



DIGNITY PROJECT

WHAT IS DIGNITY?

Dignity is inherent to all people, regardless of who they are or how they act. Because people have dignity, they are entitled to respect. We respect people better by ensuring autonomy, equality and recognising individuality.



“Human dignity is the core of my work”
- Antonio Guterres

“You’re counting the wrong things. You’re not counting dignity of people.”
- Winnie Byanyima

“They should not treat us as if we were children and decisions should not be made without consulting us. This is dignity.”
- Colombian IDP in ODI research



Is your programme respectful? How, exactly, do you know that? Did you ask people?

In the rush to do good, charities and governments often end up disrespecting people - by treating them as a number, by not valuing their time, or by making them jump through demeaning hoops to access aid.

We all want to do better. But right now we don’t have the tools to do so. The Dignity Project is an ongoing campaign for more respectful development.



Photo by Benna

What we know about dignity

From The Dignity Project’s six original experimental and qualitative studies:



Differs by place: Dignity is a standalone concept, but experiences of it vary greatly around the world - place matters.



Disrespect causes harm: Disrespect is common and painful. In 13 Afrobarometer countries more than 50% said public officials do not treat them with respect. In Nairobi it was associated with feeling significantly less happy and less empowered.



Support from the public and the sector: People say they would donate 60% more to a more respectful charity. There is also support in the development sector: 79% of non-profit professionals say they are personally committed to raising dignity with their colleagues.



Strategies for respect: Make listening routine. Give cash over in-kind aid (Shapiro, 2019). Show when we are putting in the effort, and feed back to them. Address people by name, give them real choices, and treat them as equals.

What you can do to promote dignity right now:



1 Include an expectation of respectfulness in TORs



2 Encourage implementers to trial The Dignity Project’s measures in their M&E



3 Expect implementers to use respectfulness to improve programmes and processes

Right now, we have a unique chance to pause, and think ‘how can we do this, the way it’s supposed to be done?’ When we put dignity first in our work, it makes a difference.