



HPG Working Paper

Dignity in displacement

Case studies from Afghanistan,
Colombia, the Philippines and
South Sudan

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Acronyms

AREU	Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit
ARMM	Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao
CODHES	Consultancy for Human Rights and Displacement
DAFAC	Disaster family access cards
DANE	National Administrative Department of Statistics
DoRR	Directorate of Refugees and Repatriation
DSWD	Department of Social Welfare and Development
FGD	Focus group discussion
IDP	Internally displaced person
INGO	International non-governmental organisation
MAA	Main affected area
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
OCHA	UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
PoCs	Protection of Civilians sites
SPLM/A	Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army
UN	United Nations
UNCAT	Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman and Degrading Treatment or Punishment
UNHCR	UN High Commissioner for Refugees
UNMISS	UN Mission in South Sudan
WASH	Water, sanitation and hygiene

1 Introduction

Kerrie Holloway

Dignity is evoked specifically in many humanitarian documents and multiple sectors – including food and cash-based aid, livelihoods, education, health and hygiene, shelter, protection and psychosocial support. The Sphere Handbook promotes the overall principles of ‘the right to life with dignity, the right to receive humanitarian assistance and the right to protection and security’, and the first core tenet of the Humanitarian Charter is that those ‘affected by disaster or conflict have the right to life with dignity and, therefore, the right to assistance’ (Sphere Project, 2018). Dignity is also mentioned in documents specifically focused on displacement, such as the *Guiding principles on internal displacement* (UNHCR, 1998) and the *Handbook on voluntary repatriation* (UNHCR, 1996).

Despite a strong emphasis on dignity within the policies and rhetoric of the international humanitarian system, there is a dearth of literature analysing whether, and in what ways, humanitarian action upholds and furthers, or indeed detracts from and undermines, the dignity of crisis-affected people, particularly in displacement responses. This two-year project by the Humanitarian Policy Group (HPG) at the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) looks at dignity in displacement and aims to explore how affected people conceptualise dignity and their perceptions of whether humanitarian action has upheld or undermined their dignity. It then compares these conceptualisations with how dignity has been understood within the humanitarian sector and within international and locally led responses to displacement. The study tests the assumption that greater funding to local actors will lead to a more dignified humanitarian response.

The goal of this project is not to define dignity. As noted in the literature review underpinning this project, even if a concrete definition of dignity could be agreed, its meaning and application would depend heavily on context, thus making a single definition unhelpful in most situations (Holloway and Grandi, 2018). Instead, this project seeks to provide

a better understanding of what dignity means to the displaced in different places at different times, to help humanitarian action accomplish what it so often sets out to do – to uphold the dignity of the displaced. This series, focusing on displacement in Afghanistan, Colombia, the Philippines and South Sudan, contributes four contextual examples of what dignity in displacement means, and accompanies the case studies on the Rohingya in Bangladesh (Holloway and Fan, 2018) and Syrians in Lebanon (Grandi et al., 2018) that inform this project.

1.1 Methodology and outline

This collection aims to explore how dignity is perceived by different people (e.g. men, women, youth, elderly, minority groups) and how it relates to recent displacement crises and humanitarian responses. Local researchers were contracted to write the short pieces included here, based on interviews they conducted locally and their own contextual knowledge. The research questions driving these studies were as follows:

- How is dignity understood in the local context?
- What are different understandings and perceptions of dignity among different people (e.g. men, women, youth, elderly, minority groups)?
- How have people experienced the international and local aid response in their location? Are there differences in the way that dignity is upheld in local or international aid responses? If so, what are they?
- Are there good or bad practice examples of how organisations (international and/or local) try to uphold dignity in these responses?

The four studies presented here differ from the two stand-alone case studies in this project in both breadth and length. Fewer interviews were conducted¹ and the resulting pieces are shorter; yet, the depth of these studies remains, as the contextual knowledge already held by the local researchers contributed to detailed

1 More detailed methodology can be found at the beginning of each case study.

understandings of dignity in the local contexts. All four studies would benefit from further exploration; yet, they offer a small window into a very complex and culturally specific concept.

This collection is organised alphabetically by the country of study. Wali Kandiwal looks at dignity among refugees, returnees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Jalalabad, Afghanistan, and analyses the key factors that determine how they perceived dignity and assesses how dignity is or is not upheld in the humanitarian response. Gloria Miranda Ángel looks at how IDPs in Colombia understand dignity through six common expressions that appeared

in her interviews for this project. Ica Fernandez examines both social and individual dignity for IDPs in the Philippines who were doubly displaced: first by violence during the Marawi siege and then by Typhoon Tembin. Leben Moro offers reflections of how refugees from South Sudan, primarily in Uganda but also in Egypt and Kenya, conceptualise dignity and how they see their dignity being upheld and undermined in various phases of their displacement. The study concludes by offering some thoughts on common themes that have appeared, how they relate to humanitarian action and whether locally led responses are more likely to uphold the dignity of affected populations.

2 Dignity among the displaced in Jalalabad, Afghanistan

Wali Mohammad Kandiwal

This study explores how displaced populations understand and perceive dignity in the local context of Jalalabad, Afghanistan. It explores key factors that influence understandings of the concept in this context and the various ways it has been upheld, or undermined, as well as providing good and bad examples of humanitarian assistance. Both the available literature reviewed for this study and the empirical data collected in the field through individual interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs) indicate that dignity is a concept of fundamental importance for displaced populations as well as for the organisations helping them. In addition, humanitarian organisations and the Afghan government say (often explicitly in their policy documents) they are committed to preserving the dignity of displaced populations through their response. Yet, there is little explanation as to how dignity is to be upheld in operational responses. Throughout the data collection, some examples of humanitarian assistance that contributed to preserving the dignity of the displaced from their perspective emerged. However, many grievances were shared by interviewees, which they believed undermined IDPs' dignity, such as the kinds of

materials distributed in some areas, the behaviour of volunteers and staff who participate in distributions, and where and how assistance was distributed.

2.1 Methodology

This study is based on primary and secondary data. A review of the accessible literature on dignity in displacement was followed by field data collection in and on the outskirts of Jalalabad city, mostly in informal settlements in the areas that received the highest number of returnees and IDPs (two neighbouring districts, Bihsud and Surkh Rod). Both individual interviews and FGDs were conducted based on a short research question guide, developed in consultation with HPG. The interviewees came from various provinces, including Kunar, Laghman, Nangarhar, Nuristan and Paktia, and from different Pashtun and non-Pashtun tribes, such as Pashai.

Men and women were interviewed; however, more men than women were represented because of the limited availability of women for interviews. In addition, the

Table 1: Interview demographics

FGD	Number of participants	Number of FGDs
Refugee returnees, IDPs and their representatives	16	3
Key Informant Interviews		
Staff of national NGOs	2	
Individual Interviews		
Refugee returnees, IDPs and their representatives	6	
Total number of respondents	24	
Gender (all categories)		
Women = 3	Men = 21	
Age range (all categories)		
	20–50	

scope of this brief study has been limited due to time and resource constraints, and data was collected only by a male researcher (the author).

2.2 National legal context

To receive humanitarian assistance, refugee returnees and IDPs must approach the Directorate of Refugees and Repatriation (DoRR) either to receive direct help or for DoRR to provide a letter of introduction to a non-governmental organisation (NGO) that can provide assistance instead. NGO programmes are set up in two ways. First, when people become displaced, organisations send their staff to carry out a survey and help those who qualify as beneficiaries, based on the organisation's criteria. Second, NGOs might approach DoRR when they have projects to be introduced to the neediest IDPs and returnees, so they can distribute assistance among them.

At the national level in Afghanistan, maintaining the dignity of the country's vast displaced population is referenced in several principles of the *National policy on internally displaced persons*, which is aligned with the *Guiding principles on internal displacement* (UNHCR, 1998). It states:

Every human being has the right to dignity and physical, mental and moral integrity ... Based on the enacted laws of the country, the Ministry of the Interior and the Afghan National Police shall facilitate the daily activities of IDPs in their areas, maintain security, safeguard their civil rights and prevent any kind of immoral and unethical activities which can go against or damage their human dignity (Government of Afghanistan, 2013: 59, 64).

Moreover, it is imperative that displaced persons be treated equally and without any type of discrimination based on gender, ethnicity or religious affiliation. The document further advocates for 'upgrading shelter, housing, water, sanitation and other infrastructure in areas inhabited by IDPs to ensure their safety and dignity' (Government of Afghanistan, 2013: 48). These documents highlight the importance of the safety and dignity of the displaced population during their displacement and when they return to their place of origin. However, less discussion exists in the literature around which materials to distribute to displaced persons, the distribution process and the behaviour of those involved in the distributions – all of which were cited by the affected population as important to upholding their dignity.

2.3 Several understandings of dignity

In Afghanistan, preserving the dignity and honour of the other side in any kind of relationship is fundamental. Thus, many who were interviewed believe that life has no meaning without dignity. In Nangarhar province, there are three main words in Pashto used to describe 'dignity': *haisi-yath* (حيثيت), *wiqar* (وقار) or honour, and *arzakhth* (ارزښت) or value. During the interviews, the researcher mainly used the first two words. Additionally, the terms 'dignity' and 'honour' were used interchangeably by interviewees, but many had difficulty describing their understanding of dignity, and among those who could, there seemed to be several different understandings of the concept. For example, a female respondent from the Pachir Agam district of Nangarhar, who has been displaced for almost 10 years, equates dignity with her personal identity: her own name, position, family, religion, language, etc. These aspects are equally important to her. She believes that all people have the same dignity, without any difference, since all of them have personal identities. However, she accepts that many people think differently, especially uneducated men and women when it comes to the participation of women in different events, decision-making processes, or working out of home. This was a common perception of many who were interviewed.

For others dignity is conceptualised differently. One female respondent linked dignity with education and skills. By having higher education or more skills, she believed a person had more dignity compared to others because people will be keen to learn from them. Another respondent believes that his dignity depends on his job and daily income: if he has a job and a good income, he has a life with dignity; otherwise, his dignity is damaged. In the same FGD, another participant said that accessing all the rights of a human being is dignity. In other words, when a person has access to education, healthcare, food, drinking water, etc. – or more simply, whatever is needed for life – that person lives with dignity, but this is undermined if they lack access to these things. For several others, dignity is respect; when a person is respected everywhere, he/she has dignity, and if not, his/her dignity is destroyed. For example, receiving a positive response to a request for aid after approaching an organisation or person means one's dignity is upheld, while a negative response with harsh words means the damaging of a person's dignity. Finally, some interviewees think dignity and honour are linked to wealth in Afghanistan today. Thus, rich people have respect, dignity and honour regardless of who they are or what they do, while poor people do not.

2.4 Factors influencing different conceptualisations of dignity

The factors that influence understandings of dignity vary for interviewees, even for those belonging to the same tribe, village or family. Their thoughts can be framed around three points: education, socio-economic status and cultural background.

Education was highlighted as an important factor that can change people's mindsets, especially regarding dignity and honour. Many interviewees believed that educated people thought more broadly and positively, particularly about the dignity of women. Most educated people allow girls and women to study, work in offices and leave the house to buy what they need or access assistance in displacement, whereas less educated people often believe these kinds of practices can damage the dignity of a person or a family.

Socioeconomic status and the context in which one lives emerged as key factors influencing understandings of dignity. For example, those who were more financially secure before displacement may feel their dignity is damaged when living in informal settlements in a poor-quality house or tent, while others who were less financially stable before displacement believe that owning one- or two-room houses, even on government land,² preserves one's dignity.

Finally, cultural and religious background can influence people's understanding of dignity. Those living in rural areas are often more conservative in their cultural practices compared to inhabitants of urban areas (culture and religion appeared more often in discussions with interviewees who originally lived in rural areas, but are now displaced in or around the city of Jalalabad). The religiously conservative are more likely to be against women's engagement in public activities. This could be due to the combination of religion and local culture, the interdependence of which makes it difficult to understand which of the two takes precedence. Although these may not be the only factors influencing key differences in understanding dignity, these were highlighted by the respondents.

2.5 People's experiences of the aid response: good and bad practice

The opinions of respondents on good and bad practice of humanitarian assistance regarding dignity, as well as their experiences of aid responses, can be framed around three separate points: distribution of humanitarian assistance (the place, those facilitating the distributions, etc.); the behaviour and attitude of NGO staff; and the materials or services given. To uphold dignity, distributions should be organised to prioritise the elderly and women; NGO staff should treat recipients of aid with respect; and the materials and services given should be appropriate and needed.

2.5.1 Organisation and distribution of aid

Organising the distribution of assistance is difficult as the displaced may expect more assistance than an organisation can offer, and some people may not be eligible because of criteria set by the humanitarian organisation (Kandiwal, 2018). This results in coping strategies such as individuals insistently asking for assistance or trying to show they are more in need than others. Selecting the location where assistance is given and how it is distributed can also become problematic. Organisations' criteria can vary, but typically the primary entry point is the Malik, or community leader,³ in a given displaced population. In fact, the Malik's residence is often used for distributions, even though this practice is criticised by many IDPs.

One interviewee, displaced from Kunar province and currently living in the Bihsud district, was omitted from aid distributions several times for accusing Maliks of being involved in corruption, nepotism and giving priority to their friends. He saw his dignity as being undermined when his neighbours received assistance, but he did not. He asked, 'Why? Am I not from this country? Am I not displaced? I did not receive any assistance; it is because the Maliks are following their own interests. They are not working for the sake of Allah'. Conversely, some Maliks believe that being involved in assistance distribution simultaneously promotes and damages their dignity. As one Malik explained:

2 Phrase 8, article 3 of the *Law on managing land affairs* (Government of Afghanistan, 2008) defines 'Government lands as:

- Plot(s) of orchard, irrigated and rain-fed lands, hills, parks, marshy lands, forests, pastures, reed-beds and other lands being registered in the principal book of the government lands;
- Lands, which are deemed public lands, but are not registered in the principal book of government lands;
- Lands in respect of which individual ownership has not been proved legally during settlement'.

3 Maliks are community leaders who traditionally inherit their position, while 'elder' is a catch-all term for a male member of the community who has a level of respect and role in decision-making. Both positions are distributive and reciprocal, meaning that to be a respected Malik or elder, you must do something for your community.

These organisations come to our areas and ask us to invite, for example, 100 displaced persons, mostly heads of families, and we do this and help. Later, they might give the assistance to 10% to 20% of them. The others who do not receive any assistance blame us for corruption, and name us badly in public. So, the organisations promise a lot while doing less.

Another Malik in a different area said:

An organisation came to this area in 2016 and asked us to introduce women who have Tazkera [the national identity card], and they will be helped. Each of them will receive 350AFN cash. The elders provided a list of 40 women who had Tazkera, but only four or five received assistance. The others did not. We asked the reasons from that organisation several times – why some should receive assistance and others should not – but we got no answers. Now the family of the women who did not receive assistance are asking us again and again, but we, the elders who provided the list, have no way to explain. Thus, we have been accused of corruption. This discards our honour and dignity among the community, especially among those who did not get aid. In fact, people who do not receive assistance feel bad and believe their dignity is undermined compared to those who get assistance.

Perhaps the real insult to the dignity of the displaced lies with the lack of communication and transparency around the criteria used to determine who is eligible for the distribution, created by the aid organisations without input from the Maliks or other displaced people.

Distributions also lessen the sense of dignity for those receiving aid. A female interviewee, displaced in Koz (Lower) Sheikh Mesri for more than a decade, told how a widow had trouble for many years because she took assistance from a Malik's place where so many people were gathered:

I cannot remember the exact year, but it was either 2008 or 2009. I was living in the Koz Sheikh Mesri. An organisation ... was distributing assistance in the residence of a Malik and so many people were gathered. There was a widow, but very young, living in our neighbourhood, who went to take assistance, as the two other adult members of the family (her mother-in-law and brother-in-law) were not at home. Because of doing so, she faced a lot of

problems; she was accused of bringing shame and damaging the dignity of the whole family. She was supposed to be married to her brother-in-law, but because of this, he rejected the marriage and convincing him to return to that marriage took more than four years.

Another interviewee complained about delays and cancellations of distributions, saying that they usually start later than the announced time, and that people must wait in crowded places, which particularly undermines the dignity and honour of women and elderly.

2.5.2 Behaviour of employees and facilitators

Assistance is provided to displaced people by governmental, non-governmental, international, national and local organisations, networks and individuals. In addition, military personnel were engaged in humanitarian aid distribution in the post-Taliban era. Many respondents underscored that the behaviour of the distributor, no matter who they are, is important to the dignity of those receiving assistance. While respondents were hesitant to name the organisations involved, they were forthcoming about the types of behaviours they experienced in Pakistan and after returning to Afghanistan. Harsh words were frequently said towards the poorest, who are often the majority among displaced persons, such as 'You do not know shame' (تاسو شرم نه پیژنی), 'You are always begging' (تاسو همیشہ سوال کوئی) or even 'You do not have any dignity or honour' (تاسو هیڅ حیثیت او عزت نه لرئ). Along with these insults, many interviewees had experienced being pushed, or even hit, when receiving assistance, especially in government distributions.

2.5.3 Goods and services offered as assistance

According to the respondents for this study, humanitarian aid was perceived both as helpful and preserving of the dignity of the displaced population, as well as negatively and undermining their (and their family's) dignity. Several examples of good practice centred on interventions that allowed women to maintain their privacy, and thus their dignity. For instance, in the Daman area of the Bihsud district, heavy rains flooded the streets and destroyed houses constructed from mud. As well as not being secure from the outside, people could see everything inside the house, including the women, who typically stay inside the home unseen, which was perceived as damaging the dignity of that family. A humanitarian organisation constructed a sidewall to prevent flooding, which upholds the dignity of the people of the area whose houses and privacy are no longer compromised. Another example from the same area centred on drinking water. Until the 1970s, women

travelled far from home to fetch drinking water, though this was not perceived to be undignified. Now, according to the local culture, spending time outdoors can hurt not only a woman's dignity, but that of her entire family, as women are expected to remain unseen inside the home. This change is likely due to a decrease in security in the area, as families feel less safe since displacement because they now live among people from different provinces and districts. Now that a water tank has been constructed and water pipes installed, women no longer need to leave home for drinking water. According to one FGD, this is the best example of aid that preserves the dignity of the displaced population. Other good examples centred on income-generating activities and skill learning.

Negative examples were also mentioned. One, from Koz Sheikh Mesri camp, regarded short-term courses about women's rights. A woman who had participated in a 15-day training/workshop on women's rights felt fully empowered and knowledgeable on this subject and so intervened in a husband–wife conflict without any preparation, which negatively impacted her dignity. As the respondent went on to explain:

At the end of the day that person who had the conflict came to the house of his neighbour and asked him to tell to his wife not to go to people's houses and engage with the personal issues of other people who were not asking for help. After that, people of that area who became aware were laughing at that woman, which hurt the dignity of that woman.

This example shows that, though the woman had good intentions, she was let down by a poorly designed programme. The time allocated to explain women's rights was insufficient, and when she tried to put what she learned into practice, she was mocked by her community because she did not understand the issue's full complexities.

Other interventions made with good intentions have resulted in bad practice because there is not enough contextual understanding. Providing shelter is perceived to be the best way to preserve the dignity of those who are displaced, since it is believed that a person's best life and the fulfilment of their dignity comes when they have a room to stay in and skills that enable them to find 'a bit of bread' (*yawa marai dodai*). However, one humanitarian organisation distributed shelters made of iron, which are impossible to stay inside during the summer season in Jalalabad because of the hot weather,

with temperatures at around 40–45°C. Thus, although the organisation provided one of the highest forms of dignity in the eyes of the displaced, they inadvertently undermined people's dignity because the shelters were unusable. A better alternative would have been wooden shelters, which are more common and more appropriate to the climate of the area.

Finally, although this study sought to examine the differences between local and international NGOs, it was very difficult for respondents to distinguish between these organisations, as well as between humanitarian and development organisations. Thus, they had no explanation as to who better promoted dignity or an understanding of the different ways that national and international organisations uphold the dignity of the displaced population.

2.6 Conclusion

Dignity as a concept is very broad and open to interpretation, and it includes many aspects of socio-cultural values that are context-specific. In Afghanistan, maintaining dignity is highly regarded by humanitarian organisations and is often mentioned in their documents, yet it seems difficult to put into practice. For recipients of humanitarian assistance, respecting their dignity is as important as their life. Recipients appreciate humanitarian assistance in general, but they are often disappointed by the behaviour of those who distribute materials as well as the materials themselves, which can be inappropriate for the climate or local culture. Distribution sites were also highlighted as undermining people's dignity as they are crowded and inappropriate for women.

This study has featured both good and bad examples of humanitarian programmes that uphold and undermine dignity. Most of the bad examples could have been avoided with a more on-the-ground focus and understanding of or respect for the local culture. By paying more attention to what is important to those in need of assistance, their dignity could be upheld through a culturally acceptable distribution of materials, respectful behaviours of those involved in the distribution, a rethink of the places where assistance is distributed and a change in some of the materials that are given out. If dignity is to be taken seriously by humanitarian organisations and the government, then it must be put into practice, rather than only into policy documents.

3 The six expressions of dignity according to IDPs in Colombia

Gloria Miranda Ángel

How IDPs interviewed for this study believe they are seen by host populations, institutions and society constitutes an important part of their sense of dignity. Perceived by others as strangers or intruders, different and dangerous, most IDPs feel unaccepted, lonely, abandoned and powerless because the circumstances that caused their displacement are not socially recognised.

Colombian IDPs conceptualise dignity around six commonly used expressions:

1. *'Dignity is that you are not discriminated against because you are displaced, since you are many other things, but in the end, being displaced is a stigma.'* Having the identity of a displaced person generates stigma and leads to discrimination, but paradoxically, this label is also the way that IDPs achieve recognition of their situation and restitution of their rights.
2. *'When they speak of dignity in the return process, what we really want is for them to say what really happened, that everything they said about the people of the town was not true.'* This search for truth refers to IDPs' desire to remove the dishonour, individual and collective, suffered during the conflict in Colombia, as well to demand that the facts of their victimisation be revealed, without politicising the biases that blame IDPs for their own displacement.
3. *'We have said it many times, they should not treat us as if we were children and decisions should not be made without consulting us. This is dignity.'* Dignity in the humanitarian response is associated with the way humanitarian workers treat beneficiaries: as human beings, capable of managing their own lives.
4. *'Dignity is the illusion of knowing what is going to happen to you. We appreciate the help, but when you do not know anything about your children's future, it is quite difficult.'* Uncertainty about the future makes decision-making difficult.

Programmes that promote return or restoration generate expectations, but uncertainties remain, given the situation of recurrent violence, and some people distrust the institutions that are promoting them.

5. *'You get tired of [international humanitarian actors] coming and going, in a parade of vests, asking questions, taking pictures and solving nothing. For the people of the community, this is a question of dignity.'* Certain communities have been over-exposed to international humanitarian aid visitors.
6. *'Dignity is that you, as a woman, are worthy of being valued and respected.'* Depending on age and gender, dignity is defined theoretically or practically in reference to the past or as an expectation for the future.

3.1 Methodology

This brief case study was conducted in Colombia. Six individual interviews and four focus groups (24 individuals) with IDPs were conducted in Medellín, with a gender split of 12 men and 18 women. The four focus groups comprised currently displaced men, currently displaced women, men and women involved in the return process (about to return accompanied by local government officials from Medellín) and four women indigenous returnees. All interviewees had been displaced for more than five years, mostly from the countryside to the city, and have legal recognition and self-identify as forcibly displaced persons. Most intend to return to their original places of residence via a return process generated by the peace agreement, with the assistance of government staff and local humanitarian workers from national and international NGOs. Five individual interviews were conducted with humanitarian workers in local, national and international NGOs, and four with public officials involved in the humanitarian response.

3.2 Colombia's context

Colombia has experienced several episodes of displacement. Between 1946 and 1966 there was a period of violent political conflict known in Colombia as 'The age of violence' (*La época de la violencia*), which led to rapid urbanisation. According to the National Administrative Department of Statistics (DANE), only 30.9% of the Colombian population resided in urban areas in 1938, but this figure had doubled by 1964. The violence resulted from a struggle for power between the two political parties of the time (Liberals and Conservatives) and was fuelled by social, economic and religious conflicts. After the assassination of Liberal leader Jorge Eliécer Gaitán on 9 April 1948 the violence increased and came to a symbolic end in 1957 with the formation of the National Front, a political agreement that allowed power to be exchanged every four years between the two political parties, but excluded other ideologies, leading to insurgent struggles until 1966. In the 1960s and 1970s, political conflict increased as leftist insurgents intensified their presence and activities, and the Colombian government responded with hard repression. Many civilians were displaced or forcibly disappeared, and few records remain. The number of people residing in urban areas continued to grow, reaching 63.1% of the total population in 1973.

The current phase of displacement began in the mid-1980s with new forms of confrontation that included left-wing insurgents as well as right-wing paramilitaries (illegal groups linked to the official army) and new power dynamics associated with drug trafficking. In 1994, during a decade when no data on displacements was collected as displaced status was yet to be legally recognised, the population in urban areas increased to 72.3%. Overall, these changes were registered as migration, rather than displacement, and people never received recognition as forcibly displaced persons.

Normative recognition of displacement began in 1997. Since then, people must approach the offices of the ombudsman to declare what had happened to them, and the state decides whether to grant them this status. Resources for humanitarian assistance were not allocated until 2001, when a series of measures (including protection measures) aimed at preventing displacement and responding to the crisis were put in place, though these measures were expected to be temporary.

In 2011, the Colombian government presented the Victims and Land Restitution Law (Law 1448), which

also established the Unit for Victims' Assistance and Reparation in January 2012. Anticipating the restitution of millions of hectares of land abandoned or stolen due to human rights abuses and International Humanitarian Law violations, Law 1448 aimed to restore land to people who had been forcibly displaced. The 'displaced person' label changed to 'victim of forced displacement' – now clearly defined, but not applicable to people affected before 1990. The 'Single Record of Displaced Population' became the 'Single Record of Victims', and clarified that those who had registered in the first record did not need to register again, unless they wished to add another circumstance, such as murder, forced disappearance, torture, inhumane or degrading treatment, rape, abuse or sexual slavery or forced recruitment of children and adolescents to their initial declaration. However, according to Human Rights Watch (2013), the provisions of this law exclude many victims with legitimate claims in recent years, and forcibly displaced people have faced problems in getting official recognition as records are far from complete.

According to the Consultancy for Human Rights and Displacement (CODHES, 2018), the de-escalation of violence between 2016 and 2017 created expectations that it was possible to overcome Colombia's violent history. However, 2018 saw the persistence of illegal armed groups with interest in and capacity for territorial and armed control of many areas of the country. CODHES identified 34 illegal armed groups with a territorial presence in Colombia during 2018, with four groups generating the greatest concern in terms of capacity to cause damage: Gaitanista Self-Defences of Colombia (*Autodefensas Gaitanistas de Colombia*), Black Eagles (*Águilas Negras*) – heirs of the paramilitaries post-demobilisation – the National Liberation Army (*Ejército de Liberación Nacional*) and Dissidents of the FARC (*Dissidencias de las FARC*) – leftist guerrillas. These new insurgencies may generate future displacements and prevent the return of previous displaced persons to conditions of security.

At the end of 2017, Colombia had 7.3 million IDPs, the majority of whom came from rural areas (OCHA, 2018). There are no displacement camps in Colombia, with IDPs mostly seeking shelter in towns and cities, scattered among the general population, mainly with the urban poor in informal settlements on the periphery of cities.

The Colombian state is committed to the *Guiding principles on internal displacement* (UNHCR, 1998) and has standardised, through signed documents, the three basic principles of return: that it be voluntary, in safety

and with dignity. Voluntariness must be admitted, and a document signed by IDPs who want to return. Security as a legal concept is given by the civil and military authorities who certify this condition for return. Finally, a letter of dignity (*carta de dignificación*) is issued by the government, recognising the returnee's resilience as a survivor and regretting that he/she has been affected by armed conflict. This state message of recognition of the victim's condition and the exaltation of their dignity, name and honour attempts to address the victims' demands for dignity, but IDPs consider it insufficient; it is very general and not individualised; it is not enough to restore their dignity and good name and that of their relatives; and it does not reverse the effects of stigmatisation. These reasons tie heavily into how dignity is conceptualised by IDPs in Colombia more generally, particularly the first two conceptualisations – the label and honour or good name of IDPs.

3.3 The 'displaced person' label

Dignity in Colombia is associated with identity and pride. The 'displaced person' label intends to promote dignity by providing a legal status and identity, but it undermines a person's pride and social dignity because it creates stigma. Following the *Guiding principles on internal displacement* (UNHCR, 1998), the Colombian Congress labelled the displaced to give an effective and timely response to the needs of IDPs and, therefore, to give dignity to the victims. When a person adopts the displaced label, it defines their identity and allows them to access humanitarian assistance and the restitution of their rights. Most case study participants see the moment of displacement as being when they made the declaration to be part of the Single Record of Displaced Population, rather than when they were expelled or escaped from their homes.

However, the 'displaced person' label also causes victims to become segregated and discriminated against in the social sphere due to, among other reasons, a lack of effective awareness campaigns targeting the sensitivity and acceptance of the host community, mostly urban, who felt their areas had been invaded by people who were suspected of having played an active role in their own displacement. With the arrival of IDPs, the label became synonymous with poverty and aid, especially the state's legal recourse and humanitarian response. This response encouraged discrimination towards IDPs from the host community and those who have been historically neglected, as they did not have enough even before the arrival of IDPs. Thus, the dignity of IDPs was undermined because they lacked access to the few existing services.

Furthermore, the insufficient response of the state and the international community led many IDPs, particularly those who moved to the slums of big cities, to beg in the streets or to carry out informal and degrading work. This was mentioned especially by the indigenous participants in this case study, who affirmed their outrage at seeing their own people begging in the street when they had previously been proud farmers, hunters, fishermen and harvesters – work that had existed in the rural countryside but was no longer available after their displacement to urban areas.

Pride, and the public physical appearance of oneself, is a matter of dignity in Colombia, and has been undermined in displacement. For some women, for example, being registered as an IDP and receiving cash was humiliating and led to feelings of shame, due to long waiting times in queues that publicly exposed their needs and created a lack of dignity. Other IDPs chose to walk barefoot for many days and put their shoes on only after arriving in an urban area to still look presentable. However, this often played against them because some public officials saw their shoes were not worn down and did not believe their stories.

The IDP identity leads to marginalisation among the host community, but also creates a community and shared identity among IDPs who have undergone similar experiences. Some join forces to struggle for their rights. Asserting this identity becomes an act of courage and of dignity, highlighting that dignity can fluctuate depending on context. After the peace agreement was signed in 2016, IDPs' expectation of returning to their lands reinforced this collective identity, since to be an IDP or victim brings the possibility to access truth, justice and reparation. Dignity in displacement in Colombia also involves trying to recover one's reputation and honour, or good name (*buen nombre*), and the possibility of making decisions about one's own future.

3.4 'Honour (good name) and calling things by their true name'

As seen in the first conceptualisation, dignity in Colombia is represented both individually and collectively. It is associated with one's reputation, honour and good name (*buen nombre*) as well as with the search for its restoration through the IDP label. Many interviewed for this study expressed the desire to tell it how it is, or to call things by their true name (*llamar las cosas por su nombre*), as a necessary part

of reparation, specifically associated with dignity. Thus, it is not enough to assume the label of internally displaced; the causes of this displacement must be presented without bias – the second conceptualisation of dignity. This aspect appeared particularly when interviewees spoke of the media: how parties involved in conflict are represented, the euphemisms used and apparent biases. For example, many rejected the labelling of the ‘cold-blooded murder of civilians’ as ‘death in combat’. Often, civilians are unlawfully killed by legitimate soldiers, and their deaths are made to look like lawful combat killings. Later, after circumstances are revealed, they may be recognised as false positives (*falsos positivos*). The recovery of the dignity of loved ones who had disappeared or were killed in unknown circumstances is also important for collective, family dignity.

At the community level, when acts of war are presented as a confrontation between combatants, the displaced population is marked as if they were part of or supported an armed actor. Displacement’s association with violence and war means that those who are forced to escape are seen as having played a role in their own displacement through their political commitments or support for one of the opposing forces. This naturally generates discrimination that threatens their security, good name and dignity, but blaming victims for the circumstances of their displacement can lead to their being forcibly displaced again.

3.5 ‘Treat me as an adult’: dignity in humanitarian response

Whether dignity is upheld or undermined in the context of displacement, specifically in humanitarian response, depends largely on the exchange between the giver and receiver of aid. The initial humanitarian response tends to meet IDPs’ basic needs and is based either on a needs assessment or the assumption of what humanitarian workers believe IDPs need. Yet, such assumptions undermine the dignity of IDPs and infantilise them. First and foremost, dignity requires the recognition of IDPs as human beings, and they must be given an opportunity to talk about the issues that concern them as citizens and as family or community members. Dignity is related to being able to express one’s opinions.

Many interviewees, especially adult men (even more so indigenous men), demanded to be treated as adults – that is, not to be treated with condescension or as

if they were incapable of deciding their future and that of their families. In the humanitarian response, this includes providing transparent information, managing expectations, determining selection criteria and, above all, respecting IDPs as human beings and treating them accordingly. Humanitarian workers have the mandate to follow standards or act according to the law, but they cannot always provide a realistic, effective and timely humanitarian response. In these circumstances, transparency and sharing accurate and accessible information, including information about delays or lack of resources, is vital to upholding an IDP’s dignity. With explanation, the IDP understands and appreciates the time taken to explain what is going on, as this makes them feel included, as equals and as adults.

Transparent information helps manage expectations. Throughout all stages of needs assessments, IDPs believe they will receive aid, but these expectations should be informed at each stage of the project cycle. Relatedly, selection criteria for projects should be clearly explained. Occasionally, it is difficult for IDPs to understand certain types of positive discrimination, such as the prioritisation of single mothers or people with disabilities, but once explained, this ceases to be an issue that threatens the dignity of those who still need but fall outside of certain selection criteria.

Finally, cash-based responses attempt to give IDPs responsibility and the possibility of making their own decisions, and thus were initially perceived as upholding their dignity. However, this does not necessarily work in practice, as the system requires IDPs to queue for up to 12 hours to access assistance. While the outcome of this programme may uphold dignity more than aid-in-kind, its implementation may do more harm than good.

3.6 ‘Today we have, tomorrow we do not know’: uncertainty about the future

All study participants agreed that dignity is associated with the ability to decide their own future. Although some IDPs returned home quickly, many remain displaced, some experience double displacement and even those who establish themselves in new areas continue to feel as if they are in a place that does not belong to them. This was expressed clearly by adults, but young people often did not desire to return to their home territory and

explicitly stated the need to re-establish their lives. They note that their families' displacement have given them opportunities, though they have not yet achieved the necessary autonomy to be agents of their own future.

The official process of return, or relocation, includes measures of reparation such as: personal and public safety; adequate standard of living; access to livelihoods; restitution of housing, land and property; access to documentation; family reunification; participation in public affairs; and access to effective resources and effective justice, as well as payment of compensation. Of these measures, most people focus on the payment of compensation, usually perceiving the other criteria as a kind of checklist. Like emergency aid, compensation is limited to supplying momentary needs rather than durable solutions; therefore, this payment does not necessarily give recipients agency over their own future.

Despite the peace process and increase of institutional programmes promoting the return of IDPs, violence has re-escalated recently, causing some displaced people to be less optimistic about their return and to distrust institutions promoting return. According to CODHES (2018), the first half of 2018 was the most violent period in the last decade: 112 displacement events have occurred, affecting more than 33,000 people; 78 social leaders and three more people who claimed their rights as victims have been murdered and 67 people and at least 12 other groups are under threat of death by the heirs of paramilitaries. Safe return has become uncertain, now and in the future, leading to a sense that the information provided about return lacks transparency, making it difficult for IDPs to plan for the future, therefore undermining their dignity.

3.7 'The parade of vests': the local and international response

The presence of humanitarian agencies can also undermine the dignity of the displaced. Perceptions of humanitarian aid delivered by international and local staff vary according to the experiences of IDPs. However, there is a marked difference in social status between local and international staff: internationals are paid significantly more, but are also marked out as foreigners by their vehicles, flags, clothes and communications equipment. Local

staff, on the other hand, are perceived as closer to the affected population.

International staff are valued in terms of their neutrality in the conflict because they do not have a personal link with the culture, history or political affairs of Colombia. They also are perceived as not having the presumptions or intimate knowledge of the context that sometimes leads local staff to be biased, even involuntarily. The perceived ignorance on the part of international staff means that IDPs feel that their interactions with them are more to satisfy personal curiosity rather than a search for information about people's true needs. IDPs expressed a feeling of being used by international staff and believe expatriates may take advantage of their misery to make money.

Humanitarian workers often wear vests with their agency or donor country's branding, resulting in an overexposure of logos and emblems referred to as a parade of vests (*desfile de chalecos*) by IDPs. Moreover, when agencies schedule visits by foreigners (expatriates, donors, heads of missions, ambassadors, etc.) to their projects, they usually visit the same communities because of distance, safety and cost, as well for being good examples of the situation. Yet, this furthers the overexposure of humanitarian agencies in some communities and undermines the dignity of the IDPs living there, especially because they see the large amounts of money being invested in vehicles and staff accommodation that is luxurious compared to where IDPs reside. This lends itself to another common expression: 'We live like this to make them eat well and stay in hotels' – a feeling of indignity that reveals an interdependent relationship in which IDPs receive help from foreigners who are able to live comfortably because of their misery.

IDPs see some benefits to having local humanitarian staff in their community: basic information about the context, uses and customs are more easily assimilated and considered, and they promote a more dignified response because there is less of a gap in social status between the responder and the receivers of help. However, value judgements and prejudices associated with IDPs' origins, their political affiliations, the cause of their displacement and the suspicion that falls on the victim affect local staff more than international. Finally, local workers are seen as more likely to be involved in corruption than international staff.

3.8 ‘A human value or a practical issue’: conceptualisations of dignity by gender and age

Dignity has a gendered dimension in Colombia. Women associate dignity with character and value, something that can be undermined morally, while men believe that dignity can be undermined practically, through loss of economic autonomy, their roles in the community and political participation. The first need IDPs must address is food security, which is associated with gendered perceptions of dignity. While women see food as an urgent requirement related to survival, men view the need for food assistance as one they can no longer supply, thereby highlighting their lack of self-reliance. Women are more likely to know whether humanitarian food distributions are adequate and good quality, which they take as a sign of respect and a contribution to upholding their dignity. Men, on the other hand, often struggle to accept that someone else now supplies food for their families, which generates feelings of unworthiness. The next priority for IDPs is the need for shelter, with housing being directly related to living with dignity. Men are mainly concerned with land ownership and the hope of recovering assets left behind, while women view shelter in terms of the security and protection it provides for themselves and their families. Third, sustainability or employability was more often mentioned by men, who link dignity to self-sufficiency and the possibility of providing and making decisions for the family. Because their experience is in agriculture, employment in urban areas is hindered, and there are few alternatives to generate income in the formal, or even informal, labour market, which in many cases leads to begging on the streets as the only means of subsistence. Conversely, peasant and indigenous women displaced to urban settings tend to become economic providers as they are more likely to find jobs, typically as cleaners. Although this work is similar to what they had done previously, becoming providers adds value to their dignity, empowers them in their families and gives them new opportunities.

There are also differences in perceptions of dignity among young people and the elderly, related to how they view the past and future, as well as relationships

with others. For the elderly, dignity is related to preserving traditions, uses, customs and beliefs. This group mentioned that they had dignity when they were young, and now they must regain their lost dignity. For young people, dignity is being able to function in the social sphere and compete for available opportunities, and they therefore see dignity in their hopes for the future.

3.9 Conclusion

Colombian institutions are making efforts to develop a system of care designed to provide a personalised and attentive service, through training and awareness programmes with staff, which seek to reduce stigmatising biases that may generate discrimination. In Colombia, the ‘displaced person’ label is part of one’s identity in the individual sphere, but a stigma in the social sphere. It can simultaneously contribute to discrimination and the restoration of rights. The processes of truth, justice and reparation are vital for promoting dignity, knowing the facts and recovering the honour of IDPs, whether they return, relocate or remain as displaced people indefinitely.

For IDPs, a dignified humanitarian response must be a relationship between equals. Yet this is not always the case, due to the lack of transparent information and selection criteria, which can generate false expectations. Dignity goes beyond basic needs to encompass people’s agency and ability to make decisions about their own futures. International aid is perceived to take advantage of IDPs’ situation because of the high social status of the humanitarian workers, who earn much more than local staff, but they are valued for their neutrality. In contrast, local staff are appreciated because of their contextual knowledge, though this same knowledge can also lead to discrimination and bias.

In conclusion, dignity in displacement in Colombia in the individual sphere is understood as the preservation of honour and the possibility of making decisions about the future, and, in the social sphere, especially around the humanitarian response, it is the respectful and sensitive treatment of IDPs as human beings.

4 The two sides of dignity in post-crisis response in the Philippines: insights from Marawi and Typhoon Tembin (Vinta)

Ica Fernandez

In 2017, the Philippines had the second highest number of new internal displacements globally – 80% were due to disasters from natural hazards, and 20% to armed conflict (Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, 2018). It is the third most risk-prone country in the world and is home to at least five major non-state armed groups considered legitimate enough for peace negotiations (Eckstein et al., 2018). In the Muslim-majority areas of Mindanao, the southern-most island-region of the Philippine archipelago, disasters from natural hazards and armed conflict can occur simultaneously. With the shift in climate patterns and rapid urbanisation, double displacement occurs with increasing regularity, intensity and duration.

Upholding human dignity in both natural and man-made disasters is an established precept in humanitarian literature. However, it is difficult to execute in practice – especially when the aftermath of two events needs to be dealt with by the same communities in rapid succession. This study uses the case of Northern Mindanao, Philippines, after the Marawi siege (May–October 2017) and Typhoon Tembin (December 2017), locally known as Typhoon Vinta, to explore how local communities understand dignity – loosely translated as *maratabat* in M'ranao⁴ – and the degree to which various local and international

humanitarian and development actors are perceived to effectively deliver dignity-supportive interventions.

Marawi and Vinta have created a situation of *'doble bakwit'*, or double displacement, which provides an opportunity to analyse how the Philippines' disaster risk reduction and management system upholds human dignity, particularly in the culturally sensitive and hazard-prone area of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM). Given Marawi's status as the only self-avowed 'Islamic City' in a predominantly Christian country, complex and specific notions of respect, pride and people's aspirations for political, cultural and economic self-determination factor heavily, in ways that are not always directly translatable to 'dignity' as broadly defined by Western humanitarian actors. The emergence of 'black flag', ISIS-inspired violent extremism complicates this further, ensuring that choices made in emergency response situations have wide-reaching security and development implications. This study argues that equal attention should be paid to what respondents framed as 'two sides', or dimensions, of dignity: (i) *personal dignity*, which covers physical standards of living, safety and security as well as individual human rights; and (ii) *communal dignity* at the clan and community level, interwoven in the complex political economy and conflict dynamics of the area.

4 There is no codified writing system for the language; as such, this can be spelt as Meranao, Meranaw, Maranaw, or M'ranao.

4.1 Methodology

The study draws upon original research conducted from March to May 2018 to assess the Philippines' and ARMM disaster response experience through the lens of *maratabat*. More than 100 interviews were undertaken in multiple sites, including the cities of Marawi, Iligan and Cotabato and IDP sites in Balo-i, Pantar, Saguiaran, Marantao, Madalum and Madamba. Respondents were selected to ensure that 70% of interviewees were IDPs due to the Marawi siege, with half of that number as '*doble bakwit*'. The remaining 30% of interviews were with local civil society leaders and academics, staff of INGOs and international development partners, as well as local and national government officials – at least 75% of whom were themselves displaced. Of the 109 interviews conducted with IDPs, barangay captains (village chiefs) and government leaders, 55 respondents were men and 54 were women.

4.2 Double displacement context in Northern Mindanao

International human rights and humanitarian law emphasise the right of IDPs to be treated with dignity, which has been described as the 'feeling of having decision-making power, freedom and autonomy over life choices, together with feelings of self-worth, self-confidence and respect' (Berry, 2009: 6). However, the understanding and experience of dignity, let alone its translation in post-crisis humanitarian response and development, differs greatly between contexts.

The case of Marawi and the Lanao region, after the double disasters of the Marawi siege and Typhoon Vinta, provides a unique opportunity to investigate what shapes affected communities' concepts, fears and aspirations of dignity, for three reasons. First, it is a complex crisis that involves disasters from natural hazards and armed conflict. The Marawi siege began on 23 May 2017, when the combined forces of M'ranaw 'black flag'-inspired actors, such as Dawlah Islamiyah (popularly known as the Maute Group), the Sulu-led Abu Sayyaf Group and aligned foreign jihadists, attacked the lakeside city, triggering the declaration of martial law and the suspension of the writ of habeas corpus for the whole of Mindanao. Lasting five months, it is the longest-running military campaign since the Marcos dictatorship ended in 1986. Just over two months later, Typhoon Tembin, known locally as Vinta, made

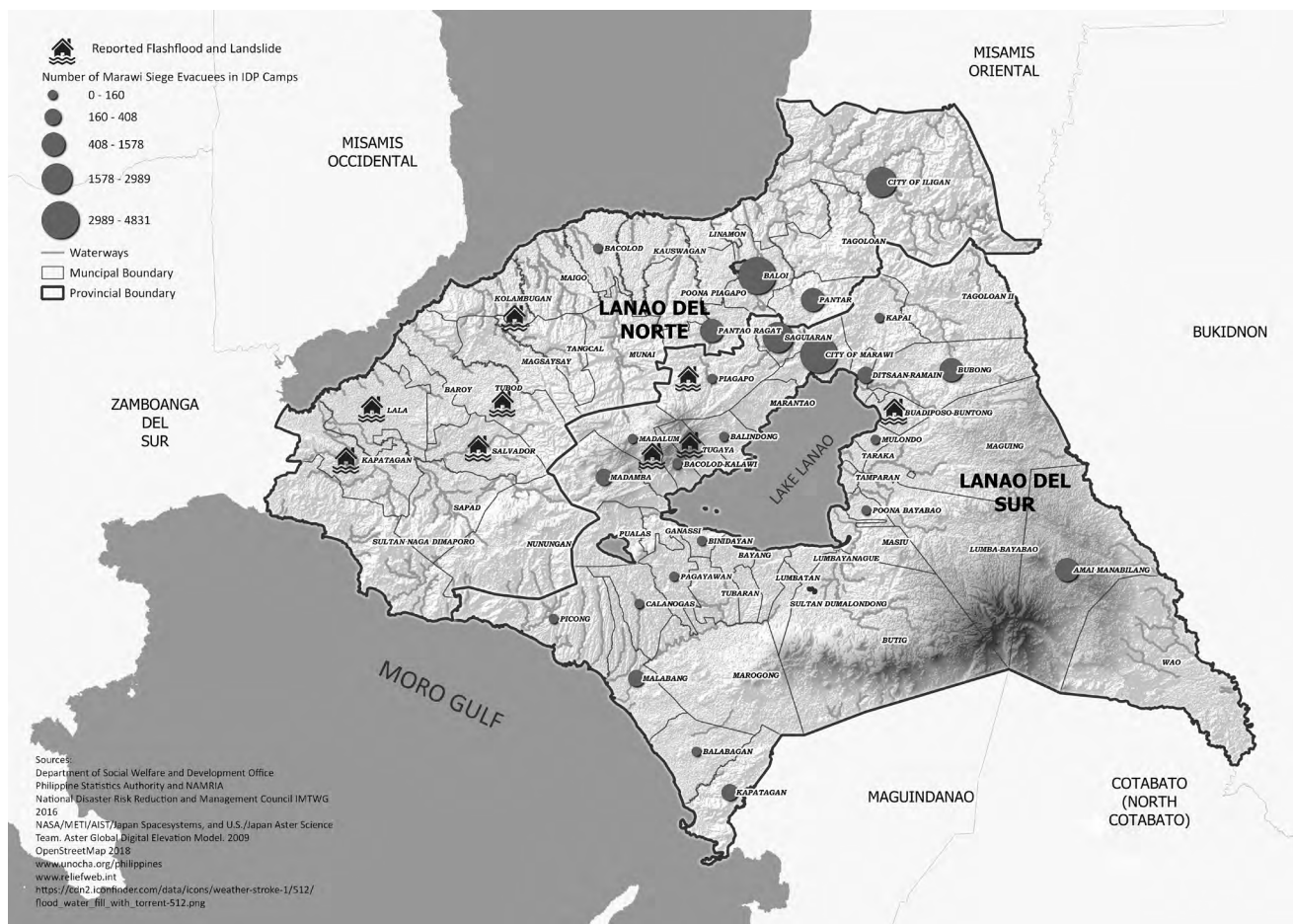
landfall in Cateel, Davao Oriental, and cut a path over Northern Mindanao before exiting at Palawan. It affected 715,000 people, with 138,500 recorded displaced as of 28 December 2017 (OCHA, 2017). High winds, severe flooding and landslides occurred on 22–23 December 2017, flooding evacuation centres and destroying tent shelters. Rockslides hit homes and covered farmland, and already-burdened host communities lost the ability to support their families, let alone displaced relatives and friends.

Second, these events occurred in the only autonomous region in the Philippines, which was created in the context of a subnational conflict driven by a Muslim minority's aspirations for greater self-determination. The ARMM was created under the peace process between the Philippines government and the Moro National Liberation Front and is presently undergoing a transition to a parliamentary system of governance under a 2014 agreement with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front. The M'ranaw people, who make up 92.9% of the population of Marawi City and 96.1% of Lanao del Sur, are one of the thirteen Islamised tribes of Mindanao (Philippine Statistics Authority, 2015). Given that the ARMM is in transition, the degree of institutional complexity makes coordination and service delivery for both humanitarian response and reconstruction even more fraught, particularly given the involvement of violent extremism.

Third, the affected area epitomises the strong relationship and spill-overs between urban and rural communities. The city of Marawi, originally known as Dansalan in recognition of its role as the meeting place for all peoples around Lake Lanao, was largely untouched in the intermittent wars of the last 50 years and so was able to urbanise in ways that its neighbours in the present ARMM could not. Although multiple secondary centres exist, including provincial agro-industry hubs Wao and Malabang, pre-siege Marawi served as the primary driver of economic activity and growth in the area.

Figure 1 illustrates the scale of forced displacement across Northern Mindanao at its height in December 2017, including the path affected by Typhoon Vinta. Most (95–98%) of IDPs (known in the vernacular as *bakwit*, or evacuees) are dispersed in informal, house-based arrangements over Northern Mindanao, making them difficult to track and putting strain on basic services and limited financial resources. Tensions have risen in predominantly Christian areas such as Iligan, where IDPs have been asked to leave. Typhoon Vinta affected areas that hosted Marawi siege IDPs. Although these municipalities were

Figure 1: Areas affected by the Marawi siege and Tembin/Vinta



Note: Official displacement data from December 2017 to January 2018 only reflects the location of IDPs in evacuation centres, not house-based IDPs.

Source: © Wilfredo T. Dizon, Jr., 2018

not directly affected by the siege, they experienced the closure of the primary markets, schools and hospitals in Marawi, as well as additional extensive checkpoints across national and major roads. Many were supporting relatives and friends who had fled the city. In Madalum, one in 10 Vinta-affected families were *doble bakwit* who fled from Marawi only to be displaced again.

4.3 *Maratabat*: an expanded concept of dignity

In this study, dignity was translated into the Tagalog and Cebuano terms '*dignidad*' and '*respeto*'. However, the predominant translation raised by M'ranao respondents was the word *maratabat*, and its related word *pagadatan*. While images of a dignified life were also described in terms of *kapagimutao a kalilintad* (peace) and *kapamagongowa* (respect), *maratabat*, which connotes respect ascribed to a particular rank, status or way of life, was acknowledged by many as

a unifying phrase for dignity that is able to capture its specific connotations in the political, cultural and security context of Marawi.

Taken from the Arabic *martabat* (meaning status or rank), which is translated in the island languages of Tausug and Samal as *mahaltabat* and in mainland Maguindanao as *malatabat*, M'ranao *maratabat* is considered a cultural trait that sets the ethnolinguistic group apart from many of their neighbours. Remier (1976) notes that the M'ranos have taken the concept beyond its Arabic sense and have expanded the meaning from 'rank' to sensitivity about rank, and from 'prestige' to seeking prestige. Adiong (1989) calls *maratabat* one of M'ranao society's defining traits, along with a deep sense of hospitality. Studies also highlight that *maratabat* is not only individual identity, but collective dignity. As a phenomenon arising from M'ranao family relationships, insults and prestige alike are shared by one's extended clan community. *Maratabat* can also serve as the impetus for collective action towards improving the welfare of other members of the clan.

Gujile-Maranda (1995) unpacks the most important concepts related to *maratabat* as being pride, followed by self-image, prestige and honour, as well as shame. She notes, however, that the expressions of these notions are gender-differentiated: female adolescents ‘behave in an extra careful manner in the presence of men to not tarnish their *maratabat*’, while male adolescents ‘would defend their *maratabat* even to the extent of giving up their life for its sake’ (Gujile-Maranda, 1995: 2). Saber et al. (1975) argue *maratabat* manifests in four ways: an ideology, an expression of one’s social position, as a relationship maintained and enforced by families through social cohesion and not a matter of individual choice and as a legal concept under traditional and customary law, which accepts the use of force as a valid means of defending *maratabat*.

Although M’ranaos joke that *maratabat* is the reason why pre-siege Marawi City was covered in tarpaulins proclaiming family members’ academic and cultural achievements, perceived affronts to dignity have serious implications across all aspects of humanitarian response. *Maratabat* is often cited as a reason for most IDPs being house-based – collective pride precludes allowing family members to stay in evacuation centres. Similarly, many affected families initially refused to queue for relief goods and other services because of *maratabat*. Wealthy traders prior to the siege, they left their homes and valuables thinking violence would last no more than three days, and it would damage their dignity to ask for food or other aid alongside others.

The way dignity is interpreted and applied by IDPs has evolved in the year since the siege. The core

narrative is that a dignified response supports or does not detract from one’s *maratabat*, at a time when people are most vulnerable. *Maratabat* is also used as a warning against slipshod aid or reconstruction efforts. Once an affront to personal and communal dignity goes beyond a certain point, aggression or violence is permitted because those who do not challenge the attack upon their personal and communal social role and prestige earn the derogatory label ‘without *maratabat*’ (Disoma, 1982).

4.4 Dignity in the humanitarian response

A consistent message from actors on the ground is that all response, rehabilitation and reconstruction efforts should be informed by community desires and aspirations, as well as local mindsets and cultural practices. Results from existing needs assessments and development plans, and the fieldwork conducted for this study, suggest that *maratabat*’s two dimensions both play a role. Personal dignity covers physical standards of living, safety and security as well as human rights for individuals and their families, similar to broad definitions of dignity in Western humanitarian literature. Communal dignity occurs at various interlocking levels: at the level of the clan, the barangay/municipality/Sultanate one belongs to and the M’ranao ethnolinguistic group, although other respondents also framed answers in terms of the *maratabat* of the Bangsamoro people, or the 13 Islamised tribes of Mindanao, as well as the Islamic *ummah*.

Table 2: Personal and communal needs

Individual and family needs Personal dignity	Clan and community needs Communal dignity
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consistent sources of food (not just canned goods) • Non-food items <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Appropriate clothing, including <i>hijabs</i> – Kitchen materials – cooking pots, pails – Hygiene kits • Access to adequate shelter • Water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) • Personal safety and agency, especially for women and children • Employment opportunities for men • Access to health services and psychosocial support • Right to bury the dead in accordance with custom • Business and livelihood opportunities • Education (Western and Islamic) • Security of land tenure • Freedom of movement under martial law conditions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to markets and reconstruction of traditional <i>padian</i> marketplace • Places for prayer (<i>masajid</i>) • Places to practice traditional chants (<i>bayok</i>) • Access to resources and control of the development process • Space to voice needs and aspirations and build consensus within the community • Representation in selecting projects in difficult circumstances • Ensuring sanctity of clan burial plots • Land: security of tenure and clan ancestral domain (in the context of the M’ranao <i>Pat-a-pangampong-a-Ranao</i>, Lake Lanao, and the proposed Bangsamoro homeland) • Reparations

Table 2 lists respondents' needs for dignified interventions. The divide between personal and collective, immediate response and medium-term reconstruction are largely arbitrary. Genuinely dignity-driven interventions must cover both while allowing for situational shifts over time.

Respondents affected by Typhoon Vinta and the Marawi siege spoke of dignity and assessed the quality of the response with clarity lent by a year's distance from initial displacement. Many older people left millions of pesos in cash in the city, only to have their homes burned or looted. With only three operating banks in the city, all of which are government-owned, more affluent citizens often kept their money in vaults at home – a longstanding practice for traders who require ready cash. Though some homes were left largely intact after the siege and typhoon, successive waves of looting have removed all valuables, including cash, home equipment, heirloom brassware, Qur'ans, passports and irreplaceable centuries-old family genealogies (*tarsila*).

From 1 April to 10 May 2018, the so-called 'Kambisita' programme allowed families from the main affected area (MAA) – the 250-hectare urban core of the city – to visit their homes for the first time since the siege to salvage anything useable before rubble was cleared for reconstruction. Neighbourhoods were divided into quadrants, with each quadrant allowed only three days for visitation. During these visits, residents were emotional but calm, as they moved through rubble and/or looted homes. One respondent framed this in terms of retaining *maratabat*, as any sign of weakness is to lose or diminish one's *maratabat*. 'Nadehado na kami,' he said. 'Hindi mo ako makikitang umiyak.' (We've already lost so much. You will not see me cry.)

Though basic humanitarian issues remain, much attention has focused on the reconstruction of Marawi, which is overseen by the government's Task Force Bangon Marawi, a national coordinative mechanism. Little or no attention has been given to those affected by Vinta, as there was no formal call for support. Official government reports and accounts from communities describe the support provided by government in terms of debris clearance, food packs, and some emergency cash. Selected INGOs provided non-food items and cash-for-work programmes.

4.5 Cultural sensitivity in aid delivery

The mismatch between notions of dignity and what and how support is provided is exacerbated by humanitarian actors' lack of understanding of Islamic and M'ranao beliefs and practices. This ranged from including canned pork products in food deliveries; lack of appropriate clothing such as *hijabs*, *niqabs* or *malongs* in donation packs; or poorly designed temporary and transitory shelters, since women are not supposed to allow non-family members to see them with their hair uncovered.

How aid and services are usually distributed by the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) and other government agencies at evacuation centres is commonly debated, though the majority of IDPs are house-based. Personal and family pride are cited by house-based IDPs as a barrier to receiving aid, as they feel public distributions are not dignified: *Nahibiya kami pumila*. (We are ashamed to line up [for support].) There are also cases, especially outside the ARMM, of people lining up and receiving aid who are not IDPs but indigent members of host communities who were unaffected by the siege. Respondents from government agencies shrug and say that these areas were already impoverished before the siege, so there is no harm in giving canned food and rice to any individuals desperate enough to line up for hours: *Kung sino man naandyan, sila ang mabibigyan*. (If they are in line, we'll give them the aid.)

Transparency over criteria for targeting is also problematic. Many respondents do not understand how these criteria are set, leading to confusion, jealousy and resentment amongst neighbours and relatives. There is confusion, for example, around why renters or those considered as part of the transient population in the MAA are not deemed eligible for housing support, or why some flood victims received immediate food and cash assistance but may not be considered eligible for non-food items and cash-for-work schemes.

The primary instrument used by government for identifying and tracking beneficiaries and services provided is the disaster family access card (DAFAC) issued by the DSWD. However, not all IDPs have been able to access DAFAC cards, and they do not apply to extended families (as Islamic law allows for multiple wives) or single parents. Data is often generated by barangay and municipal government officials, which can be both positive and negative,

including priority access or eligibility for housing projects and seed capital, inclusion of one's home in a no-build zone or potential tagging as a black-flag sympathiser. One respondent, who fled from Marawi only to be displaced again by Vinta in Madalum, noted that he was not automatically given a DAFAC card, since he was not a registered voter in the host municipality, and had to negotiate with the local DSWD to receive one. Although he described 'having to fight for his due' as an 'affront to his dignity', desperation for his family forced him to 'swallow his pride'.

Class differences nuance these responses, with more affluent respondents talking of *maratabat* and blockages to dignity-driven interventions mostly in terms of the 'colonial' relationship between M'ranao people and central government, while more impoverished respondents spoke about their relationship with their local elites. Respondents from more prominent families spoke of *maratabat* in terms of pride – that M'ranaos are usually proud that community practice once forbade intermarriage amongst different tribes – while some (particularly those aligned with non-state revolutionary movements) shunned cash-for-work schemes, saying that they would not voluntarily pick up a shovel when they are already 'used to carrying a gun'.

In contrast, there are anecdotal reports, collected by civil society organisations, of respondents entering employment in Iligan as house help or even prostitution – practices previously unheard of among M'ranaos. Poorer respondents noted that they would prefer to receive materials rather than cash for housing repairs to ensure aid would not be stolen by government officials. The same respondents also said that being forced to subsist on rice, noodles and canned goods for months was not dignified and, since they were not being given cash, they have been selling these items in the market to buy fresh vegetables and fish.

In the context of a Muslim displaced population in a country that is predominantly Christian, lack of cultural sensitivity can lead to discrimination and other abuses, particularly under martial law conditions. Though the national and regional human rights commissions and the Mindanao Humanitarian Team protection cluster have been recording cases of rape, looting, harassment and other human rights violations, few formal complaints have been filed. Some respondents link this to not wanting to tarnish

their *maratabat*, with one explaining that M'ranaos do not like confrontation and would rather settle issues informally instead of through legal proceedings.

4.6 Self-determination as a crucial part of dignity

A key message expressed in the FGDs is that dignity requires meaningful representation and participation in response and reconstruction – or in the words of a civil society leader, 'No development for us, without us'. This should not be limited to the usual community consultations but should aspire towards tapping into the vast experience and expertise within Marawi and M'ranao society itself in the design of plans, programmes and activities. This points to an aspect of dignity in humanitarian response that is not often highlighted, which is ensuring that affected communities retain a sense of safety and control of access to resources, information and decision-making. At a minimum, this means being able to hold space for people to voice their needs and aspirations, consistent with the Islamic principle of *shuura*, or consultation. One respondent, a M'ranao civil society leader, used coffee to illustrate the role of *maratabat* in humanitarian aid:

You can offer [fancy, name-brand coffee], but if the person doesn't know what it is, or doesn't like, know, or trust you, he won't take it. The other way is to ask, hey, wouldn't it be nice to have some coffee? And then when he agrees, maybe he'll be excited enough to try to find some for the both of you himself. M'ranaos are like that. It could be three-in-one, it could be the cheapest brew we can afford. But we'll drink it, and we'll share it with you. But you have to let him find it.

The call for meaningful participation in decision-making covers all aspects of humanitarian aid, but for Marawi, the loudest message for dignified treatment has been related to development. Land ownership, tenure and use in the region is complex, and conflicts over land were prevalent even prior to the siege (Fernandez et al., 2018). Landowners from MAA fear that the reconstruction process will trigger a process of dispossession, leading many residents to spray-paint their names over the ruins of their homes during the *Kambisita*.

4.7 Managing frustrations, maintaining dignity

The long-drawn-out and repetitive nature of displacement contributes to rising frustrations, with respondents likening their year of various indignities as a third disaster. Evacuation centres are often located in far-flung areas without access to basic services – or worse, are in areas prone to flooding, landslides and earthquakes. For example, a Christian woman was staying in an evacuation site in Balo-i, Lanao del Norte, when Vinta hit. Located in a low-lying plain, all tents were destroyed by floods and wind, and IDP families were moved to nearby basketball courts. She said she felt sorry that her children had to be evacuated twice – once from their home and again from the evacuation centre – and on Christmas Day.

Similar issues have been experienced in both temporary and transitory sites in Sagonsongan, Marawi City, which are adjacent to a faultline. Reports from the Mindanao Humanitarian Team WASH cluster highlight insufficient access to potable and domestic water for both permanent and transitory sites, as well as areas in the city where people have returned. Families in Sagonsongan report being unable to bathe for up to three days at a time – a particularly undignified situation given that Islamic practice requires multiple daily ablutions. This situation has been compounded by leaking latrines, which are not adequately water-sealed, causing waste to leak into the surrounding soil of the transitory site. With the onset of monsoon season, there are fears that the runoff will taint the city's water supply, given its proximity to Lake Lanao. A key word used by Sagonsongan respondents in conjunction with *maratabat* is the Islamic principle of *sabr*, which is variously translated as patience, perseverance, or persistence in the face of adverse conditions. Another frequently used term was *astaghfirullah* – seeking forgiveness from God for thoughts of anger and pain.

Mental health is also an issue for IDPs. With the disconnect between long-held notions of dignity and the realities required for survival, there are numerous reports of people in mental and emotional distress. One respondent, a *madrasah* teacher, shared that her teenage daughter has refused to leave their room in the new host community for months. Another respondent's seven-year-old son, who survived the siege and was rescued from the Vinta flooding that claimed his grandmother's life, still shakes in fear when it rains.

4.8 Recommendations and best practices

Ensuring community dignity in a complex crisis such as that experienced after the Marawi siege and Typhoon Vinta requires moving away from traditional top-down management approaches. Instead, a more collaborative environment that sees residents not only as passive beneficiaries to be placated, but also as experts in their own right, is needed. The hybrid nature of the dual crisis requires that (as much as possible) dignified interventions are programmed across sectors, platforms and scales, and not limited by the usual institutional or sectoral silos. Finally, national and international support should build the capacities of local, provincial and regional agencies without supplanting them – respecting both individual and communal *maratabat*.

Many residents, however, maintain a mistrust of local government officials, citing elite capture and corruption as a serious barrier to dignified aid, and preferring to receive assistance from international and local NGOs. Notable projects from local NGOs and groups include:

- Shelter projects that support IDPs where they are, on their own terms.
- Halal food kitchens run with M'ranao and Muslim cooks and the building of food gardens in transitional shelter sites and schools.
- Support for women- and child-friendly spaces, including items needed by nursing mothers, such as donated breastmilk, diapers, *malongs* and *hijabs*.
- Culture-sensitive psychosocial support.
- Community-based disaster risk reduction processes, including early warning systems and local flood maps that ensure that evacuation centres are not placed in hazard-prone areas. While these were piloted in Iligan City after Severe Tropical Storm Washi in 2011 (known locally as Tropical Storm Sendong), a harmonised system for both natural and man-made disasters in urban areas has yet to be operationalised.
- Interfaith platforms such as Duyog Marawi, a social action initiative led by the Catholic prelatry of Marawi to support the rehabilitation and reconstruction of the city by bridging the gap between M'ranaos and Christians.
- Informal homegrown Islamic microfinance initiatives providing small infusions for already-skilled businessmen, artisans and weavers, supplying them with seed capital and marketing

support instead of teaching new livelihood skills that IDPs may not necessarily be suited for, or have no ready market to absorb the products they make.

Local concepts of dignity should inform the selection, design and management of physical spaces. This includes temporary and transitional shelter sites, as well as transparent, participatory and locally led decision-making at community and sub-regional scales. Ensuring a consistent two-way flow of information between government and the governed will help to ensure that the implementation of major plans are aligned to people's needs and aspirations. At a minimum, an 'acceptable-enough' consensus should be decided upon and implemented in a transparent and culturally sensitive fashion, supported by safe spaces to express sentiments, with opportunities for locals to lead.

Other well-meaning policies, if not balanced against societal norms, can generate unplanned outcomes. Though global humanitarian practices often underscore the role of women and girls, the conflict literature advocates for ensuring opportunities for young men. An unpublished Mindanao Humanitarian Team gender report from June 2018 describes how donor policies encouraging more women to receive aid and participate in livelihood programmes (i.e. cash-for-work) have led to the

partial tarnishing of men's *maratabat* as heads of households. This has also led to women having to perform both productive and reproductive roles – resulting in multiple burdens for women. As a result, men have become disengaged in these processes and are more vulnerable to recruitment by extremist groups.

Nevertheless, no humanitarian and reconstruction effort can be perfect, and the understanding and practice of dignity is often negotiated between community members, civil society, international development organisations and government actors at local, regional and national scales. The challenge for humanitarian actors is to expand and nuance how dignity is operationalised, based on the specific political, economic and cultural context and knowledge practices of the area, including: strong communal (clan and ethnolinguistic) identity, Islamic and other traditional principles and practices, class and gender stratification and aspirations for meaningful autonomy. Efforts should also be made to facilitate processes to allow local actors to transcend the negative use of *maratabat* where it fuels political rifts and condones clannishness and corruption. It will take decades for Marawi and the surrounding areas to return to pre-siege levels of economic and social equilibrium, but by balancing the two sides of dignity, one can hope for more productive response processes and recovery outcomes.

5 Dignity in humanitarian action: reflections of South Sudanese forced migrants

Leben Moro

Humanitarian organisations carry out their operations on the premise that those affected by natural or man-made disasters have ‘the right to life with dignity and, therefore, the right to assistance’ (Sphere Project, 2018). This study examines the experiences of South Sudanese forced migrants (refugees and IDPs) as recipients of humanitarian assistance. It found that, while assistance saves lives and alleviates suffering, it does not necessarily enable recipients to fully enjoy human rights and regain their dignity, mainly because of the type and level of assistance provided and the way it is managed. Often, the kinds of assistance that refugees or IDPs receive, or the ways in which it is provided, do not make recipients feel respected or that their dignity is considered. Admittedly, refugees and IDPs have significant differences, but they generally have much in common in their interactions with aid givers. In fact, the circumstances of some IDPs, such as the thousands of individuals on bases of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), are no different, and sometimes in a worse situation, than those of many refugees.

5.1 Methodology

The study is based on interviews and discussions with South Sudanese displaced persons over several decades. In the 1990s, while a refugee in Egypt, I carried out research into the socioeconomic situations of Southern Sudanese refugees in Egypt, Kenya and Uganda, as well as IDPs in rebel-controlled parts of what was then a unified Sudan (see Sudan Cultural Digest Project (1998) and Moro (2004) for the resulting publications). In June 2018, I returned to Uganda, where my siblings and other close relatives had become refugees for the second time, to interview refugees from Kajokeji (in the present Yei River State of South Sudan) living in Kampala, Bwelye in the centre of Uganda and Palorinya in the north.

Face-to-face or telephone interviews were carried out with 25 key informants in Juba and Uganda. The interviews lasted approximately one hour and concentrated on interviewees’ flights from their places of origin; settlement in new areas and their struggles to eke out a living; relations with aid givers, government authorities and host communities; and how it felt to become a recipient of aid. Additionally, FGDs were held with youth, local leaders, traders and church leaders in Palorinya on these issues. Observations of the activities of humanitarian organisations and refugees were also undertaken in Palorinya. Other discussions were conducted with South Sudanese via email, yielding interesting views on humanitarian assistance and dignity.

5.2 Displacement context in and stemming from South Sudan

South Sudanese have suffered for decades due to war, displacement and the pain associated with return. The first war began in 1955, months before Sudan gained its independence, and lasted for 17 years, during which multitudes were uprooted from their homes and forced to rely on the generosity of others. There was relative peace between 1972 and 1982, enabling the return of refugees and IDPs. In 1983, the war resumed and lasted until 2005, when the Comprehensive Peace Agreement was concluded by the rebel movement, the Sudan People’s Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A) and the Sudanese government. This war was particularly brutal, with rampant summary killings, torture, rapes, use of food as a weapon of war, destruction of basic facilities and degrading treatment of civilians.

Amid hostilities, the United Nations (UN) organised a huge humanitarian effort, Operation Lifeline Sudan,

which delivered assistance to those trapped in war zones. Millions sought security in other countries or in IDP camps in northern Sudan, manned by government security forces. The organisations supporting those in these camps were often coerced or manipulated by government authorities to provide services that should have been provided by the state. South Sudanese, and northern Sudanese considered enemies by the regime, were subjected to legally prescribed torture and cruel and other inhumane and degrading treatment under Islamic or Shari'a laws. Many were whipped after show trials for acts such as alcohol consumption⁵ and their rights and dignity were largely ignored. The brutality of Sudanese regime forces in Darfur, where millions were killed or displaced, led to the indictment of President Omar al-Bashir on 4 February 2009 by the International Criminal Court. He became the first sitting head of state to be issued with an arrest warrant by the Hague-based tribunal.

In 2011, Sudan was divided into two separate states. The young South Sudanese state quickly descended into a violent conflict in December 2013, which continues despite efforts by the Intergovernmental Authority on Development and global powers to restore peace to the country. This ongoing war, which has ethnic overtones, is no less brutal than previous conflicts. When it erupted, thousands of Nuer civilians in Juba were murdered, tortured, raped and subjected to other inhumane, cruel and degrading treatment by Dinka elements in the security organs. Survivors were offered protection by UNMISS and currently remain in Protection of Civilians Sites (PoCs) – locations on UNMISS bases in Juba and other places where civilians took refuge. Thus, Juba was ethnically cleansed of Nuer (African Union Commission of Inquiry on South Sudan, 2014). Nuer fighters retaliated against Dinka civilians in kind, and violence spiralled in all directions, forcing civilians to flee.

At the end of 2017, the number of IDPs in the country reached 1,903,953 and that of 'persons of concern' to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)⁶ to 2,203,145 – a large proportion of the population for a country that counted eight million residents in its last census in 2008 (UNHCR, 2018b). In 2018, UNHCR appealed for slightly over \$1.5 billion to support refugees and other 'persons of concern' in the countries

bordering South Sudan (UNHCR, 2018a). Many IDPs, including those living in PoCs in refugee-like conditions, are unable to cater for their basic needs and depend on humanitarian assistance.

5.3 Dignity in South Sudan

The South Sudanese do not have an agreed-upon understanding of dignity. This is to be expected as they belong to myriad ethnic and social groups with differing cultures and many languages. Even members of a single ethnic group do not necessarily agree on a definition of the term since clan and other differences often exist among them. For example, individuals from a relatively small ethnic group, Kuku of Kajokeji, most of whom are now refugees in Palorinya and other camps in Northern Uganda, do not have a single shared understanding of dignity. During a recent email discussion, some thought it referred to *ruwan* as in *ngutu lo kode na ruruwan*, or somebody who is a 'VIP or a dignitary', a meaning similar to the early definition apparent in Western societies before the Second World War (Debes, 2018). Most, however, argued that it meant *twöit* or *kuga na 'borik*, or self-respect or respect by others. One person elaborated that the Kuku would say *twane a lomeri ko kuga na 'borik*, or 'Better to die poor, but with dignity or respect'. Thus, the idea of dignity is used interchangeably with, or is at least closely associated with, the idea of respect. However, it is worth noting that respect is not equally accorded to all. Often age, gender and other factors decide what kind of respect or dignity is accorded to whom.

Even without a single definition of dignity, refugees and IDPs do not always feel that the actions of aid workers enhance their dignity. For many refugees the experience of fleeing their land in search of sanctuary in a country that is not their own is felt as a loss of dignity, which can be either compounded or lessened by the treatment they receive from aid workers, local people and host states. Professor Taban lo Liyong evoked the plight of his own kin from Kajokeji who had fled to Uganda in a piece for a newspaper in South Sudan as follows:

Where have the former proud Southerners gone? People who have experienced shame of homelessness? ... Never again, they had sworn,

5 Whipping of people is considered acceptable under Shari'a law but is regarded as torture under the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman and Degrading Treatment or Punishment (UNCAT).

6 UNHCR's 'persons of concern' comprises: refugees, people in refugee-like situations, returnees, IDPs, asylum-seekers, stateless persons and other persons of concern.

shall we go out into exile after they had won independence from the Arabs? ... They are all in exile. Again, in their millions ... the land is becoming bush. The mangoes of Kajokeji are now feeding monkeys and birds. The people are in refugee camps abroad, suffering the indignity of being called refugees, landless people (Iyong, 2018: 6).

The sense of loss of dignity may be lessened if assistance is provided in a good way, particularly if it is mindful of the opinions, concerns and sensibilities of recipients, though this is often not the case. Using the seminal work of Marcel Mauss on gift and obligation, Harrell-Bond argued 20 years ago that inappropriate aid makes refugees feel ‘humiliated, degraded, shamed, disgraced’ (Harrell-Bond, 1999: 142). Other scholars, such as Mamdani (2011), have claimed that recipients of aid are often treated like children by their helpers. Thus, instead of enhancing the dignity of refugees, the manner in which aid is provided can foster a loss of dignity.

Despite the concerns expressed above, humanitarian organisations have saved lives and alleviated suffering, and in some cases their actions enable refugees to regain dignity and respect, as will be shown below.

5.4 Satisfaction or dissatisfaction with assistance management

South Sudanese refugees in Northern Uganda have encountered some of these difficulties in how assistance is managed. In interviews with refugees, it became apparent that they were totally unprepared for what awaited them once they had fled their homes. One young man said their departure happened in an ‘unexpected way, and we found ourselves in Zone II of Palorinya camp in Moyo district’. He and many others had fled to the same part of Uganda in the 1990s and early 2000s, where they were hosted in Olijji and other camps. At this time, they generally felt that humanitarians had taken good care of them and acted in respectful and dignified ways. In their current displacement, refugees complained about many things, such as counting and labelling, disempowerment and disorganisation, restricted access to land and forest resources, unmet expectations and challenging relationships with the host community – all of which impact their dignity. In this situation, refugees struggle to earn their livelihoods, as assistance is inadequate – a typical feature of camps. As critics have pointed out, ‘It is not that camps drain people’s desire to work,

but rather that they severely limit their opportunity to work’ (Cooper-Knock and Long, 2018: 57).

5.4.1 Humiliation associated with counting and labelling

Government authorities and humanitarian organisations count refugees to gain reliable information, so they can plan and implement refugee assistance programmes; yet, it is often challenging to do this in a timely and dignified manner. In Palorinya camp in June 2018, registration of refugees was underway using a biometric system, prompted by allegations that government officials had been inflating refugee numbers to extract personal benefits. Four officials, including a registration officer from the Office of the Prime Minister (the government department overseeing refugee matters in the country), had reportedly been suspended from their jobs following ‘a complaint of gross abuse of South Sudanese refugees in Ugandan camps by the United Nations’ (Agence de Presse Africaine, 2018).

Refugees refer to the places where registration happens as ‘biometric’, from the name of the system used for capturing fingerprints. In Zone I of Palorinya camp, long queues of refugees waited under a tree to be registered and have their fingerprints captured, some of whom sat on the ground during the long wait. There was one queue for men and another for women, with refugee helpers on hand to provide information and support. Waiting in line was felt by some to be humiliating and demeaning, especially for older people who had been treated with respect back home. All were labelled ‘refugees’ – a term often used to connote a helpless person, dependent on the support of others and lacking agency.

5.4.2 Perils of disempowerment and disorganisation

Refugee programming often does not adequately involve beneficiaries, fostering a feeling of disempowerment. After registration, refugees are given cards that entitle them to some freedom of movement and humanitarian assistance. They have no part in decisions on what assistance is provided, when it is delivered or how it is allocated. One refugee complained: ‘It is hard to gain sustainable livelihoods here. Food distribution is not in order. People line up for food the whole day, and sometimes get it the following day. It is particularly hard for pregnant women’. Aid is distributed by Ugandans and so refugees are not involved in the management of the distribution and feel disempowered and humiliated. Young people in Zone II of the Palorinya camp in different stages of education voiced their

frustration particularly strongly. Officials in the administration of the aid programme seem not to be concerned that these young people deserve to be treated well and with dignity.

Refugees in Palorinya camp often complained about harsh or unreasonable actions by the police and local authorities. In particular, the police and tax authorities are accused of intruding into the camps to arrest people for committing minor crimes and imposing unaffordable taxes on people doing business within the camp. While the police are welcomed by refugees to deal with serious crimes, such as homicide and serious security situations, refugees felt that some cases could be dealt with more effectively if they could organise and use the service of chiefs and other leaders amongst them, because of experience and cultural sensitivity.

This recommendation is based on the experience of South Sudanese refugees in Uganda in the 1990s and early 2000s. Locally elected bodies called Refugee Welfare Committees played an active part in refugee affairs, including food distribution, and refugees felt they were being treated with dignity. These committees, including representatives from women, youth and other often marginalised groups, were empowered to deal with disputes between family members, troublesome youth and other minor problems. The committees also organised refugees to work on educational and other projects, making them feel that they had dignity and were not only subservient recipients of assistance.

Officials from the Office of the Prime Minister have begun putting in place local structures in the camps, but the refugees elected or appointed to manage them do not feel empowered to carry out their responsibilities, since cases of minor disputes still tend to be handled by nationals instead of the elected or appointed refugee representatives.

5.4.3 Restricted access to land and forest resources

Some humanitarian organisations and individuals claim that when refugees receive aid for a long period of time they are likely to become dependent on assistance and reluctant to work (Harvey and Lind, 2015; Easton-Calabria and Omata, 2018). In Palorinya, refugees often counter this argument by noting that the reason for their dependency is that the government has not allocated them agricultural land. They reiterate that refugees need land to grow crops. For example, an elderly former law enforcement officer in Kajokeji explained that a Kuku wants to

ngingira, or sweat, and later enjoy the fruits of his or her labour, which is the source of his or her dignity and respect by others. By contrast, having to rely on others undermines their dignity.

Disputes with locals over access to forest products, especially charcoal, poles and grass, lead to feelings of disappointment for refugees. In Morobi, a part of Zone II of Palorinya camp, some wondered how they would survive without access to firewood for cooking and poles for building huts to replace the deteriorating tents. Problems connected with firewood can lead to more serious problems: in South Sudan, IDPs have suffered horrendous abuses while collecting firewood. For instance, women forced into PoCs there frequently risk rape whenever they go to collect firewood. Many refugees have been subjected to humiliating treatment by the host community because of ownership disputes over resources. A young refugee explained that ‘some of our women were beaten while out in the forest, and some husbands armed themselves with bows and arrows and provided escorts whenever their wives went out to gather firewood’. This treatment is a constant reminder of foreignness, limited rights and lack of dignity in the new environment.

5.4.4 Challenging forced migrant–host relations

Relations between refugees and their hosts are often tense, sometimes because of past hostilities, leaving refugees feeling unwelcome and undignified. In some cases, host communities are intent on punishing new arrivals rather than supporting them. For example, the Madi from the Moyo district of Uganda fought the Kuku over their shared border, resulting in deaths; yet, shortly after this, the Kuku had to flee for relatively safer places in Uganda. They found it difficult to settle in parts of Moyo inhabited by those they had previously fought, and instead went to areas in Adjumani, where they maintained good relations with the local Madi there. Others went to places in Moyo inhabited by the Reli and Gimara people, who are closely related with the Kuku and not Madi.

A similar situation affected Nuer and Dinka refugees in Moyo district in the 1990s and early 2000s. Refugees belonging to both groups, who were fighting each other in Sudan due to the split of the SPLM/A in 1991, received a hostile reception from their respective host communities and fellow refugees from other ethnic groups (Moro, 2004). They were hated due to the misbehaviour of SPLA soldiers and therefore did not receive sympathy or respect. However, the Church of Uganda welcomed them and gave them land, thus making them feel that their dignity as human beings was respected.

In Egypt, South Sudanese also faced challenges in their dealings with local people, who had undisguised racism against people with black skin and open xenophobia. Refugees were called bad names, such as *samara*, or black, and *cholata*, or chocolates, because of their dark complexion (Miranda, 2018: 21). Occasionally, they were exposed to violence at home or on the street, which typically went ignored by law enforcement agencies. Thus, the relationship with the host community and its treatment of South Sudanese refugees undermines their humanity and dignity.

5.4.5 Unmet expectations for quality assistance

Dignity was also mentioned among concerns for the type and quantity of food, water and shelter provided to refugees, which most claim is inadequate, as well as provision of services. This negatively impacts refugees' view of themselves and the humanitarians supporting them. Some refugees feel that assistance degrades them. A former chief in Kajokeji explained:

I am a chief, but look at the hut I sleep in. It is being destroyed by termites. At night, the soil and grass fall all over me. How can I feel that I am somebody here? I had a good house back home, with iron sheets on the roof. Now look at this situation. It is the first time for me to be in this situation, and I never wanted to come to this place.

The camps also lack educational opportunities, which affected refugees' dignity. Many youth in Morobi are utterly downcast about their future. For those with limited resources, the chances of continuing their education are nearly non-existent as scholarships are not available, unlike in the 1990s and early 2000s when refugees benefitted from scholarships offered by UNHCR and other aid organisations. According to many refugees, the lack of opportunities for education beyond primary school, coupled with poverty, forced some youth into antisocial activities, such as illegal gangs, consequently leading them to prison. Some youth who sought opportunities in Kampala and other urban areas found life equally unpalatable. Adolescent refugee youth in urban areas of Uganda reportedly face rampant discrimination, with serious mental health implications (Stark et al., 2015). They do not feel that their dignity is respected.

Inadequate assistance can result in negative consequences for the dignity of female refugees. For example, in the 1990s, a Ugandan newspaper published a picture of a refugee with flies hovering around her because of her lack of resources to manage menstruation (Sudan Cultural Digest Project, 1998: 33). At that time, a refugee woman in a camp called Mireiyi

said women felt a loss of dignity and humiliation because of their inability to cover themselves properly. Humanitarian organisations responded by distributing sanitary materials or dignity kits to women refugees. Though well intentioned, initially these were distributed alongside food items, which women found embarrassing because men and children were present. A change of distribution modality was subsequently adopted, and the sanitary kits were distributed separately by women, which was accepted as appropriate and more upholding of recipients' dignity.

5.5 Conclusions and recommendations

Many South Sudanese have been or continue to be IDPs or refugees. Like many forced migrants, they have received support from humanitarian organisations, whose activities aim to restore or maintain the dignity of aid recipients. In the case of South Sudanese in Uganda, the study argues that while assistance saves lives and alleviates suffering, it does not necessarily lead recipients to regain dignity or respect.

Many South Sudanese refugees feel their dignity is undermined in displacement due to weaknesses in the way aid is delivered or difficult relations with host communities. Refugees feel humiliated by having to wait in registration and aid queues for long periods of time and by being indiscriminately labelled as refugees, which often signifies their helplessness and dependence on others. Instead of continuing, new systems could be trialled, such as giving those waiting to be registered appointment blocks, to minimise queuing. Refugees should also be asked their opinions on the refugee label, and more education of local populations on refugee rights could help counteract the negative stigma currently associated with the term.

To uphold the dignity of displaced South Sudanese, refugees should be allowed to organise freely to mitigate their feelings of disempowerment. They should be given access to adequate land and forest products to become self-reliant as many felt that prolonged dependence on others undermines their dignity and promulgates difficult relations with host communities that hurt the confidence of refugees and leads to xenophobia and stigmatisation. Finally, humanitarian agencies should do more to understand refugees' expectations for food, shelter and education and explain when these expectations cannot be met and why. Otherwise, unmet expectations are equated with undignified treatment, even though humanitarian organisations are trying to help.

6 Conclusion

Kerrie Holloway

Dignity, across time and tradition, has many different meanings and associations, including religious connotations, agency and as an inviolable right (Holloway and Grandi, 2018); the concept's ambiguous definition and various understandings are highlighted in the four studies presented here. Even when dignity has similar conceptualisations in different contexts, the influencing factors and their realisations differ, as seen in these studies. In Afghanistan, for example, dignity and honour are used interchangeably, and life without dignity is thought to be meaningless. This conceptualisation, however, also represents the least cohesive understanding of dignity presented here, with interviewees linking dignity with respect, prestige, wealth and education based on factors such as socioeconomic status and cultural background. In Marawi, Philippines, dignity is most closely associated with rank, honour and prestige, which can be incompatible with a traditional humanitarian response. For example, rather than live in shelters provided by the humanitarian community or the government, the majority of IDPs live in homes with friends and families to protect their family's honour. In Colombia and South Sudan, being labelled as displaced leads to a loss of dignity. Dignity in Colombia is paradoxically upheld and undermined by the state: IDPs are given a categorisation and recourse to rights and a letter of dignity recognises their condition and their dignity, name and honour; yet, this label undermines dignity and brings discrimination from other Colombians who view them as having contributed to their own displacement. For the Kuku people of South Sudan, dignity is most commonly linked to self-respect and mutual respect, and most felt they had lost dignity when displaced to Uganda, Egypt and other countries because the 'refugee' label did not afford them respect from others.

One common thread running through all four studies is the link between dignity and agency. In the acute, emergency crisis of the recent double displacement following the Marawi siege and Typhoon Tembin, Ica Fernandez highlights self-determination as a crucial element of dignity, requiring meaningful representation and participation in response and reconstruction in the Philippines. In the other three more protracted

crises, agency was linked to self-sufficiency and the ability to provide for one's family. Leben Moro argues that displaced South Sudanese should be given access to adequate land and forest products to become self-reliant, as many felt that prolonged dependence on others undermines their dignity. Similarly, in Colombia, Gloria Miranda notes how internally displaced men often link dignity with self-sufficiency and the possibility of providing and making decisions for the family, and in Afghanistan, Wali Kandiwali ties the dignity of refugees, returnees and IDPs to employment, income and wealth.

Dignity has also been described as both individual and collective (Holloway and Grandi, 2018). Individual dignity is inward-looking, relating to the inner mental and emotional sphere, and how one sees oneself. Collective dignity is outward-looking, relating to a person's social and relational identity, and how others perceive that person. In this volume, Fernandez's study on the Philippines is the clearest example of dignity's duality. Here, personal dignity was seen in the individual and family, or pride, whereas social dignity related to the clan and community, or prestige. Similarly, Miranda's study on Colombia demonstrates how Colombian IDPs conceptualise dignity as one's reputation, honour and good name – their internal identity – as well as the reputation, honour and good name of their family members – their collective dignity.

6.1 Dignity and humanitarian action

All four studies speak of the importance of respect to one's dignity and emphasise that how humanitarian workers treat the displaced is just as, if not more, important than the aid they provide. Although the humanitarian sector often attempts to uphold dignity in displacement, based on the four studies presented here, their efforts often fall short, due to their own shortcomings and external constraints that are beyond their control. In Afghanistan, the interviewed returned refugees and IDPs stated that

the humanitarian response undermined their dignity because distributions were disorganised, run by staff who were rude or mistreated them and provided culturally or environmentally inappropriate materials. Likewise, interviewed displaced South Sudanese mentioned endless counting and labelling, disorganised distributions and unmet expectations for the assistance provided as the main ways their dignity was undermined. IDPs in Colombia claimed their dignity was not upheld when they were accused of causing their own displacement, treated as infants or objects and unable to shape their own future. Lastly, in the Philippines, those who had been doubly displaced felt their dignity was undermined in the humanitarian response through culturally insensitive aid and exclusion from the decision-making process.

Thus, the humanitarian community can and should do more to make the response to displacement more dignified. Overall, these studies call for responses that are more culturally sensitive – both in the type of materials that are distributed and the way they are distributed – and more transparency in selection criteria and why expectations in aid levels cannot be met. This requires more research at the beginning of the response into what is culturally appropriate and necessary, as well as ongoing communication with the affected community throughout the response so that they can participate in decisions regarding the response. Moreover, accurate information about conditions back home should be provided to the displaced to allow them to make decisions about their lives and their future. As mentioned in the Colombia study, the displaced should be treated as adults, and allowed to make informed decisions about their own future if dignity is to be maintained in displacement.

6.2 Dignity and locally led responses

Finally, this project's initial hypothesis – that local humanitarian actors are inherently better than their international counterparts at knowing what local communities need and want and are better equipped to provide a more dignified response – is not borne out by this collection. In the Afghanistan study, Kandiwal notes that respondents could not distinguish between national and international, or humanitarian and development, organisations, and thus could not determine who promoted their dignity better. Miranda highlights both positive and negative aspects of both local and international organisations in Colombia, stating that international actors are less swayed by bias and sectarianism, whereas local organisations are more in touch with people's ideas of dignity, but more likely to be corrupt due to their lower salaries. In the Philippines, Fernandez describes a mismatch between notions of dignity and what and how support is provided by international non-governmental organisations (INGOs), who may not understand Islamic and M'ranao beliefs and practices, while also showing how local government agencies also implement undignified practices. Lastly, Moro identifies local hostilities that lead to the undermining of the dignity of displaced South Sudanese, where tensions over resources have led to increasing racism and xenophobia. As exemplified by the other case studies for this project, tensions within the host community need to be considered carefully when shifting power to locally led organisations (Holloway, 2018).

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