**Digni**

# Background

*Human dignity* is the overall goal for all development assistance projects in Digni. For Digni, the concept of human dignity is rooted in the belief that every human being is created in the image of God, with equal worth and value, and are meant to experience a life in its fullness.

However, all over the world human dignity is violated through extreme poverty, discrimination, power abuse and neglect for basic human rights. Human rights represent key basic human freedoms essential for every person's wellbeing and human dignity. Such freedoms encompass among others: the right to life, health and well-being; security and peace; education; economic and material security; environmental responsibility, participation and organization, freedom of thought and belief, etc.

In Digni's understanding, *poverty* is a fundamental cause of human dignity violations. Moreover, poverty is not only about lack of resources, but also lack of security, social exclusion and a denial of choices, opportunities, and lack of basic capacity to participate effectively and meaningfully in society as individuals or as a group.

Many of the target groups/communities in Digni projects are acutely aware of their lack of voice, power, and independence, which subject them to exploitation and discrimination and being treated without respect and dignity. Their poverty leaves them vulnerable to rudeness, humiliation, and inhumane treatment and violence.

The lack of physical, human, social, and environmental assets leaves citizens vulnerable and exposed to risks. The change we want to achieve involves transitioning from a *situation of poverty* to a situation where *empowered communities and individuals live in dignity.*

Iflack of power and unequal discriminatory social relations are fundamental dimensions and root causes of poverty, the *empowerment* of people living in poverty becomes crucial for upholding their human dignity. Seeking to empower and engage the poor and marginalized to improve their quality of life and wellbeing, challenge power-holders, address discriminatory societal structures and norms, unequal social relations and practices, becomes essential. Empowerment of individuals and groups is thus both the mean and the goal for experiencing a life in dignity. Hence, measuring and tracking changes in empowerment in the projects, both as a process as well as a final outcome of development, becomes important for estimating changes in the human dignity situation.

## Defining empowerment

The concept and definition of empowerment is dependent upon different socio-cultural and political contexts and is shaped by beliefs and value systems. Still, most definitions suggest that empowerment

is the process of gaining *power over decisions and resources.*

**Examples of definitions of empowerment:**

"Empowerment involves challenging the forms of oppression which compel millions of people to play a part in their society on terms which are inequitable, or in ways which deny their human rights" (Oxfam, 1995)

"Empowerment is a multi-dimensional social process that helps people gain control over their own lives" (Page and Czuba, 1999)

"The process through which those who are currently disadvantaged achieve equal rights, resources and power" (Mayoux, 2008)

The UK Government communities' website states, "Community empowerment is about people and government, working together to make life better. It involves more people being able to influence decisions about their communities, and more people taking responsibility for tackling social problems, rather than expecting others to" [(http://communities.gov.uk/communities/](http://communities.gov.uk/communities/))

"The expansion of assets and capabilities of poor people to participate in, negotiate with, influence, control and hold accountable institutions that affect their lives" (World Bank Sourcebook on Empowerment, 2002)

Digni will use a definition of empowerment conceptualized by Naila Kabeer1, which summarizes well the core elements of the concept as well as making it operational and measurable. Kabeer points to three fundamental dimensions of empowerment, defining empowerment as *"the expansion in people's ability to make strategic life choices where this ability was previously denied them. Changes in the ability to exercise choice in order "to live the life one values" involve three inter-dependent dimensions":*

I. *Resources* - the conditions under which choices are made (being)

1. *Agency* - the process /power by which choices are made (doing)
2. *Achievements* - the outcomes of choices, i.e. the outcome of a person's resources and agency (capability)

1 Resources, Agency, Achievements: Reflections on the Measurement of Women's Empowerment by Naila Kabeer, published in Discussing Women's Empowerment - Theory and Practice, Sida Studies nr 3, 2001.

*The three dimensions of empowerment may be expressed as follows:*

**RESOURCES**

Conditions (being)

**ACHIEVEMENTS**

Outcomes (capabil1ity)

**AGENCY**

Process/power (doing)

**Resources** are material, human and social and they influence the ability to exercise choice.

* + *Tangible and intangible material resources* include for example money, food, house, land, human rights, policies, etc.
  + *Human resources* include for example health, education, knowledge, health, skills, creativity, imagination, etc.
  + *Social resources* include for example relationships, networks, connections, traditions, norms that will support/impede the individual or group to improve the situation.

Resources are distributed through a variety of different institutions and processes and access to resources will be determined by the rules, norms and practices which prevail in different institutions (e.g. familial norms, patron-client relationships, informal wage arrangements). Heads of households, chiefs of tribes, directors of firms, teachers, doctors, elites within a community have decision- making authority by the virtue of their position in the particular institution. Therefore, the *terms* on which people gain access to resources are as important as the resources themselves when the issue of empowerment is considered. Increased access to resources for a poor person may be given on very exploitative terms - or be achieved in a way which enhances the person's sense of self-worth and human dignity.

Therefore: To assess empowerment there is a need not only to use the change in access to or quantity of resources, but empowerment needs to entail a change in the terms on which resources are acquired as much as an increase in access to resources.

**Agency** refers to the ability to define one's goal and act upon it. An individual or groups decision­ making ability to choose and act is inevitably linked to issues of power and social relations. Power can be visible, invisible or hidden. Kabeer and Duncan Green2 talk about four levels of power/empowerment:

* + *"The power within":* Agency is more than the observable action. It also encompasses the meaning, motivation and purpose by which individuals carry out their activity. It is about

2 Duncan Green: How Change Happens. Oxford University Press, 2016. Page 33.

personal self-confidence and sense of rights and entitlement. It encompasses not only decision- making, but also bargaining, negotiation, resistance, protest, as well as intangible cognitive processes of awareness, reflection and analysis.

* + *"The power with":* Is the collective power obtained through organization, solidarity and joint action.
  + *"The power to":* Refers to people's capacity to define their own life-choices and to pursue their own goals, even in the opposition of others.
  + *"The power over":* Refers for instance to the power to control the ownership and realization of one's resources and translate them into achievements. It is the power to determine/control the outcome.

Practice shows that unless people first develop a sense of self-worth and confidence and a belief in their own rights (power within), efforts to help them organize (power with) and demand a say (power to) may not bear fruit. Likewise, if efforts are only directed at empowering the individual, he or she may not be strong enough to face or confront the constraints that impedes improving the situation.

The individual may need the collective power to be able to act. Hence a sustainable process of empowerment involves change at multiple levels at both individual and structural levels as well as in multiple dimensions.

**Achievements:** Resources and agency together constitute what Amartya Sen3 refers to as *capabilities* and Kabeer calls *achievements.* It is the potential that people have for living the lives they want, of achieving valued ways of "being and doing". These realized achievements and outcomes constitute the third dimension of empowerment. And likewise, the failure to achieve, is a token of prevailing disempowerment.

When measuring changes in empowerment there is a need to investigate and assess all three dimensions of empowerment: Resources, Agency and Achievements. It is not sufficient to only look at one or two dimensions. You need to assess changes in resources, changes in agency, and changes in achievements, i.e. carrying out what is called a *triangulation* to get a proper assessment of empowerment. This is because these three dimensions are inter-dependent and changes in each contribute to, and benefits from, changes in the others. Digni's methodology for assessing results in this regard is described in more detail below.

# Tool

## A framework for measuring empowerment

In order to provide a systematic, solid and reliable manner of assessing and aggregating results across projects, empowerment assessments will be carried out as part of all external project *evaluations.* In

3 On Amartya Sen’s Capability Approach read article in «The Encyclopedia of Philosophy: Sen’s Capability Approach” ref: <http://www.iep.utm.edu/sen-cap>

this way, external empowerment assessments will be available in the external evaluation reports that Digni bases its assessments on.

The objectives of a project evaluation are diverse and most often encompass several dimensions such as assessing relevance, cost-effectiveness, results, sustainability, learning, added value of partner, etc. Assessment of changes in empowerment at project level will therefore be *one* important dimension of evaluations and not the only one.

### The rationale for measuring empowerment at project level

Digni believes that measuring changes in empowerment at project level for the target group is one of the most meaningful ways to assess the *results* of the intervention.

Assessing empowerment is important for:

* The project target group: It will strengthen them in owning their development process and their results, learn from them and adjust.
* The local partner organization: It will strengthen them to know whether their activities and ways of working leads to empowerment, document it, and use this information for improving practice.
* Digni: It will assist in documenting results of change at each project. Carrying out assessments of empowerment across all Digni funded projects in a systematic manner will assist Digni in its aggregation, documentation and reporting of results according to Digni's Global Results Framework.

***Methodology***

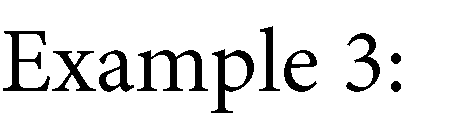
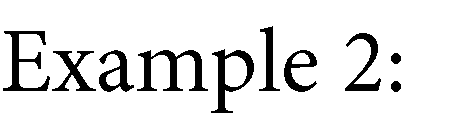
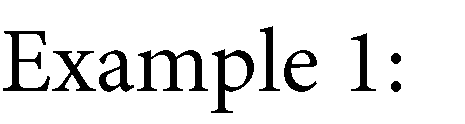
Projects in Digni are diverse with regard to contexts, target groups, involvements of stakeholders, themes, objectives, approaches, and foremost, they are also diverse in the methodology they apply. Therefore, the methodology used in project evaluations will not be standardized, but will be adapted to each project and be specified in the Terms of Reference. The part of the evaluation that concerns the empowerment assessment should therefore also be adopted and applied to "fit" the specific project and not vice versa.

However, there are dimensions that we would like the "evaluator/or evaluation team" to consider:

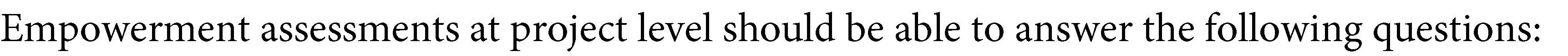
* The evaluation should be an empowering exercise for the people and organization concerned.
* Participatory approaches are recommended. Participation of targets groups, project staff and partner organization should be meaningful.
* The evaluation process should contribute to learning by target groups, project staff and partners. It should assist them to know and to own their results, and adjust the way they are working for improved change.

When measuring changes in empowerment there is a need to investigate and assess all three empowerment dimensions: RESOURCES, AGENCY and ACHIEVEMENTS (ref. section 1.2, above).

Below are three examples using the three dimensions to assess empowerment (see description of the empowerment scale below for further illustrations of how to use the three dimensions).





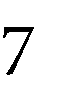




## Empowerment assessment table



|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **DEGREE AND LEVEL OF EMPOWERMENT** | | | | | |
| **THEMATIC AREAS OF RESULT** |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |



|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | ... |  |  |  |  |  |
| ... |  |  |  |  |  |
| Gender Equality (mandatory) |  |  |  | X |  |
| **Total assessment of project** |  |  |  | **X** |  |

### Instructions for filling out the table to the evaluator/team:

* + 1. Fill in the appropriate project thematic areas.

All projects in the Digni portfolio are require to register which thematic areas in Digni's Global Results Framework (GRF) they are working within. Applicable thematic areas are: I) Strengthening Civil Society (mandatory), 2) Health, 3) Peaceful Coexistence, 4) Environmental Stewardship, 5) Education and 6) Economic Empowerment. These thematic areas correspond to the main categories in the GRF (see overview in section 2.3 below of thematic impact and outcome goals). In addition to these categories, 7) Gender Equality has been added as a mandatory thematic area in the empowerment assessment table.

* + 1. Based on the "scale" of empowerment levels given below, mark the "applicable cells" per theme in the table with an "X".

(NB: Digni recognizes that this "scale" will not fit all Digni projects. In the rare cases that this scale is not doing justice or is not appropriate for the project evaluation, for instance in an organizational development project or a national advocacy project, etc., use the concepts of *resources, agency,* and *achievements* and develop "your" own scale. If the evaluation chooses to use their own scale, a specification of the scale content should be attached to the evaluation).

### Empowerment scale

Below we have provided definitions or characteristics of each level in the assessment table:

**LEVEL 1 (Output):**

Resources: have increased, been provided by project to individuals and/or community and/or other target groups

Agency: No demonstration of target groups having changed their behavior or

*using* resources to act.

Achievement/Results: There are no documented changes in target groups situation.

**LEVEL 2 (Output):**

Resources: Agency:

have increased by project to individuals and/or community, some local resource mobilization.

Target groups tell that they have gained "power within", increased their self-esteem, and/or have changed perspectives. Still little change in behavior and signs of agency.

Achievement/Results: There are few documented changes in the target groups' situation.

**LEVEL 3 (Outcome):**

Resources:

Agency:

have increased by project to individuals and/or community and/or other target groups. There might be some local contribution of resources to the project.

Target groups show that they have gained not only individual power, but also some collective agency, the "power with". There are some documented actions.

Achievement/Results: There are documented changes in target groups' situation.

**LEVEL 4 (Outcome):**

Resources: Agency:

have increased, been provided by project to individuals and/or community, and/or local resources are contributed.

Target groups show that they have gained not only individual power, but also collective agency, the "power to" act. There are documented community/target group action.

Achievement/Results: There are documented changes in the situation for direct and immediate indirect target groups. There are indications of results at "structural level" for instance stakeholders such as local government and/or others power elites are providing some resources or changed

their behavior/practice to some degree.

**LEVEL 5 (Impact):**

Resources: Agency:

have increased, been provided by project, and/or local resources are contributed, and/or provided by stakeholders.

Target groups show that they have gained collective agency, the "power to" act, but also some "power over". There are documented community/target group action.

Achievement/Results: There are substantial documented changes that most often goes beyond improvement of the situation for the direct target groups. The changes are often perceived to be sustainable and results are often at a "structural level". There might be multiplication effects and adoption of project methodology by others. Examples may be change in norms and harmful traditions, policies and laws; Stakeholders such as local government and/or others power elites are providing increased resources or changed their behavior and institutional practice.

* + 1. How to assess/mark the total empowerment of the project.

Even though empowerment assessments are carried out for various thematic areas, Digni asks that in the overall total empowerment assessment of the project the evaluator/team should give most weight to the main theme/objective of the project.

* + 1. A qualitative written assessment.

In addition to the table a qualitative brief justification per theme for the assessment can/should be provided. This can be omitted, if the evaluation report's previous sections describes the results and hence the marking in the table can be assumed to be "self -explanatory". The idea is that it is unnecessary for evaluator to repeat information in the evaluation report.

## Thematic areas in the Digni Global Results Framework

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Thematic area** | **Impact goal** | **Outcome goals** |
| **1) Strengthening** | Society is | There is a high degree of organization in the target |
| **civil society** | characterized by a | groups |
|  | strong civil society | Local communities are able to identify and solve their |
|  | engagement for | challenges together |
|  | change | Communities provide equal opportunities for women |
|  |  | and men |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  |  | Rights-holders are holding duty-bearers accountable |
| Local partners have strong capacity\* |
| Churches are mobilizing core assets in development\* |
| **2) Good health** | Target groups are able to influence conditions regarding own health and wellbeing | Rights-holders have access to adequate health  services |
| Target groups demonstrate knowledge about  conditions affecting the health of households |
| Target groups openly address stigma related to health |
| **3) Peaceful coexistence** | Target groups are coexisting in a safe and peaceful environment | Target groups are able to promote non-violent  coexistence |
| Local partners and communities combat gender  based violence (GBV) in target areas |
| Children grow up in a safe and caring environment |
| Local partners and communities combat human  rights violations against ethnic, indigenous or religious minorities |
| **4) Environmental stewardship** | Target groups exercise responsible stewardship of the  environment | Target groups are resilient to negative livelihood  conditions |
| Local partners and communities implement environmentally friendly measures |
| **5) Quality education** | Learners in target areas acquire relevant education of high quality | Target institutions provide quality and inclusive  education to learners |
| Communities support the right to education for all |
| Learners trained in vocational skills are employed or  self-employed |
| **6) Economic empowerment** | Women and men in target areas are economically  empowered | Women and men in target areas have improved their  livelihood |
| Rights-holders are accessing financial services |

\* *Normally not reported on by projects, only by members and partners.*