

After the gathering in Lilongwe, Adriaan and Adam reflected on the discussions, focussing on the dynamics of the meeting and the interplay of cultural factors influencing the participation and engagement of the attendees. Here are the key takeaways from their reflections:

1. Group Dynamics and Discussion Efficiency

- The smaller group size facilitated deeper engagement and allowed everyone to share more openly. This setup seemed effective and fostered a productive discussion environment, with participants actively sharing insights and personal experiences.

2. Role of the Church in Community Issues

- A significant focus was placed on understanding the church's role in addressing various community issues, particularly crises of identity, cultural beliefs, and social responsibilities. The reflections pondered whether the church should primarily support existing structures or actively lead initiatives to instigate change.

3. Practical Steps and Implementation

- There was an emphasis on the need for practical, actionable steps that the church and community could undertake. However, there was a sentiment that while many ideas were traditional (such as workshops and conferences), there should be an openness to innovate within these frameworks to address current challenges more effectively.

4. Cultural Sensitivity and Participation

- Cultural respect and understanding were highlighted as crucial, especially in facilitating discussions among diverse groups. There was an observation that younger participants might have been reticent to share openly, possibly due to cultural norms around respecting elders or leaders.

5. Mutual Support Among Facilitators

- The cooperation between Adriaan and Adam was noted as a positive factor in managing the flow of the meeting effectively. This mutual support helped in maintaining the structure of the session and in adapting dynamically to the needs of the discussion.

6. Insights into Community Engagement

- The reflections also touched on the importance of community engagement strategies that consider cultural and social dynamics unique to each setting. The approach to discussions, the type of questions asked, and the facilitation tactics were tailored to encourage participation and make the sessions relevant to the participants' realities.

These reflections highlight the complexities of facilitating community discussions in culturally diverse settings and underscore the importance of adaptive strategies that respect local contexts and promote active participation. The facilitators' insights into the church's role and community dynamics provide a foundation for further development of intervention strategies and engagement models suitable for the specific cultural and social fabric of Malawi.

