

The discussion on formulating themes in Lilongwe was unique and focused on structuring thematic areas to explore during the research, applying a sequential approach to theme development based on root causes and effects. Here are the key takeaways regarding the methodology applied:

- 1. Sequential Thematic Development:** The group aimed to identify and order themes in a sequence that reflects causal relationships, starting with root causes and progressing to resultant issues. This approach emphasises understanding the progression and interconnection of issues within the theme of polycrisis.
- 2. Identifying Root Causes:** The discussion revolved around identifying what participants perceived as the fundamental causes of broader issues. Different viewpoints were considered, such as whether financial hardship or cultural practices constitute the primary underlying cause of subsequent crises.
- 3. Integration of Cultural and Financial Aspects:** The methodology included a strong emphasis on how cultural norms and financial realities interact to shape societal issues. For instance, cultural expectations around familial support were discussed as factors that could potentially discourage individual initiative and self-reliance, contributing to financial hardships.
- 4. Practical Examples and Personal Experiences:** Participants used personal stories and local examples to illustrate how cultural practices impact financial behaviour and societal expectations. These narratives helped ground the theoretical discussion in concrete terms, making the themes more relatable and understandable.
- 5. Collaborative Decision-Making:** The process was highly collaborative, with participants actively suggesting, debating, and refining the themes. This participatory approach ensured that the themes resonated with the participants' experiences and perceptions of local realities.
- 6. Outcome-Orientated Discussion:** The end goal was to establish a clear and actionable set of themes that could guide further research or interventions. The discussion aimed to ensure that each theme was not only well-defined but also relevant to the participants' societal context.

This methodological approach highlights the importance of community engagement in research, allowing for a nuanced understanding of complex issues by prioritising local knowledge and experiences.

