

Reflections on the Lilongwe Gathering:

Discussions on Crisis and Resilience

Introduction

The gathering in Lilongwe brought together community members and church leaders to engage in meaningful discussions focused on resilience and crisis management within the community. The event was structured to foster open dialogue, encourage the sharing of personal experiences, and collectively explore strategies for addressing community-specific challenges.

Objectives of the Gathering:

- To understand the community's perception of resilience and crisis.
- To identify key themes related to community crises and brainstorm potential solutions.
- To enhance collaboration between church leaders and community stakeholders in crisis intervention.

Defining Resilience and Crisis

The discussions began with defining the key concepts of resilience and crisis, which are central to addressing the challenges communities face. Resilience was discussed as the capacity of individuals and groups to endure and adapt in the face of adversity, maintain functional stability, and use the challenges as a basis for growth. A crisis was defined as any event or series of events that significantly disrupts the normal functioning of individuals or communities, requiring an immediate and effective response to restore stability and resolve the situation.

Four Themes Discussed:

1. Crisis on Cultural Beliefs and Systems:

- The role of the church in aligning cultural beliefs with positive societal values.
- Practical steps for the church included educational programs on financial management and cultural practices, promoting healthier cultural norms through community interaction, and continuous assessment and reinforcement of new practices.

2. Crisis of Financial Hardship and Poverty:

- Focus on the church's role in economic education and empowerment.
- Steps discussed included providing financial and vocational training, using church resources to support community members in need, and creating employment opportunities through church-funded businesses.

3. Crisis in Social and Relational Struggles:

- Emphasis on the church's role in fostering community relationships and addressing social conflicts.
- Actionable steps involved organising seminars on marriage and relationships, promoting inclusive environments to reduce social isolation, and engaging in community activities that encourage social cohesion.



4. **Crisis on Identity and Emotional Wellbeing:**

- Discussion on the church's role in supporting mental and emotional wellness.
- Practical measures included implementing discipleship and counselling focused on identity and self-worth, encouraging physical activities to boost mental health, and facilitating platforms for social interaction to combat isolation.

Key Takeaways for Further Reflection:

- The need for ongoing training and education within the church to address both spiritual and societal issues effectively.
- The importance of inclusive practices that embrace all community members and encourage active participation in church-led initiatives.
- The potential for church leaders to play a pivotal role in shifting cultural norms towards healthier community practices.
- Acknowledgement of the church as a place of refuge and support in times of personal and community crises.

Questions Asked by Participants for Further Reflection:

1. How can the church better collaborate with the government to address the multifaceted crises facing our community?
2. What steps can I take personally and within my church to become a better mentor and leader in crisis situations?
3. Following these discussions, what actionable steps will the facilitators suggest to help us implement the discussed strategies?

Conclusion

The gathering in Lilongwe was a fruitful endeavour, providing deep insights into the community's challenges and the church's potential role in addressing them. The discussions highlighted the necessity for continued dialogue and action on cultural, financial, social, and emotional fronts to build a resilient community capable of overcoming crises. The engagement of church leaders and stakeholders in these discussions is crucial for turning these insights into action. As we move forward, the questions and themes discussed will guide our efforts to support Lilongwe's community in becoming more resilient and prepared to handle future challenges.

