

Here's a summary of the responses from the participants in Lilongwe discussing the theme "Crisis on Cultural Beliefs and Systems," focussing on the role of the church in addressing health crises related to cultural beliefs:

### **1. What is the role and place of the church in Malawi in responding to the crisis of health?**

- The church is seen as pivotal in aligning cultural belief systems with Christian values. The idea is not for the church to adapt to existing cultural norms but to shape these norms according to the values upheld by the church. This alignment is primarily targeted to start within the church community itself, dealing with personal, relational, and family issues by reinforcing Christian teachings.

### **2. What are three practical steps that the church in Malawi can take to respond to the health crisis on Cultural Beliefs and Systems?**

- **Identify Cultural Issues:** The church should pinpoint specific cultural practices that contribute to crises. An example given was the secretive financial practices among men, which can affect marital relationships.
- **Educational Teachings:** Once issues are identified, the church should educate its members about them, using platforms like home cells and regular church services to reinforce new, healthier cultural practices based on Christian values.
- **Continuous Assessment:** The impact of these teachings should be regularly assessed to ensure they are understood and applied, allowing for adjustments and reiteration of messages as needed.

### **3. What are three practical steps that your church community can take to respond to the crisis on Cultural Beliefs and Systems?**

- **In-Community Engagement:** Churches should form teams to engage with the wider community, sharing new practices and encouraging communal participation in these new approaches.
- **Setting Up Programs:** Establish programs and centres that provide ongoing education and training on these issues. These centres should also serve as points for continuous assessment of behavioural changes in the community.
- **Community Demonstrations:** Encourage the community to demonstrate practical applications of the teachings, which can help embed the changes deeply within the local culture. Examples include reducing crime and improving interpersonal behaviours through the influence of church teachings.

These steps reflect a systematic approach where the church first aligns its internal practices with Christian values before reaching out to influence broader community behaviours, aiming for a sustainable transformation of cultural norms through education, practical application, and continuous assessment.

