

The discussions held in Livingstone, Zambia, focused on the role of the church in responding to health crises. Participants divided into groups and tackled three central questions to explore how the church can be a pivotal player in promoting health and well-being within their communities. The summary of responses to these questions is presented below:

1. What is the Role and Place of the Church in Livingstone Responding to the Crisis of Health?

The church in Livingstone plays a vital role in health by fostering sensitisation and education among community members. This involves:

- **Health Talks:** Churches hold regular health talks to educate their congregation about different health topics. For instance, House of Kings Church organises 10-15 minute health talks on topics like sports and their benefits.
- **Open Youth Talks:** Addressing teenage pregnancies and health issues through cycling and open discussions, allowing youth to talk freely and understand the importance of health.
- **Singles and Couples Meetings:** These gatherings allow individuals to discuss personal health issues, share experiences, and learn from one another in a trusted environment.
- **Trust and Relationships:** Building trust through relational interactions rather than just providing resources. This involves creating open spaces where community members can talk about their struggles, such as HIV/AIDS, and find support within the church.

Key Observations:

- The church's role is primarily relational, not just transactional, focussing on building trust and partnerships to address health issues.
- There is a need for more direct support and engagement with individuals already facing health challenges.

2. What are Three Practical Steps That the Church in Zambia Can Do in Responding to the Crisis of Health?

Training and Education:

- **Leaders Training:** Churches should identify and train leaders who can bring back valuable health information to their communities. Collaboration with organisations like PEPFAR, which engage with church leaders for training on health issues, is essential.
- **National and Regional Training:** Encouraging participation in national and regional health training sessions and conferences to disseminate knowledge across churches.

Engaging Stakeholders:

- **Partnerships:** Collaborate with government and non-governmental organisations, like the Ministry of Health, to carry out health initiatives such as cholera sensitisation.
- **Identifying and Motivating Stakeholders:** Establish initiatives that align with stakeholders' interests, such as fighting teenage pregnancies, to gain support and resources.



Community Involvement:

- **Volunteer Programs:** Engage community volunteers who can relate to locals and effectively communicate health messages.
- **Sports and Activities:** Organise sports and voluntary activities, like cleaning the community, to promote health and connect with stakeholders.

Key Observations:

- Collaboration with stakeholders can lead to greater resource availability and impactful health campaigns.
- There's a strong emphasis on building relationships before seeking assistance from external parties.

3. What are Three Practical Steps That Your Church Community Can Take in Response to the Crisis of Health?

Follow-Ups and Support:

- **Consistent Engagement:** Regular follow-ups with individuals facing health challenges like depression to provide emotional and spiritual support.
- **Praying with the Affected:** Offering hope through prayer and spiritual support, focussing on providing strength and encouragement to those in need.

Church-to-Community Activities:

- **Outreach Programs:** Implement activities that take place within the community, such as hosting concerts near marketplaces, rather than just within church walls.
- **Building Trust:** Focus on actions that demonstrate the church's commitment to serving the community, fostering trust and dependability.

Promoting Physical Health:

- **Sports Events:** Organise sports matches with other churches to promote physical health and community unity.
- **Voluntary Cleaning:** Lead initiatives to clean the community, partnering with entities like the Ministry of Health, to promote a healthy environment.

Key Observations:

- The church should prioritise community engagement and outreach to build trust and show its dedication to public health.
- Practical involvement in community health initiatives strengthens the church's role as a trusted partner in health promotion.

Conclusion

The discussions emphasised the church's crucial role in promoting health through relational engagement, training, and community involvement. Participants highlighted the importance of trust, partnerships, and practical initiatives in addressing health crises. This reflective session calls for churches to adopt a more comprehensive approach to health, going beyond spiritual well-being to address physical and emotional needs, thereby enhancing the church's role as a cornerstone of community support in Livingstone, Zambia.

