

Introduction

On 16 September 2024, a gathering of church leaders, community leaders, and stakeholders was held in Nairobi, Kenya, to explore the church's role in responding to crises and fostering resilience in the face of complex challenges. This report summarises the key discussions, reflections, and takeaways from the meeting. The aim of the gathering was to **listen, learn, and ask better questions**, seeking to understand how the church can engage with the multiple crises affecting communities in Nairobi. While the discussions do not reflect the views of the entire church community in Nairobi, they serve as a starting point for future reflection, research, and action.

Definitions: Resilience and Crisis

During the discussions, participants reflected on the meaning of both "resilience" and "crisis" in the context of Nairobi.

Resilience:

In Nairobi, **resilience** was defined as the ability to maintain a right mindset and attitude in the face of inevitable trials, grounded in faith and trust in God. It involves perseverance, taking responsibility, and seeking both spiritual and practical solutions to challenges. Participants emphasised that resilience is not simply about waiting for miracles but about taking action, trusting in God's faithfulness, and recognising that breakthroughs often come through a process. It also involves fostering a balanced lifestyle, love, and an awareness of God's presence.

Crisis:

A **crisis** in Nairobi was described as a state of overwhelming difficulty, marked by grief, uncertainty, and emotional instability. It is often exacerbated by systemic issues such as corruption, poor governance, and mismanagement. Crises also involve challenges related to infrastructure, health, safety, and family relations, with additional pressures from cultural beliefs, peer pressure, and addiction. The participants noted that crises extend beyond individual problems, reflecting broader societal and governance failures.



Four Themes Discussed

Throughout the meeting, participants divided into groups to explore four key themes. Each theme was discussed in terms of the role of the church and practical steps that can be taken to address the challenges.

1. Leadership and Governance Challenges

Participants identified **leadership and governance challenges** as major contributors to crises in Nairobi. The discussions focused on the role of the church in promoting integrity, transparency, and accountability.

- **Role of the Church:** The church has a crucial role in **advocating for accountability** and **rebuking unethical behaviour** among leaders. It should serve as a moral compass, encouraging good governance both within and outside the church.
- **Three Practical Steps for the Church in Kenya:**
 - Teach and train leaders on ethical governance using Biblical principles.
 - Engage actively in leadership development programs, particularly in schools and communities.
 - Recognise and celebrate leaders who demonstrate integrity and strong moral values .
- **Three Practical Steps for Local Church Communities:**
 - Adopt nearby schools and provide mentorship to students.
 - Create safe spaces for leadership training and development.
 - Serve as resource mobilisation centres for leadership development.

2. Personal and Emotional Well-being

This theme examined how the church can support individuals facing personal crises, such as grief, emotional instability, and mental health issues.

- **Role of the Church:** The church must provide emotional and spiritual support, acting as a **safe space** for those in need. It should also mobilise resources to cater for personal and emotional well-being.
- **Three Practical Steps for the Church in Kenya:**
 - Provide temporary shelters and homes for those affected by crises.
 - Offer prayers, counselling, and emotional support to those in need.
 - Engage in mental health and psychosocial support initiatives.
- **Three Practical Steps for Local Church Communities:**
 - Mobilise resources to meet the immediate needs of individuals facing personal crises.
 - Encourage church members to open their homes to those in need.
 - Participate in discussions on mental health and partner with organisations to address these issues.



3. Cultural and Social Influences

Participants reflected on the **cultural and social challenges** that influence crises, including harmful traditional practices, misinformation, and the breakdown of community support structures.

- **Role of the Church:** The church should work to **identify and address negative cultural influences** while promoting positive values rooted in Biblical teachings. It has a key role in correcting misinformation and encouraging responsible civic behaviour.
- **Three Practical Steps for the Church in Kenya:**
 - Provide psychosocial and civic education to promote informed decision-making and reduce the impact of harmful cultural practices.
 - Build inclusive social structures that support vulnerable groups, such as persons with disabilities, orphans, and widows.
 - Influence policies that address cultural issues like early marriage and female genital mutilation (FGM).
- **Three Practical Steps for Local Church Communities:**
 - Advocate for social justice and accountability in leadership.
 - Engage government leaders on current social issues to influence policy change.
 - Pray for God's intervention while taking practical actions to address societal problems.

4. Leadership Development and Mentorship

The discussions also focused on the **need for effective leadership development and mentorship** within the church and broader community.

- **Role of the Church:** The church should provide platforms for leadership development and mentorship, guiding future leaders on ethical and moral leadership.
- **Three Practical Steps for the Church in Kenya:**
 - Teach leadership principles through speeches and church programs.
 - Offer holistic leadership training, especially in schools, to install strong leadership values from an early age.
 - Recognise and celebrate leaders who exemplify integrity and moral courage.
- **Three Practical Steps for Local Church Communities:**
 - Partner with nearby schools to mentor young leaders.
 - Create safe spaces for leadership training and mentorship.
 - Serve as a resource centre for leadership development and mentorship initiatives.



Key Takeaways for Further Reflection

1. **Corruption and Governance:** A recurring theme throughout the discussions was the pervasive issue of corruption in both government and church leadership. Participants expressed frustration with how entrenched corruption has become, and many felt that the church has a responsibility to speak out against it and model better leadership.
2. **Systems Thinking:** Participants demonstrated a growing ability to think about crises in a more **systemic way**, recognising that issues like poor urban planning, greed, and infrastructure failures are interconnected. This holistic approach to understanding crises is key to developing effective solutions.
3. **Need for Action:** While participants valued the discussions, there was a clear desire to move beyond talking and toward **practical action**. Many participants felt that too much time is spent discussing problems without arriving at tangible solutions. Future gatherings should focus on identifying specific, actionable steps.
4. **Vulnerability and Authentic Sharing:** The platform created during the gathering allowed for **authentic sharing of personal stories**, which fostered trust and a sense of community. Participants appreciated the opportunity to express their struggles and felt that the environment was conducive to open dialogue.

Team Reflections

Adriaan and Adam, reflecting on the day's discussions, highlighted several important observations:

- **The Role of the Venue:** While the structured, business-like venue provided comfort, it also created distractions. The use of technology during the sessions detracted from the engagement, leading to a suggestion for more focused environments in future gatherings.
- **Authenticity and Engagement:** The participants were generally engaged, with many sharing deeply personal stories. The facilitators noted that the **co-learning** model, where participants are treated as co-creators of the discussion, allowed for a more meaningful exchange of ideas.
- **Frustration with the Status Quo:** Corruption was a major issue raised during the sessions. Participants expressed a sense of helplessness, but also a desire for change, indicating that the church could play a more active role in confronting corruption and promoting integrity.



Questions Raised by Participants for Further Reflection

At the conclusion of the gathering, participants were asked to share questions for further reflection. These questions are important starting points for continued discussion and action:

1. What is my personal role in articulating crisis management in the context of the church?
2. How can I start civic education in my country in the aspect of crisis management?
3. How best can we work together as a church in Kenya to be better actors during a crisis?
4. How do we ensure sustainability in crisis management, including the next generation?
5. How can we network to better handle crises that arise unexpectedly?
6. How can each believer in every church take up the role of handling crises or providing solutions to existing crises?
7. Does Romans 13:1's call to submit to authority include political leadership that was acquired corruptly?

Conclusion

The discussions held in Nairobi on 16 September 2024 provided valuable insights into how the church can respond to the crises facing Nairobi and its communities. While the participants recognised the church's role in fostering resilience and leadership, they also emphasised the need for practical actions to address systemic issues such as corruption, poor governance, and cultural influences. The reflections and questions raised during the gathering offer a starting point for further research, dialogue, and action as the church and its leaders work to build a more resilient and just society.

This report, while based on the discussions with church and community leaders in Nairobi, does not reflect the views of the entire