

Team Reflections on the Jinja Gathering

After concluding the gathering in Jinja, Adriaan and Adam reflected on key aspects of the event, covering both logistical details and deeper thematic takeaways. Here are the major reflections and takeaways:

1. Challenges in Coordination and Initial Scepticism

- **Coordination:** There were some initial challenges in organising the meeting. The original local organiser pulled out a week before the event, requiring quick reorganisation through contacts made in Livingstone. Despite these challenges, the gathering came together successfully, with 12 participants arriving by the end of the first session.
- **Scepticism:** Both Adriaan and Adam initially felt unsure about how the meeting would unfold, especially given the last-minute changes and logistical uncertainties. However, the event exceeded expectations, with meaningful discussions and positive engagement from the participants.

2. Diverse Representation and Themes

- **Group Composition:** The gathering included a mix of pastors and community members, which led to rich and varied discussions. There was also good representation of women and a range of ages, which contributed to the depth of the conversation.
- **Crisis as Personal:** A recurring theme was that crises, whether financial, cultural, or spiritual, are deeply personal. Participants often shared personal stories, reinforcing that crisis management needs to consider individual and community-level responses.

3. Key Themes Identified

- **Witchcraft and Family Breakdown:** Witchcraft was a recurring topic, often linked to family breakdowns and divorce. The participants highlighted that witchcraft is seen as a contributing factor to divorce, and the discussions explored the complex relationship between financial strain, family dynamics, and traditional beliefs.
- **Church Financial Struggles:** Financial struggles, particularly a lack of tithing, were another major theme. Many pastors raised concerns about low contributions from congregants, which they attributed to unemployment and a lack of financial education. This issue resonated with many of the participants, especially the pastors.
- **Education and Employment:** There was a significant focus on education, specifically its relevance to employment. Many participants felt that formal education was not adequately preparing individuals for either employment or entrepreneurial ventures, which contributed to both economic and social crises.



4. The Role of the Church

- **Addressing Financial and Employment Issues:** A key reflection was the church's role in helping individuals develop practical skills for entrepreneurship and employment. Participants discussed the need for mentorship and leadership training to empower church members to create economic opportunities, rather than solely relying on external job markets.
- **Supporting Pastors:** Many church leaders are financially strained and have had to take on side businesses to support themselves. This reflects the financial challenges facing both the church and the wider community.

5. Logistical Reflections and Integrity

- **Financial Integrity:** Adriaan reflected positively on the integrity of the local organiser, who managed the budget transparently. This included adjusting expenses based on the actual number of attendees and returning leftover funds. The organiser also worked hard to ensure participants had transportation assistance, further demonstrating his commitment.
- **Language and Cultural Sensitivities:** The event required translation services, as the primary language spoken was Luganda. This highlighted the importance of being mindful of language barriers, especially as the team moved between regions with different linguistic and cultural contexts.

Key Takeaways for Further Reflection:

1. **Personalisation of Crisis:** The deeply personal nature of crises should be a central focus of future discussions. While broad themes such as financial or spiritual crises are important, understanding the personal impact on individuals and families is critical to developing effective solutions.
2. **Education and Economic Empowerment:** The role of education, especially in preparing individuals for economic independence, is a recurring theme. The church could consider developing programs that not only educate members but also foster entrepreneurial skills and practical employment opportunities.
3. **Church Financial Sustainability:** The financial struggles of pastors and churches are a critical issue. Exploring sustainable models, such as church-run businesses or financial education for congregants, could provide long-term solutions.
4. **Mentorship and Leadership Development:** A lack of leadership and mentorship within the church community was noted. Developing programs to mentor younger leaders and provide guidance for economic and social challenges could significantly strengthen the church's role in addressing community crises.
5. **Cultural Sensitivity:** The meeting highlighted the need for awareness of cultural and linguistic differences as the team continues their journey. Understanding local contexts and addressing cultural beliefs like witchcraft will be essential in future engagements.

These reflections provide insight into both the successes and challenges of the Jinja meeting, offering a roadmap for future discussions and deeper engagement with local communities.

