

After completing the gathering in Sekiwunga, Adriaan and Adam reflected on the experience, highlighting several key takeaways for further consideration:

Key Reflections:

1. Challenges in Engagement and Attendance:

- The meeting started late, which put pressure on facilitators to cover everything. Despite these challenges, the meeting had valuable input, even from individuals who were not church or community leaders but ordinary church members.
- The participation of these members offered a broader perspective, especially on issues like **domestic violence** and **poverty**, which were more prominently discussed in this meeting compared to others.

2. Personal Nature of Crises:

- They noted that crises such as **domestic violence** and **emotional struggles** are deeply personal, remaining with individuals long after major events like natural disasters fade away. This was consistent across participants, both church leaders and members.
- Emotional responses such as **anger**, **frustration**, and **revenge** were often highlighted as significant contributors to relational breakdowns, particularly within families. Poverty was frequently cited as a cause of many of these issues.

3. Relational and Family Conflicts:

- Family and marriage issues were prominent, with many stories of **violence** or **breakdowns in relationships**. Poverty often exacerbated these situations, creating a cycle of anger and retaliation that spilled over into marriages and the upbringing of children.
- A recurring issue was the tension between traditional practices and Christian teachings. For example, one participant spoke of traditional marriage rituals where additional wives were taken, which created confusion and frustration for women caught between cultural expectations and their desire for a Christian marriage.

4. Disconnect Between Church Leaders and Congregants:

- One key reflection was the apparent **disconnect** between church leaders and the daily realities of their congregants. In some cases, pastors were hearing for the first time about the crises faced by members of their own congregations. This raised questions about the relevance and effectiveness of church leadership in understanding and addressing the real issues within their communities.



5. **The Church's Role in Crisis:**

- The discussion repeatedly returned to the church's role in responding to crises. There was an expectation for the church to provide both **spiritual** and **practical support**, but participants seemed to default to familiar strategies such as **prayer sessions** and **evangelistic crusades**. However, these methods were often seen as insufficient for addressing the underlying issues.
- Adriaan and Adam questioned the **effectiveness of traditional responses**, challenging whether the church needed to consider new approaches, particularly in the areas of counselling, emotional support, and practical solutions.

6. **Impact of Poverty:**

- **Poverty** was a central theme throughout the meeting, frequently blamed for many of the challenges faced by the community. However, as the discussion progressed, it became clear that **emotional and psychological factors**, such as anger and frustration, were deeply intertwined with poverty and often intensified its effects.
- There was also concern that **church funding** and **community tithing** were severely affected by poverty, limiting the church's ability to respond effectively to crises.

7. **Tensions Between Tradition and Modernity:**

- The reflections noted a tension between traditional cultural beliefs and Christian teachings. For example, some participants spoke of traditional beliefs regarding twins being considered a curse, which led to significant emotional and social conflict within families. The church's role in challenging or navigating these traditional beliefs was identified as crucial but also complex.

Key Takeaways for Further Reflection:

- **The Need for Deeper Connection:** The reflections raised important questions about how well church leaders know their congregants' realities and whether they are effectively responding to them. There is a need for more **relational pastoral care** that goes beyond Sunday preaching to understanding the personal crises faced by church members.
- **Rethinking the Church's Response:** While prayer and evangelistic events are essential, they are not sufficient on their own. The church must develop **new strategies** for providing practical support, including **counselling, emotional healing**, and community empowerment through initiatives that address both **poverty** and **psychological well-being**.
- **Addressing Cultural Conflicts:** There is a significant need for the church to navigate and address **cultural conflicts**, especially in areas where traditional beliefs clash with Christian values. This includes a more nuanced approach to dealing with issues like marriage, domestic violence, and family dynamics.
- **Empowering Church Leadership:** A key challenge is how to empower church leaders to better understand and engage with the crises their congregants are facing. This may require **retraining pastors** and developing new forms of **ministry** that are more responsive to the real needs of the community.

These reflections suggest that while the church plays a vital role in addressing crises, there is room for growth in how it engages with both **personal and societal issues**, moving beyond traditional methods to more holistic and practical responses.

