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FACULTY OF THEOLOGY

DEPARTMENT OF PASTORAL THEOLOGY

THESIS

THE IMPACT OF STRATEGIC PASTORAL PLANNING ON BUILDING A SELF-RELIANT CHURCH: A CASE STUDY OF ZOMBA CATHOLIC DIOCESE, MALAWI.

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of Theology in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Licentiate in Sacred Theology with Specialisation in Pastoral Theology

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DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that this Thesis is a direct original work of mine attained through research, reading, and profound reflection. This work has never been rendered to any institute of higher learning for academic credentials. Furthermore, I hereby account for the information discussed in it.

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DEDICATION

This theological study is first and foremost dedicated to the Greater Glory of God whose wisdom and strength have inspired, guided and sustained me throughout this academic pastoral journey. I also dedicate this work to Right Reverend Alfred Mateyu Chaima, the Local Ordinary of Zomba Catholic Diocese, as well as his predecessors. Furthermore, I also dedicate this work to Zomba Catholic Diocese and beyond as well as all those passionate about realizing a Self-Reliant local Church. I hope this work will help in widening the horizons of realizing a self-ministering, self-propagating and self-sustaining not as isolation and parochialism but as a strategy of strengthening the Catholic solidarity of the whole Church.

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ABSTRACT

This theological study examines the impact of strategic plan on building a self-reliant Church with Zomba Catholic Diocese of Malawi as a Case Study. The call for self-reliance within the Church has gained prominence in the contemporary world, especially in Africa, where overdependence on external aid has often limited sustainable pastoral and socio-economic development. Based on the Universal and African concern for self-reliance in the Church, AMECEA has emphasized on the need for the Local Churches to work of strategies on building a self-reliant Church. Rooted in the pastoral vision of the Church through Vatican Council II and *Ecclesia in Africa,* Strategic pastoral planning for the Church has been continuously promoted in the mission of Evangelisation of the Church, especially in the AMECEA region. It has been promoted as a vital tool for coordinated pastoral life of the Church. After decades of strategic efforts by the local Churches in Africa to be a self-reliant the question would concern the effectiveness and efficiency of strategic pastoral planning for building a self-reliant Church. Aware that there are challenges and underutilized opportunities in implementing the strategic pastoral plan for the attainment of a Self-reliant Church, the research probes into the root causes and effects around the challenges and highlights the opportunities that ought to be explored and expanded to enhance the self-reliance goal of the Church. Thus grounded in synodal pillars of communion, participation and mission, this research explores how deliberate and contextually informed strategic pastoral planning contributes to human, financial and material resource sustainability.

This investigation employs a case study research design, utilizing a mixed-method approach of both quantitative and qualitative aspects. Data was collected from the clergy, the religious and the laity engaged in pastoral structures. The tools used to collect data were questionnaires, interviews and focus group discussions. Key areas of investigation included resource mobilization strategies, leadership formation and community participation within the framework of the diocesan strategic pastoral plan. Collected data was then analysed using Kobo Toolbox as general Statistics of the measurements of the central tendency. Through synthesis and theological reflection, under the framework of Synodality, the challenges are thought through from both sociological and theological aspects.

Findings indicate that strategic pastoral planning is a tool capable of fostering self-reliant goals of the Church. The study also reveals that pastoral and spiritual maturity, synodal approach and professional quality control mechanisms are critical enablers of self-reliance. However, challenges such as poor sharing of the vision and mission of the Church on building a self-reliant Church, poor communication and empowerment of the laity continue to hinder full realization of self-reliance.

The research concludes that while strategic pastoral planning is a vital tool for building a self-reliant Church, its success relies on continuous communication and formation, contextual adaptation and implementation, strong commitment to quality control. The research recommends changes for transformation that includes ongoing pastoral formation, increased involvement of the laity at all stages of the strategic pastoral planning and implementation, as well as enhanced commitment to quality control in the management of the strategic pastoral plan. Finally, the recommendations have led to a proposed action plan as a way of translating the recommendations into practical actions towards bringing about the desired transformation as far as effective and efficient strategic pastoral planning for building a self-reliant Church is concerned.

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ABREVIATIONS

AMECEA	Association of Member Episcopal Conferences of Eastern Africa
AFER	African Ecclesial Review
CCAP	Church of Central African Presbyterian
CUEA	Catholic University of Eastern Africa
ECM	Episcopal Conference of Malawi
MCCB	Malawi Catholic Conference of Bishops
MEL	Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning
M& E	Monitoring and Evaluation
SCC	Small Christian Community
T/A	Tradition Authority
Sub-T/A	Sub-Tradition Authority
SWOT	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

During the early days of Christianity in Africa, Malawi, like other countries in the continent, was considered as *mission field* and so was dependent on expatriate missionaries for personnel, financial resources, and material resources for the mission of evangelisation. This was particularly the case during the colonial and early years of post-colonial times. However, the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) and the First Synod of Africa (1994) redefined the role of the Church in Africa, calling the local Churches to self-reliance. Vatican II provided the universal theological vision for a participatory and inculturated Church. This was both a pastoral challenge and a call to spiritual and pastoral maturity. The First Synod of Africa urged dioceses in Africa to adopt strategic pastoral plans, train local clergy, and manage resources responsibly to avoid over-dependence on external donors. In 2025, the Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar (SECAM), in its 20th Assembly (30 July to 4 August 2025) in Kigali, Rwanda, highlighted self-reliance as one of the 12 pillars of the Church in the run up to the next jubilee year of 2050.

Responding to the call by Vatican Council II, Zomba is one such a diocese that has attempted to come up with a diocesan strategic pastoral plan on building a self-reliant Church. It created its first 5-year strategic pastoral plan in 2017. This plan, covering 2017 to 2022, was revised in 2023 for the period 2024 to 2028. Its focus is on building a self-reliant Church, using the themes of "Towards a Self-Reliant Church" and "Ownership and Responsibility in Building a Self-Reliant Church", respectively.

The big question, which is the central research question of this research is: *What is the impact of diocesan strategic pastoral planning on building a self-reliant Church?* This impact is considered under synodality of the Church framework. For the purpose of that goal, the researcher

examines the impact of strategic pastoral planning on developing a self-reliant Church, focusing specifically on evangelisation, and using the Zomba Catholic Diocese as a case study.

In this research, the independent variable is the strategic pastoral planning, while the dependent variable is self-reliance, defined by three dimensions: self-ministering, self-propagating, and self-sustaining. According to Pope John Paul II, these three dimensions of self-reliance refer to the Church's ability to evangelize and grow without relying on external agencies.[1] These dimensions are explored in three main areas: human resources, financial resources, and material resources.

This research has two working hypotheses for testing, under the framework of synodality. First, strategic pastoral planning may strengthen the spiritual and pastoral maturity of Church members, leading to increased participation in decision-making and practical activities in Church programs and projects. Second, strategic pastoral planning may improve the self-reliant efforts of the diocese for the overall transformation of both its inner life and the outer society the Church serves. The goal is not just self-reliance itself but also to support the Church's mission of evangelisation.

This study uses both quantitative and qualitative methods and employs the Pastoral Cycle and SWOT Analysis to assess whether strategic planning is significantly contributing to self-reliance. The researcher hopes that the findings will not only aid decision-making within Zomba Diocese but also provide insights for other ecclesial institutions and denominations in Malawi and across Africa.

[1] John Paul II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Africa*, September 14, 1995, nos. 106–110, in *AAS* 88 (1996), 681–687.

CHAPTER ONE

BACKGROUND TO THE CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF ZOMBA

INTRODUCTION

For a proper understanding of the impact of diocesan strategic pastoral planning on building a self-reliant Church, based on Zomba Catholic Diocese of Malawi as a Case Study, this first chapter provides the background of the diocese. The research will discuss the following domains of the background: geographic location, demographic data, historical context, cultural context, social context, economic situation, political landscape, and religious situation. The main sources of this information are Church historical documents, Socio-Economic Profile (SEP) of Zomba District, interviews, and personal experience of the researcher.

1.1 GEOGRAPHIC LOCATION AND SIZE

Geographic location and size is a crucial part of this academic research since it provides context and setting for the study and so can influence social and economic conditions among other things. It also helps in determining pastoral needs and priorities as well as influencing resource availability and self-reliance initiatives.

Zomba Catholic Diocese is located in the southeastern region of Malawi, in Sub-Saharan Africa. Malawi is a landlocked country bordered to the north and northeast by Tanzania, to the east, south, and southwest by Mozambique, and to the west by Zambia. The country is 900 kilometers long and a maximum width of about 250 km. varies in width from 80 to 161 kilometers. It has a total area of 118,484 square kilometers. 20% of its total area is covered by surface water bodies.[2]

[2] https://openknowledge.fao.org/Country-profile-Malawi-FAO (accessed 12 March 2025)

Zomba District is one of the 13 districts in Malawi's Southern Region whose total area is about 2,580 km², which is around 2.2% of Malawi's total land area. Zomba Diocese comprises the whole area of Zomba District and includes some parts of Chiradzulu and Machinga Districts, bringing its total land area to about 3,522 km².[3] The following are the main geographical features:

1.1.1 Topography

Zomba District has rolling hills and valleys. The highlands include Zomba Mountain, which rises to 2,087 meters above sea level, as well as Malosa Hill, Chikala Hills, and Ntonya Hill. The main valley is the Shire Valley, which runs through the Chingale area of the district. This valley provides water for irrigation. The varied topography leads to different climatic conditions, ranging from cold to warm and from rainy to dry weather across different parts of the district.[4]

1.1.2 Natural resources

Zomba District is rich in natural resources like minerals (including industrial and semi-precious minerals), large tracks of land for developments,[5] rivers, an inland lake called Lake Chirwa, and forests - mostly the state controlled Zomba Malosa Forest Reserve.[6] The Zomba-Malosa Forest Reserve is the main water catchment area for the perennial rivers flowing out of the mountain, especially Domasi, Mulunguzi, and Likangala. These rivers are important inlets for Lake Chilwa, which supports the small-scale fishing industry, water-bird hunting, and rice cultivation. The lake and its inlets provide water for both domestic and agricultural needs, including fisheries, and contribute positively to the socio-economic development of both the

[3] Zomba District Council, *Zomba District Socio-Economic Profile 2022–2030* (Zomba: Government Print. 2022), 12.
[4] Zomba District Council, *Zomba District Socio-Economic Profile 2022–203*, 32.
[5] The land use map of trading Centre's for the district is currently overwhelmed with unplanned structures. However, there is a potential area to increase the commercial and industrial activities towards Domasi Rural hospital and Sakata Technical College and improving market infrastructure and accessibility, according to Zomba District Council. Confer Zomba District Council. *Socio-Economic Profile- 2022-2030,* 155.
[6] Zomba District Council. *Socio-Economic Profile- 2022-2030,* 85.

district and the country. The rivers on the western side of the reserve drain into the Shire River, which originates from Lake Malawi and flows into the Zambezi. There is no endemic wildlife or rare species in the protected forests on Zomba Plateau due to extinction. Major threats to the forest reserve include encroachment, bushfires and deforestation from opening new farmland, preparing land for the growing season, hunting, and charcoal production.[7]

Among the natural resources of the area under Zomba Catholic Diocese are large tracts of land at Namitembo[8], Mayaka, and Pirimiti parishes among other areas. It also has a big forest reserve at Nankhunda Minor Seminary that provides timber and other non-timber products like honey and mushrooms. Despite having such large tracts of land the land is not fully utilized for self-reliance of the Church, among other things, due to a lack of proper plans on what to do with it on both short-term and long-term basis. As such there are times when such land has been exposed to encroachment by the people from the surrounded villages.

1.1.3 Climate

Climate is the average atmospheric condition of a place over a long period of time, usually the minimum being 30 years. Zomba District enjoys a subtropical highland climate. The hottest months are September, October, and November, with average temperatures between 28° and 30°C. June and July are the coldest months, with minimum temperatures dropping to 10°C. Annual rainfall varies from 600 to 1,500 mm, with most rain falling in February.

Due to climate change, Zomba is increasingly vulnerable to cyclones, flooding, and drought.[9] These have led to the deaths of some people, destruction of property and infrastructure

[7] Zomba District Council, *Socio-Economic Profile- 2022-2030,* 96.
[8] The diocese has opened a farm at this land that had been bought by missionaries way back in the years. It is doing fairly well with Maize production, though earlier attempts to grow other high value crops like ginger and peas failed due to unfavarourable soil conditions for such crops.
[9] Zomba District Council, *Socio-Economic Profile- 2022-2030,* 33.

like Church buildings, health facilities and school blocks, thereby derailing their usefulness for promoting self-reliance of the community members. Such cases have been common mostly in parishes close to Lake Chirwa like Pirimiti Parish, Matiya Parish and Sitima Parish as well as those close to Shire River like Lisanjala and Namitembo parishes. Thus, for instance, as reported by Zomba District Council's preliminary report on the disaster caused by persistent rainfall of 8 March 2019, 'the general impression so far is that this has been one of the devastating disasters in terms of magnitude. It is estimated that a cumulative total of 29,892 households have been affected so far, and the figure is most likely going to rise.'[10]

1.1.4 Transportation network

Despite its historical significance, Zomba has many underdeveloped road networks especially in the rural areas. During rainy season, such poor roads make mobility for essential services like Sunday Masses, school, health care and marketing a great challenge. Traditional Authority Mlumbe and Sub-Traditional Authority M'biza struggle the most with public transport access, especially during rainy weather due to poor road conditions. The islands of Chisi, Chinguma, Ngotangota, and Lungazi on Lake Chirwa in TA Mkumbira can only be reached by boat and air.[11]

[10] Zomba District Council report on the 2019 Disaster caused by persistent rainfall.
[11] Zomba District Council, *Socio-Economic Profile- 2022-2030,* 342.

1.2 DEMOGRAPHIC DETAILS

Demographic details, as statistical characteristics of a population are helpful for this research in order to describe the structure of the population. They also can help a researcher, a planner and members of the Church themselves to understand what the community is like and how people in the community live. The following are the main demographic details in this research:

1.2.1 Ethnic composition

Zomba is generally the land of immigrants composed of a population of various ethnic groups, cultures, and languages. The main and earliest ethnic groups in the land were the Mang'anja,[12] followed by the Yaos and the Lomwes. Today there are also other ethnic groups in the area like the Chewa, Ngoni, Tumbuka, and many other smaller ethnic groups. The district is also populated by non-Malawian Africans like those from Democratic Republic of Congo and from Burundi, who came as refugees, and non-Africans like Indians and Chinese who are greatest merchants in the country. Some of these immigrants have even accessed the Malawian citizenship.

In Zomba District the Yaos are found mainly in the Traditional Authorities of Mlumbe, Malemia, Kuntumanji, and Sub-TA Nkagula. The Yao people embraced Islam for various reasons, such as strengthening economic ties with their Arab trading partners. In some cases, kings used their commercial influence to secure loyalty from their subjects.[13]

The Mang'anja, and Lhomwes are primarily found in T/A Chikowi, T/A Kuntumanji, T/A Mwambo, and T/A Mkumbira.[14] The Lhomwe are part of the Makhuwa-Lomwe group.

[12] Mang'anja: These were the Chewa people who having settled along Lake Chilwa came to called Mang'anja since the name lake in Chewa is called Nyanja.
[13] Kudo Yuya, *Religion and Polygamy: Evidence from Livingstonia Mission in Malawi,* an academic paper. Confer https://ir.ide.go.jp>IDP00477-001 (accessed 21/09/2025).
[14] Zomba District Council, *Socio-Economic Profile- 2022-2030,* 50.

Traditionally, Lhomwes are animists who worship ancestral spirits. In regions like Thyolo, Mulanje, Chiradzulu, and Zomba, where they settled, they were sometimes called *Akapolo* (slaves) because they worked for local chiefs in exchange for land. In certain areas, they received derogatory names, such as *Angulu* (people from Ngulu Hills in Mozambique), for their inability to speak the local languages.[15]

1.2.2 Languages

Today the predominant languages of communication in the households are Chichewa (national language), Chinyanja and Chiyao. The other languages include Chilhomwe and English. However English speaking depends on the level of education completed. Chilhomwe is becoming a dead language because not many people use it for communication nowadays due to the fact that other tribes ridicule the Lhomwes as primitives when they use it.[16]

1.2.3 Human Population

Malawi has a population of approximately 20 million people up from 18.6 million in 2018 according to the 2018 Malawi Population and Housing Census. By the 2018 census, Zomba District had a population of 851,737, of which 386,502 were children. Statistics has it that this total population of the district declined slightly to 814,315 by 2022 due to migration and urbanisation patterns, but is projected to increase to 945,362 by 2030.[17]

[15] Boeder, R.B., *Silent Majority: A History of the Lomwe in Malawi* (Pretoria: Africa Institute of South Africa. 1984), 18-19.
[16] Zomba District Council, *Socio-Economic Profile- 2022-2030,* 50.
[17] Government of Malawi, National Statistics Office (NSO). Malawi Population and Housing Census 2018. May 2019. Confer ferhttps://malawi.unfpa.org/sites…2018%20Malawi%20Population%20and%20Housing% (accessed 22 September 2025).

Based on the 2024 annual statistical update of the diocese, Zomba Diocese has a population of 216,181 Christians. From this total number 59 are local clergy, 13 are priests religious, 79 are Religious Sisters, 9 are Religious Brothers and 35 are Catechists.[18] There are approximately 1,040 Small Christian Communities in the diocese. There are 20 parishes in the diocese. Research has shown that it is more women than men who attend and participate in Church activities including Small Christian Community meetings despite the fact that there are more men than women in leadership positions.[19]

1.2.4 Age and gender

The district has a young population, with 65% under the age of 25. As of 2022, the population projections for Zomba Rural estimate a total of 814,315. Of this number, 424,460 are female, making up 52%, while 389,855 are male, representing 48%.[20]

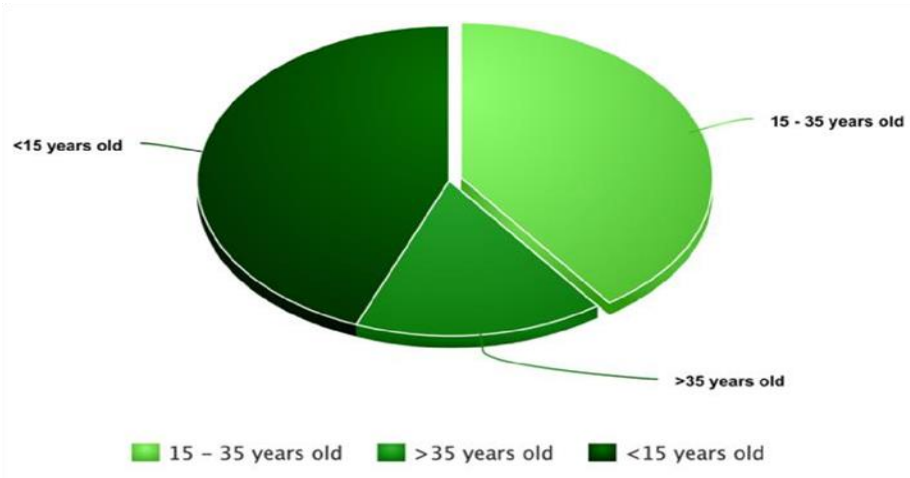


Figure 2: Malawi Population 2018 by Age Group

[18] Zomba Catholic Diocese, *Diocesan Archives*, 2025.
[19] Zomba Catholic Diocese, Diocesan Statistics, 2022.
[20] Zomba District Council, *Socio-Economic Profile- 2022-2030*, 57-58.

1.2.5 Literacy levels

Literacy is defined as the ability to read and write a sentence in any language. According to 2018 NSO statistics, there were 15 million people in Malawi aged 5 and older, with 10.3 million considered literate, resulting in a literacy rate of 68.6%. The literacy rate in the district is 68%, based on the 2018 Malawi Population and Housing Census (NSO, 2019), which is close to the national average. More men are literate compared to women, with rates of 71.6% and 67.9%, respectively.[21]

1.3 CULTURAL SET-UP

The cultural set-up is very important for this research for it enhances our understanding of people's values, behaviours and attitudes, ensures contextual relevance of the study and supports effective pastoral planning and implementation among other things.

The cultural landscape of Zomba District showcases the varied backgrounds of the Yao, Lhomwe, and Chewa, with the Mang'anja being the most prominent groups. Even with modernization and outside cultural influences, traditional practices, shared values, and social structures continue to shape identity and community bonds.

1.3.1 Cultural Values

The local people of Zomba District possess a rich cultural value legacy like respect for elders, hospitality, politeness, sense of solidarity, and mutual community care. Their sense of solidarity (Umodzi), is clearly manifested in occasions like initiation ceremonies, weddings, sickness and death, among other eventualities. However, with modernization and urbanization these social bonds are somehow being challenged by the cropping in of a spirit of individualism.

[21] Zomba District Council, *Socio-Economic Profile- 2022-2030,* 223.

1.3.2 Marriage System

Marriage system in Zomba District follows the matrilineal system. In this system family lines, inheritance, and chieftaincy go through the women, not the men. Thus, for instance, when a couple marries, the husband, called *mkamwini*, transfers from his own home of birth to settle at his wife's village and the children born from that couple belongs to the woman's lineage and not that of a man. With chieftainship the role usually passes to a nephew or niece, often a child of the chief's sister. According to the local people in Zomba this setup brings families closer together. This also means men do not have much authority in their wives' villages.[22] According to Mfune this marriage set-up sometimes becomes counter-productive since some men feel dispossessed and they do not have a sense of ownership to what they produce which makes them not put in enough of their potential.[23]

1.3.3 Initiation Ceremonies

The lives of the people of Zomba are marked by a number of rituals. Initiation ceremonies are usually performed as vehicles for such rituals. Among such initiation ceremonies are those marking the transition from youth to adult life, especially among the Yao people. Boys participate in rites like *chidontoto, jando , or lupanda,* while girls take part in *nsondo* or *zoma.* These events usually happen in secluded camps under the guidance of elders. The chief guide and owner of a camp is called *Namkungwi.* Instruction includes sexual education, morality, cultural values, responsibilities of adulthood, and preparation for marriage. Christian churches, including the Catholic Church, have sometimes challenged parts of the initiation process, particularly regarding sexual education, but have also sought to incorporate aspects of it into their practices. According to Catechist George Liundi Banda, such inculturation of the initiation rites has helped many

[22] Interviewed Mrs Lydia Kenamu (nee Mukaka), aunt to the researcher, on 24 March 2025.
[23] Interviewed (online) with Damazio Mfune, of University of Malawi, on 20 February 2026.

Christian families to appreciate the role of culture in religion and thus to find meaning in their religion from a cultural perspective.[24]

1.3.4 Traditional music and Dances

Despite the cropping in of modernity, traditional dances are a central part of cultural identity and are performed during special occasions like initiations, weddings, funerals, and the enthronement of traditional village leaders. Among the Yao, common dances include *likwata, chioda,* and *jiri.* The Mang'anja perform *zoma* and *mganda,* while the Lomwe are known for *masewe* and *tchopa.* Such dances express mood of the occasion, strengthen community bonds, and carry historical or moral instruction aspects. Through the latter aspects traditions are passed on from one generation to the other.

Note that during the missionary era, local dances were denounced as pagan and thus were not allowed in the Church's liturgical functions. But with Vatican Council II and the First Synod of Africa's call for urgency in inculturation saw the adoption, by the diocese, of local dances of the Yao and Lomwe, alongside local instruments like *ng'oma* and *maseche* into liturgy. According to remarks by Mr Paul Mtoliro, one of the proponents of local Yao music, 'we now feel at home in our liturgy and express ourselves in prayer from the basis of our traditional cultures as a self-reliant Church.'[25]

1.3.5 Traditional folktales and Proverbs

As typical among the African societies, traditional folktales and proverbs serve as sources of wisdom and moral guidance in Zomba District. Elders in the past used to narrate folktales to the children around supper time. Nowadays most of these folktales are shared to the young generation in formal schools as part of the syllabus. Usually when people are talking they make great use of

[24] Interviewed Catechist Yona Chikwakwa, of Sacred Heart Parish, on 7 August 2025.
[25] Interviewed Mr Paul Mtoliro, of Sacred Heart Parish, on 7 August 2025.

proverbs to communicate a deeper meaning. Some of the common educative proverbs used by the local people are: *Mutu umodzi susenza denga* (One head cannot carry a roof), which means teamwork is important and *Okakamira pantchito safa ndi njala* (One committed to work will not die of hunger), meaning hard work leads to success. By and large these proverbs emphasize communal traditional values like patriotism, teamwork, industriousness, and resilience.

1.4 SOCIAL SET-UP

Social set-up refers to the organization of the society. It includes social relationships, institutions, roles, and structures that shape how people live and interact. The social set-up will help us understand social relationships and structures as well as supporting contextualized pastoral planning among other things.

Zomba's social structure mixes traditional kinship systems, modern institutions, and religious influences. The district shows a contrast between rural areas that keep traditional practices and Zomba City, which is more modern and urbanized. In this section, the researcher will discuss the following sociological elements: social organization, gender roles, patterns of power, and household decision-making, access to and control over resources, social services and social challenges bordering on self-reliance.

1.4.1 Social organization

Traditionally, the majority of the tribes live in small villages under the leadership of traditional leaders like village headmen and Traditional Authorities. Among other responsibilities such leaders are custodians of order and harmony in the community. Thus, for instance, they are responsible for guardianship of traditions, land allocation, and settlement of disputes among the people under their jurisdiction. At the basic level, as the main social unit, marriage is socially

regulated. By this arrangement, the relatives of couples in the whole community are involved in such occasions as initiation of children into adulthood, marriage preparation and celebration.

Furthermore, social unity is expressed by a strong sense of togetherness whereby extended families play an important role in raising children, with uncles and grandparents having authority in moral and social issues over the young ones. Social bonds in African societies are particularly manifested during times of crisis such as hunger, illness, and death.[26]

1.4.2 Gender Roles, Patterns of Power, and Household Decision-Making

In the district, previously, and mostly in the traditional setups, gender roles are highly emphasised whereby male chauvinism leads to monopoly of leadership roles and power in communities, in the religious spheres also sometimes. This is more emphasized at the household level, whereby much of the household decisions like type of industry to initiate, of what to purchase, etc. are made by males. Furthermore, men typically control valuable assets like livestock and credit. Men usually, use their economic superiority to oppress women. This limits women's ability to fully engage in group planning and full participation in various endeavors including self-help projects.[27] However, with promotion of gender equality in the society, including in the Church, such a situation is changing. Thus, for instance, in Zomba Catholic Diocese, some of the critical responsibilities on the parish and diocesan levels have been chaired by ladies, whose leadership trajectory has been superb.

1.4.3 Social Services

In Zomba District the government departments, the NGOs, and the Church organisations collaborate very well in offering social services like education, health, and community

[26] John S. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*. (London: Heinemann, 1969), 106.
[27] Zomba District Council, *Socio-Economic Profile- 2022-2030,* 279.

development to the people. For Zomba Diocese these social services are mainly offered through the social department of the diocese.[28]

1.5 ECONOMIC SITUATION

Economy refers to all undertakings that are related to the production, distribution, and consumption of goods and services at different levels of the society. The economic situation directly shapes both the challenges and opportunities for achieving self-reliance. Thus in this study the economic situation is a key factor in understanding people's capacity, behavior, and level of participation in development initiatives.

In Zomba District, many households, especially in rural areas, live below the poverty line. Their main sources of income are on-farm enterprises and non-farm enterprises. The former includes rain-fed crop production, dimba (wetland) cultivation, livestock production, and tree crop farming. The latter includes small scale retail trade, food services, and transport called *boda-boba* and *Kabaza.* In Zomba City and some urban growing centres, the growth of education and health institutions, along with civil service jobs, supports a small middle-income class.[29]

1.6 POLITICAL SITUATION

According to Aristotle, the Father of Political Science, politics is the art of governing for the common good, aiming at the wellbeing of citizens in the polis (city-state). [30] The political situation is this research helps us to understand the system of governance, distribution of public resources, policies, leadership structures, and power relations that influence how society is

[28] See 2024 Annual Diocesan Statistics, Appendix no. 1 for details.
[29] Zomba District Council, *Socio-Economic Profile- 2022-2030,* 107.
[30] https://www.britannica.com/Aristotle-Politics, Philosophy, Logic (accessed 5 October 2025).

organized and managed. The political situation also provides an important factor that shapes both opportunities and limitations for Church initiaves.

In this section the researcher will discuss the following elements of the political life in Zomba District: key political structures, political women's involvement, and key .challenges these political arrangements pose for planning self-reliance.

1.6.1 Key political structures

The major parties in Zomba District are Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), People's Party (PP), Malawi Congress Party (MCP) and United Democratic Front (UDF). The current national ruling party is DPP, which won with landslide victory in the 16 September 2025 general elections.[31]

With reference to local development of the district, Members of Parliament and District Council, traditional authorities under the Mayor of Zomba are the operating structures that overlap in the district. These different actors mentioned above, interact constantly. Experience shows that sometimes they work together, but often they compete, and this mix strongly influences local development and efforts to plan for self-reliance. As Mr Pius Mtike, a well conversant man in communications and community mobilization, once said, 'When national and local political interests align, Zomba may see quicker release of resources and favourable project approvals. On the other hand, when they diverge, local planners face delays or redirected funds.'[32]

1.6.2 Political women's involvement

Women participation in leadership position is a good indicator in achieving gender equality. According to Zomba District Council, in Zomba, most leadership positions in influential

[31] Malawi Electoral Commission, *Results of the 16 September 2025 General Elections*, released on 24 September 2025.
[32] Interviewed Pius Mtike, of Sacred Heart Parish, on 22 September 2025.

committees and structures are dominated by men apart from MPs which has good representation for male and female (55%/45%) respectively. The situation is worse for women's representation as councillors and Area Development Committee (ADC) chairperson.[33]

1.7 RELIGIOUS SITUATION

The religious satiation in this study focuses on the distribution of religious affiliations, beliefs, practices and levels of participation among the population. In this research the religious situation will help us define the context of evangelization and pastoral work. It will also help us identify opportunities for collaboration and dialogue as well as supporting contextualized pastoral planning.

In this section the researcher will describe the religious situation of the area before Christianity, religious life today, and religious challenges affecting Self-Reliance in Zomba District.

1.7.1 Religious situation before the advent of Christianity

Traditionally, Malawi is a God fearing country. Before the advent of Christianity to the area of Zomba, the first group of the Lhomwe were practicing their own traditional religion. They believed in the Supreme Being called *Namalenga* (the Creator). They also believed strongly in ancestral spirits through whom they offered sacrifices to God for various intentions.

1.7.2 Religious life today

Today Zomba is made up of many Christian denominations as well as Islam. There is also a little presence of adherents of traditional religions. Based on the 2018 Population and Housing Census Report, Christians make up the majority in Zomba District in both rural and urban areas at 75.2% of the population. Other mainline Churches with a good following are the Anglican Church,

[33] Zomba District Council, Socio-economic profile, 2022-2030, 266.

Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (CCAP), Pentecostals, Baptists, and Adventists. Islam follows as the second-largest religion, accounting for 19.4%. Meanwhile, 0.38% of the population reported no religious affiliation, and 3.4% practice other faiths or traditional religions. Note that Pentecostal and African Independent Churches continue to grow quickly, especially in urban regions.[34]

1.8 BRIEF HISTORY OF ZOMBA DISTRICT

The historical background of the district provides insights into past events, experiences, trends and developments that shape the present realities. This historical details in this study will provide background to the study. It will also help us explain present conditions and attitudes. Furthermore, it would also help the research by informing strategic pastoral planning as well as identifying continuity and change.

1.8.1 Early History of Zomba District before British colonialism

Zomba's history shows a blend of local settlement, colonial rule, and missionary efforts, especially under the Montfort Missionaries. As mentioned in the demographic section, Zomba's primary history, in living memory, has notably been influenced and marked by the immigration and settlement of a number of Bantu-speaking groups, mainly the Yao and the Lomwe, who came in different phases. According to history, the Yao people, from Mozambique, started settling in the southern parts of Malawi, Zomba included, in the 19th century. In Zomba District they built a strong chiefdom Chief Malemia. Apart from farming, their other main preoccupation was trade, including slave trade. In their recent history they were popularly known for small scale businesses like tailoring and ground labour provision to South Africa. The Lhomwe people, who moved later

[34] Zomba District Council, *Socio-Economic Profile- 2022-2030,* 50.

to Zomba from Mozambique, settled in the area, and formed their own chieftaincy, too. Some of the notable chiefs are T/A Mkumbira and TA Mwambo.[35] Their main preoccupation was working in European estates in addition to farming.

1.8.2 Zomba District in the Colonial era

In 1891, the British Government declared Malawi, then called Nyasaland, as a British Protectorate. They did so under the influence of the Scottish Presbyterian mission from Blantyre who had come earlier to Malawi and whose security was being endangered by the Portuguese agenda, under Major Sepa Pinto, to take control of the area from their base in Mozambique. The British Government chose Zomba as the capital for the colonial administration because of its strategic location and mild climate. Thus many of the national institutions like Central Administration Office, a military base, police headquarters, and prison headquarters were established in Zomba District. The district also became a center for European settlers and missionary institutions, turning it into a cosmopolitan area. Most administrative and professional roles were filled by skilled European personnel, which improved local employment, but it remained under colonial control. The economy was primarily driven by European interests, and African involvement in economic decisions was minimal.

1.8.3 Zomba District in the Post-colonial era

From 1974, Malawi became a sovereign state under Dr Hastings Kamuzu Banda of Malawi Congress Party. Despite his autocratic rule, he encouraged Malawi to take Agro-based economy seriously both for their own development and the development of the nation. However, for Zomba District, since most of the prime lands for agriculture was in the hands of the Europeans, the locals

[35] John McCracken, *A History of Malawi, 1859–1966* (Woodbridge: James Currey, 2012), 45–47.

have never practiced serious farming for commercial purposes. This has been compounded by overpopulation leading to pressure for resources like land.

From 1994, Malawi came under democratic dispensation. With that the residents of Zomba have been opened to more opportunities like education, business, and jobs within and beyond the country. However most of the big businesses in the district are controlled by foreign investors like the Indians, the Chinese, and the Burundians, thus benefitting little the indigenous people who are more of employees than employers.

1.9 HISTORY OF ZOMBA CATHOLIC DIOCESE

In this research the History of Zomba Catholic Diocese is a key factor helping us understand the immediate ecclesiastical and institutional context of the Church under study. It also highlights growth and development of the local Church, helps us explain current pastoral practices and structures, informs strategic pastoral planning as well as supports contextualized and sustainable recommendations.

Catholic missionary activities in the area that became Zomba Catholic Diocese began with the wider arrival of Catholic missionaries in the country in the late 19th century. In Zomba Catholic Diocese, most of the pastoral programme of evangelisation was done among the Lhomwe. In this subsection the researcher will discuss the following historical elements: Catholicism and the Lomwe relationship, creation of vicariates in Malawi, Zomba Vicariate under Montfort Missionary care, establishment of Zomba Catholic Diocese under missionary tutelage, Montfort Missionaries' paternalistic model for sustainability of the mission of Evangelisation, Zomba Catholic Diocese after Missionary tutelage, and pastoral strategic planning initiatives of Zomba Catholic Diocese after the missionary era.

1.9.1 Catholicism and the Lhomwe relationship

In the predominantly Protestant and Mang'anja population a mass migration of the Lhomwe became a new group of potential converts to Catholicism. This was particularly evident in Nankhunda, Zomba, and Mulanje Missions. Here a large and prolonged immigration of the Lhomwe people became *a new and providential locus for Catholic evangelisation*.[36] The Lhomwe were eagerly seeking and accepting the welcome the Catholics gave. Furthermore, the Lhomwe movement towards Catholicism was only expected in the circumstances where they were taken as second-class people by the Mang'anjas and the Yaos;

> For *Corpus Christianum* provided them with an alternative society in which they could attain positions of authority and prestige denied them elsewhere. The Montfort Missionaries themselves too, facing resistance from the Presbyterian missionaries of Blantyre Mission and the Yao partners of Arabs, saw the Lhomwe people as their fellow foreigners in the land with whom they could easily partner with. However, although most Lhomwe adopted Christianity, their ancestral traditions continue to shape their daily lives.[37]

1.9.2 Creation of Vicariates in Malawi (then called Nyasaland)

On July 31, 1889, by a decree of Pope Leo XIII, *Ad Evangelizationis Officium*, the Missionaries of Africa, commonly known as White Fathers, were given a permission to establish the Apostolic Pro-Vicariate of Nyasa after discussions with the Portuguese Government. This pro-vicariate covered nearly all of what is now eastern Zambia and most of present-day Malawi. It was 'nearly all' because the Tanganyika Vicariate extended into the northern part of Malawi and northern Zambia. Following this arrangement, the Missionaries of Africa first arrived in Malawi in 1889. They landed at Mponda Village among the Yao along the shores of Lake Malawi. Their early efforts faced opposition from Islamic influence and political tensions between the British and

[36] Hubert Reijnaerts, Ann Nilesen, A. and Mathew Schoffeleers, *Montfort Missionaries in Malawi: Their Spirituality and Pastoral Approach* (Blantyre: Christian Literature Association in Malawi, 1997), 173.
[37] Ian Linden, *Catholics, Peasants and Chewa Resistance in Nyasaland, 1889-1939* (Berkeley and Los Angelos: University of California Press, 1974), 174.

the Portuguese. Consequently, in 1891, the initial team at Mponda left the mission and went to Tanzania. The British later arrived in Mponda and destroyed the Mponda Mission. However, the Pro-Vicariate of Nyasa continued to exist, and in 1897, it was elevated to the status of a vicariate with Joseph Dupont as its Apostolic Vicar.[38]

Due to the expansiveness of their missionary land in Nyasa, the Missionaries of Africa invited the Montfort Fathers to assist them in their mission of Evangelisation in Malawi. The Montfort Missionaries arrived in 1901, followed by the return of the White Fathers in 1902. In 1903, Rome established the Shire Prefecture Apostolic and entrusted it to the Montfort Missionaries, with Auguste Prezeau as Apostolic Vicar. He was succeeded by Bishop Louis Auneau (1910–1950).[39]

1.9.3 Zomba Vicariate and Diocese under Montfort Missionary Care

According to Fr Louis Marie Qeurrel, Bishop Louis Auneau had longed to start a mission at the centre of the British Protectorate in Zomba town so that the Catholic Church could achieve a certain visibility as a living reality and as a moral force to be reckoned with. In order to achieve that dream, they sought permission from the Colonial government. Mr Smith, the Governor of that time, allowed the Montfort Missionaries to open a mission in Zomba, despite a standing policy that no new mission be established within 10 miles of the centre of Zomba town and that the Presbyterians had already established themselves in Zomba town. Thus the Bishop bought Nankhunda land from a vast estate of the British Centre Africa (BCA), on the edges of Zomba Mountain, six miles from town. He still held a firm intention of moving the mission station into

[38] Ronald Vezeau, *The Apostolic Vicariate of Nyasa: Origins and First Developments 1889-1935* (Rome: Missionaries of Africa, 1989), 16-23. Also confer Fr Francis Bonongwe (Church Historian), Malawi Church History II – Unpublished Class notes, St Peter's Major Seminary, 2018-2019 Academic year, pp. 10-13.
[39] Hubert Reijnaerts, Ann Nilesen, A. and Mathew Schoffeleers, *Montfort Missionaries in Malawi: Their Spirituality and Pastoral Approach,* 8-10.

the capital at the first possible opportunity. The Mission took the name of a small stream called Nankhunda.[40] For 10 years there were always 2 or 3 missionaries there. One of the notable missionaries at Nankhunda Mission, and later at Zomba Mission, was Fr Joseph Delauney. Some notable outstations of Nankhunda Mission established were Namahiya in Pirimiti area, Mdende in Chikala area and Ntomai-Nkomangama Maseso on the plains towards Shire River[41]

It was after 10 years of running Nankhunda Mission that the mission station, seizing a chance offered by Divine Providence, moved out to Zomba town. Nankhunda then became a seminary of the vicariate. [42]

1.9.4 Establishment of Zomba Diocese under missionary tutelage

On 17th May 1959 Pope John XXIII elevated all the vicariates in Nyasaland to the status of dioceses. Zomba became a diocese in that same year under Bishop Lawrence Pullen Hardman, *SMM*. The diocese was made a suffragan of the metropolitan Archdiocese of Blantyre. The diocese comprised Zomba, Mangochi, and Dedza Districts. On 30 April of the year 1965 the Vicariate Apostolic Vicariate of Dedza was formed by the Apostolic letter *Esti Quotidie.* Later on Mangochi was made an Apostolic Prefecture from Zomba Diocese in 1969 with Bishop Alessandro Assolari appointed as her Prefect Apostolic on 18 October 1969. Later on Mangochi was made a diocese on 17 September 1973.[43]

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[40] Hubert Reijnaerts, Ann Nilesen, A. and Mathew Schoffeleers, *Montfort Missionaries in Malawi: Their Spirituality and Pastoral Approach,* 134-135.
[41]Hubert Reijnaerts, Ann Nilesen, A. and Mathew Schoffeleers, *Montfort Missionaries in Malawi: Their Spirituality and Pastoral Approach,* 162-167.
[42] Nankhunda *Montfort Missionary* Journal, 25 January 1920, pp. 1-8.
[43] Zomba Catholic Diocese, *Zomba Catholic Diocese Strategic Plan: July 2017-july 2020: Towards a Self-Reliant Church* (Balaka: Montfort Media, 2022), 11-12. Also confer Fr Francis Bonongwe (Church Historian), Malawi Church History II – Unpublished Class notes, St Peter's Major Seminary, 2018-2019 Academic year, 2-8.

1.9.4.1 Missionary Paternalistic model of sustainability of Evangelisation in Zomba

To a larger extent, the early Montfort Missionaries in Zomba Vicariate, and later on Zomba Diocese, used Paternalistic/Dependency Model of sustaining their mission of evangelization. By this model, the missionaries, taking a paternal role, hierarchical pastoral leadership, and based on imperial theory marred by the belief that Africans as a people are not competent or mature to manage their own affairs[44], made key decisions about Church management and other developments. They also provided for nearly every aspect of Church and community life. Thus, for instance, the missionaries built churches, schools, health centres, and convents using financial aid and materials from Europe. They also supplied material things like food, clothing, and salaries for catechists, teachers, and other workers. At Nankhunda and Pirimiti Missions, the early Fathers imported almost all materials like cement, liturgical items, and seeds for mission gardens from Europe.[45]

The effects of this model included the following: local people were attracted to Christianity by material help, and they became dependent on the missionary generosity, the Church was seen as a benevolent donor institution and not a community of shared responsibility. Thus, as Catechist George Liundi Banda remarked, people waited for every gift from the missionaries, including rosaries, and were not ready to provide for the needs of their Church communities. Parishioners rarely initiated projects without missionary approval or funding.[46]

Thus, by and large, despite the positive strategies to make the Church self-reliant in terms like recruiting and training local Church personnel, the early missionary paternalistic model was

[44] Okon, Etim E, 'Christian Missions and Colonial Rule in Africa: Objective and Contemporary Analysis.' *European Scientific Journal, ESJ*, vol. 10, no. 17, June 2014, pp. 192–209, https://doi.org/10.19044/esj.2014.v10n17p%p (accessed 5 October 2025).
[45] This model was also connected to a Civilisation model whereby the missionaries believed that evangelization meant not only preaching Christ but also 'civilising' African communities. It was connected to Charity/Welfare model whereby missionaries viewed evangelization as an act of mercy.
[46] Interviewed Catechist George Liundi Banda on 5 September 2025.

generous but unbalanced. While the generosity led to attracting many of the local people to the faith, in did not challenge them to take control of their new faith. Furthermore, it limited local initiatives, suppressed African cultural participation and created a 'receiver mentality' among the local people.

1.9.4.2 Missionary attempts towards self-reliance

Despite the paternalistic model of sustaining the mission of evangelization, the Montfort Missionaries also, with the passage of time, attempted towards self-reliance by encouraging co-responsibility and developing future-oriented structures. Examples of such attempts are: training and involvement of Catechists (Known as *Akapitawo* or *Agulupa* in Chichewa) in preaching, teaching in mission schools, and organizing and coordinating small lay groups of Christians; preparations of future local priests by the opening of Nankhunda Minor Seminary,[47] and formation of lay groups, faith communities, and devotional groups. The lay faith groups, faith communities, and devotional groups (especially the Legion of Mary) promoted mutual support, ongoing communal catechesis, and lay participation in pastoral ministries, planting the seeds for later formal Small Chritsian Community (SCC) structures.[48]

1.9.5 Zomba Diocese after Missionary Tutelage

After independence in 1964, the Church gradually became localized and the diocese has seen an increase in the number of the local clergy taking a leading role in the diocese at different levels. Thus, for instance, with reference to the episcopal office, after Bishop Hardman's episcopal

[47] Some of the first graduates from Nankhunda Seminary were Alfred Finye and Andrea Makhonyo, both Lomwe by tribe, who were ordained at Limbe Cathedral by Bishop Auneau of the Shire Vicariate in 1938 after their major seminary training at Kipalapala Major Seminary in Tanzania. Other notable graduates from Nankhunda Seminary who have contributed significantly to the Church in recent years include the Late Bishop James Chiona, the Late Bishop Felix Mkhori, Emeritus Bishop Allan Chamgwera, Archbishop Thomas Luke Msusa, and Archbishop George Desmond Tambala.

[48]Hubert Reijnaerts, Ann Nilesen, A. and Mathew Schoffeleers, *Montfort Missionaries in Malawi: Their Spirituality and Pastoral Approach,* 209-216.

service in Zomba from 1959 to 1970, he was succeeded by a number of bishops of indigenous origin. The first Malawian bishop, Rt. Reverend Matthias Chimole, held the episcopal office in the diocese of Zomba from 1970 to 1979. When Rt. Reverend Matthias Chimole was transferred to Lilongwe in 1979, Zomba Diocese was without a Bishop for a period of a year. At that time, Monsignor Sebastian Keyte acted as Vicar Capitular. On 31st May 1981, Fr Allan Chamgwera was consecrated bishop for the diocese. He served Zomba from 1981 until 2004. He was succeeded by Rt. Rev. Thomas Luke Msusa from 2004 to 2013. When Rt. Rev. Thomas Luke Msusa moved from Zomba Diocese to Blantyre Archdiocese, the see of Zomba became vacant. During this vacancy, Fr Henry Kaleso, the Diocesan Administrator, managed the diocese until he died in office on 13th May 2015. On 18th May 2015, the Holy See appointed Archbishop Thomas Luke Msusa of Blantyre Archdiocese as the Apostolic Administrator of Zomba Diocese. Almost six months later, on 15th October 2015, the Holy See appointed Fr George Desmond Tambala, a Discalced Carmelite, as bishop of Zomba Diocese. He passed the leadership of Zomba Diocese to Bishop Alfred Mateyu Chaima on 12th August 2023 after Chaima's appointment on 5th June 2023.

Today, the diocese has 59 diocesan priests. They are doing the mission of Evangelization and New Evangelisation in collaboration with 13 religious priests belonging to the following four religious congregations, Montfort Missionaries, Franciscan Capuchins, Stigmatine Fathers and Vincentian Missionaries of St Paul. There are also 79 Religious Sisters from the following congregations: Daughters of Wisdom, Servants of the Blessed Virgin Mary (SBVM), Benedictine Sisters of Divine Providence, Carmelites Sisters and Carmelite Missionary Sisters, and Innocentian Sisters working in the diocese. There are also a good number of lay apostolates and different lay groups like Catholic Women Association (CWA), Catholic Men Association (CMA), Legion of

Mary, Youth Christian Workers (YCW) and Young Christian Students (YCS). All these groups collaborate in the mission of Evangelisation of the Church.[49]

1.9.6 Paradigm shift: diocesan move towards participatory model of evangelisation

With insight from Vatican Council II and the Synod of Africa, the Church in Malawi, and, indeed, in Zomba, made a paradigm shift from a paternalistic model to a participatory model of doing evangelization in an attempt to make evangelization self-sustainable. Thus participative leadership empowers their followers by listening, visiting, trusting and involving them in decision-making. By this model, Evangelisation is a shared mission where local Christians actively participate in planning, decision-making, and implementation of Church activities. Furthermore, in this model evangelization aims at empowering the people spiritually, socially and economically (integral evangelization, as it were) to take responsibility of their Church and community.

This model values dialogue, partnership, inculturation, and local responsibility, leading to a self-reliant and mature Church. The effects of participative leadership, therefore, include increased occupational commitment, organizational allegiance and organizational ownership behavior, collaboration and leadership performance.[50] Hence after returning from the Synod of Bishops of 1994, the Episcopal Conference of Malawi released a pastoral letter, entitled *You, too, go into my vineyard* (Mat. 20:4), encouraging local dioceses, including Zomba, to pursue self-reliance as part of embracing local culture. There have been a number of initiatives by Zomba Catholic Diocese towards building a more self-reliant Church as discussed below:

[49] Zomba Catholic Diocese, Diocesan Archives, 2024.
[50] Roger Gill and Edward Burris, 'Leadership behavior and employee voice: Is the door really open?' *A Journal of Management*, no.40, 84-86.

a) Strengthening the pastoral structures supporting the Participatory Model

In an effort to support the participatory Model of Evangelisation the diocese from 1994 onwards strengthened the following pastoral structures: small Christian communities, parish pastoral councils, diocesan commissions, and pastoral department. Among these structures Small Christian Communities were seen as the foundation of participatory evangelization where among other things these SCCs handle local catechesis, prayer, social outreach, and resource mobilization. The Diocesan Pastoral Department that was established then aimed at consolidating the pastoral plan of the diocese, strengthening and coordinating the different structures of the pastoral life of the diocese, organizing trainings and review session for different stakeholders in the diocese.[51]

b) Diocesan Mini-synod on self-reliance and its implementation

According to Emeritus Bishop of Zomba Diocese, Rt. Rev. Allan Chamgwera, upon the return of the Malawian Bishops from the Synod of Africa, the diocese came up with a mini-synod, championed by a special pastoral steering team, on how to put the call for self-reliance from Rome into practice. Thus this special pastoral steering engaged priests and the laity on different levels into a dialogue on self-reliance.

According to Rt Rev. Allan Chamgwera what was at stake in the mini-synod was an issue of mind-set change for both the clergy and the laity. For him the clergy had to change from clericalisation of Church leadership to the improved inclusion of the laity in Church leadership. Furthermore, according to the Bishop, 'the Church is not only the clergy, but the People of God and the majority in the Church are the laity. Thus the

[51] Interviewed Fr Cosmas Tione Namphimba, of Zomba Catholic Diocese, on 30 August 2025.

important question for the clergy, as servant leaders, to ask them is *Titani* (What shall we do)? so that we decide our future together?[52]

According to Fr Cosmas Tione Namphimba, Pastoral Coordinator of the time, the mini-synod discussions used SWOT Analysis to engage the people on three main questions: *Where are we coming from? Where are we? Where do we want to go?* The questionnaire was prepared to collect data for this exercise but unfortunately the project was aborted due to lack of enough funds.[53] However some of the interventions that were made at that time included *Training for Transformation* Programmes for the clergy and the laity, construction of a Commercial Building at BCA Hills in Blantyre and opening of a filling station at Thondwe Trading Centre to generate funds for Mass stipends and their welfare, in that way empowering priests and reducing much financial burden on the laity.[54]

c) Development and implementation of a Diocesan Financial Policy

Under Rt Rev. Thomas Luka Msusa, as the Local Ordinary of the diocese, a diocesan financial policy was developed around 2010. This policy led to the developments of new projects like Maize Mill projects and capacity building by training the clergy in different disciplines like architecture, health, and business administration. Furthermore, there was introduced the office of parish clerks to assist the Financial Committee with data collection and recording in almost all the parishes. According to Fr Steven Likhucha, who was Bishop's Secretary and member of the Diocesan Project's Committee then, the diocese also had started a project of community development especially in most economically

[52] Interviewed Emeritus Bishop Allan Chamgwera on 11 July 2025.
[53] Inteviewed Fr Cosmas Tione Namphimba on 30 August 2025.
[54] Inteviewed Fr Cosmas Tione Namphimba on 30 August 2025.

challenged parishes like Chipini and Lisanjala parishes where trainings on technical skills like tailoring and modern agriculture such as smart agriculture were being conducted.[55]

d) Development of a Diocesan Strategic Pastoral Plan

Under Rt Rev. George Desmond Tambala, as the Local Ordinary of the diocese, a technical team formulated Zomba's first strategic pastoral plan with a theme *Towards a Self-Reliant Church* (2017–2022). This plan arose as global Catholic donor support decreased. Some of the strategic actions during this time were like Privatisation of Zomba Catholic Secondary School and the construction of Fr Frederick Scragg Private Primary School to provide quality education for social transformation and a little fundraising for the support of the pastoral activities of the Church. The other strategic actions included increased capacity building for priests, the religious, and the clergy through various trainings, within and beyond the country.

e) **Reviewed Strategic Pastoral Plan (2024-2028) today**

Under the leadership of Rt Rev. Alfred Mateyu Chaima, as the Local Ordinary of the diocese, the diocese revised the diocesan strategic pastoral plan. The revised plan, titled "Ownership and Responsibility in Building a Self-Reliant Church," focuses on local resource mobilization, sustainable investments, and lay participation. During the launch of the plan on February 2, 2024, which coincided with the national celebration of consecrated life in the Church and the Pontifical Missionary Union (PMS), Rt. Rev. Alfred Chaima, Bishop of Zomba Diocese, called on Catholic faithful to collaborate for successful implementation. "Everyone must be involved, from priests and religious leaders to lay men and women at the grassroots level. We need to start implementing the strategic pastoral

[55] Interviewed Fr Steven Likhucha, of Zomba Catholic Diocese, on 3 October 2025.

plan without wasting our precious time." [56] Some of the activities during this period of time are trainings, recollections and retreats for various Church groups with an aim to deepen their spiritual and pastoral lives.

CONCLUSION

For a proper understanding of the impact of diocesan strategic pastoral planning on building a self-reliant Church, based on Zomba Catholic Diocese of Malawi as a Case Study, this first chapter has provides the background of Zomba District in general and Zomba Catholic Diocese in particular. To that end we have discussed the following domains of the background: geographic location, demographic data, historical context, cultural context, social context, economic situation, political landscape, and religious situation. The main sources of this information are Church historical documents, Socio-Economic Profile (SEP) of Zomba District, interviews, and personal experience of the researcher.

As discussed in the chapter, the Diocese of Zomba has gone through various stages of development from the time of the missionary tutelage to the time of the local Church under local leadership.[57] In both times there were some efforts towards building a self-reliant Church. However some form of dependency on external support somehow continued to exist after the missionary era and even with the intervention of the Zomba Diocesan Strategic Pastoral Plan. The next chapter will analyse the Zomba Diocesan Pastoral Strategic Planning to determine the impact of strategic pastoral planning on building a self-reliant Church.

[56] Luke Bisani, article in *AMECEA Social Communications Newsletter*, 9 February 2024.
[57] This year, 2026, as the Catholic Church celebrates 150 of its existence in Malawi, Zomba Catholic Diocese has clocked 114 of catholicity since the arrival of the first missionaries at Nankhunda in 1912.

CHAPTER TWO

THE IMPACT OF DIOCESAN STRATEGIC PASTORAL PLAN ON BUILDING A SELF-RELIANT CHURCH

INTRODUCTION

This Chapter, which is the second stage of the Pastoral Cycle, is about Social Analysis on the impact of diocesan strategic pastoral planning. The case study for this study is Zomba Catholic Diocese, in Zomba, where the research was conducted. Data was collected from various participants including members of the Diocesan Curia, the clergy, members of the parish councils, religious men and women, members of Small Christian Communities, members of the Catholic Women Association, Catholic Men Association, and the youth. A total of 304 respondents from all the 20 parishes of the diocese participated through the questionnaires, interviews, and focus group discussions.[58]

The data was analysed qualitatively and quantitatively to identify trends, patterns, and themes under each SWOT category. The analysis integrates both empirical data and some theoretical reflections, relating outcomes to the study objectives and relevant theories on strategic plan and management in general.

In the first section of this Chapter, the researcher will present SWOT analyses from the current research and relate it with baseline data from the period between 2017 and 2025[59] as well as the background of the diocese, from chapter 1, to assess the progress. In the second section the researcher will discuss the general and specific impact of the Zomba Diocesan Strategic Pastoral

[58] Note that most of the respondents responded as individuals. Few, like parish pastoral teams, parish council executive, SCCS and the youth responded as a group Focus Group Discussion.
[59] Note that the first diocesan strategic plan run from 2017 to 2022. Thus under this research, data from 2023-2025, which is part of the present diocesan strategic plan, is taken as a continuum.

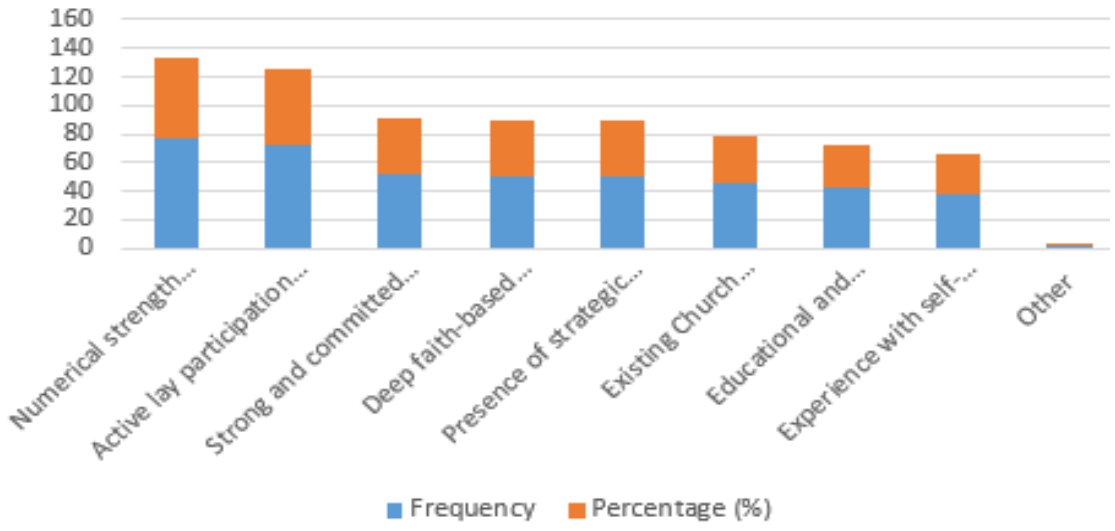
plan in building a self-reliant Church. In the third section the researcher will discuss the main challenges and opportunities from the study. In the fourth section the researcher will present the summary of the main challenges and opportunities from the study.

2.1 SWOT ANALYSIS AND IMPACT ASSESSMENT

This section presents and analyses data collected on the impact of the Diocesan Strategic Pastoral Planning in building a self-reliant Church in the Catholic Diocese of Zomba in Malawi. Data was gathered using the SWOT Analysis framework to identify strengths and weaknesses as well as external opportunities and threats affecting the implementation of the strategic plan.

2.1.1 Internal Strengths of the Diocesan Strategic Plan Implementation

The study revealed several internal strengths that contribute to building a self-reliant Church in Zomba Catholic Diocese. The graph below shows data about the responses on question 5a of the Kobo Toolbox Questionnaire, which is about the strengths that contribute to self-reliance. 129 out of 135 respondents answered this question (6 were without data). The graph below shows the results of the responses:



Graph 1: ***Internal strength of the Diocesan Strategic plan implementation***

Value	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Numerical strength and teamwork among priests, the religious, and the laity	77	57.04
Active lay participation with well-organized lay apostolates (e.g., CMA, CWA, youth groups)	72	53.33
Strong and committed structures such as Strategic Plan Coordinating Committees, Small Christian Communities, and lay group leadership	52	38.52
Deep faith-based community spiritually committed to its vision and mission rooted in Catholic identity	51	37.78
Presence of strategic planning and management skills among members	51	37.78
Existing Church structures and institutions (parish halls, schools, health centers)	45	33.33
Educational and human capital resources	42	31.11
Experience with self-help and development initiatives	38	28.15
Other	2	1.48

Based on these responses, three main strengths in their order are: Numerical strength and team work among priests, the religious and the laity (77 votes); active lay participation and well organized lay groups apostolates like CMA, CWA and the Youth groups (72 votes), and Deep faith-based communities spiritually committed to its vision and mission rooted in the Catholic identity (51 votes). Below is the discussion of these strengths:

2.1.1.1 Numerical strength and team work among priests, the religious and the laity

Based on this first strength, as supported by the statistics of Zomba Diocese under Demographics in Chapter 1, one would see human resources as constituting a powerful tool to bring about positive change in building a self-reliant Church in the diocese. As the comparative analysis of diocesan strengths between 2016 and 2023 demonstrates, human resources constitute a powerful tool for fostering pastoral engagement and promoting self-reliance. The Catholic Church in Zomba enjoys a larger membership compared to other mainline churches, such as the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (CCAP). As Likhucha observed, “the diocese is rich in

human capital through priests, the religious and laity and with stable structures like Small Christian Communities."[60]

2.1.1.2 Active participation and well organized lay apostolates and ecclesial groups

The second major strength, supported by 72 votes, is the active participation of the laity through well-organized groups such as the Catholic Men's Association (CMA), the Catholic Women's Association (CWA), and youth groups. Comparative analysis of diocesan strengths shows that lay participation has grown significantly between 2016 and 2023, with Small Christian Communities (SCCs) becoming more numerous and active. These communities provide platforms for spiritual formation, pastoral training, and grassroots planning, ensuring that the laity contributes meaningfully to parish and diocesan life.

According to research findings, the greatest active lay group is the Catholic Women Association (CWA).[61] The CWA exemplifies the empowerment of lay groups. Through sustainable income-generating projects such as rental buildings and maize mills, the CWA actively supports diocesan initiatives, contributes to liturgical activities, and participates in broader Church forums such as AMECEA. According to Mrs. Christina Lakiyon, Diocesan CWA Chairlady, their success in implementing strategic plans stems from constant communication, determination, teamwork, and innovation in resource mobilization from the grassroots levels. According to her, with reference to financial self-reliance 'every woman commits herself to contribute what they can afford. The collected amount is then invested in projects to bring about multipliers effect.' This growth in lay engagement underscores the positive change in the grassroots structure of the Church and demonstrates the transformative impact of organized, empowered lay groups in advancing the mission of self-reliance.

[60] Interviewed Fr Steven Likhucha, of Zomba Catholic Diocese, on 12 September 2025.
[61] Confer question no. 2 of Kobo Toolbox questionnaire.

2.1.1.3 Strong and committed structures like Strategic Plan Implementation Coordinating Committees, SCCs, and lay leadership and groups

According to the findings strong and committed structures like Strategic Plan Coordinating Committees, SCCs, and lay leadership form strong and essential linkages of the strategic plan between the diocesan and grassroots levels. These strengths show that the diocese possesses a significant internal capacity to implement the plan effectively.

Furthermore, according to responses to the poll questionnaire the diocesan strategic plan, under the leadership of the Local Ordinary and the Diocesan Strategic Plan Coordinating Committee, provides a shared vision that unites clergy and laity around pastoral priorities, such as evangelization, social development and stewardship.[62]

Additionally, the baseline survey also highlights the vibrancy of the laity and the availability of various Church groups, such as the Catholic Women Association (CWA), Small Christian Communities (SCCs), Youth groups, and the more recent Catholic Men Association (CMA). From 2016 to 2023, these groups have become increasingly active in participating in Church mission and development projects. This progress underscores the critical role of organized lay participation in promoting self-reliance. Well-structured groups facilitate coordinated activities, resource mobilization, and social outreach, thereby complementing the Diocese's strategic objectives.

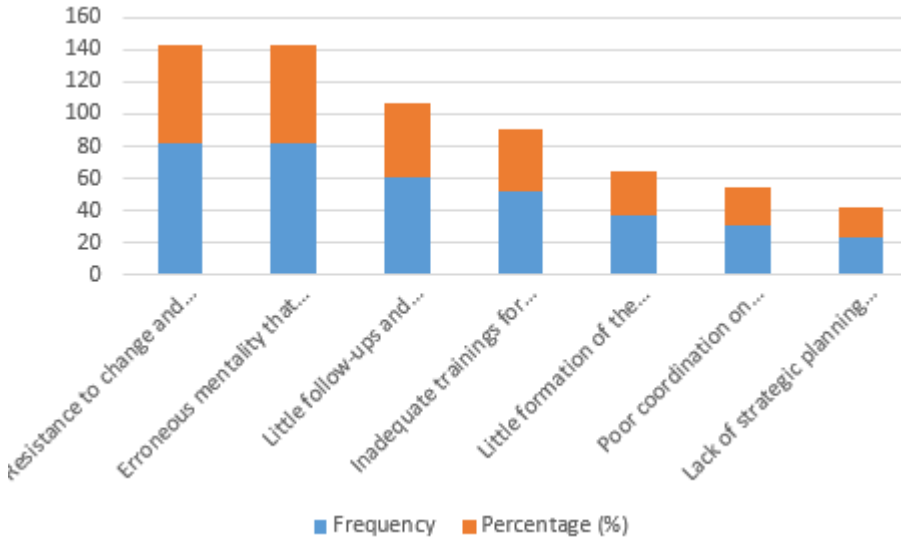
By and large the comparative analysis of diocesan strengths between 2016 and 2023 reinforces the findings above. Human resources remain a stable and foundational strength, while the number and activeness of SCCs and lay groups have increased, enhancing the Church's grassroots capacity. The engagement of experts and businesspeople in pastoral initiatives has improved, reflecting a growing commitment of skilled individuals to the mission. Lastly, lay

[62] See poll questionnaire, appendix 2.

empowerment continues to deepen, with stronger participation in planning, resource mobilization, and execution of diocesan priorities. Collectively, these strengths indicate that the diocese possesses significant internal capacity to implement the strategic plan effectively, foster ownership among clergy and laity, and advance toward a self-reliant Church.

2.1.2 Weaknesses in the Implementation of the Zomba Diocesan Strategic Plan

Despite notable strengths, several internal weaknesses hinder the effective realization of a self-reliant Church in the diocese. Based on responses to question 5b of the Kobo Toolbox questionnaire, about weaknesses, 126 out of 135 respondents answered this question (9 were without answers). The graph below shows the results of the responses:



Graph 2: ***Weaknesses of the strategic plan implementation***

Value	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Resistance to change and stagnant attitude of handouts	82	60.74
Erroneous mentality that the Church is rich and thus needs not much support	82	60.74
Little follow-ups and discussions on planned activities and their progress by leaders	61	45.19
Inadequate trainings for different categories of Christians on the diocesan strategic plan	52	38.52
Little formation of the Christians on self-reliance and stewardship	37	27.41
Poor coordination on planning, contextualization and implementation of the diocesan strategic plan on different levels of the Church	31	22.96
Lack of strategic planning and management skills	24	17.78

Based on the data collected, the two greatest weaknesses scoring 82 votes each are: Resistance to change and stagnated attitude of handouts; and erroneous mentality that the Church is rich and already self-reliant. The third weakness is that there is little follow-ups and discussions on the planned activities and progress around the activities by leaders (61 votes). Below is the discussion on these weaknesses:

2.1.2.1 Resistance to change and stagnant attitude of handouts

The study reveals that some people are not ready to do things the new way and therefore resist change. This aligns with Kotter's observation that "people cling to the familiar because the status quo is a powerful gravitational force.[63] For instance, some leaders remain attached to the old way of planning pastoral activities, relying on traditional and often mediocre methods of mobilizing resources, and implementing activities without long-term assessment. As Mintzberg notes, such tendencies reflect 'the trap of routine patterns that persist even when the environment demands adaptation.'[64]

Some Christians, shaped by a stagnant attitude linked to the handouts they previously received from missionaries, or currently get from NGOs and Church partners, are not prepared to contribute meaningfully to the Church's financial and material needs. Instead of embracing active participation, they consider themselves primarily as "receivers," which hampers the growth of a sustainable, self-reliant Church.

[63] John P. Kotter, *Leading Change* (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 1996), 44.
[64] Henry Mintzberg, *The Rise and Fall of Strategic Planning* (New York: Free Press, 1994), 220.

2.1.2.2 Erroneous mentality that the Church is rich and already self-reliant

A recurring challenge is the widespread erroneous belief among some Catholics that the Church is already adequately resourced and self-reliant. Historically, this mindset discouraged active contributions and promoted dependency. While the 2023 survey indicates some improvement, especially in urban areas, rural parishes continue to display this perception. In the context of strategic plan implementation, this mentality manifests as a stagnant attitude toward financial and material stewardship. Many Christians, accustomed to receiving support from missionaries or NGOs, regard themselves primarily as recipients rather than active contributors. This limits the diocese's ability to mobilize resources sustainably and slows progress toward self-reliance.

2.1.2.3 Weak lay involvement in planning and follow-up

Another significant weakness is weak lay involvement in the planning and the follow-up on the strategic plan implementation progress. When leaders fail to engage the laity in planning or progress monitoring—sometimes due to elitist perceptions—the laity tends to relax, leading to stagnation in planned activities. Thus strategic plan's implementation suffers when there is no consistent co-planning, review, or follow-up meetings with the laity to assess progress. Higgins emphasizes that 'without systematic review, plans lose their guiding function and deteriorate into mere intentions,'[65] and Bryson notes that 'effective strategic implementation requires ongoing attention, feedback, and learning.'[66] Little follow-up and discussion involving the laity on planning and progress of activities lead to poor participation of the laity in the strategic plan implementation.[67]

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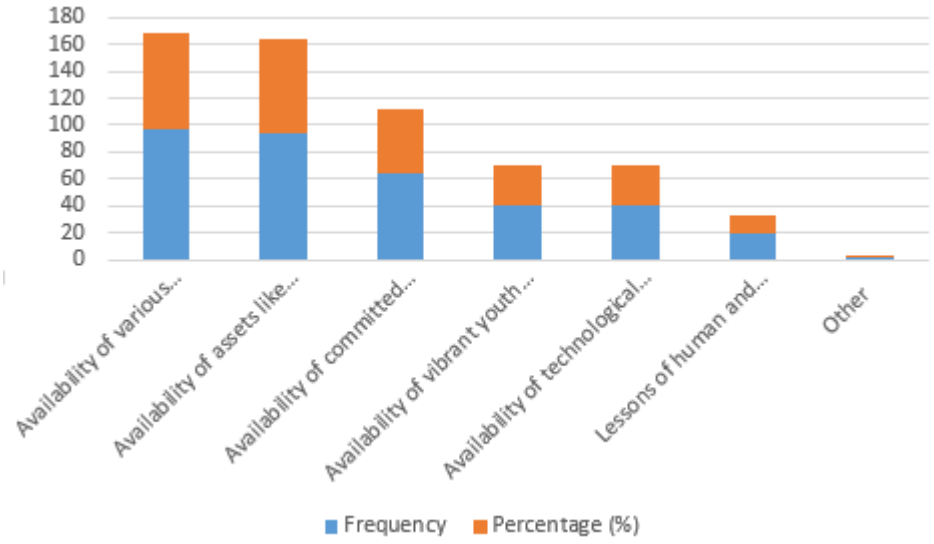
[65] James M. Higgins**,** *The Management Challenge*, (New York: Macmillan, 1994), 215.
[66] John M. Bryson**,** *Strategic Planning for Public and Nonprofit Organizations* (5th ed.) (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2018), 276.
[67] George A. Steiner**,** *Strategic Planning: What Every Manager Must Know* (New York: Free Press, 1979), 162.

Furthermore, this research also noted some lack of active participation in Church activities and poor attendance, especially among men and youth in Small Christian Communities (SCCs). Although there has been some improvement due to the involvement of organized lay groups such as the Catholic Men Association (CMA) and other ecclesial movements, overall engagement remains uneven. In the strategic plan context, low participation reduces the effectiveness of pastoral programs and diminishes communal accountability, making it difficult to implement initiatives across all parishes consistently.

By and large, with reference to the implications of these weaknesses for strategic plan implementation we have seen that all these weaknesses collectively hinder the diocese's efforts to implement its strategic pastoral plan. The combination of resistance to change, stagnated attitudes toward resource contribution, uneven participation, weak leadership oversight, coupled with inadequate doctrinal knowledge, constrains the Church's journey toward self-reliance.

2.1.3 Opportunities for enhancing diocesan self-reliance

The SWOT Analysis identifies several external opportunities that can enhance diocesan self-reliance. Based on question 5c, on the opportunities that can enhance diocesan self-reliance, 129 out of 135 respondents answered this question (6 were without data). The graph below shows the results of the responses:



Graph 3***: Opportunities for the advancement of a self-reliant Church***

Value	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Availability of various talents among members	97	71.85
Availability of assets like land for future developments	94	69.63
Availability of committed Christian professionals	64	47.41
Availability of vibrant youth generation with innovative ideas	40	29.63
Availability of technological potential for digital pastoral communication	40	29.63
Lessons of human and material self-reliance from the early missionaries in the diocese	19	14.07
Other	1	0.74

Based on this data, the greatest opportunity for the Zomba Diocesan strategic planning for building a self-reliant Church is the availability of talents and skills among members of the Church (71.85%). It is seconded by the availability of assets like land and infrastructure for future Church plans and development (69.63%). The third opportunity is the availability of committed professionals ready to offer their services for free (47.41%). Below is the discussion on the opportunities:

2.1.3.1 Availability of talents and skills among members of the Church

The first opportunity, the availability of talents and skills among members of the Church—and the third opportunity, the presence of committed professionals ready to offer their services for

free, are closely connected as elements under human resources. Being an educational hub and with a city set-up, Zomba Diocese benefits from a wide presence of Christians from diverse professions, including education, judiciary, agriculture, business, research, and construction. The expertise of these professionals, combined with their willingness to work for the Diocese without remuneration, or with considerate fee charges, constitutes a significant strategic advantage. This reflects what Bryson highlights in nonprofit strategic planning: "volunteer professionals often contribute high-level skills that greatly extend an organization's capacity when properly engaged."[68]

Human resource theorists emphasize that people are at the center of organizational success. As Armstrong notes, "human capital remains the most valuable asset of any institution, for it is people who innovate, solve problems, and drive strategy forward."[69] Drucker reminds organizations that "the productivity of knowledge workers determines the performance capacity of the institution."[70] Similarly, resource-based theorists like Barney affirm that "rare, skilled, and committed human resources form a source of sustainable competitive advantage."[71] For the diocese, these gifts represent not only human capital but also a theological expression of stewardship—offering one's talents for the growth of the Church.

2.1.3.2 Availability of assets like land and infrastructure for future Church plans and development

The second opportunity, from the baseline survey to date, is that the diocese has consistently possessed significant land and infrastructural assets. Cases in point are large tracts of

[68] John M. Bryson, *Strategic Planning for Public and Nonprofit Organizations* (5th ed.), 218.
[69] Michael Armstrong, *Armstrong's Handbook of Human Resource Management Practice* (14th ed.) (London: Kogan Page, 2023), 54.
[70] Peter F. Drucker, *Management Challenges for the 21st Century* (New York: Harper Business, 1999) 85.
[71] Jay Barney, "Firm Resources and Sustained Competitive Advantage," in *Journal of Management 17,* no. 1 (1991), 112.

land at Namitembo, Zomba Cathedral, Mayaka, and Pirimiti parishes. Most of the land in these places, apart from being used a bit by the diocese for agriculture and construction, is not yet fully utilized for development and income generation. One respondent, Fr. Joseph Makawa, the Bishop's Secretary, even suggested expanding agricultural production at diocesan farms at Namitembo and Pirimiti parishes.[72] Another respondent, Paul Malikebu, commented that Zomba has great construction potential around Zomba Cathedral for service provision to the community and for commercial purposes.[73] Other diocesan lands, including the one in Machinga and those purchased in the commercial city of Lilongwe, have not yet been used for income generation. Apart from such lands that the diocese already possesses, there is great possibility of purchasing new lands for future plans of the diocese in urbanizing centres like Songani, Liwonde, and Jali where government land-selling projects are underway.

Furthermore, the diocese has a number of infrastructures, like Thondwe Pastoral Centre, St Joseph's Carpentry Shop, various schools and health centres which can bring more funds to the diocese when the commercial aspects of such institutions are fully planned and utilized, as is the case with Zomba Catholic Secondary School and Fr Frederick Scragg Private Primary School. All such opportunities can help the diocese in its plans of building a self-reliant Church if used to the maximum.

In addition to the above opportunities, other opportunities obtained from Chapter 1 of this thesis are a favourable socio-economic environment and potential partnerships. In Malawi, in general, and in Zomba District, in particular, there is a growing entrepreneurship and government emphasis on local development. This situation aligns well with the Church's mission of self-reliance. As Chinsinga observes, Malawi's development policies in recent years have increasingly

[72] Interviewed Fr. Joseph Makawa, Bishop's Secretary, Zomba Diocese, 12 August 2025.
[73] Interviewed Paul Malikebu, of Sacred Heart Parish, on 18 August 2025.

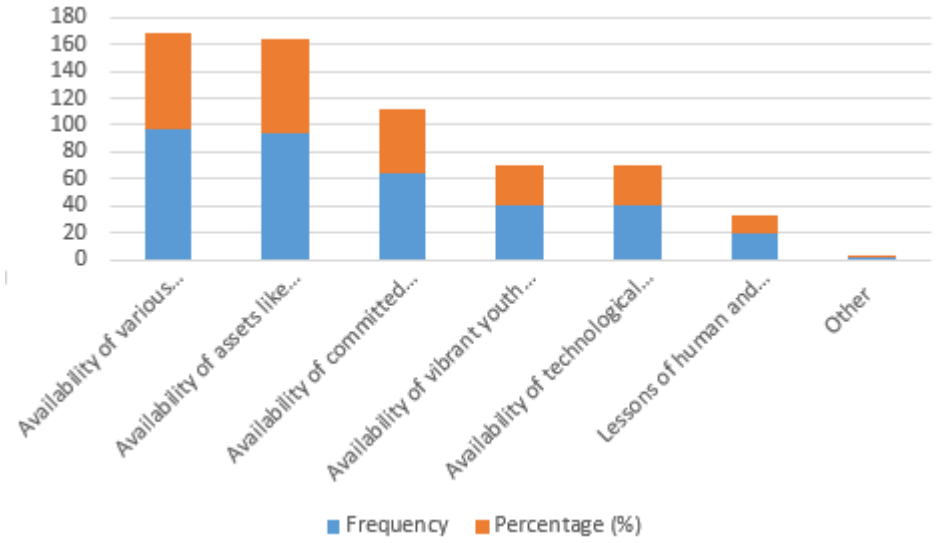
promoted 'local participation, entrepreneurship, and community-driven development.'[74] There are also many potential partnerships with government institutions like the Agricultural Research Centre, the University of Malawi, and various NGOs operating in the district that can enhance and support the diocese in its self-reliance drive. While the 2016–2023 survey shows that this potential has not been fully exploited, there remains a strong opportunity to engage these partners in projects supporting financial sustainability and evangelization efforts, echoing Eade's argument that 'local partnerships are essential for strengthening institutional capacity and long-term development impact.'[75]

By and large, Zomba Catholic Diocese possesses enduring and evolving opportunities that, if strategically harnessed, can significantly advance the vision of a self-reliant Church. Human resources like talented and committed professionals, vibrant laity and organized groups remain the greatest asset, complemented by underutilized land, infrastructure and potential partnerships. While progress has been made between 2016 and 2023, particularly in lay engagement and professional involvement, greater strategic utilization of assets and external collaborations is needed to fully realize the Diocese's self-reliance objectives. These opportunities, combined with deliberate planning, stewardship, and innovation, provide a strong foundation for sustainable growth and mission fulfillment.

[74] Blessings Chinsinga, *The Political Economy of Malawi* (Johannesburg: Jacana Media, 2021), 142–43.
[75] Deborah Eade, *Capacity-Building: An Approach to People-Centred Development* (Oxford: Oxfam, 1997), 52.

2.1.4 Threats that may hinder the plan's implementation

Respondents identified threats that may hinder the plan's implementation under question 5d of the Kobo Toolbox. 127 out of 135 participants responded to this question (8 were without data). Below is the graph of the results from the responses:



Graph 4: ***Threats for the implementation of the diocesan strategic plan***

Value	Frequency	Percentage (%)
General poverty and high unemployment levels	79	58.52
Discontinuity of planned pastoral programmes and projects with leadership changes	78	55.52
Lack of contextualization of the diocesan strategic plan	60	44.44
Lack of strategic financial planning	53	39.26
Harsh economic factors like economic instability	57	42.22
Minimal lay participation in decision-making process	21	18.52
Theological and cultural attitudes that spiritualise poverty	15	11.11
Weak leadership and governance	14	10.37
Limited local human capacity building	13	9.63

Based on this data the three main threats to the implementation of the diocesan pastoral strategic plan are: general poverty and high unemployment levels in the community; discontinuity of planned programmes and projects with leadership change; and lack of contextualization and implementation of the diocesan strategic plan by some parishes, institutions and lay groups. Below is the discussion on these threats:

2.1.4.1 General poverty and high unemployment levels in the community

One of the most enduring threats to the diocese has been the poor national economy and the high poverty levels among the faithful. The 2016 baseline survey indicated that widespread poverty limited contributions from parishioners and constrained the diocese's capacity to fund pastoral and developmental activities.[76] By 2023, poverty levels had further increased, compounded by rising costs of living.[77] According to the current study, this threat affects 58.52% of respondents, illustrating that economic hardship continues to be a significant barrier to the successful implementation of the diocesan strategic pastoral plan. The persistent poverty directly influences the Church's ability to mobilize resources for both pastoral and social projects, undermining financial self-reliance and limiting strategic progress, consistent with Nkhoma's observation that 'economic vulnerability in Malawi severely limits local institutional capacity to finance development initiatives.[78]

2.1.4.2 Discontinuity of planned programmes and projects with leadership change

Another ongoing threat identified by both the baseline survey and current findings is the discontinuity of programs and projects following leadership transitions. The 2016 baseline survey noted that delayed orientation and leadership changes hindered smooth implementation of pastoral initiatives.[1] By 2023, while the orientation of leaders had improved, frequent transfers of priests and changes in key positions continued to disrupt continuity, as highlighted by 55.56% of the respondents in the current study. Such disruptions weaken program sustainability, reduce accountability, and make it difficult to maintain momentum on long-term strategic goals. This

[76] Diocese of Zomba, *Baseline Pastoral and Socio-Economic Survey Report*, Zomba Catholic Diocese, 2016, 34.
[77] National Statistical Office (Malawi), *Integrated Household Survey 2022–2023: Poverty Report* (Zomba: NSO, 2023), 17–18.
[78] Dalitso Nkhoma, "Economic Constraints and Institutional Development in Malawi," in Development Challenges in Malawi, ed. Henry Chingaipe (Lilongwe: MISEP, 2020), 112.

reflects Kotter's observation that 'institutional change is most vulnerable during leadership turnover, when vision and processes risk being lost or diluted.'[79] Without mechanisms for continuity, planned initiatives risk stagnating or being abandoned, thus undermining the diocese's vision for a self-reliant Church, a challenge also noted by Bryson, who argues that 'strategic effectiveness depends on stable leadership structures and consistent follow-through.'[80]

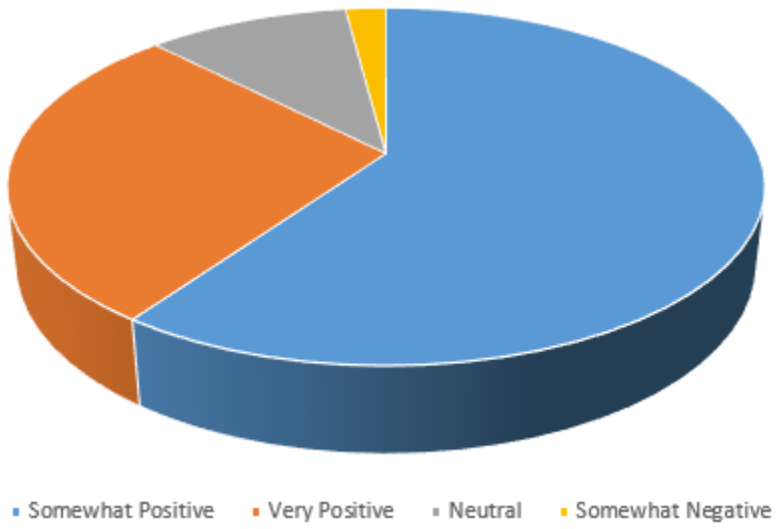
2.1.4.3 Inadequate Utilization and Contextualization of the Strategic Plan

The baseline survey indicated that while the introduction of strategic pastoral planning represented a major advancement, practical usage was minimal.[81] By 2023, the plan existed but was often underutilized, with many parishes, institutions, and lay groups failing to contextualize it within their specific settings. The current study identifies this threat in 44.44% of respondents. When the plan is treated merely as a document rather than a guiding framework for pastoral action, its intended impact is significantly diminished. This aligns with Bryson's assertion that 'strategic plans become ineffective when they are not adapted to local operational contexts.'[82] This lack of contextualization and follow-through prevents the diocese from translating strategic intentions into measurable results, reflecting Higgins's view that 'plans lose value when not actively implemented and integrated into daily decision-making processes.'[83] Ultimately, the plan risks remaining a theoretical rather than practical tool for building a self-reliant Church.

2.2 IMPACTS OF THE DIOCESAN STRATEGIC PLAN ON BUILDING A SELF-RELIANT CHURCH

[79] John P. Kotter, *Leading Change* (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 1996), 57.
[80] John M. Bryson, *Strategic Planning for Public and Nonprofit Organizations* (5th ed.), 289.
[81] Diocese of Zomba, Baseline Pastoral and Socio-Economic Survey Report, Zomba Catholic Diocese, 2016), 52.
[82] John M. Bryson, *Strategic Planning for Public and Nonprofit Organizations* (5th ed.), 214.
[83] James M. Higgins, *The Management Challenge*, 203.

Note that four tools, namely Kobo Toolbox, Likert, poll phone tool, interviews/including Focus Group Discussion were combined to source the general and specific impacts of the diocesan strategic plan on building a self-reliant Church. The graph below shows how people have evaluated the impact of the diocesan strategic pastoral planning in general based on 4a question of kobo toolbox questionnaire:



Graph 5: ***General impact of the diocesan strategic plan***

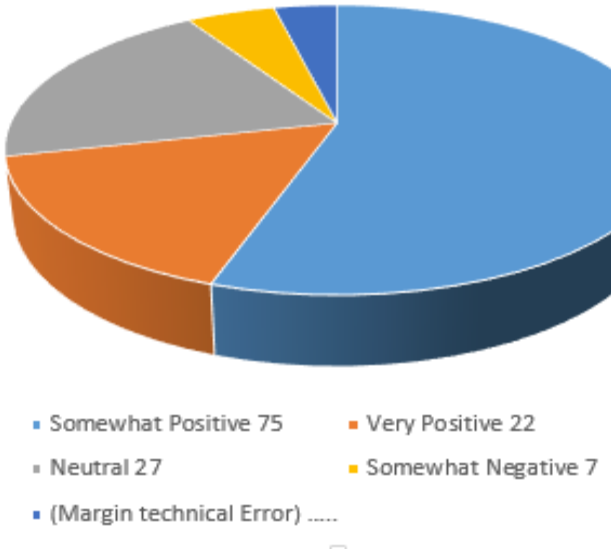
Sentiment Category	Count	Percentage
Somewhat Positive	58	61.7%
Very Positive	27	28.7%
Neutral	10	10.6%
Somewhat Negative	2	2.1%
Total	97	100%

2.2.1 Impact of the diocesan strategic pastoral plan on Human Resource Management

The impact of the diocesan strategic pastoral planning will be discussed in terms of both general and specific impacts.

2.2.1.1 General impact of the diocesan strategic pastoral plan on Human Resource Management

The graph below, based on question 4b of the Kobo Toolbox questionnaire, 130 out of 135 participants (5 were without data), presents the general impact of the diocesan strategic pastoral Plan in terms of Human Resources:



Graph 6: ***General impact of the Zomba Diocesan Strategic Pastoral Plan on Human Resource Management***

Sentiment Category	Percentage
Somewhat Positive	55.15%
Very Positive	16.18%
Neutral	19.85%
Somewhat Negative	5.15%
(Margin technical Error)	3.67%
Total	100%

The interpretation of this graph shows that the majority, slightly above half of the respondents, constituting 54.81%, claim that the diocesan strategic plan has made somewhat positive impact on building a self-reliant Church.

Based on question 4l of the Kobo Toolbox questionnaire, the greatest indicator for the general positive impact of the Zomba Diocesan Strategic Pastoral Plan in building a self-reliant

Church, which received 58.52% votes is the increased spirit of team work, collaboration and division of labour in the planning, implementation and evaluation of group activities. It is seconded by increased professional handling of diocesan assents through policies and procedures leading to responsible use of the local resources (50.37%).

2.2.1.2 Specific impacts of the diocesan strategic plan on self-reliance around Human Resources

Under human resource Management, the research used the Likert tool to delve into the following key areas: Capacity building, participation of Christians in Church activities, as well as youth and women involvement. Below were the results:

a) Capacity Building

Participants were asked to assess if at all Capacity building around issues like on-going formation, training, and orientations around strategic plan issues for leadership development was making progress or not. The responses were as follows:

Sentimental category	**Percentage**
Strongly disagree	7%
Partially disagree	15%
Neutral	8%
Agree	20%
Strongly agree	50%
Total	100%

The Mean score thus was 4.1. According to interpretation, over half (50%) strongly agree that leadership training has improved. This is the strongest result.

Based on question 4j of the Kobo Toolbox questionnaire, the greatest indicator for positive impact with regards to capacity building is increased team work and collaborative ministry among priests, religious and laity leading to improved sustainability of Church programmes and projects. It received 71% votes from participants. It was seconded by

improved spiritual and social empowerment of the laity in Church activities through recollections, retreats and trainings (60.74%).

b) Participation of Christians

Participants were asked to assess if at all participation of Christians in Church activities has increased. The responses were as follows:

Sentimental value	**Percentage**
Strongly disagree	13%
Partially disagree	20%
Neutral	10%
Agree	28%
Strongly agree	40%

The Mean score was 3.8. According to the interpretation of the results, 68% of the respondents confirm improvement in participation of the Christians. The indicator for positive impact around this is the same of increased team work mentioned under capacity building under 2.2.1.3 above.

c) Youth and Women involvement

Participants were asked to assess whether youth's and women's involvement in Church activities, including strategic plan activities, has increased. The responses were as follows:

Sentimental value	**Percentage**
Strongly disagree	9%
Partially disagree	6%
Neutral	14%
Agree	23%
Strongly agree	48%
Total	100%

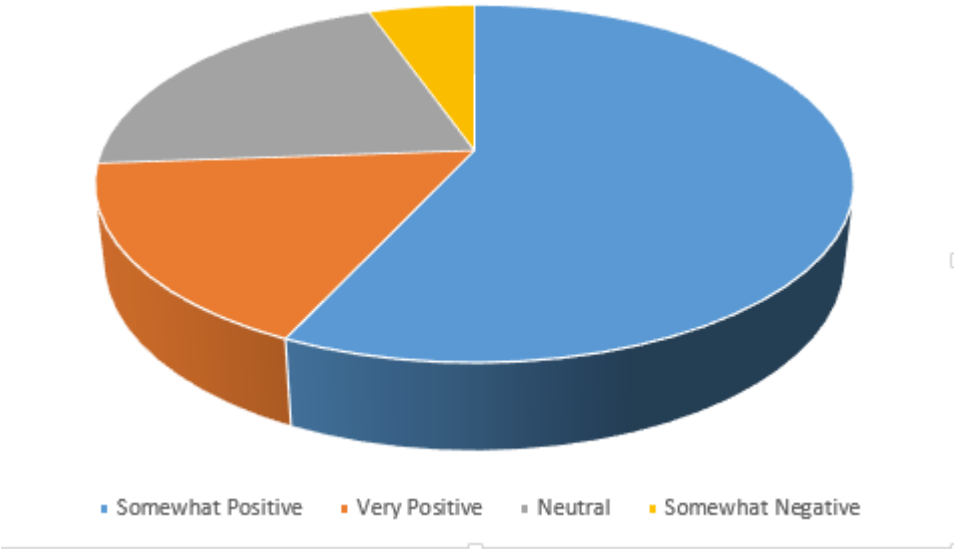
The Mean score thus was 4.0. According to the interpretation of the results, nearly half (48%) strongly agree, showing strong inclusivity gains. The indicator for positive

impact around this is the same as increased team work mentioned under capacity building above under 2.2.1.3 above.

2.2.2. Impact of the diocesan strategic pastoral plan on building a self-reliant Church around financial and material resources

2.2.2.1 General impact

With reference to question 4c on the general impact of strategic pastoral planning on building a self-reliant Church around financial and material resources, 131 out of 136 who participated in this questionnaire (5 were without data), the graph below shows the results:



Graph 7: ***General impact of the diocesan strategic pastoral plan on building a self-reliant Church around financial and material resources***

Sentimental value	Percentage
Somewhat Positive	53.21%
Very Positive	21.12%
Neutral	20.19%
Somewhat Negative	2.21%
Very negative	1.47%
Total	100%

Based on these results, 53.21% of the respondents said that the strategic pastoral plan on building a self-reliant Church as made a somewhat positive impact and 21.12% of the respondents said that the plan has made a very positive impact. Thus based on the average of the two main sets of respondents the results show that the strategic pastoral planning has made a somewhat positive impact. The specific impacts below are indicative of this position.

2.2.2.2 Specific impacts

The following are the specific impacts of the Zomba Diocesan Strategic Pastoral Plan on self-reliance around financial and material resources:

a) Strengthening of Parish-level Self-Reliance

As commented by different priests and lay leaders the strategic pastoral plan implementation has strengthened parish level Self-Reliance. Thus for example parishes like Sacred Heart (Zomba) Parish, St Charles Lwanga Parish, St Anthony (Thondwe) Parish and St Thereza (Liwonde) Parish, have claimed the impact of the ability to sustain their own pastoral activities. Indicators for that include ability to increase priests' upkeep to a reasonable amount, ability to purchase and maintain utility vehicles for pastoral activities and maintenance of Church buildings. All these achievements have led to grassroots empowerment and ownership of Church mission.

b) Reduced financial leakages and mismanagement

Reduced financial leakages and mismanagement due to improved transparent and accountable management of Church resources has led to more funds being retained for mission as an impact. Thus as noted by Chamangwana, once a Parish Moderator of St

Charles Lwanga Parish, by implementing sound financial policies like internal and external audits and controls, clear procurement procedures and separation of roles in financial transactions their parish managed to service their huge outstanding debts and serve more money for the mission of the Church.[84] Similar sentiments were also echoed by Church institutions like health centres and schools.

c) Progress in Church Finances and Resource Management

The responses were as follows:

Sentimental value	**Percentage**
Strongly disagree	20%
Disagree	13%
Neutral	14%
Agree	21%
Strongly agree	32%
Total	100%

According to the interpretation, while 53% agree/strongly agree that resources are being used well in funding Church the 33% who disagree express concerns in transparency and effectiveness around Church finances and resource management.

Based on question 4k of the Kobo Toolbox questionnaire, the greatest indicator of positive impact on self-reliance with regard to financial and material resources is the increased commitment of Christians to financially and materially support pastoral programmes and projects through different means of resources mobilization, including tithing. This point received 74% of the votes from participants. It was seconded by an increased sense of responsibility of the local communities to identify their financial and material needs and their readiness to locally cater for them (62.22%). The third indicator

[84] Interviewed (online) Immaculate Chamangwana of Zomba Catholic Diocese on 20 February 2026.

identified is the increased commitment of the social department and diocesan institutions to financially and materially support the pastoral programmes and projects of the Church (41.48%).

In conclusion to this section, the findings of this study demonstrate that the Zomba Diocesan Strategic Pastoral Plan has contributed positively to the transformation of the Diocese toward self-reliance, especially through strengthened human resources, increased participation of the laity, and clearer pastoral direction. However, its full potential is yet to be realized due to gaps in monitoring, inconsistent contextualization at the parish level, financial management weaknesses, and socio-economic limitations within the wider community. The overall conclusion is that the strategic plan has made a "somewhat positive" impact—with notable progress, persistent challenges, and considerable room for growth.

2.3 DISCUSSION ON THE MAIN CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES IDENTIFIED

The following are the challenges and opportunities around the implementation of the diocesan strategic pastoral plan leading to poor human, financial, and material self-reliance. These challenges and opportunities are extracted from the preliminary questions of the Kobo Toolbox questionnaire as well as from SWOT Analysis proper.

2.3.1 Main Challenges

There are many and various challenges that has dwindled the implementation of the diocesan strategic pastoral plan of Zomba Catholic Diocese as far as building a self-reliant Church is concerned. The following are the main challenges:

2.3.1.1 Little familiarity with the Zomba Diocesan Strategic Pastoral Plan

One of the challenges obtained from the preliminary questions to the SWOT Analysis is that in the diocese familiarity with the diocesan strategic plan is between low and average. Furthermore the question 4b from the Kobo Toolbox reveal that, the least familiar area of the strategic plan in on human resource management for pastoral work. Since human resource management is central to the implementation of the diocesan strategic plan, these two significant challenges lead to little or no implementation of the diocesan strategic pastoral planning by close to half of the diocesan institutions, parishes or groups.

a) Possible Causes for little familiarity with the diocesan strategic pastoral plan on building a self-reliant Church

Possible causes of little familiarity with the diocesan strategic pastoral plan in building a self-reliant Church are:

i. Inadequate Dissemination and Communication

After the launch of the first and second strategic plan versions, the plans were not widely distributed and explained to the grassroots. Such a scenario were creating weak communication channels between diocesan offices and grassroots levels. Furthermore most parishes and institutions do not have enough copies or simplified summaries.

ii. Inadequate Orientation and Training for the leaders

While there were some orientations and trainings provided for priests, religious members, and lay leaders regarding the two versions of the strategic plan, these sessions were insufficient for these individuals to fully grasp how to implement the plan in their specific pastoral settings. Effective strategic planning

requires more than introductory sessions; as Bryson emphasizes, "a plan succeeds only when people understand not just what it says but what it means for their day-to-day actions."[85] Moreover, without consistent and ongoing training, individuals may remain unaware of its practical significance. This aligns with Kaplan and Norton's observation that "strategy cannot be executed without continuous communication and learning."[86]

Additionally, certain members of Small Christian Communities (SCCs) or parish leaders may lack the necessary background to read or interpret the strategic pastoral plan for effective application without support. In line with this, Mintzberg argues that "strategies fail when the people expected to implement them do not understand the context or the concepts behind them."[87] For this reason, capacity building becomes essential. As Armstrong notes, "developing people's competencies is a prerequisite for transforming strategic intentions into operational realities."[88]

iii. Low grassroots participation during the consultancy stage

Despite the fact that questionnaires meant for parish grassroots levels participation had been sent to parishes, most parish leadership failed to forward these questionnaires to the grassroots level groups, and where they did, they often failed to collect the responses or forward them to the pastoral office. This breakdown in communication reflects what Bryson identifies as a major

[85] John M. Bryson, *Strategic Planning for Public and Nonprofit Organizations* (5th ed.), 223.
[86] Robert S. Kaplan and David P. Norton, *The Strategy-Focused Organization* (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 2001), 9.
[87] Henry Mintzberg, *The Rise and Fall of Strategic Planning*, 321.
[88] Michael Armstrong, *Handbook of Human Resource Management Practice (14th ed.)*, 112.

implementation challenge: "strategies falter when information does not flow to and from the people whose participation is essential."[89] When people are excluded from the process, they often lose proper ownership of the plan, a reality echoed by Kotter, who notes that "without broad involvement, there is no commitment, and without commitment, there is no implementation."[90]

Furthermore, participation is a critical principle in pastoral planning. As Drucker observes, "people support what they help to create."[91] This means that failure to involve the people undermines both engagement and accountability. Such a scenario, furthermore, disconnects grassroots Christians from the broader diocesan vision and from participating on contextualizing the broader diocesan plan in their levels.

iv. Limited Use of Local Languages or Simple Formats

The strategic plan document has been viewed by some Christians as being too technical and academic. This is compounded by the lack of many copies of the document in Chichewa, their venecular language. According to Kaplan and Norton' "a strategy that is not understood cannot be executed."[92] Bryson emphasizes that "strategic plans must be communicated in clear, accessible formats if broad participation is expected."[93] As a result, without simplified versions, summaries, or visual aids, the plan ends up being merely "a document on the shelf." Mintzberg

[89] John M. Bryson, *Strategic Planning for Public and Nonprofit Organizations* (5th ed.), 256.
[90] John P. Kotter, *Leading Change*, 67.
[91] Peter F. Drucker, *Managing the Non-Profit Organization: Principles and Practices*, 146.
[92] Robert S. Kaplan and David P. Norton, *The Strategy-Focused Organization*, 40.
[93] John M. Bryson, *Strategic Planning for Public and Nonprofit Organizations* (5th ed.), 245.

warns about this tendency when he argues that "planning becomes detached from action when documents are produced but not internalized."[94] The absence of user-friendly materials, therefore, weakens ownership, engagement, and ultimately the impact of the strategic plan.

v. Limited Emphasis of Strategic Plan Implementation from Leaders

When church leaders on different levels do not or rarely refer to the plan in their statements, meetings, or homilies, the faithful forget about the strategic plan or consider that as signifying that the strategic plan is not a priority.

vi. Perception That Planning Is a Leadership Task Only

Numerous Christians perceive that strategic planning is solely the duty of bishops, priests, and councils. Thus they just sit down and do things business as usual, treating immediate issues only without focusing on the vision of a self-reliant Church.

b) Effects of lack of familiarity with the Strategic plan on Building a Self-Reliant Church

The following are some of the effects of a lack of familiarity with the diocesan strategic pastoral plan on building a self-reliant Church:

i. Weak Sense of Ownership

Being unfamiliar with the diocesan plan, some of the Lay Faithful see the plan as a 'document for the bishop or priests,' rather than as their own mission roadmap. This reduces motivation and commitment to contribute time, skills, or resources toward meeting the objectives of the plan. Bryson emphasizes that

[94] Henry Mintzberg, *The Rise and Fall of Strategic Planning*, 305.

'stakeholders must see themselves as active participants in the plan; otherwise, engagement and ownership decline.'[95]

Additionally, parishes might concentrate heavily on urgent issues such as sacraments, finances, church building projects, and routine pastoral tasks. As a result, strategic planning can often be seen as a lower priority or simply 'administrative,' rather than an essential part of daily Christian life. Kaplan and Norton note that 'without linking strategic initiatives to daily operational priorities, plans risk becoming peripheral rather than integral to organizational life.'[96]

ii. Poor Implementation of Pastoral Priorities

In some cases parishes and institutions act independently or inconsistently, with competing priorities and thus without unified direction. As a result key diocesan objectives (e.g., evangelization, development, and self-reliance) may remain unfulfilled.

iii. Weak Monitoring and Evaluation

Most the Faithful are not familiar with the plan's goals and key performance indicators. With that situation it becomes difficult to assess progress or measure impact at different levels of the diocese. The intervals for evaluations may also not be regularly made.[97] As commented by Mfune this is a quite key challenge in strategic plan management that needs a lot of attention for an institution like the Church to fulfill its plans.[98]

[95] John M. Bryson, *Strategic Planning for Public and Nonprofit Organizations* (5th ed.), 238.
[96] Robert S. Kaplan and David P. Norton, *The Strategy-Focused Organization*, 51.
[97] With reference to question no 4f from the Kobo Toolbox questionnaire, less than half of the parishes and lay groups evaluate their planned activities with the rhythm of the 5 year period of the strategic plan.
[98] Interviewed (online) Damazio Mfune of the University of Malawi, on 24 February 2026.

iv. Stagnation of Pastoral Growth

Without following a clear long-term vision, many diocesan institutions, parishes and lay groups become reactive instead of proactive- just responding to issues as they arise.

2.3.1.2 Resistance to change and stagnant attitude to handouts

Resistance to change and a stagnant attitude towards handouts are closely linked. Usually parishes and institutions used to a culture of handouts also resist change related to self-reliance.

a) Possible causes of resistance to change and stagnated attitude of handouts

The following are the possible causes of resistance to change and stagnated attitude of handouts: legacy of missionary dependency, lack of empowerment and capacity building, and a victim mindset.

i. Legacy of missionary dependency.

This legacy of missionary dependency, as articulated in Chapter 1 under historical and economic domains, has been particularly acute in parishes that have long relied on missionaries. Zomba Catholic Diocese, like other Catholic dioceses, began with external financial and material support. This pattern reflects what Drucker describes as 'dependency on external resources can create a culture of passivity that impedes local initiative and ownership.'[99]

The legacy of missionary dependency is connected to another challenge: the erroneous mentality of some members of the Church that the Church is adequately self-sustaining without their personal contributions. Bryson emphasizes that

[99] Peter F. Drucker, *Managing the Non-Profit Organization: Principles and Practices*, 89.

"misperceptions about organizational wealth or capacity often diminish stakeholder engagement and responsibility."[100]

This perception is further compounded by a lack of accountability and transparency regarding how funds and resources are used. As observed by Kaplan and Norton, 'without clear reporting and stewardship practices, trust erodes and stakeholders are less likely to contribute actively to organizational goals.'[101] Together, these factors undermine both financial self-reliance and a culture of responsible stewardship within the Diocese.

ii. Lack of empowerment and capacity-building.

The French Montfort Missionaries, who laid the foundation of the Church in the diocese, left in numbers almost at the same short-time, leaving some human personnel gaps and without enough time for proper transitions, handovers and training to prepare the indigenous people on how to manage or sustain initiatives independently.

iii. Victim-mindset

A victim-mindset comes in when some people, who, with the general poverty and challenges like cyclones, expect more to receive from the Church and Church partners like Caritas than for them to do something for the Church even in their poverty.

b) Effects of resistance to change and stagnant attitude of handouts

The following are some of the effects of dependency syndrome and stagnant attitude towards handouts:

[100] John M. Bryson, *Strategic Planning for Public and Nonprofit Organizations* (5th ed.), 229.
[101] Robert S. Kaplan and David P. Norton, *The Strategy-Focused Organization*, 51.

i. Delayed implementation of pastoral plans

Strategic pastoral planning requires discernment to identify emerging challenges that demand new solutions—solutions that may be difficult or unsettling. As Stephen G. Haines explains in his systems-thinking model of strategic management, leaders must ask: "Where do we want to be? … Where are we right now? … How do we get there from here?"[102] Without such reflective planning, a church risks perpetuating outdated models. Yet when people resist change—especially when there is a "stagnated attitude of handouts"—they struggle to shift toward new pastoral strategies that foster a self-reliant church.

ii. Division and conflict within the community

Dependency syndrome and stagnated attitude of handouts breeds division and conflict within the community, since while some parishes, institutions and lay groups are following the demands of the strategic plan others resist it and are not ready to cooperate.

iii. Stifled creativity and initiative in Church projects and programmes

With dependency syndrome and stagnated attitude of handouts pastoral programmes and projects become too dependent on donors such that when funding stops, the programmes and projects collapse. A case in point was the Catechetical Programmes for the Youth at Pirimiti and Katamba parishes that was fully funded by a donor through the Catholic Secretariat of the Malawi Conference of Catholic Bishops (MCCB), then called Episcopal Conference of Malawi. When the funding

[102] Stephen G. Haines, *The Systems Thinking Approach to Strategic Planning and Management* (San Diego: Haines Centre for Strategic Management, 2000), 43–44.

for Pirimiti Parish was halted the programme died immediately. At Katamba parish, where the funding is still on, the programme is still taking place. This shows that with dependency syndrome and a victim attitude, there is a weak sense of ownership, whereby, projects and programmes are seen as belonging to 'donors' or 'leaders,' and not the community.

iv. Reduced evangelizing power

With dependency syndrome and stagnant attitude towards handouts there is reduced evangelizing power, whereby the Church becomes more of a receiver than a proactive missionary body. This weakens the witness to unity and mission in the Church.

2.3.1.3 Little involvement of the laity in planning and discussing the progress of the strategic plan activities.

Experience has shown that most of the planning is done by priests and a few educated experts and forums for lay involvement and participation are not well established or utilized properly, especially from the grassroots like the Small Christian Communities.

a) Possible Causes of little involvement of the laity in planning and discussing the progress of the strategic plan activities

The following are some of the causes of little involvement of the laity in planning and discussing the progress of the strategic plan activities:

i. Knowledge and Capacity Gaps

Knowledge and capacity gaps demotivate many lay members—especially in rural parishes—from participating in the planning and evaluation of a self-reliant

Church. For example, as the study found, many lay faithful do not understand its objectives, terminology, or relevance to parish life, and with little exposure to training, some lack skills in pastoral leadership, project management, or strategic planning, making them hesitant to engage. This problem echoes what Aubrey Malphurs warns in his church-planning model: "a strategic plan requires daily commitment from leaders … [but] if the people do not understand what is being planned, they cannot own it."[103] In the context of a church, the lack of trained lay leaders means the institution is under-investing in one of its most strategic resources.

ii. Poor communication and dissemination

There have been challenges in making enough copies of the diocesan strategic pastoral plan document, with simplified formats, for different stakeholders in the diocese, including grassroots communities. With that there is little participation of the laity, who are the majority of the people in the Church.

iii. Traditional dependence on clergy

A historical mentality that pastoral leadership and planning belong to priests and religious may discourage lay initiative in as far as strategic pastoral planning for their groups is concerned. This may emanate from fear of authority or lack of confidence and a passive or consumer mentality, whereby some laity see the Church

[103] Aubrey Malphurs, *Advanced Strategic Planning: A New Model for Church and Ministry Leaders* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999), 9.

mainly as a provider of sacraments and services rather than a community where they too share responsibility.

b) Effects of Limited Laity Involvement on Building a Self-Reliant Church

The following are some of the effects of limited lay involvement in building a Self-reliant Church:

i. Weak sense of Ownership and Commitment

When the decisions are made from top to bottom, without involvement of the laity, the faithful feel disconnected from the diocesan mission. With that situation comes a lack of sense of ownership of the strategic pastoral plan, whereby the laity see Church programmes and projects as 'for the priests' rather than 'our common mission.' This leads to low participation, poor volunteerism, and marginal financial or material support for Church activities.

ii. Reduced Financial and Material Self-Sustainability

A self-sufficient Church relies on members who are dedicated to its support. When congregants are left out of the planning process, they are less inclined to give generously because they don't understand how money is allocated or how decisions are made. This matches Harrison and Cormier's argument that 'participation increases ownership, understanding, and generosity within faith communities.'[104] Additionally, a lack of participation diminishes transparency, accountability, and trust, which in turn hampers resource mobilization and stewardship. This aligns with Loughry's observation that 'effective stewardship requires openness, shared decision-making, and clear communication between leaders and the faithful.'[105]

[104] Paul Harrison and Bill Cormier, *Stewardship and Church Finance* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2010), 78.
[105] Michael Loughry, *Church Administration and Leadership* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2015), 121.

iii. Stagnation of Synodality and Shared Mission

A Church that is synodal and self-sufficient flourishes through shared responsibility and open discussions among both clergy and laity. Restricting involvement leads to a clericalized Church. This diminishes synodal communion, which is an essential pastoral foundation for sustainability.

iv. Poor Implementation and Monitoring of the Strategic pastoral Plan

Excluding the laity means fewer people understand or support the diocesan strategic pastoral plan. Activities lack grassroots participation, making it hard to implement, monitor, or evaluate effectively.[106] As a result, plans remain on paper, without concrete impact at the grassroots level.[107] This aligns with Pfeffer and Salancik's assertion that 'organizational outcomes depend on active engagement of all stakeholders, as lack of participation reduces both implementation capacity and legitimacy.'[108]

v. Weakened Lay Leadership Formation

Minimal engagement prevents laypeople from gaining the chance to develop leadership, planning, and stewardship abilities. This hinders the emergence of skilled lay leaders who could lead self-sufficient initiatives within parishes,

[106] John M. Bryson, Strategic Planning for Public and Nonprofit Organizations (5th ed.), 242.
[107] Anthony Giddens, *The Constitution of Society: Outline of the Theory of Structuration* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 130.
[108] Jeffrey Pfeffer and Gerald R. Salancik, *The External Control of Organizations: A Resource Dependence Perspective* (New York: Harper & Row, 1978), 48.

schools, and communities. Ultimately, this continues to reinforce the gap between clergy and laity and weakens the Church's effectiveness in evangelization.

vi. Reduced Evangelizing Impact

Poor participation of the laity leads to less impact of the mission of evangelisation since the laity, who are the majority in the Church, are not engaged as active evangelizers within their families, workplaces, and communities.

vii. Missed opportunities for contextual and relevant Pastoral Action

The laity practice their faith in a variety of social and cultural contexts. Not involving them in the planning process results in strategies that are frequently less relevant, less applicable, and less attuned to genuine needs. This hampers the creativeness and flexibility of pastoral programs to suit local circumstances, which is crucial for fostering self-sufficiency.

2.3.1.4 Poor Contextualization of the diocesan strategic plan

As the research shows, about half of the parishes, institutions and lay groups do not properly follow the strategic pastoral plan of the diocese when making plans for their respective groups. They do not contextualize the diocesan strategic plan.

a) Possible causes of lack of contextualization of the diocesan strategic pastoral plan

The following are the possible causes for the lack of contextualization of the diocesan strategic pastoral plan:

i. Poor communication and dissemination

The diocesan plan may not be clearly explained or distributed to parishes and institutions. Many clergy and lay leaders may not understand its content, goals, or how to apply it locally.[109] Thus for instance Parish leaders and pastoral agents may lack training in planning, implementation, and monitoring of pastoral programs. Without capacity building, they struggle to interpret and apply the diocesan plan meaningfully. As noted by Right Reverend John Oballa Owaa, practical realization of self-reliance remains elusive for some Churches due to lack of strategic pastoral planning as well as underdeveloped or poorly implementation of the plans.[110]

ii. Weak coordination between diocesan offices and parishes/institutions

Lack of consistent follow-up, evaluation, and feedback mechanisms prevents local adaptation. Some parishes work in isolation instead of integrating their activities into the diocesan vision.

b) Effects of lack of diocesan plan contextualization on building a Self-Reliant Church

The following are some of the effects of lack of diocesan plan contextualization on building a self-reliant Church:

i. Weak ownership and commitment

When people feel the plan does not reflect their situation, they see it as a *diocesan document* rather than *our plan*. This reduces motivation to implement it or contribute resources toward its success.[111]

[109] Interviewed Fr Samuel Mangulenje, Diocesan Director of Pontifical Missionary Societies, Zomba Catholic Diocese, on 8 September 2025.
[110] Rt. Rev. John Oballa Owaa (Bishop of Ngong Diocese, Kenya), Opening Keynote Address for the 28th Interdisciplinary Theological Session, Catholic University of Eastern Africa (CUEA), on 4 March 2026.
[111] John M. Bryson, *Strategic Planning for Public and Nonprofit Organizations*, 247.

ii. Poor implementation of pastoral activities

Some parishes and institutions struggle to translate the diocesan goals into concrete, achievable actions. This leads to inconsistency and failure to meet targets.

iii. Breakdown of Synodality

Lack of diocesan plan contextualization goes against the synodal approach — walking together and discerning together. It leads to disconnection between parishes and institutions weakening the communal nature of the Church.

iv. Minimal Impact on Evangelization and Development

A non-contextualized plan fails to address real social and spiritual needs such as poverty, youth unemployment, family challenges, or cultural values. This weakens the Church's witness and her transformative presence in society.

2.3.1.5 Lack of continued monitoring and evaluations

The research has shown that many parishes, institutions, and lay groups do not have regular monitoring and evaluation of the strategic plan implementation.

a) Possible causes of lack of continued monitoring and evaluation of the diocesan strategic plan

Possible causes of the lack of continued monitoring and evaluation of the diocesan strategic plan include the following:

i. Limited human capacity

The diocese lacks trained personnel in monitoring and evaluation. Furthermore, pastoral agents (priests, religious, lay leaders) may not understand M&E tools or processes.

ii. Weak or inactive pastoral structures

Diocesan pastoral commissions, or parish pastoral councils may not be fully functional. Furthermore, SCC leaders may not have mechanisms to report progress to higher levels.

iii. Inadequate financial resources

With financial challenges the diocese, parishes, and institutions may fail to monitor and evaluate the implementation of the strategic plan. M&E requires resources for visits, workshops, data collection, and reporting.

iv. Lack of a clear M&E framework

The diocesan strategic pastoral plan does not include well-defined indicators, timelines, responsibilities, and reporting tools. Without a structured plan, leaders do not know what, when, or how to monitor.[112] As reiterated by Mfune this is a major shortfall in strategic plan management. [113]

v. Cultural resistance to accountability

[112] John M. Bryson, *Strategic Planning for Public and Nonprofit Organizations* (5th ed.), 273.
[113] Interviewed (online) Damazio Mfune of the University of Malawi, on 24 February 2026.

As was observed by the researcher, some pastoral workers may view monitoring as "inspection" or criticism rather than support.[114] A pastoral culture that values activities more than outcomes discourages systematic evaluation.[115]

vi. Overburdened Clergy and Lay Leaders

As was observed by the researcher, priests often juggle multiple roles, like administration, pastoral care and sacraments, leaving little time for M&E. Parish leaders may lack time to produce reports or follow up on indicators. Furthermore, monitoring and evaluation may not have been emphasised during planning. Once a strategic plan is launched, the focus shifts to implementation while oversight is forgotten.

b) Effects of lack of continued monitoring and evaluation

The following are some of the effects of lack of continued monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of the diocesan strategic pastoral planning:

i. Poor implementation of the strategic plan

Without monitoring and evaluation activities drift away from diocesan priorities because there is no follow-up.[116] With that scenario, parishes may also implement selectively or inconsistently.

ii. Loss of direction and momentum

Without periodic review, the diocesan strategic pastoral plan loses visibility and becomes inactive. The faithful forget about the plan due to lack of reinforcement.

[114] George A. Steiner, *Strategic Planning: What Every Manager Must Know* (New York: Free Press, 1979) 115.
[115] George A. Steiner, *Strategic Planning: What Every Manager Must Know*, 119.
[116] John M. Bryson, *Strategic Planning for Public and Nonprofit Organizations* (5th ed.), 275.

iii. Reduced accountability and transparency

Without monitoring and evaluation leaders and pastoral agents are not held accountable for assigned roles, misuse of resources or failure to implement activities may go unnoticed or stakeholders do not know how resources are used.[117] This may lead to mistrust among clergy, laity, and donors.

iv. Limited learning and improvement

Without monitoring and evaluation the diocese fails to identify what works and what does not. Furthermore with that scenario, best practices are not shared across parishes, and mistakes are repeated.[118]

v. Ineffective use of resources

Without monitoring and evaluation funds, time, and effort may be wasted on activities that do not contribute to strategic objectives. Projects may also be duplicated while other priority areas are neglected.

vi. Weak progress towards a Self-Reliant Church

Without monitoring and evaluation, strategies related to financial sustainability, stewardship, and development are poorly tracked. Consequently, the diocese struggles to achieve self-reliance goals because progress is not measured.

vii. Difficulty in making evidence-based decisions

[117] John M. Bryson, *Strategic Planning for Public and Nonprofit Organizations* (5th ed.), 278.
[118] Statement by Prof. Ruth Kanyongolo, Former Chairperson of the Diocesan Strategic Pastoral Plan Committee for 2017-2022 cycle.

Without monitoring and evaluation, future planning becomes guesswork because no data exists on previous performance.[119] Furthermore, with that situation leadership decisions lack credible evidence.[120]

viii. Failure to Respond to Emerging Pastoral Needs

Without regular assessment, new challenges or opportunities are not detected early. Thus the diocese, parishes or institutions become reactive instead of proactive.

2.3.1.5 Discontinuity of strategically planned programmes and projects when leadership changes

Through the study the researcher has observed that some strategically planned programmes and projects discontinue when leadership changes.

a) Possible causes of Discontinuity of strategic pastoral plans

Possible causes of discontinuity of strategically planned programmes and projects when leadership changes include:

i. Lack of Institutionalisation of the Strategic Plan

When the strategic plan is not fully embedded in diocesan structures, policies, constitutions, or pastoral councils, it remains dependent on individual leaders.[121] New leaders feel free to start new initiatives rather than continue existing ones.[122]

ii. Poor Handover and Transition Processes

[119] John M. Bryson, *Strategic Planning for Public and Nonprofit Organizations*, 282.
[120] George A. Steiner, *Strategic Planning: What Every Manager Must Know*, 130.
[121] John M. Bryson, *Strategic Planning for Public and Nonprofit Organizations* (5th ed.), 288.
[122] George A. Steiner, *Strategic Planning: What Every Manager Must Know*, 132.

As observed by the researcher, outgoing leaders often do not provide comprehensive handover notes. New leaders may not be briefed on ongoing programmes, priorities, and unfinished activities.

iii. Weak monitoring and documentation

If progress reports, evaluations, and records are not kept, new leaders do not know what has been implemented or what remains. Lack of documentation leads to abandonment of ongoing programmes.

iv. Insufficient training and awareness of the Strategic Plan

New leaders (priests, religious, lay leaders) may not have been trained on the diocesan plan or may not fully understand it. Without formation, they cannot continue programmes they are unfamiliar with.

v. Institutional memory loss

Frequent transfers of priests or replacement of lay leaders reduce continuity. Without stable staff or leaders, the institutional memory weakens.

vi. Lack of accountability mechanisms

When nobody is evaluated on the basis of implementing the strategic plan, it becomes optional for new leaders. The absence of accountability encourages discontinuity.

b) Effects of Discontinuity of Planned Pastoral Programmes and Projects

The effects of discontinuity of planned pastoral programmes and projects include the following:

i. Wastage of resources and donor fatigue

Abandoned or incomplete projects waste financial, material, and human resources. Donors and partners lose confidence in the Church's ability to manage long-term projects. This damages the Diocese's credibility and fundraising capacity.

ii. Weak institutional learning

Due to loss of institutional memory knowledge, experience, and best practices from past initiatives disappear with outgoing leaders, the Church repeats the same mistakes instead of building on previous lessons. This results in feeble institutional learning and sluggish growth.[123]

iii. Stunted Pastoral and Structural Development

Discontinuity interrupts long-term plans such as formation programs, schools, agricultural projects, or infrastructure development. As a result, the diocese struggles to achieve stability, self-reliance, and growth. Furthermore, strategic vision remains fragmented and short-term.

iv. Loss of partnerships and external support

[123] John M. Bryson, *Strategic Planning for Public and Nonprofit Organizations*, 290.

NGOs, government agencies, or donor partners hesitate to collaborate with a diocese or parish that frequently changes direction. This limits the Church's opportunities for collaborative development and outreach.

v. Hindered journey toward self-reliance

Self-reliance demands long-term planning, capacity building, and consistent leadership. Discontinuity disrupts progress and keeps the Church dependent on external help and emergency interventions.[124]

2.3.1.6 General poverty and high unemployment levels

The rural economy in Zomba faces various structural problems. These include a poverty rate of around 51% in Zomba District, one of the highest in the Southern Region; limited industrialization, and weak private sector investment. There is a heavy reliance on smallholder farming, high youth unemployment and underemployment, lack of capital, increasing climate variability (droughts, floods, unpredictable rains), weak market links, hiking of prices for various goods including far inputs, and dependency on maize and tobacco, along with pressures from population growth and fragmentation. These challenges not only affect household livelihoods but also significantly hinder the Church's ability to achieve financial self-reliance.

a) Possible Causes of General Poverty and High Unemployment Levels in Zomba District

Possible causes of general poverty and high unemployment levels in Zomba District are the following:

i. Limited Economic Opportunities and Industrial Base

[124] George A. Steiner, *Strategic Planning: What Every Manager Must Know*, 136.

Zomba's economy is largely agrarian, with minimal industrial or manufacturing activity. The closure or downsizing of formal institutions since the relocation of the capital to Lilongwe (in 1975) led to reduced economic activity. Few industries or private enterprises, compounded with overpopulation, mean limited formal employment opportunities, especially for the majority of youth and graduates. Many young people remain unemployed or underemployed, increasing frustration and social vulnerability.[125]

ii. Overdependence on subsistence Agriculture

The majority of people in Zomba District depend on small-scale, rain-fed agriculture for their livelihood. Frequent droughts, erratic rainfall, and soil degradation due to deforestation reduce productivity. Lack of irrigation, farm inputs, and modern techniques keep many families in perpetual poverty.[126]

iii. Rapid population growth and land pressure

High population density in parts of Zomba leads to land fragmentation, leaving households with very small plots.[127] This limits agricultural yields and pushes young people to migrate to towns or countries like South Africa, China and America in search of work.[128] Overuse of land without replenishment results in soil exhaustion and further food insecurity.[129]

iv. Low Levels of Education and Skills Training

[125] Refer to Chapter 1, section 1.5, Economic situation, 16.
[126] Refer to Chapter 1, section 1.5, Economic situation, p. 16.
[127] National Statistical Office (Malawi), *2018 Population and Housing Census Report*, 45.
[128] Peter Manda, *Youth Migration and Rural Livelihoods in Malawi* (Lilongwe: Centre for Social Research, University of Malawi, 2017), 62.
[129] Dennis Mvula, *Land Use, Soil Fertility, and Food Security in Southern Malawi* (Zomba: Chancellor College Press, 2016), 88.

While Zomba has major institutions like the University of Malawi and Zomba Nursing College many rural communities have low literacy levels.[130] Technical and vocational training opportunities are limited, especially for rural youth.[131] This mismatch between education and the job market contributes to youth unemployment and underemployment.[132]

v. Limited access to credit and financial services

In Zomba District, Smallholder farmers and entrepreneurs lack access to affordable loans or microfinance to start or expand businesses.[133] Banks often require collateral that poor households do not have.[134] Without capital, people cannot invest in productive activities, reinforcing the cycle of poverty.[135]

vi. Cultural and social factors

As discussed in Chapter 1 under cultural and social domains, in some communities, early marriages, gender inequality, and low participation of women in economic activities limit household income potential.[136] Cultural dependence on aid or remittances from relatives in towns discourages local initiatives in the rural

[130] National Statistical Office (Malawi), *Malawi Demographic and Health Survey 2021* (Zomba: NSO, 2022), 123.
[131] Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (Malawi), *Technical, Entrepreneurial, and Vocational Education and Training (TEVET) Report* (Lilongwe: Government of Malawi, 2020), p. 35.
[132] World Bank, *Malawi Jobs Diagnostic: Tackling Unemployment and Underemployment* (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2019), 41.
[133] Charles Chirwa and John Matita, *Access to Finance for Smallholder Farmers in Malawi* (Lilongwe: Centre for Agricultural Research and Development, 2017), 22.
[134] National Bank of Malawi, *Annual Report 2021* (Lilongwe: National Bank of Malawi, 2021), 45.
[135] World Bank, *Malawi Poverty Assessment: Breaking the Cycle of Poverty* (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2018), 38.
[136] Caroline Manda, *Gender, Culture, and Economic Participation in Malawi* (Lilongwe: Centre for Social Research, University of Malawi, 2016), 58.

areas.[137] Furthermore, social obligations, such as extended family support, strain the limited resources of even those working in the urban areas.[138]

vii. Health-related challenges

High prevalence of diseases such as HIV/AIDS and malaria affects the productive age group.[139] Chronic ailment reduces availability and quality of labour and increases dependency burdens within families.[140] Medical expenses drain already scarce household income.

b) Effects of General Poverty and High Unemployment Levels on Building a Self-Reliant Church

The following are some of the effects of general poverty and high unemployment levels on building a self-reliant Church:

i. Weak financial base for Church development

With most faithful having little or no income, the Church usually fails to generate enough resources from offertory, tithes, and local fundraising.[141] Parish and diocesan projects such as building churches, supporting catechists, and maintaining institutions depend on external aid. This financial fragility undermines economic independence, which is a pillar of self-reliance.[142]

ii. Reinforcement of the Dependency Mentality

[137] Blessings Chinsinga, *The Political Economy of Malawi* (Johannesburg: Jacana Media, 2021), 147.
[138] United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), *Human Development Report: Malawi 2020* (Lilongwe: UNDP Malawi, 2020), 92.
[139] National AIDS Commission (Malawi), *Malawi HIV/AIDS Strategic Plan 2020–2025* (Lilongwe: NAC, 2020), 23.
[140] World Health Organization (WHO), *Malaria Country Profile: Malawi* (Geneva: WHO, 2021), 5.
[141] Paul Harrison and Bill Cormier, *Stewardship and Church Finance* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2010), 78.
[142] Michael Loughry, *Church Administration and Leadership* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2015), 121.

Poverty and unemployment create a culture of dependence on external donors, missionaries, or government programs by some Malawians, in general, and Christians, in particular.[143] Instead of viewing themselves as agents of development, the faithful begin to see themselves as recipients of charity.[144] In Zomba Catholic Diocese, this contradicts the Church's vision of a self-sustaining, participatory community that takes ownership of its mission.[145]

iii. Stifled human capacity and talent development

High unemployment, in Malawi, in general, and Zomba District, in particular, leads to brain drain, as skilled youth migrate or disengage from Church life in search of work.[146] Those who remain may lack opportunities to develop leadership, management, or entrepreneurial skills.[147] The Church, therefore, misses out on local expertise that could support financial management, project planning, and institutional growth.[148]

iv. Inability to sustain Church institutions and services

Most of the Zomba Catholic Diocesan-run academic institutions, health centres, and the pastoral center cannot cover operational costs if communities cannot pay minimal fees or make contributions. This creates financial deficits and dependence on external subsidies for staff salaries, materials, and maintenance. As a result, the Church's mission in education, health, and social services becomes less

[143] Blessings Chinsinga, *The Political Economy of Malawi* (Johannesburg: Jacana Media, 2021), p. 143.
[144] Michael Loughry, *Church Administration and Leadership* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2015), 119.
[145] John M. Bryson, *Strategic Planning for Public and Nonprofit Organizations* (5th ed.), 291.
[146] Peter Manda, *Youth Migration and Rural Livelihoods in Malawi*, 62.
[147] National Statistical Office (Malawi), *Labour Force Survey Report 2022*, 39.
[148] John M. Bryson, *Strategic Planning for Public and Nonprofit Organizations* (5th ed.), 291.

sustainable.[149]Another challenge around the inability of the local Church to sustain its pastoral institutions and services is that it is extremely difficult to find partners for pastoral projects than for social projects as noted by Rt. Rev. John Oballa Owaa.[150]

v. Reduced Evangelization and Missionary Outreach

Limited finances and human resources constrain evangelization resulting, for example, in fewer catechists trained, fewer youth programs made, and less pastoral mobility for priests and other pastoral agents. Furthermore the Church struggles to sustain missionary parishes. Thus, the mission of evangelization, which is central to a self-reliant and vibrant Church, becomes restricted.

vi. Threat to vocations and ongoing formation

Families in poverty cannot afford to support seminarians or provide basic needs for formation programs, as a cost-sharing measure.[151] Thus the diocese faces difficulty funding seminaries and ongoing education for clergy and lay leaders.[152] This limits the growth of well-formed pastoral agents who could promote local initiatives and self-sufficiency.[153]

vii. Weak Institutional Growth and Strategic Planning

With unstable or limited local income, the Catholic diocese of Zomba, with its parishes and institutions, cannot implement long-term strategic plans

[149] Interviewed Fr Steven Kaziyale, a medical practitioner at Pirimiti Rural Catholic Hospital, Zomba Catholic Diocese, on 8 September 2025.
[150] Rt. Rev. John Oballa Owaa (Bishop of Ngong Diocese), Opening Keynote Address for the 28th Interdisciplinary Theological Session, CUEA, 4 March 2026.
[151] Michael Loughry, *Church Administration and Leadership*, 123.
[152] Diocese of Zomba, *Pastoral and Socio-Economic Survey Report*, 47.
[153] John M. Bryson, *Strategic Planning for Public and Nonprofit Organizations* (5th ed.), 291.

effectively.[154] Infrastructure projects, lay formation, and diocesan programs are postponed or scaled down. This slows the structural maturity of the local Church and hinders its progress toward autonomy.

2.3.2 The opportunities

The opportunities to improve the impact of the diocesan strategic pastoral planning on building a self-reliant Church are the following:

a) Increase of human resource of the Church

Increased skilled members like teachers, health workers, accountants, farmers, artisans, youth leaders, and entrepreneurs can directly contribute to planning and implementation of diocesan strategic pastoral programs. These human resources, when well- managed, can strengthen pastoral councils, finance committees, catechetical teams, and social development offices. Tapping into their expertise reduces dependence on external consultants.

b) Capacity Building and Knowledge Transfer

Skilled individuals have the ability to educate others, equipping additional members with essential practical and professional skills through workshops and mentorship initiatives. In this endeavor professionals impart knowledge on leadership, project management, entrepreneurship, or stewardship to others who may in turn work professionally in building a self-reliant Church. This approach has the potential to foster a culture of self-sufficiency and competence within the diocese.

[154] Paul Harrison and Bill Cormier, *Stewardship and Church Finance* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2010), 80.

c) Enhancement of local economic self-sufficiency

Skilled businesspeople and professionals can initiate income-generating activities that fund Church projects. Thus, for example, agriculturalists, builders, or financial experts can help develop sustainable parish projects, such as farms, schools, or microfinance initiatives which can support the diocese's goal of financial independence.

d) Effective pastoral communication and evangelization

Enhanced diocesan pastoral communication and improved usage of modern technology like catholic audio-visual facilities and institutions, in addition to print media, can help spread the Gospel and the diocesan messages. This enhances evangelization outreach at minimal cost and with greater relevance to the modern society.

e) Leadership development and participation

Skill identification and leadership development among the clergy, the religious and the laity provide quality leadership pool for various Church structures. Shared leadership and co-responsibility promote synodality in strategic pastoral plan implementation thus ensuring sustainable pastoral planning. Thus, for example, strategic usage of skilled members in pastoral planning and programming, finance and project management as well as project proposal writing can help the diocese secure local and external grants responsibly. They ensure transparency and accountability, values which build trust, credibility and confidence in those interested in supporting Church programmes and projects.

f) Availability of land and infrastructure as assets

Diocesan assets, such as plots of land within and beyond the diocesan territory, and infrastructure like schools, health centres and halls present in the Zomba Catholic Diocese

have great potential as pastoral instruments that support evangelization and development. The following are illustrations on how these assets can be useful for self-reliance:

i. **Land as a strategic asset for enhancing self-reliance**

As a strategic asset land has the potential for expanding pastoral and social developments for maximized impact of the diocesan strategic pastoral planning on building a self-reliant Church. Furthermore, since land appreciates over time, secure and well-documented land estates would give the diocese a stable financial backbone that can support future projects or act as collateral for responsible borrowing.

ii. **Infrastructure**

Infrastructure like Churches, buildings, Thondwe Pastoral Centre, and halls enhance spiritual formation, Catechesis and Evangelisation by creating a conducive environment for meeting and conduction of activities like workshops, trainings and retreats. Thus infrastructure provides a conducive environment for building a self-ministering, self-propagating and self-sustaining Church.

CONCLUSION

By and large, this Chapter, which is the second stage of the Pastoral Cycle, is about Social Analysis on the impact of diocesan strategic pastoral planning. The case study for this study has been Zomba Catholic Diocese, in Zomba, where the research was conducted. Data was collected from various participants including members of the Diocesan Curia, the clergy, members of the parish councils, religious men and women, members of Small Christian Communities, members of the Catholic Women Association, Catholic Men Association, and the youth. Participants in the research gave their responses to the questionnaires in addition to interviews, and focus group

discussions.[155] The data was analysed qualitatively and quantitatively to identify trends, patterns, and themes under each SWOT category.

The research has shown that the diocese has made a positive impact with the strategic pastoral planning for building a self-reliant Church. Among other things, it is providing a shared vision on attaining self-reliance. However, the impact is limited by the challenges mentioned under weaknesses and threats and the lack of maximum utilization of the available human and material resources. When these challenges are properly addressed, the researcher thinks the progress of the diocese towards building a self-reliant Church would improve.

[155] Note that most of the respondents responded as individuals. Few, like parish pastoral teams, parish council executive, SCCS and the youth responded as a group Focus Group Discussion.

CHAPTER THREE
THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION ON STRATEGIC PASTORAL PLANNING ON BUILDING A SELF-RELIANT CHURCH A SELF-RELIANT CHURCH

INTRODUCTION

Pastoral planning is the process of praying and thinking together about the actions of the Body of Christ in a particular time and place.[156] As Camperman puts it, faith reflection, the third movement in the pastoral spiral, is a decisive point in the process. It is a point at which we discern the direction we sense that God is inviting us to take as a response to the situation. Furthermore, she says that this reflection includes the following: dependence on God, openness to new things, community discernment, religious imagination and commitment to action.[157]In this chapter we will discuss theological reflections around the elements of planning and self-reliance. The main sources for such reflections have been the Sacred Scripture, Sacred Tradition, Writings of theologians and our own experiences within the framework of synodality with its three main dimensions namely, communion, participation and mission. We envision that the theological wisdom from these reflections will provide us insights that the synodality framework strengthens communion and participation in the mission of evangelization, thereby making the Church indeed self-ministering, self-propagating and self-sustaining. Thus we hope that when diocesan strategic pastoral planning embraces the Synodal model, several transformative outcomes can be achieved like strengthened unity and communion, improved lay participation, financial and material sustainability, vibrant Christian communities, holistic evangelization and cultural integration.

[156] Jim Kanakulya. Unpublished Class notes in Pastoral Planning and Administration, CUEA, 2024-2025 Academic Year.
[157] Maria Camperman, *Social Analysis for the 1st Century: How Faith becomes Action* (Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 2015), 115.

3.1 SACRED SCRIPTURE ON PLANNING AND SELF-RELIANCE

Sacred Scripture presents stewardship and self-reliance not as isolation, but rather as responsible participation of the community of believers in God's creative mission in the salvific plan in history. Such a situation is presented below:

3.1.1 Old Testament.

In the Old Testament, God reveals to us that, in His Triune nature, He is both a communal planner and that he delegates human beings to participate in his mission. Below are some of the Old Testament texts to this effect:

3.1.1.1 God as a planner and director of planning (Genesis 1: 26-28)

In this passage, God reveals to humanity that all things belong to Him and that He directs humanity, as a community of persons, to have dominion over creation, in a responsible way as stewards. In this way communion, participation, and mission of God for the sustainability of creation are clearly shown. By giving humanity a responsibility to care for creation, God entrusted them with the ability to discern and plan on how to go about the stewardship entrusted to them. Thus with regard to the pastoral planning, God expects humanity to plan, use, and manage the resources given by Him in time and space.

As articulated by Brian Lucas, Peter Slack and William Apife in *Church Administration Handbook,* an understanding of administration within the Church ought to begin with an appreciation of the relationships that are at the heart of Church life: relationship within the Trinity; relationship of the baptized with the Triune God; and relationship among the baptized themselves.

These authors went on to say that, 'the Church's structures and mission flow from the divine will. It is a participation in the life and mission of Christ. Catholic faith is not a private affair.'[158]

3.1.1.2 Strategic Planning of Joseph in Egypt (Genesis 41: 34-35)

Following Joseph's interpretation of Pharaoh's dream as signifying seven years of abundance followed by seven years of famine, he was made the prime minister to plan for the food security of the nation. Acting on his prophetic insight, Joseph designed and implemented a strategic national plan to collect and store grain during the years of abundance to sustain Egypt and the surrounding nations during the time of famine. Above and beyond being an administrative act, Joseph's plan, which was grounded in discernment of God's will and oriented toward the preservation of life, was an initiative that reveals an integrated vision where faith, prudence and economic long-term planning converge under divine guidance.

3.1.1.3 *Chaburah* gathering as covenantal solidarity (Exodus 12: 3-11)

As described by this scripture passage, the Hebrews in the Old Testament had *Chaburah* gatherings, that is to say 'fellowship' gatherings for a common spiritual purpose, particularly for the Passover meal, when families and friends formed *Chaburot* (group) to share one Paschal Lamb. At such gatherings prayer, sharing, learning, and services became the traditions of the community gathered even for later religious communities. Each *Chaburah* was not merely a meal together but a symbol of covenantal solidarity by which everyone was contributing, belonging, and responsible for one another.[159]

Regarding Church planning, according to Frans and his co-authors in the book entitled *The Pastoral Cycle Revisited: A critical Quest for Truth and Transformation,* the greatest strength of

[158] Lucas Brian, Peter Slack & William d'Apice, *Church Administration Handbook***.** (Strathfield, NSW**:** St Paul's Publications, 2018), 28.
[159] Stephen Mbugua, Unpublished class notes in Ecclesial Communities, Catholic University of Eastern Africa (CUEA), Nairobi, 2025-2026 academic year, 32.

the Church lies in its grassroots, in the Small Christian Communities.[160] According to Mbugua, it is there, in SCCs, as in other small groups, that people concretely commune, share their aspirations and challenges more in an interpersonal way and where they participate in the evangelizing and organizational aspects of the Church.[161]

3.1.1.4 Solidarity in the project of rebuilding the temple (Nehemiah 1-11; 2:1-8)

The book of Nehemiah is rich with theological insights that are instrumental to planning for a self-reliant Church, especially for Churches of communities seeking renewal after crisis. Furthermore, as commented by Cousins and his co- authors in the book called *Mastering Church Management,* basing on the great biblical leader Nehemiah, a leader needs three abilities: discerning accurately the current conditions of the organization and be able to say, 'this is where we are now'; vision and understanding whereby the leader is able to say 'and this is where we need to go'; knows how to bring together the people and resources needed to move the organization from where it is to where it needs to be.[162] Below are some of the selected issues from the book:

Firstly, Nehemiah begins with a vision rooted in concrete need: Jerusalem's walls are broken (Neh 1:3). The lessons from this starting point of planning include the fact that self-reliance begins with honest assessment of one's situation and that true development begins from within the community, having identified its own problem rather than waiting for outsiders to define them. Thus the local Church or Church institution ought to critically evaluate their spiritual, economic and social realities first for effective planning.

[160] Wijsen Frans, Peter Henriot and Rodrigo Mejia (editors), *The Pastoral Cycle Revisited; A Critical Quest for Truth and Transformation. (*Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 2006), 68.
[161] Stephen Mbugua, Unpublished class notes in Ecclesial Communities, Catholic University of Eastern Africa (CUEA), Nairobi, 2025-2026 academic year.
[162] Don Cousins et al, *Mastering Church Management* (Portland, Oregon: Multinomah Press, 1990), 18-19.

Secondly, Nehemiah prays deeply (Nehemiah 1: 4-11) and simultaneously acts decisively (Neh 2: 1-8). From such a practice we learn that self-reliance is not self-sufficiency apart from God, but rather that it is cooperation with God.

Thirdly, the rebuilding of the wall was done by families, clans, and local groups using locally mobilized resources like local labour, existing skills, and available materials (Nehemiah 3). From this approach we learn more about local ownership of a Church project. One of the lessons is that self-reliance thrives when people participate directly in solving their own problems. The second lesson is that development imposed from above rarely lasts. The third lesson is that self-reliance means maximizing what is already available. The key insights from this scenario is that ownership creates commitment since people usually protect what they build themselves.

3.1.2 New Testament on planning and self-reliance

The New Testament teaches us a lot from Jesus's practice as well as the practices of the Apostles and the early Church on the communion model of Christian life leading to self-reliance in the mission of the Church. Below are some examples:

3.1.2.1 The Last Supper as Chaburah gathering (Luke 22: 14-20)

The Last Supper was in essence, a *chaburah* meal. Jesus gathered His 12 Disciples in fellowship, shared bread and wine, and gave new meaning to the traditional Jewish meal. By declaring, 'This is my body…. This is my blood,' He instituted the Eucharist, transforming the old covenant meal into a Sacrament of the New Covenant. It is the Eucharist, that is the source and summit of all activities of the Church, as Vatican Council II puts it.[163] Thus, we also see that it was around this meal that Jesus taught his disciples, by the washing of their feet, that Christian fellowship is rooted not in hierarchy but in love and service.

[163] Second Vatican Council, *Lumen Gentium* (Dogmatic Constitution on the Church), no. 11; AAS 57 (1965), 15.

3.1.2.2 Community life among the early Christians (Acts 2: 42-47)

After the Resurrection of Jesus, the new community that was established by the early Christians had some sort of *chaburah* gatherings. This new community understood itself to have a kerygmatic task of evangelizing, preaching, and teaching the good news of Christ to the ends of the world. Day by day both in the temple and at home they never stopped gathering around the apostolic teaching, fellowship, the breaking of bread, and prayer, proclaiming the Good News of Jesus the Messiah (Acts 5:42) In the homes they also shared meals, cared for the needy, and supported one another. Furthermore, they were also voluntarily sharing things in common, showing love and commitment to each other. As Thomas Groome puts in the book entitled, *Sharing Faith; A Comprehensive Approach to Religious Education and Pastoral Ministry,* over time Evangelisation came to refer to announcing the Good News to would-be Christian converts, preaching to designate a spiritual reflection on scripture and especially in a liturgical context with people already Christians or the Catechumens becoming Christians, and teaching to describe the in-depth instruction and the formation of the people in the way of life and wisdom that is lived Christian faith.[164] Within that situation there was self-ministering, self-propagation, and self-supporting in the Community and the Community was also growing.

Thus this early Church was a network of small, faith filled fellowships, where unity, participation, and sharing were central. It was a living continuation of the *chaburah*, transformed by the risen Christ.

3.1.2.3 Charisms and strategic pastoral planning (Corinthians 12-14)

In the Pauline epistles and especially, 1 Corinthians 12-14, Paul provides one of the most profound theological frameworks for understanding diversity and unity in the life of the Church.

[164] Thomas H. Groome, *Sharing Faith; A Comprehensive Approach to Religious Education and Pastoral Ministry.* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1991), 180

As commented by Nalianya, in a special way St Paul in 1 Corinthians 12:4-30, uses the image of one body with many parts to illustrate the multitude and diversity of spiritual gifts, different kinds of service and activities in the Church. None of the body parts can claim to be fully autonomous to the extent of rejecting others. No single part can assume the role of the others. All of them in their diversity aim at maintaining the well-being of the one body. These Pauline teachings on charisms offer valuable insight for how the Church can engage in strategic pastoral planning that is inclusive, participatory and Spirit-led.[165]

For a diocese like Zomba Catholic Diocese, which seeks to build a self-reliant and mission-oriented Church, Paul's vision of the Christian community as the Body of Christ provides a biblical foundation for mobilizing and harmonising the gifts of all members. This means cultivating a spirituality of co-responsibility, empowering all the baptized and organizing diocesan life in a way that harmonises human, financial and material gifts. Such a Spirit-guided strategy leads not only to self-reliance but to a deeper communion in mission- fulfilling the Pauline vision that 'all members care for one another.'[166]

By and large, these passages call the Church in Zomba Catholic Diocese to embrace pastoral strategies that empower the faithful to become responsible for evangelization and development, not as passive recipients of aid. That would bring about strong ownership of the pastoral strategic plan of the diocese towards making the diocese self-reliant.

3.1.2.4 Partnership in the Gospel (Phil. 4: 14-20)

St Paul praises the Church at Phillipi for entering into partnership (koinonia) in the Gospel with him by sending financial support from time to time. So Paul wrote them to express his receipt of

[165] Antony Situma Nalianya, The Pauline Perspective of Self-Reliance in 2 Thess. 3:6-16, An academic paper presented during the 28th Interdisciplinary Theological Session, CUEA: Faculty of Theology, 4 March 2026.
[166] 1 Cor. 12:25.

their gifts in the spirit of accountability and transparency and to thank the community for their generosity. Commenting on this passage, Wright in his book entitled *The Biblical Theology of Life: The Mission of God's People,* says that 'supporting includes generosity in giving and that is undoubtedly a major part of the mission of God's people. It is, as Paul gratefully said to the Christians at Phillipi, a matter of 'fellowship' in the Gospel.'[167]

3.2 SACRED TRADITION AND THEIR TEACHINGS ON STEWARDSHIP AND COMMUNAL RESPONSIBILITIES

The Church Fathers underscore stewardship and communal responsibility that illuminate today's call for self-reliance. Below are some selected teachings from some of these Patristic Fathers:

3.2.1 St Justin Martyr (100- 165 AD)

Justin the Martyr was a Christian apologist, voluminous and important Church writer who taught and defended the Christian religion in Asia Minor and at Rome where he suffered martyrdom in about 165 AD. His famous works were *Apologies, A Refutation* and *Dialogue.* Justin Martyr defined the Church as a new people of God endowed with the Trinitarian holiness and the spirituality of fellowship and self-support. Thus as commented by Clement Majawa, the Church should always be enriched and transformed by the charismatic talents of its members and quoted Justin Martyr who had said that 'those who are able to make offerings in accordance to their means, each as he or she wishes; the bishops in turn makes use of these to support orphans, widows…. and those who for other reasons find themselves in need. [168]

[167] Christopher J.H. Wright, *The Biblical Theology of Life: The Mission of God's People* (Grandrapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2010), 220.
[168] Clement Majawa, *'Theological Assessment of the Church as Family of God,'* in *African Theological Journal,* vol. 16, no. 2, 2001, 39.

3.2.2 St Clement of Alexandria (150-215 AD)

Clement of Alexandria was a Christian apologist, theologian who was the second leader and teacher at the catechetical school of Alexandria. Among his writings he wrote ethical and theological works and biblical commentaries combating heretical Gnostics. He provides a rich and very balanced vision of a self-reliant Church as embracing intellectual, moral, spiritual, and material aspects of life. Below are some of the selected teachings around this type of self-reliance.

Firstly, for Clement of Alexandria, true self-reliance begins with the formation of the whole person.[169] Thus according to him the goal of Christian life is the formation of the mature (Christian) person grounded in faith, reason and virtue.[170] From this teaching we learn that a self-reliant Church depends on well-formed people, not merely external support. We also learn that ignorance breeds dependency whereas formation builds confidence and responsibility. The pastoral implications from that include that strong catechesis, catholic education and social teaching of the Church are essential for the sustainability of the Church, societies, and individuals.[171]

Secondly, Clement of Alexandria in his writing entitled *Who is the Rich Man That shall be saved?* argues that wealth as such is neutral and that the problem is disordered attachment.[172] From this teaching we get a lesson that a self-reliant Church may possess resources, but not necessarily be possessed by them. Furthermore we also learn that poverty is not holiness but that simplicity and generosity are.[173] From this reflection we get the economic insight that proper use of resources strengthens mission and independence in the local Churches.

[169] Clement of Alexandria, *Paedagogus*, I.1.
[170] Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata*, I.5, in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 2, 305–307.
[171] Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata*, VII.10.
[172] Clement of Alexandria, *Who Is the Rich Man That Shall Be Saved?*, trans. William Wilson, in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 2, 591–604.
[173] Clement of Alexandria, *Who Is the Rich Man That Shall Be Saved?*, 600–602.

Thirdly, just as taught by Thomas Aquinas later on, Clement of Alexandria teaches that almsgiving must respect the dignity of the poor by empowering them.[174] Thus from him we learn that charity should restore human dignity and agency and not create passive recipients. Hence from that we get the strategic principle that assistance must aim at transformation, not perpetual dependency.

Finally, Clement of Alexandria teaches that Christ is the true educator and model who forms responsible and free persons. Thus from that teaching we learn that self-reliance is Christ-centred and not self-centred. Furthermore, we also learn that freedom flows from obedience to truth.[175] Thus for a self-reliant Church the implication is that the Church's plans for self-reliance ought to be based on discerning the actual situation on the ground (insertion and social analysis) following the bases of Scripture, Tradition, Scholastic and Christian Philosophies, Theological reflections by Christian authors and experiences of the people with Christ at the centre (Theological reflection). From that we learn that freedom, including in planning, (Pastoral Action) flows from obedience to what Christ is teaching us.

3.2.3 St Basil the Great (330-379)

St Basil the Great was an early Roman Christian prelate who served as Bishop of Caesarea Mazaca in Cappadocia. He was an influential theologian who supported the Nicene Creed. He thus opposed heresies in the early Church like Arianism and Appollinarianism. In his writings Basil provides rich and practical insights on self-reliance in the context of Christian and ecclesial framework**.[176]** According to him, self-reliance is never individualistic autonomy but responsible

[174] Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata*, II.18; cf. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, II–II, q. 32, a. 1.
[175] Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata*, I.7, II.4.
[176] Basil of Caesarea, *On the Holy Spirit*, trans. Stephen Hildebrand (Yonkers, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2011), 15–17.

stewardship, communal solidarity, and disciplined Christian living**.**[177] The following are some of the highlights from his teachings and practices:

Firstly, he considered self-reliance as responsible stewardship. Thus he developed a theology of communal life and economic justice rooted in the Christian understanding of creation.[178] In his *Longer Rules and Homilies,* he insists that 'the bread you keep belongs to the hungry; the cloak you store in your chest belongs to the naked.'[179] From this teaching we learn that Self-reliance does not mean hoarding resources but using them productively and ethically for the good of all. A self-reliant Christian community avoids dependency by putting God-given resources into active service. The pastoral implication from this is that the local Churches or Church institutions ought to encourage local resource mobilization**,** accountability, and transparent use of assets.[180]

Secondly, on the practical basis, St Basil teaches on Community-Based Self-Reliance (not Individualism). Basil's establishment of monastic communities (Basileias) integrated prayer, manual work and service of the poor – becoming early models of self-sufficient Christian communities.[181] From that teaching, with example, St Basil shows us that true self-reliance grows within communion**.** The individual becomes strong by contributing to the strength of the community.[182] The pastoral implication from this teaching is that this principle strongly supports

[177] Basil of Caesarea, *The Longer Rules,* prologue, in *Ascetical Works,* trans. Monica Wagner (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1962), pp. 211–213.
[178] Basil of Caesarea, *Hexaemeron*, Homily I, in *Fathers of the Church*, vol. 46, trans. Agnes Clare Way (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1963), pp. 3–7.
[179] Basil of Caesarea, *Homily on Social Justice* (Homily VI, "I Will Tear Down My Barns"), in *On Social Justice*, trans. C. Paul Schroeder (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2009),p. 69.
[180] Basil of Caesarea, *The Longer Rules*, q. 37.
[181] Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oration 43: Funeral Oration for Basil the Great*, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, 2nd series, vol. 7, ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994), pp. 395–997.
[182] Basil of Caesarea, *The Shorter Rules*, q. 95, in *Ascetical Works*, pp. 328–329.

Small Christian Communities and parish-based initiatives where skills, labor, and resources are pooled.[183]

Thirdly, St Basil teaches us on *Preferential Option for the Poor* through Local Action. Thus on the practical basis, Basil established the *Basiliad*, a complex of hospitals, shelters, and workshops—funded and staffed locally.[184] From this practical teaching St Basil teaches us that Self-reliance includes institutional creativity. Thus based on the needs of the community the Church must develop sustainable structures without permanent dependence on external charity.[185] Thus the pastoral implication is that the local Church are called to invest in self-sustaining pastoral and social institutions like healthcare, education, and agriculture centres. The other implication is that St Basil's synthesis of spirituality and economics shows that pastoral development must be animated by the Holy Spirit, not merely human ambition.[186]

With reference to team working Basil on Psalm 29:1 and on the Holy Spirit, XVI:38, talks about the harmony that the Spirit brings about in the Church, the one who is harmony in person. Connecting this teaching to the synodal Church Kaulemu says that the Synodal Church can be described using the image of the orchestra: the variety of instruments is necessary to give life to the beauty and harmony of music, within which the voice of each one retains its own distinctive features at the service of the common mission.[187]

3.2.4 St Augustine of Hippo (354-430 AD)

St Augustine of Hippo was born at Thagaste in Northern Africa in modern day Algeria. He was a bishop of Hippo, one of the great philosophers, theologians and defender of Western

[183] John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles Laici* (1988), no. 26.
[184] Basil of Caesarea, *Letter 94*, in *Letters*, vol. 1, trans. Roy J. Deferrari (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1926), pp. 409–411.
[185] Basil of Caesarea, *Homily VIII*, in *On Social Justice*, pp. 93–95.
[186] Basil of Caesarea, *On the Holy Spirit*, chap. 15.
[187] David Kaulemu, 'Theological Foundations of Co-responsibility,' in *African Synodal Theology: A Tall Tree is as Strong as Its Roots*, ed. Agbonkhianmeghe E. Orobator (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2026), 220.

Christianity. He wrote over 200 books and 1000 sermons including *Confessions, The City of God* and *On the Trinity*. His *Sermon* 355, is a profound text on Church leadership, communal responsibility and accountability that are instrumental for pastoral ministry, ecclesial communion and self-reliance within the Church. Among other things Augustine speaks candidly about the weight of clerical office. While rejecting the idea of ministry as honour and power, he stresses that Church ministry is a service undertaken for the sake of others, not for personal advancement. Furthermore he emphasizes that leaders are servants who carry responsibilities together with the people. Thus for Augustine the Church needs to be mindful of the need for communion and providing for participation of the entire people in carrying out pastoral duties, which are the activities of the entire Body of Christ.

Furthermore, in Sermon 50, which is about pastoral responsibility, vigilance, and accountability before God, St Augustine reminds believers that everything possessed by Christians belongs to God and should therefore serve the common good. He warned against avarice and spiritual lethargy that paralyse generosity, teaching that the superfluities of the rich are the necessities of the poor. Thus for St Augustine communal sharing is a manifestation of divine love, an anticipation for the heavenly city where 'God will be all in all.' This Augustinian theology calls for diocese of Zomba to perceive self-reliance as participation in divine love through just distribution and transparent management of resources.

3.2.5 St Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274 AD)

He was an Italian Dominican friar, philosopher-theologian and Doctor of the Church. His major works include *Summa Theologiae, The 'Five Ways'* as well as *Faith and Reason.* There are many theological reflections from Thomas Aquinas' teachings, especially in *Summa Theologicae* (ST), that are very instrumental for the understanding of building a self-reliant Church through

aspects of communion, participation and mission. Below are some of the selected theological points from Thomas Aquinas in this regard:

Firstly, Thomas Aquinas in *ST* 1, q. 1, a.8, says that Grace builds on nature, by which he claims that God's grace does not destroy human effort but perfects it. From this teaching we learn that human beings are expected to use their natural capacities like reason, skills, labour and organization for the sake of self-reliance. We also learn that dependency of God's providence never excuses passivity. From all this, and for the sake of building a self-reliant Church we get the insight that communities should develop their own human and material resources while open to God's grace. This is also articulated in ST1, q.22.

Secondly, Thomas Aquinas teaches about Common Good over individual gain in ST I-II, q. 90, a.2). According to him common good is superior to private interest and that a community thrives when individuals contribute to shared well-being. From this teaching we learn that the Church becomes self-reliant when resources serve mission which is aimed at the common good. From this we appreciate the solidarity funds that Christian communities and institutions make locally and internationally for the sake of the common mission in which they all participate.

Thirdly, Thomas Aquinas in ST II-II, Q.23, talks about Charity that empowers and not weakens. By this teaching we learn that authentic help ought to aim at enabling others to stand on their own. Thus giving that creates dependency contradicts charity. By this teaching we get that for self-reliance charity must be paired with empowerment.

3.3 CONCILIAR DOCUMENTS

3.3.1 Vatican Council II (1962-1965)

The Second Vatican Council reshaped Catholic Ecclesiology and pastoral praxis in a way that directly informs strategic pastoral planning and the pursuit of self-reliance. Two texts are especially pertinent to this regard:

a) Lumen Gentium

It reconceived the Church as the People of God (LG, 6), emphasizing the Universal call to holiness and co-responsibility of all the baptized in the Church's mission. This shift from a purely hierarchical model to a participatory ecclesiology provides theological warrant for involving the laity, the religious and the clergy collaboratively in diocesan planning, formation, and stewardship. This is to say the laity are part and parcel of the Church too and participants in the Mission of the Church. Thus according to Vatican II, every member of the Church is sent and the elements of collaborative ministry requires that all be involved in the work of the Church, according to each one's proper role, cooperating unanimously in the common task. This is linked to Second Vatican Council's document on the laity: 'The Christian Vocation is, of its nature, a vocation to the Apostolate as well. Within the diversity of ministries, all have an active part to play in the single mission of the Church.[188]

As articulated by Aumann Jordan in his book entitled, *On the Front Lines: The Lay Person in the Church after Vatican II,* Vatican II treated at length of the Church in its basic document, *The Dogmatic Constitution of the Church.* He says that at the very outset the Council Fathers spoke of the 'mystery of the Church' and they used a variety

[188] Vatican Council II, *Apostolicam Actuositatem* (Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity), November 18, 1965, no. 2, *AAS* 58 (1966), 837.

of symbols to portray it. Thus the Church is a sacrament, a sign and instrument of Communion with God and the unity among the people. Furthermore, Vatican II had already recommended that from the start the Christian Community should be so organized that it is able to provide for its own needs as far as possible.[189]

b) *Gaudium et Spes*

It insists that the Church reads the 'signs of the times' and engages the practical realities of human life. The document links faith with concrete social concerns - human dignity, development, and ethical use of resources, thereby legitimizing pastoral strategies that integrate evangelization with socio-economic development. Vatican II, therefore, supplies an ecclesiological and pastoral programme for making strategic planning a theological act, not merely a managerial exercise.[190] Furthermore, as commented by Orobator, according to *Gaudium et Spes* no. 43, synodality calls us to acknowledge that People of God, through their baptismal identity, are also called and commissioned to participate actively in the whole life of the Church.[191]

As argued by David Kaulemu in his article, Theological Foundations of Co-responsibility, the teachings of the Church and the value of tradition since Vatican Council II offers the foundation for the practice of co-responsibility in a synodal Church. He further stresses that a Church invites and welcomes the gifts of all the baptized, laity, consecrated and ordained. Hence as he puts it;

> The facilitation of all these gifts- commitment, charisms, abilities, professions, identities, cultures and talents- allows the full participation of the whole congregation to realize and

[189] Vatican Council II, *Apostolicam Actuositatem* (Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity), no. 2. See also Jordan Aumann, *On the Front Lines: The Lay Person in the Church after Vatican II* (Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor, 1996), pp.15–18

[190] Vatican Council II, *Gaudium et Spes* (Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World), nos. 1, 4, 11, and 42.

[191] Agbonkhianmeghe E. Orobator (ed), *African Synodal Theology: A Tall Tree is as Strong as Its Roots* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2026), x.

> fulfill its mission in the world. Participation recognizes that all the faithful have opportunities to realize and fulfil their charism, and thus to activate the obligation to serve one another through the gifts they received from the Holy Spirit.[192]

3.3.2 Synod of Africa priorities: inculturation, human development, lay participation, and strengthening of ecclesial self-reliance

This special African Synod, convoked in Rome in October 1994, was the first of its kind to include lay representatives among the Bishops who were there by right.[193] This Synod of Bishops for Africa (1994)—which led to Pope John Paul II's apostolic exhortation *Ecclesia in Africa* (1995)—offers rich and concrete principles for planning a self-reliant Church**,** especially in the African context. Although the Synod does not use modern management language, its ecclesiological and pastoral vision clearly supports pastoral, financial, and missionary self-reliance**.** Below are some of the theological teachings from this synod and the post-synodal exhortation, the Ecclesia in Africa:

a) Church as Family of God

The Synod proposed 'Church as Family of God' as the central image for the Church in Africa and the 'most suitable for expressing the Church's nature.' It builds on African cultural values of communion life, solidarity, hospitality, and mutual care- values which form the backbone of the African family system. Key insights from this include the following: that a family takes responsibility for its own life and future; that mutual support, solidarity, and shared resources are intrinsic in the family; and that dependency contradicts the dignity and responsibility of family members.

[192] David Kaulemu, 'Theological Foundations of Co-responsibility', in *African Synodal Theology*, ed. Aghonkhianmeghe E. Orobator (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2026), 209.
[193] John Paul II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Africa* (September 14, 1995), no. 8, *AAS* 88 (1996), 681–682.

Furthermore, the synod reaffirmed AMECEA's option for Small Christian Communities as a way of promoting self-reliance in the Church in Africa. Furthermore, the synod said that the Small Christian Communities are an effective way to bring the Good News to others, to foster inculturation, to promote responsibility and deal with the concrete problems of life (Justice and Peace) in the light of the Gospel.[194]

The lesson for pastoral planning from this argument is that Self-reliance must be built on shared responsibility, participation, and solidarity among clergy, religious, and laity. Planning should foster a sense of *ownership* of the Church's mission and resources.

b) Evangelisation is inseparable from human development

According to this African Synod evangelization is inseparable from human development. It is for that reason that they synod emphasized that pastoral plans ought to include concrete programmes for education, health, and livelihood.[195]

c) Lay formation

Regarding the promotion of the laity, the synod called for stronger lay formation and participation, considering them as indispensable partners in mission and development.[196] This resonates with one of the key pillars of the Synod on Synodality which talks about the local church forming itself to be synodal.

The synod's discussions directly informed Pope John Paul II's post-synodal exhortation, *Ecclesia in Africa*, (1995), which explicitly encourages African Churches

[194] John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Africa*, nos. 89–90.
[195] John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Africa*, nos. 51–52.
[196] John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Africa*, nos. 53–54, 90.

to become 'self-propagating, self-supporting, and self-governing' and to work towards fostering local initiatives and mutual assistance rather than institutional dependence on external aid.[197] Thus strategic pastoral planning guided by these theological reflections should aim at communion, participation, and co-responsibility, leading the diocese towards self-reliance and sustainable evangelization. For Zomba Catholic Diocese, this synodal's teaching provides a clear theological and pastoral mandate to orient strategic plans towards local capacity building, inculturated catechesis of stewardship, and structured reforms that deepen participation and financial responsibility.

3.4 PAPAL DOCUMENTS

A sequence of papal teachings since Paul VI consistently links evangelization with social responsibility, stewardship, and the ethical dimensions of development.

3.4.1 Pope Paul VI- *Evangelii Nuntiandi*

Pope Paul VI was the head of the Catholic Church from 1963 to1978, succeeding Pope John XXII. He is especially remembered for guiding the Church through a time of major change, especially by successfully bringing Vatican Council II to the conclusion in 1975 as oversaw the implementation of its monumental reforms. His major contributions include promotion of Evangelisation in a changing world, dialogue with the modern world and was the first pope to travel internationally, setting the stage for later global papacies like John Paul II. During his visit to Uganda he addressed African bishops and the faithful, telling them that the Church in Africa had come of age and that therefore Africans should now evangelise their own people. He said,

[197] John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Africa*, no. 104.

'Africans, you are now your own missionaries. The Church of Christ is truly planted in the blessed soil. You must now be missionaries to yourselves.'[198]

At the year of closure of Vatican Council sitting, he wrote the encyclical called *Evangelii Nuntiandi*. Among other issues the pope in this encyclical teaches us points that are instrumental for planning for a self-reliant Church. Below are two selected teachings to express this assertion:

a) Intentional and organized evangelisation

According to *Evangelii Nuntiundi* evangelization must be **i**ntentional and organized and not improvised. It must be rooted in local realities and cultures. It must also be guided by discernment rather than rigid programs. Thus for Paul VI, Evangelization requires pastoral planning adapted to concrete situations**,** not a "one-size-fits-all" approach.[199] Thus for Paul VI, local Churches must take responsibility for shaping their pastoral priorities**,** rather than relying entirely on external models. Furthermore for Paul VI, bishops and pastoral leaders are called to coordinate efforts**,** ensuring unity of mission while respecting diversity. This lays the groundwork for what we now call pastoral planning**:** prayerful discernment, setting priorities, evaluating methods, and ongoing formation.[200]

b) Synodal approach to evangelization

According to Evangelii Nuntiundi, those who sincerely accept the Good News, through the power of this acceptance and of the shared faith, gather

[198] Paul VI, *Address to the Symposium of African Bishops, Kampala,* Uganda, July 31, 1969.
[199] Paul VI, *Evangeli Nuntiundi*, December 8, 1965, nos 14 and 40; in *AAS* 68 (1976); 18
[200] Paul VI, *Evangeli Nuntiundi*, December 8, 1965, no. 22.

together in Jesus' name in order to seek together the kingdom, build it and live it. They make up a community which in is in its turn evangelizing.[201]

c) On Self-reliance

Although *Evangelii Nuntiandi* does not use the modern phrase "self-reliance," it strongly promotes maturity of the local churches, growth from dependence to responsibility and co-responsibility and development of local leadership, ministries, and resources. The Pope stresses that evangelization is not only the responsibility of Rome but must be carried out by local Churches that have reached sufficient maturity to take charge of their mission. By this teaching Paul VI insists that evangelization must lead to Churches that are rooted locally, capable of sustaining their mission and not perpetually dependent on foreign personnel or funding.[202] This vision directly supports the idea of financial, pastoral, and missionary self-sufficiency**,** especially in young Churches like Zomba Catholic Diocese and many other local Churches in the AMECEA region.

3.4.2 Pope John Paul II- Christfideles Laici

Born in Poland, Pope John Paul II (Karol Wojtyla) was the first non-Italian Pope. Among his key contributions and achievements were global evangelization through his pastoral travels to over 100 countries that earned him the title, 'the pilgrim pope,' founding of World Youth Day bringing millions of young people together in faith and his theology strongly stressed on the dignity of the human person, freedom and the value of life. In 1988, 20 years after Vatican Council II, he

[201] Paul VI, *Evangeli Nuntiundi*, December 8, 1965, no. 22. Confer Jim Kanakulya, Unpublished Class notes in Approaches to Evangelisation, CUEA, 2024-2025 Academic year, 42.
[202] Paul VI, *Evangeli Nuntiundi*, December 8, 1965, nos 62-64.

issued an apostolic exhortation *Christfideles Laici* (On the Vocation and Mission of the Lay Faithful). In this apostolic exhortation, Pope John Paul II calls every Christian, not only the clergy and religious to reflect on the word found on Mt 20: 1-4 where Jesus invites all the people of God to go and work in his vineyard.[203] The aim of the document was to review the situation and suggest a greater participation of the laity in the ecclesial life and mission. According to the Pope the first and foremost of the areas of lay apostolate within the Church is the parish community. Thus *Christifideles Laici* called for unity of all the members of God in the Church. Furthermore, this document called for the need to have a parish pastoral council that will help the laity to contribute a lot to the growth of the authentic ecclesial communion. Regarding the lay participation at the diocesan level, *Christifideles Laici* states that the faithful have a duty to foster the feeling of the diocese through their participation in the ecclesial life. Thus the document says that the laity should be ready, at the invitation of the bishop, to participate in diocesan projects.[204]

3.4.3 Pope Francis- *Evangelii Gaudium* and *Synod on Synodality*

Pope Francis (born Jorge Mario Bergoglio) was an Argentinian and the first Jesuit Pope. He was the head of the Catholic Church from 2013 to 2025. Among the key characteristics of his Papacy were the emphasis on mercy and compassion, concern for the poor, environmental advocacy, Church reform and interfaith dialogue. He is remembered as a pope who tried to make the Church more inclusive and missionary oriented, focused on real-life pastoral challenges and a promoter of a Church that goes out to the margins. In 2023 Pope Francis convened the beginning of the *Synod of Synodality*, which is considered as one of the most important events in the Church since Vatican Council II.

[203]John Paul II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles Laici* (on the Vocation and Mission of the Lay Faithful in the Church and in the World), December 30, 1988, no. 2; *AAS* 81 (1989), 395–396.
[204] John Paul II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation Chris*tifideles Laici*, nos 25 and 27.

3.4.3.1*Evangelii Gaudium*

In *Evangelii Gaudium* Pope Francis continued with the teachings of *Evangelii Nuntiundi* of Paul VI.[205] He repeatedly affirms that *Evangelii Nuntiandi* is 'the greatest pastoral document ever written**.**'[206] In his teaching, he develops its principles by stressing the following:

a) Discernment-based pastoral planning

According to Pope Francis, pastoral planning ought to arise from discernment, not bureaucracy. Furthermore, he teaches that pastoral structures be flexible and missionary and that they be at the service of mission, not self-preservation.[207]

b) On Self-reliance

The Pope exhorts local Churches to avoid dependency that weakens initiative. He further teaches that economic and pastoral self-reliance support evangelical freedom and that stewardship and accountability are signs of ecclesial maturity.[208]

By and large, in *Evangelii Gaudium,* Francis echoes *Evangelii Nuntiandi* by calling Churches to become: Missionary disciples that are capable of sustaining evangelization through local resources, leadership, and responsibility[209]

[205] Francis, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, November 24, 2013, no. 15; *AAS* 105 (2013) 1023–1024.
[206] Francis, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, no. 15.
[207] Francis, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, nos. 26–27; 32.
[208] Francis, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, nos. 51; 58; 187–189.
[209] Paul VI, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, December 8, 1975, nos. 14–15, *AAS* 68 (1976), 14–16.

3.4.3.2 *Synod on Synodality*

In line with the new ecclesiology of the Vatican Council II, on Ecclesial Communion, Pope Francis in October 2021 called for a Synod on Synodality and a synodal Church that closed in October 2024. This synod on synodality has had as its theme, 'For a synodal Church: Communion, Participation and Mission and among other important things stressed the elements of listening and dialogue to effect a synodal Church. This synod climaxed in the 16th General Assembly of Bishops. The following are some of the key teaching of Pope Francis on the pillars of synodality, namely; communion, participation and mission;

a) Communion

According to the Synod on Synodality, journeying with the Lord is not done in isolation. It leads to the formation of a community, the Church, which is a visible symbol and continuation of the ministry of Jesus. As commented by Uwineza in his article, Theological Foundations of Synodality, the early Christian Community solved its problems by coming together. Thus for him the Church and synod are synonymous.[210]

b) Participation

Synod on synodality calls for co-responsibility of all in the mission of the Church. As argued by the General Secretariat of the Synod 'in a synodal Church the whole community is called together to pray, listen, analyse, dialogue, discern and offer advice on making pastoral decisions which correspond as closely as possible to God's will.[211]

c) Co-responsibility for our common mission

[210] Preparatory Document for the synod (2021), 14, www.synod.ca/content/dam/synod/common/preparatory-document/pdf/en_prepa_boo.pdf. Confer Marcel Uwineza, 'Theological Foundations of Synodality,' in *African Synod Theology: a Tall Tree is as Strong as Its Roots,* ed. Agbonkhiameghe E. Orobator (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2026), 31.
[211] General Secretariat of the Synod, 'What is Synodality,' synod.va.

The sharing of responsibility in mission is at the heart of a synodal Church. As Pope Francis clearly puts it, the synodal journey on which the People of God are invited is the foundation of a long-term, renewed way of working and participating in the Church as equal, co-responsible members based on the reality and identity of baptism.[212] As argued by Kaulemu in his article, Theological Foundations of Co-responsibility, the reaching of the Church and the values of Christian tradition since Vatican II offers the foundation for the practice of co-responsibility in a synodal Church. Such a Church invites and welcomes the gifts of all the baptized-laity, consecrated and ordained.

d) Listening

Listening is considered as being at the centre of communion, participation and mission within the syndoality framework. Thus according to Pope Francs a synodal Church is a listening Church.' For him listening is inclusive, multidirectional and spirit-filled: 'The faithful people, college of Bishops, the Bishop of Rome: all listening to each other, and all listening to the Holy Spirit.'[213] As commented by Orobator, listening is linked with discernment and discernment with accompaniment as ordinary dimensions of the life of a synodal Church.[214] He further remarked that the distinguishing features of a synodal Church include the call to shift from hierarchy to collaboration and co-responsibility, from uniformity to diversity, and from ecclesial maintenance to self-referentiality to mission-driven Church and renewed ecclesial life.[215]

[212] David Kaulemu, 'Theological Foundations of Co-responsibility,' in *African Synod Theology: a Tall Tree is as Strong as Its Roots,* ed. Agbonkhiameghe E. Orobator (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2026), 207.
[213] Pope Francis, address commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of the institution of the Synod of Bishops, 17 October 2015.
[214] Agbonkhianmeghe E. Orobator (ed), *African Synodal Theology: A Tree is as Strong as Its Roots,* p. xv.
[215] Marcel Uwineza, 'Theological Foundations of Synodality,' in *African Synodal Theology: A Tree is as Strong as Its Roots,* ed. Agbonkhianmeghe E. Orobator (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2026), 45-46.

Based on reflection on this synod, this research believes that the synod is very instrumental is strategic pastoral planning for it allows communion and participation of all in mission of the Church and it takes into consideration the relevance and needs of different types of people in the walking together of the Church.

By and large, collectively these papal teachings form a coherent magisterial trajectory around local responsibility in the Church. For Zomba Catholic Diocesan strategic pastoral planning these teachings call for strategies that combine spiritual formation with prudent stewardship, transparent governance and environmentally sustainable development. Furthermore, these magisterial teachings provide a theological matrix for strategic pastoral planning. Their recurrent emphases - inculturation, lay participation, subsidiarity, solidarity, integral development, and ecological care - are normative guideposts for transforming diocesan dependency into a theologically grounded self-reliance. In practical terms these teachings justify programmes for lay formation, parish-based income generating projects, transparent finance systems and environmental stewardship as intrinsic dimensions of the Church's evangelizing mission.

By and large, the conciliar documents promote a Church that considers its mission from a communal ecclesiological basis and bases it's planning on prayer, discernment and discussion. With reference to strategic pastoral planning such a process allows the congregation to rely on discerning the will of God in planning and implementing the plan for building a self-reliant Church.

3.5 THEOLOGIANS

3.5.1 Aylward Shorter - *Towards a Theology of Inculturation*

A Catholic missionary and anthropologist, Shorter, in *Towards a Theology of Inculturation* (1988), provides a number of teachings that are useful for planning for a self-reliant Church. Below are three selected teachings to support that claim:

a) Self-reliance as a sign of a mature local Church

According to Shorter, self-reliance is a sign of a mature local Church. Thus according to his argument dependence on foreign personnel and finances is a sign that evangelization has not yet reached full maturity. According to him a local Church should be capable of sustaining its own pastoral life for continued dependency undermines ecclesial identity and responsibility; and mission aims not at permanent dependence but at local ownership of the Church. Thus for him Self-reliance is therefore an ecclesiological goal, not merely an economic one.[216]

For Shorter mission, considered as a process, is the transition to self-reliance. The processes involved are the following: initial proclamation, formation of local leadership, gradual transfer of responsibility and then full pastoral and material self-reliance. According to him a mission that does not move toward self-reliance has failed in its purpose.[217]

b) Self-reliance and inculturation are linked

As argued by Shorter, self-Reliance and Inculturation are linked. Thus according to him a Church that is not financially and pastorally self-reliant cannot be fully inculturated since dependency often imports foreign models of Church life

[216] Aylward Shorter, *Towards a Theology of Inculturation* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1988) 1–5, 87-96.
[217] Aylward Shorter, *Towards a Theology of Inculturation*, 97-103.

that do not fit local cultures. Hence according to him true inculturation requires that the Gospel take root in local resources, leadership, and cultural expressions. Hence according to Shorter self-reliance has an advantage of allowing the Church to become authentically local and truly Catholic.[218]

Shorter, therefore, argues that African Churches must translate the Gospel into their cultural categories through dialogue and participation. Pastoral planning, therefore, should not import foreign models uncritically but must grow from indigenous cultural strength. Inculturation of stewardship, therefore, means interpreting giving, collaboration and work through African communal values like *Harambee* and *Ujamaa.* This insight reinforces pastoral planning that integrates faith with the people's logic of cooperation and mutual aid.[219]

Thus for Zomba Catholic Diocese, Shorter's teachingS underline the need to design strategic plans rooted in local realities - economically, socially, and spiritually - using SWOT Analysis. Hence Shorter's vision calls the diocese to become authentically Malawian and fully Catholic through self-reliance.

3.5.2 Bishop Patrick Augustine Kalilombe – *Diocesan Pastoral Planning Project for a self-reliant Church*

Bishop Patrick Augustine Kalilombe, formerly a member of the Missionaries of Africa, was a great African theologian, Bishop of Lilongwe Archdiocese, and one of the proponents of a self-reliant Church in AMECEA. In 1973 Bishop Patrick Augustine Kalilombe published his work entitled *Christ in Lilongwe Archdiocese Today and Tomorrow: Our Diocesan Pastoral Planning Project.* The ecclesiological background of his pastoral guidelines was clearly that of the Vatican

[218] Aylward Shorter, *Towards a Theology of Inculturation*, 63-75.
[219] Aylward Shorter, *Towards a Theology of Inculturation*, 45-48, 52-54, 120-126.

Council and the catch pastoral phrase which underpinned the whole project of Small Christian Communities was that the young African Churches must strive to be self-supporting, self-ministering, and self-propagating.

Thus according to Kalilombe, when we talk about self-reliance, the real point at stake is whether or not it is on the local people or local conditions that the running of the Church depends; whether the local conditions, local needs and problems and local possibilities really influence and determine the way the Church exists and is being run. According to him a self-reliant Church will happen when a new system has been found whereby the running of the Church will depend on the majority of the local people themselves in their ordinary places of life and work.[220]This idea was supported by Emeritus Bishop Allan Chamgwera when he said that all the Faithful are the owners of the Church and that the clergy should not say that the laity are helping them when they participate in pastoral activities. According to him it's actually the clergy, as facilitators, that are helping the laity to realize their mission in the Church in their leadership role.[221]

Going further Bishop Kalilombe convoked a Mini-synod of Lilongwe Archdiocese (1973-1975), under the theme: *Mpingo Ndife Tonse: Mavu Anapangana kuti Aning'e Pamimba,* which according to interpretation and proverbial understanding means "The Church belongs to everyone, and collective responsibility requires shared sacrifice." This synod going by the theme involved lay people and women religious in addition to the usual clerical participation of African and missionary priests. Lilongwe Archdiocese enthusiastically endorsed the system of Small Christian Communities as the basic unit of the Church from which self-reliance can be built.[222]

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[220] Patrick Kalilombe, *Christ's Church in Lilongwe, Today and Tomorrow: Our Diocesan Planning Project* (Lilongwe: Likuni Press and Publishing House, 1973), 24-27.
[221] Interviewed Emeritus Bishop Allan Chamgwera, Emeritus Bishop of Zomba Catholic Diocese, on 11 July 2025.
[222] Diocesan Pastoral Secretary (Lilongwe Diocese), Pastoral Guidelines: Lilongwe Diocesan Mini-synod. (Lilongwe: Likuni Press and Publication House, 1979), pp. 6-9. Also see Hubert Reijnnaets, Ann Nielsen and Mathews Schofelleers. *Montfortians in Malawi: Their Spirituality and Pastoral Approach,* 404.

For Zomba Catholic Diocese, Bishop Patrick Augustine Kalilombe's teaching calls for strengthening Small Christian Communities and lay participation for the attainment of communal ownership and responsibility in the Church.

3.5.3 Clement Majawa – *Theological Assessment of the Church as a Family of God*

Clement Majawa is a professor, theologian and one of the lecturers at the Catholic University of Eastern African. According to Clement Majawa in his article entitled *Theological Assessment of the Church as a Family of God* the understanding of true ecclesiology has undergone a historical development right from the time of the early Christian Community to the contemporary understanding of the Church as a Communion and Family of God. With reference to St Clement of Alexandria (150-200 AD) who said that the local Church is to be built on faith and praxis of the early Christian communities, Clement Majawa said that the local Church is best described with the image of the family of God. He furthers says that the local Church should be founded on the Scriptures, the Sacraments, the liturgy, charity and care for the poorest in the Church.[223]

For Zomba Catholic Diocese, the teachings of Clement Majawa emphasize the Church as a family of God, extending beyond the cultural concept of family life, to achieve Christian unity and co-responsibility. That calls for an understanding of family life bounded by spiritual cords and stemming from the unity around the Eucharist.

3.5.4 Marc Nsazurwimo – *self-sustainability for the Catholic Church*

Marc Nsazurimo is a theologian and one of the priests of the Missionaries of Africa. In his book entitled, *Facing the Challenge: Self-sustainability for the Catholic Church,* in line with the arguments of Bishop Kalilombe, Fr Marc Nsazurwimo, a White Fathers missionary, asserts other

[223] Clement Majawa. 'Theological Assessment of the Church as Family of God,' in *African Theological Journal,* vol. 16, no. 2, 2001, pp. 39 and 42.

teachings that are critical for planning for a self-reliant Church. Below are three selected teachings to support this claim:

a) Church built of the local people and local conditions

According to Nsazurwimo any organization functions with the contribution of its members that 'whatever the case the running of the Church has to be built on the local people and the local conditions. Its growth has to bank on them and this is possible only if it is the bulk of the local faithful that determines the life of the Church. Thus according to Nsazurwimo, in this regard the laity are strong pillars for anything we wish to achieve in our pastoral endeavors. However, Nsazurwimo, while calling for greater responsibility in building a self-reliant society on the shoulders of the laity, acknowledges that these members do not live on the planet of their own. They share the life of their fellow citizens in the wider society which is affected by historical, social, and economic world order. By this Nsazurwimo acknowledges that the situation of the larger community, which the Christian members are also in, affects how much the Christian members are able to offer to their Church.[224]

b) Financial resources mainly depend on the generosity of the Christian community

According to Nsazurwimo, the most important, certain, durable, and normal source of financial resources for a local church lies in the generosity of its Christian community.[225] This echoes Godfrey Mboowa's claim in his doctoral dissertation

[224] Mark Nsazurwimo, *Facing the Challenge: Self-Sustainability for the Catholic Church in Zambia* (Ndola: Mission Press, 2003), 200, 213-214.
[225] Mark Nsazurwimo, *Facing the Challenge: Self-Sustainability for the Catholic Church in Zambia* (Ndola: Mission Press, 2003), 213-214.

entitled, *Towards a More Self-Reliant Church: A Pastoral Study of Lugazi Catholic Diocese – Uganda.* According to Mboowa, the process of self-reliance takes off when the majority starts to rely on their own ability and efforts, that is when one becomes responsible for their own growth and development; socially, spiritually, politically, and economically. Furthermore while taking into consideration the financial aspect of Self-reliance, he stressed that a local Church becomes truly local when it has made a clear and gradual achievement of self-reliance in all aspects of its integral evangelization.[226]

Despite the admiration of the model of the Church as a family of God, Nsazurwimo acknowledges that with the changing society, family ties have lost a lot of their positive elements and that the change is often followed by a spirit of parasitism, greed, laziness, ethnocentrism, nepotism, individualism, and exploitation by the rich. Thus we say that much of the Eucharistic hospitality will be a privileged expression of hospitality and acceptance in the Church has a family. According to Nsazurwimo, the African Church is invited to the solidarity of the children of God who are called to the same spiritual inheritance of hope (Eph. 3:6) and to live of the same resources. This solidarity is practiced and expressed between individuals and between churches as families spread all over the world and is particularly sensitive to the needs of the poor, the widows and the orphans, the marginalized and the refugees.[227]

3.5.5 Joseph Healey and Jean Hinton - *Small Christian Communities Today*

Joseph Healey is one of the priests of Montfort Missionaries and a former lecturer at the Catholic University of Eastern Africa. He is one of promoters of Small Christian Communities and

[226] Godffrey Mboowa, *Towards a More Self-Reliant Church: A Pastoral Study of Lugazi Catholic Diocese- Uganda,* Doctoral Dissertation in Sacred Theology with Specialisation in Pastoral Theology (Nairobi: CUEA Press, 2018), 47.
[227] Mark Nsazurwimo, *Facing the Challenge: Self-Sustainability for the Catholic Church in Zambia,* 8 and 14.

the concept of the Church as a family of God. Below are some of the teachings from Joseph Healey and his co-author, Jean Hinton:

a) Small Christian Community as a pastoral strategy for a communication Church

According to Joseph Healey and his co-author, Jean Hinton in the book entitled, *Small Christian Communities Today: Capturing the New Moment*, Small Christian Communities are an important pastoral strategy and even a new way of being a communitarian Church. According to these authors this new moment includes the strengthening of parish-based and family-based Small Christian Communities that are faith sharing, Bible sharing groups based on Scriptures, especially the lectionary readings; building on the scriptures, especially on the lectionary readings; building on the implementation of the 1994 African Synod and the Ecclesiology of the 'Church as family'; SCCs that are an essential part of the restructuring process in both the parish and the diocese; the SCC members who reach out to the poor and the marginalized like people with HIV/AIDS.

b) SCCS as a model of equality and building of building parish structures

Furthermore, according Joseph Healey and Jean Hinton, SCCs are a model/example of equality where nobody is excluded. They quoted Pope John Paul II who stated in the Apostolic Exhortation on the First African Synod: ' Above all, these communities are to be committed to living Christ's love for everybody, a love that transcends the limits of natural solidarity of clans, tribes or any interest groups.' They also echoed the Final Message of the Synod, which states that: 'It is such communities that will provide the best means to combat ethnocentrism within the Church itself, and more widely, within our

nations. These individual Churches, as families, have a task of working to transform society.'[228]

Furthermore, In his other book entitled, *Building the Church as a family of God; Evaluation of the Small Christian Communities,* Joseph Healey quotes Fr Emmanuel Orabator, who on the pastoral relevance an social effectiveness of SCCS in Eastern Africa, states that 'SCCs offer the Church in Africa the most valuable models and means for the Church in Africa to become real, relevant and local in the lives of the ordinary Christians.

Going further Joseph Healey gave the following among examples of the impact of SCCs in the AMECEA region: Parish based SCCs are integrated into the pastoral structures and activities of the Catholic Church, that is to say they are a pastoral model that helps to build the parish structures…. This is participation and representation from the grassroots.

Regarding self-reliance, Healey says that by organizing fundraising collections through SCCs, a research in Kenya showed that money had doubled and tripled in some parishes. He, furthermore, says that it is more efficient and effective to collect the annual Church tax and other collections through the SCCs. He says that many dioceses organize their annual fundraising appeal by assessing each parish with a certain amount. The parishes in turn assess each SCC and the overall collection is much higher. Through SCC on the grassroots level, lay people are taking more initiative and financial responsibility for 'their' Church and their involvement in the wider society.[229]

[228] Joseph Healey and Jean Hinton, *Small Christian Communities Today: Capturing the New Moment.* Nairobi: Pauline Publications Africa, 2006, 97.
[229] Joseph Healey, 'Building the Church as a family of God; Evaluation of the Small Christian Communities,' Double Spearhead nos 199-200, (Nairobi: AMECEA Gaba Publications-CUEA Press, 2012), 93

CONCLUSION

In this chapter we have discussed theological reflections around the elements of planning and self-reliance. The main sources for such reflections have been the Sacred Scripture, Sacred Tradition, Writings of theologians and our own experiences within the framework of synodality with its three main dimensions namely, communion, participation and mission. The theological wisdom from these reflections have given us insights that synodality framework strengthens communion and participation in the mission of evangelization, thereby making the Church indeed self-ministering, self-propagating and self-sustaining. Furthermore, the theological reflection on the impact of strategic pastoral planning on building a self-reliant Church in Zomba Catholic Diocese reveals that self-reliance is a spiritual vocation, a pastoral necessity as well as a dynamic manifestation of communion, stewardship and mission.

We have come to a conviction, through this reflection, that when diocesan strategic pastoral planning embraces the Synodal model, several transformative outcomes can be achieved like strengthened unity and communion, improved lay participation, financial and material sustainability, vibrant Christian communities, holistic evangelization and cultural integration. In the next chapter we shall discuss recommendations and proposed action plan to counteract the challenges noted in the implementation of the Zomba Diocesan Strategic Pastoral Plan as well as to maximize the opportunities identified.

CHAPTER FOUR
TOWARDS ENHANCING EFFECTIVE DIOCESAN STRATEGIC PLANNING IN BUILDING A SELF-RELIANT CHURCH

INTRODUCTION

Chapters two and three give us a basis for action regarding the way forward for strategic pastoral planning for building a self-reliant Church. Summarily, chapter two, which is about social analysis, presented seven main challenges around strategic pastoral planning for building a self-reliant Church: little familiarity with the details of the diocesan strategic pastoral plan among most of the people; resistance to change and a stagnated attitude of dependency on handouts; poor contextualization of the diocesan strategic pastoral plan on building a self-reliant Church; limited involvement of the laity in planning and discussions around the progress of strategic plan activities; lack of continued monitoring and evaluation of the diocesan strategic pastoral plan; discontinuity of strategically planned programmes when leadership changes; and general poverty and high unemployment levels in society.

In the same chapter, three major opportunities that can enhance ecclesial self-reliance when properly planned were identified: availability of talents and skills among Church members, availability of land and infrastructure, and availability of networks for partnership. These opportunities augers well with African ecclesiology, which emphasizes the Church as a community whose unity enables it to bring to organize and share their local resources and skills for integral development of the whole community.[230]

In chapter three, through theological reflection, it was established that the teachings of the Church consistently advocate for the active and communal involvement of all members of the Church in her mission, and that such participation is indispensable for the realization of a strategic

[230] AMECEA Pastoral Department, *Pastoral Planning in Eastern Africa* (Nairobi: AMECEA Gaba Publications, 2015), 41–45.

pastoral plan aimed at building a self-reliant Church. With this insight, this study argues for a synodal approach to strategic pastoral planning and implementation, the approach that embraces communion, participation, and mission as constitutive dimensions of ecclesial life.[231]

A review of the previous stages of the research indicates that diocesan strategic pastoral planning has had a positive impact on efforts toward building a self-reliant Church. However, much more remains to be done in the area of strategic management to enhance and maximize the attainment of self-reliance through pastoral planning initiatives. For that purpose, this study proposes the adoption of three types of change in relation to the diocesan strategic pastoral planning, namely developmental change, transitional change, and transformational change, drawing on the work of Dean Anderson and Linda Ackerman Anderson. Developmental change puts emphasis on improving existing structures, skills, and processes without shifting the organization's core identity. Transitional change involves replacing old processes or models with new and clearly defined ones, requiring structured guidance through a period of uncertainty. Transformational change reshapes values, beliefs, and organizational culture in a way that significantly influences people's understanding of their identity and roles in a mission.[232]

This chapter presents and discusses the recommendations and their implications for pastoral action culminating in the proposed pastoral action.

4.1 RECOMMENDATIONS

These recommendations are hereby presented as strategic change interventions aimed at enhancing the impact of diocesan strategic pastoral planning in building a self-reliant Church. The

[231] Synod of Bishops, *For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, and Mission* (Vatican City: General Secretariat of the Synod, 2021), 9–15.
[232] Dean Anderson and Linda Ackerman Anderson, *Beyond Change Management: How to Achieve Breakthrough Results Through Conscious Change Leadership* (San Francisco: Pfeiffer, 2010), 67–75.

recommendations are presented first at a general level and then specifically at four ecclesial levels: diocesan, parish/institution, and Small Christian Community/lay group levels. Such recommendations, based on *solution tree method*, are intentionally framed to reflect synodality and to facilitate a deliberate shift from dependency toward a mature, grace-filled self-reliance rooted in faith, solidarity and subsidiarity.

4.1.1 General Recommendations

Below are recommendations based on the challenges and opportunities identified from the Social Analysis:

4.1.1.1 Recommendations with reference to the challenges identified

The following are our recommendations with reference to the challenges identified:

a) Developing a people-centred purpose driven congregation

A people-centred purpose driven congregation would strengthen unity and co-responsibility in achieving the self-reliant purpose of the Church. The activities to advance this strategy includes sharing the theological and philosophical bases of the strategic pastoral plan among members of the Church so that every member knows and understands the common premises from which the Church is operating.

As proposed by Cousins *et al* for a purpose-driven congregation task forces are very effective. According to them, when a task force is established, it is given a single purpose, budget, and deadline in accordance to planned activities. When the mission is completed, the task force disbands and its members are free to move to other areas of need. Thus taskforces ensure projects planned are fast-tracked and completed - all things being equal. It also allows members of the Church to participate in a number of activities with concentration and in the process sharpening their organizational skills. Regarding members

of such taskforces, the authors recommend selecting accomplishers rather than representatives.[233]

Furthermore, the creation of taskforces or cross-functional teams at parish and diocesan levels would provide a structured platform that brings together skills and perspectives to solve problems, implement projects or drive innovation that cannot be effectively handled by a single unit. Such a team would be made up of the clergy, the religious and the laity with gender sensitivity.[234] This strategy would strengthen a culture of dialogue that reflects a synodal approach to strategic pastoral planning for a self-reliant Church. The benefits of such teams are like broader perspectives and better problem solving, faster and more integrated decision-making, improved coordination across departments, and breaking down 'silos' within the Church organization. [235]

b) Reframing Self-Reliance as a Theological and Ecclesiological Imperative

With regard to the lack of a comprehensive understanding of a self-reliant Church, often emphasizing its financial dimension only, we recommend that self-reliance be reframed and emphasized as a theological and ecclesiological imperative intrinsic to the mission of the Church, as a self-ministering, self-propagating and self-sustaining Body of Christ. As argued by Right Reverend John Oballa Owaa, Self-reliance rightly understood and theologically ordered helps the local Church to sustain the mission of the Church

[233] Don Cousins, *Mastering Church Management,* 47.
[234] In the light of the Synod on Synodality concerning the role of women in the mission of the Church, the Church is challenged to promote a Church in which men and women walk and work together without subordination, exclusion or completion. Cf Veronica Jemanyur, 'Consecrated Women Religious Journeying Together for a Missionary Synodal Church in Africa,' in *African Synodal Theology: A Tall Tree is as Strong as Its Roots,* ed. Agbonkhianmeghe E. Orobator (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2026), 188.
[235] John Paul II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles Laici*, no. 23.

without detachment itself from the Universal Church but as a fully functioning part of the Universal Church.[236]

By this transformative mindset change around the concept of self-reliance, self-reliance would officially be taught and understood not merely as a financial or managerial goal, but as a theological expression of communion, stewardship, and mission, rooted in Scripture and Tradition, and embraced by Church members as a sign of ecclesial maturity, authentic discipleship, and missionary commitment.[237]

c) **Increasing Awareness of the Diocesan Strategic Pastoral Plan**

Effective implementation of pastoral plans depends largely on how well they are communicated, internalized, and owned by grassroots communities. Without such internalization, planning risks remaining theoretical and failing to shape lived pastoral practice. Thus we hereby recommend increasing awareness of the diocesan strategic pastoral plan as a developmental change, aimed at improving dissemination, formation, and empowerment with regard to strategic management. To improve this awareness of the diocesan strategic pastoral plan we propose the following strategic and developmental actions:

i. **simplified and translated versions of the plan**

That strategy would foster deeper awareness and understanding of diocesan priorities among the people. That would facilitate meaningful participation in implementing the plans toward building a self-reliant Church.

i. **Regular formation sessions for the clergy and the laity**

[236] Rt. Rev. John Oballa Owaa (Bishop of Ngong Catholic Diocese), Opening Keynote Address to the 28th Interdisciplinary Theological Session, CUEA, 4 March 2026.
[237] Vatican Council II, *Lumen Gentium* (1964), nos. 30–33; John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Africa* (1995) nos. 63–65.

Beyond the formal launch of the diocesan plan, regular formation sessions for both clergy and laity broaden the awareness of the strategic pastoral plans. That would also equip them with the necessary pastoral, theological, and technical competencies required for effective implementation across diverse contexts.[238]

ii. **Mainstreaming of the strategic plan into existing diocesan, institutional, parish, and SCC meetings**

Mainstreaming the diocesan strategic pastoral plan into existing diocesan, institutional, parish, and Small Christian Community (SCC) meetings is vital for strategic plan implementation. As Peter Namphande advises, to foster continuity, purposeful planning and implementation parishes, institutions and ecclesial communities ought to include items of implementation of the strategic pastoral plan in their regular meetings.[239]

iii. **Leaders referencing the plan in communiqués, homilies, and reports**

Continued referencing to the diocesan strategic pastoral plan by Church leaders in their official statements like communiqués, homilies, and pastoral reports strengthens the awareness and relevance of the plans. It also continually mobilizes participation of every member of the Church in the activities of the Church with a sense of shared responsibility and collective ownership of the pastoral vision of the Church in varied circumstances.[240]

[238] John Paul II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores Dabo Vobis* (1992), no. 57; *AAS* 84 (1992), 746.
[239] Interviewed (online) Peter Namphande, of University of Malawi, on 19 January 2026.
[240] Vatican Council II, *Apostolicam Actuositatem* (Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity), nos. 2–3 (1965); *AAS* 58 (1966), 837–38.

By and large, increasing consciousness of a strategic pastoral plan contributes to improved understanding and ownership of pastoral priorities among Church members. This, in turn, promotes stronger alignment between different implementing structures and the diocesan vision. It also diminishes reliance on immediate activities only and fosters a more comprehensible, intentional, long-term mission-driven pastoral planning. In the final analysis this approach strengthens stewardship, responsibility, and ecclesial synodality on the journey towards building a self-reliant Church.[241]

d) **Mindset Transformation and Empowerment-Based Pastoral Planning**

To address the challenge of resistance to change, we recommend mindset transformation and empowerment-based pastoral planning though awareness trainings, workshops and sharing of success stories in different official fora of the Church. Such an approach recognizes that sustainable self-reliance requires not only structural adjustments but also a profound transformation of attitudes, beliefs, and self-understanding among Church members.[242] With reference to training for mindset change around self-reliance as such, Asiimwe based on Canon 1280 on financial councils, proposes training lay professionals in canonical duties. Furthermore, based on Canons 222 and 1261-1262, Asiimwe proposes the strategy of education on stewardship that would help Christians move from 'obligation to 'right to give' mindset.[243]

[241] Francis, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* 924 November 2013), nos. 24, 27; *AAS* 105 (2013) 1031–1033.
[242] Dean Anderson and Linda Ackerman Anderson, *Beyond Change Management: How to Achieve Breakthrough Results Through Conscious Change Leadership*, 86–102.
[243] John Bosco Asiimwe, A Self-Reliant Church for Effective Evangelisation in South Africa: Integrating Biblical Foundation, Canonical Framework, and SACBC Context, An academic paper presented at the 28th Interdisciplinary Theological Session, CUEA: Faculty of Theology, 6 March 2026.

Furthermore, as commented by Ignatius Suwedi of Zomba Catholic Diocese: to be a self-reliant diocese all local Christians and Church communities must undergo mind-self change and embrace the spirit of charity and generosity for the love of God and neighbor. He further said that:

> We can find excuses by wearing clothes of poverty and lamenting of unemployment or how hard it is to be financially stable in Zomba District. But how is it possible that in the same district and the same locations other denominations are doing much, far much better than Catholics? It all must deal with a change of mindset.[244]

Overall, these strategies can contribute to a gradual but steady cultural shift from aid-dependence to self-reliance. They also encourage the Christian community to look into their own specific situations and consider how they can solve their own local challenges and attain their aspirations as far as self-reliance is concerned. Such a position sustains ambition and participating in working for locally funded pastoral programs and projects, whose fruits they are expecting to see.

e) **Establishing a Policy on Contextual Adaptation of the Diocesan Plan at Parish, institutional, and SCC Levels**

To deal with this poor contextualization of the diocesan strategic pastoral plan challenge, we recommend the establishment of a policy on contextual adaptation of the diocesan strategic pastoral plan at parish and Small Christian Community (SCC) levels. This is a transitional change in the operating model of pastoral planning calling for a shift from attempting uniform implementation of the diocesan strategic pastoral planning to guided localization of the strategic pastoral plans based on concrete situation of the people at their respective levels of the Church. Learning from the practices of Zomba CCAP, Rev.

[244] Interviewed Rev. Fr Ignatius Suwedi, of Catholic Zomba Diocese, on 20 January 2026.

Chitsulo of Blantyre CCAP Synod advises Zomba Catholic Diocese to train and empower different groups of the Church to make their own strategic pastoral plans based on the blueprint of the diocesan strategic plan.[245] As advised by Fr Suwedi, 'when it comes to contextualization, strategic pastoral plan is not an option but a must, and should leave no ground unturned.'[246] This policy of contextualizing the diocesan strategic plan may then be followed by a policy that each diocesan institution, parish of ecclesial community be required to make annual pastoral plan and budget every pastoral year.

f) **Improving Monitoring and Evaluation through Simple, Participatory, and Formative M&E Systems**

To counteract the challenge of weak monitoring and evaluation in the implementation of the diocesan strategic pastoral plan, this study recommends strengthening monitoring and evaluation as a critical developmental and technical factor of strategic pastoral management within the Church. This strategy would involve training different stakeholders, including parish and SCC leaders, in simple reporting tools with clear indicators and schedules. As advised by Namphande, the diocesan level M&E committee should take a lead in monitoring the implementation of the diocesan strategic pastoral planning. This committee should work with the parish and institutional level committees to ensure that there is regular and in-built feedback mechanisms even at local parish level.[247] Furthermore, learning from Blantyre Synod of the CCAP, a special Sunday in every year could be earmarked as a Sunday for celebrating the Strategic Vision and that on such a Sunday different implementation structures, including lay groups and the M&E,

[245] Interviewed (online) Reverend T. Chitsulo, of Blantyre CCAP, on 16 January 2026.
[246] Interviewed (online) Rev. Fr Ignatius Suwedi, of Zomba Catholic Diocese, on 22 January 2026.
[247] Interviewed (online) Peter Namphande, of University of Malawi, on 19 January 2026.

would be asked to give reports on their strategic plan implementation to the congregation.[248]

Overall, such measures are expected to lead to improved accountability and transparency, continuous learning and pastoral adaptation. They also lead to improved efficient use of limited resources, evidence-based decision-making, and sound and steady progress of the strategic pastoral plans toward attainment of a self-reliant Church.[249]

g) **Institutional Continuity and Systems-Based Leadership**

To overcome the disruption of pastoral programmes and projects by gaps in leadership transitions, we recommend institutional continuity and systems-based leadership as a transitional change to be embraced by which the Church to move from person-dependent leadership to system-dependent governance. Strategically, the following practical actions are proposed to operationalize this recommendation: anchoring the strategic pastoral plan in diocesan statutes, policies structures; maintaining updated documentation of strategic plan; standardizing leadership transition procedures; and provision of induction training and orientation for new leaders.

h) **Intensification of Integral Evangelization Linked to Human Development**

To alleviate the challenge of poverty, which affects individuals, the wider community, and the Church herself in her pursuit of a self-reliant pastoral programme, this study recommends the intensification of integral evangelization linked to human

[248] Interviewed (online) Rev. T. Chitsulo, of Blantyre CCAP, on 21 January 2026.
[249] Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium,* nos. 27, 187–190.

development as both a transformational and developmental change to be embraced.[250] Strategically, the following practical and transformational actions are proposed to effect this recommendation: enhanced integration of economic empowerment into evangelization through Church-supported skills training, encouraging cultural solidarity-based economic models like the *Harambee* of Kenya, promotion small-scale enterprises among Church groups, promotion of a saving culture and participation in credit groups as well as enhancing partnership with government and non-governmental organizations.

Overall, this intervention is expected to yield expanded human and material capacity, greater resilience of Church institutions, and sustainable evangelization rooted in lived socio-economic realities.[251] In this way, evangelization becomes not only proclamation but a life-giving and enduring witness to the Gospel in concrete human contexts.[252]

4.1.1.2 Recommendations with reference to the identified opportunities

a) Enhancement of human personnel

With reference to skilled human personnel and in order to promote a synodal approach to strategic pastoral management we recommend promotion of a collaborative work structure as team building mechanism. As Jim Kanakulya puts it, planning promotes team-building and a spirit of cooperation; everyone knows what their responsibilities are, and how other areas of the organization need their assistance and expertise in order to complete assigned tasks.[253] Strategically, tthe following are the proposed strategic actions

[250] Dean Anderson and Linda Ackerman Anderson, *Beyond Change Management: How to Achieve Breakthrough Results Through Conscious Change Leadership*, 86–102.
[251] Francis, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, no. 27.
[252] Paul VI, Encyclical Letter *Populorum Progressio*, no. 76.
[253] Jim Kanakulya, Unpublished class notes in Pastoral Planning and Administration, Nairobi, CUEA, 2024-2025 Academic Year, 20.

to effect this recommendation: training more priests, the religious and the laity is different pastoral and social relevant fields; maximising involvement of lay experts in pastoral programmes and projects; as well as mentoring young people and emerging leaders in strategic planning activities.

Owing to the significance of financial integrity to motivate human resource to contribute their different resources to the Church financial planning necessarily needs to be connected to financial integrity of the human personnel for it to be credible. As advised by Chamangwana Church leaders be given spiritual reflections and workshops on financial integrity to assure confidence of the people in financial self-reliant activities.

Overall, strategic forming and usage of collaborative work structure would yield reduced reliance on external consultants, strengthened institutional capacity, improved quality of pastoral and development initiatives, a deepened culture of stewardship and shared responsibility, and maximized impact on self-reliance both within and beyond the Church.[254]

b) Sustainable usage of the land and infrastructure

Church-owned land and buildings constitute a significant potential resource in the diocesan quest for self-reliance in support of the evangelizing mission of the Church. Sustainable usage of land and infrastructure approach entails a deliberate shift from passive asset ownership to strategic and responsible asset management, grounded in stewardship and long-term mission sustainability.[255]

This strategy would have to follow an updated diocesan asset and resource inventory and an asset-management policy. A comprehensive diocesan asset and resource

[254] Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, no. 27.
[255] Francis, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, no. 198.

inventory would enable the Church to assess existing capacities and identify gaps. The asset and resource inventory would support informed decision-making regarding strategic pastoral planning, including construction priorities, income-generating investments, and long-term sustainability initiatives.

The expected outcomes of these strategies include the establishment of sustainable internal revenue streams, increased local funding for evangelization and social outreach, enhanced long-term financial sustainability, greater institutional resilience, and strengthened diocesan autonomy in mission and administration.[256]

4.1.2 Specific Recommendations

The following are our specific recommendations for each of the following ecclesial structures below:

4.1.2.1 Pastoral Recommendations at the National Level

We hereby make the following recommendations to the Catholic Secretariat at the Malawi Conference of Catholic Bishops: development of a clear national vision for self-reliance as an ecclesial principle, enhancing capacity building and formation for the clergy and the laity, enhancing collaboration and partnerships, enhancing national solidarity mechanisms and encouraging research and continuous learning even within and outside the nation.

The expected impact of these strategies includes greater harmonization of diocesan pastoral planning approaches, reduced duplication of efforts, and a more coherent witness of the Church as a self-reliant and mission-oriented communion.[257]

[256] Benedict XVI, Encyclical Letter *Caritas in Veritate*, June 29, 2009, no. 51, *AAS* 101 (2009), 675–676.
[257] Francis, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, no. 27.

4.1.2.2 Recommendations at the Diocesan Level

For dioceses whose overall role and focus embraces strategic plan leadership, coordination, capacity building, and oversight, the following recommendations are proposed**:** synergizing the national pastoral plan with the diocesan strategic pastoral plan, strengthening the diocesan pastoral strategic plan committees on quality control mechanisms that includes monitoring and evaluation, enhancing official visitations to parishes and institutions on self-reliance agenda, establishing a policy on contextualizing the diocesan strategic pastoral plans, preparation of training resources and trainings on strategic pastoral planning for building a self-reliant Church as well as training different stakeholders in the diocese on strategic pastoral planning for building a self-reliant Church.

4.1.2.3 Recommendations at the parish and institutional levels

With regards to parishes and institutions whose overall focus is on coordinating strategic management in their structures, the following are the recommendations**:** integration of stewardship, self-reliance, and co-responsibility into homilies, mystagogical catechesis, trainings and workshops; implementing the policy of synodal contextualization of the diocesan strategic pastoral plan, creation of budgeted annual operation plans, enhancing visitations lower structures on self-reliance agenda, promotion of lay ministries, enhancement of ecclesial communities as structures of lay participation in mission as well as surveying and revamping income-generating activities.

The expected impacts of these strategies include coherent implementation of self-reliance initiatives, enhanced accountability and trust, and deeper rootedness of self-reliance of the Church in the synodal mission.

4.1.2.4 Recommendations at the Small Christian Community (SCC) / Lay Group Level

Small Christian Communities (SCCs), has the overall focus that includes living the Gospel in daily life; grassroots evangelization as basic units of communion, participation, and mission; mutual spiritual, social, and economic support; and practical self-reliance. The following strategic actions are recommended to SCCs:

a) Annual updating of membership records and sharing of the same with the pastoral team.
b) Creation of annual pastoral programmes and sharing of the same with the pastoral team.
c) promotion of different lay ministries of the Church and increasing solidarity visitations to families and enhancing synodal fundraising initiatives.

The expected results include strengthened family model of the Church from the grassroots, improved synodality of the Church from the grassroots level. Eventually these would lead to deepened foundation of enhanced self-reliance of the whole Church.

By and large, the recommendations articulated above carry far-reaching implications for pastoral action in the Catholic Diocese of Zomba and, by extension, for the Church in Africa and beyond. In general they call for a deliberate shift from pastoral maintenance to pastoral transformation at all levels of the Church, from dependency to mature co-responsibility, and from ad hoc pastoral activities to intentional, synodal, and strategic mission-oriented action.

4.2 PROPOSED PASTORAL ACTION PLAN (2026–2030) FOR ZOMBA CATHOLIC DIOCESE

For our proposed pastoral action plan for 2026-2030, towards Enhancing Effective Diocesan Strategic Planning for Building a Self-Reliant Church, the overall Objective is to build

and sustain a self-reliant, synodal, and missionary local Church. Below are proposed objectives and pastoral action plan:

OBJECTIVE 1: To reframe self-reliance as a theological and ecclesiological imperative

Pastoral Actions	**Level**	**Responsible Structures**	**Timeline**	**Expected Pastoral Outcomes**
Develop catechetical materials/training manuals strategic pastoral planning and implementation	Diocese	Catechetical & Pastoral Offices	2026-2027	Catechetical materials/training manuals strategic pastoral planning and implementation developed.
Integrate theology of self-reliance into mystagogical catechesis, trainings, workshops, pastoral communique and homilies	Diocese/ Parish	Bishop, Clergy, Catechetical Task Team	Annually	Theology of self-reliance integrated.

OBJECTIVE 2: To increase awareness, ownership, and internalization of the diocesan strategic pastoral plan

Pastoral Actions	Level	Responsible Structures	Timeline	Expected Pastoral Outcomes
Translate the diocesan plan into Chichewa	Diocese	Diocesan Pastoral Office	2026-2027	The diocesan plan translated into Chichewa. Grassroots access and understanding
Mainstream the plan into parish, institutional, and SCC meetings	All levels	Pastoral Councils	Annually	The plan mainstreamed at all levels. Alignment of activities with diocesan vision
Reference the plan in homilies, communiqués, and reports	Diocese / Parish	Clergy & Leaders	Monthly	Reference of the plan enhanced. Culture of planning and accountability
Conduct regular in-set trainings on the diocesan plan	Parish	Parish Pastoral Teams	Bi-annually	Regular in-set trainings conducted. Pastoral competence and ownership
Conduct benchmarking visits	All levels	Leaders	Annually	Benchmarking visits conducted. Learning from others' best practices.

OBJECTIVE 3: To promote mindset transformation and empowerment-based pastoral planning

Pastoral Actions	Level	Responsible Structures	Timeline	Expected Pastoral Outcomes
Conducting spiritual formation for a self-reliant mindset among different stakeholders of the Church	All levels	Relevant trainers	By mid-2027	Spiritual formation for a self-reliant mindset among different

				stakeholders of the Church conducted
Conduct capacity building and skills trainings for various Church groups	All levels	Relevant trainers	Annually	Capacity building and skills trainings for various Church groups conducted
Use bottom-up pastoral planning where members identify needs and solutions	All levels	Relevant leaders	Annually	Bottom-up pastoral planning where members identify needs and solutions used
Share success stories of strategic pastoral planning for a self-reliant	All levels	Communications Office and different office bearers	Annually	Success stories of strategic pastoral planning for self-reliance shared. Motivation and learning culture on planning for self-reliance increased

OBJECTIVE 4: To institutionalize contextualized and synodal pastoral planning

Pastoral Actions	**Level**	**Responsible Structures**	**Timeline**	**Expected Pastoral Outcomes**
Establish a policy on contextualizing budgeted strategic pastoral planning and annual work plans	Diocese	The Local Ordinary	2026	A policy on contextualizing budgeted strategic pastoral planning and annual work plans made
Train different stakeholders in contextual pastoral	Diocese	Diocesan and Parish Pastoral and Social Offices	2027	Different stakeholders trained in contextual pastoral

planning for a self-reliant Church				planning for a self-reliant Church Improved planning competence

OBJECTIVE 5: To strengthen monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL)

Pastoral Actions	**Level**	**Responsible Structures**	**Timeline**	**Expected Pastoral Outcomes**
Develop diocesan MEL framework	Diocese	Strategic Pastoral Plan Committee	By the end of 2026	Diocesan MEL framework developed Evidence-based decision-making
Institute and train Strategic Plan Implementation Monitoring Committees	Diocese/Parish/institution	Bishop, Parish and institutional leaders	2026	Strategic Plan Implementation Monitoring Committees instituted Improved monitoring and evaluation of the planned activities
Carry out monitoring and reporting exercises on the implementation of the strategic pastoral plan	All levels	M&E teams and the community members	Annually (not bi-annually, perhaps? In fact, the frequency of this activity should depend on the nature of the activities being implemented)	Monitoring and reporting exercises on the implementation of the strategic pastoral plan done Continued follow-up on the strategic plan implementation process.
Integrate M&E into pastoral meetings	All levels	Councils & Committees	Quarterly	M&E integrated into pastoral meetings Learning-oriented pastoral culture
Conduct strategic pastoral plan	All levels	Leaders	Bi-annually	Strategic pastoral plan implementation

implementation performance reviews				performance reviews conducted Improved track on the progress of the strategic pastoral plan

OBJECTIVE 6: To ensure institutional continuity and systems-based leadership

Pastoral Actions	**Level**	**Responsible Structures**	**Timeline**	**Expected Pastoral Outcomes**
Develop diocesan statues and anchor the strategic plan in diocesan statutes	Diocese	Bishop, Curia and canonists	By the end of 2027	Diocesan statues and strategic pastoral plan integrated Continuity beyond leadership changes
Maintain updated documentation and archives	All levels	Secretariats	Annually	Updated documentation and archives maintained Institutional memory ensured
Standardize leadership handover procedures	Parish / Diocese	Pastoral Councils	By early 2027	Leadership handover procedures standardized Stability and stewardship
Conduct induction for new leaders	All levels	Pastoral Office	Ongoing	Conduct induction for new leaders Smooth transitions

OBJECTIVE 7: To intensify integral evangelization linked to human development

Pastoral Actions	Level	Responsible Structures	Timeline	Expected Pastoral Outcomes
Enhance ministries and chaplaincies	Diocese/ parish	Chaplaincy teams/ animators and parish pastoral teams	Annually	Ministries and chaplaincies enhanced.
Integrate skills training into evangelization	Diocese/Parish/ Institution	Caritas, Diocesan Projects Committee	Annually	Skills training integrated into evangelization integrated
Subsidise small enterprises for financially challenged groups like the youth	Parish	Parish Councils	Annually	Small enterprises for financially challenged groups like the youth subsidised
Develop and strengthen partnerships strategies with NGOs and government	Diocese	Caritas & Development Desk	By end of 2027	Partnerships strategies developed and strengthened Expanded impact
Strengthen inclusiveness and safeguarding policy in all pastoral and developmental programmes and activities	All levels	Relevant leaders	Annually	Inclusiveness and safeguarding policy strengthened Ensured synodality that embraces and protects all
Establish welfare fund or scholarships for needy students	Diocese	The Diocesan Curia	By the end of 2027	Welfare fund or scholarships for needy students established
Promote Corporate responsibility among diocesan institutions	Diocese/parish	Diocesan Institutional heads	By end of 2026	Increased outreach programmes to the needy

Training of the Lay Association on Training for Transformation	Diocesan level	The Pastoral and Social Commissions	Annually	Lay Association trained on Training for Transformation Increased empowerment of the Catholic lay faithful for participation in the development of their larger communities

OBJECTIVE 8: To mobilize local human resources, land, and infrastructure for mission sustainability

Pastoral Actions	**Level**	**Responsible Structures**	**Timeline**	**Expected Pastoral Outcomes**
Establish diocesan skills and talents database	Diocese	Pastoral Office and the Diocesan Curia	Annually	Diocesan skills and talents database established Reduced external dependency
Create taskforces to champion specific projects	Parish / Diocese	Pastoral Councils	Annually	Taskforces to champion specific projects created. Professional pastoral support
Develop asset policy and conduct asset inventory	Diocese/parish/institution	Finance and Development Committees. Projects and Investment Committees	By early 2027	Asset inventory policy developed Asset inventory conducted Strategic asset management

Develop capacity building plan	Diocese/parishes and institutions	The Bishop, Diocesan Curia, pastoral teams and the Management of diocesan institutions	Annually	Capacity building plan developed Ensuring availability of the needed personnel and material resources around the strategic pastoral plan.
Develop income-generating projects	Diocese/institutions/ parishes	F& D Committee/ Development Desk	By early 2027	Income-generating projects developed Sustainable internal revenue

OBJECTIVE 9: To strengthen SCCs and other ecclesial communities as the foundation of self-reliance and synodality

Pastoral Actions	**Level**	**Responsible Structures**	**Timeline**	**Expected Pastoral Outcomes**
Organise Solidarity home visits to families		Pastoral team/seminarians and ecclesial communities like Legion of Mary	Annually	Solidarity home visits organised
Keep updated SCC membership, action plans, and finance records	SCC	SCC Leaders	Annually	Updated SCC membership, action plans, and finance records compiled Transparency and planning enhanced
Promote SCC members' participation in lay ministries of the Church	SCC / Parish	Parish Leadership	Annually	SCC members' participation in lay ministries of the Church promoted. Active discipleship

Organise Family day for the parishes and other ecclesial groups	Diocese, Parish/SCC	Pastoral teams, Chaplaincies and SCC leaders	Annual	Family Day for respective ecclesial groups organised Strengthened communion in mission for various communities Team building strengthened

OBJECTIVES 9: To strengthen the Financial Policy of the diocese

Pastoral Actions	**Level**	**Responsible Structures**	**Timeline**	**Expected Pastoral Outcomes**
Launch the Financial Policy of the Diocese	Diocese	The Bishop	By mid-2027	The Financial Policy of the Diocese launched
Organize parish-level workshops on the Financial Policy of the diocese	Diocese	The Pastoral Office and the Financial Policy taskforce	By the end of 2027	Parish-level workshops on the Financial Policy of the diocese organised
Publicise quarterly and annual financial report	All levels	Diocese/parishes and institutions	Annually	Quarterly and annual financial report publicised

4.5 Expected Overall Pastoral Impact

The expected overall pastoral impact includes the following aspects: Deepened communion and synodality in strategic pastoral planning for building a self-reliant Church, shift from dependency to co-responsibility mentality, increased lay participation and leadership,

sustainable financial and institutional self-reliance, stronger integration of evangelization and development and vibrant SCC-centered Church as a Family of God and basic unit of the Church.

4.6 Contingency plans for managing risks

As Kanakulya puts it, planning encourages the development of "what-if" scenarios, where managers attempt to envision possible risk factors and develop contingency plans to deal with them for the success of the plans of the organization.[258] The following are the possible key risks and their proposed risk mitigation in the plan:

[258] Jim Kanakulya, Unpublished class notes in Pastoral Management and Administration, Nairobi, CUEA, 2024-2025 Academic Year, p. 20.

No.	Area of risk	Risk	Risk mitigation
1	Pastoral communique on Self-Reliance & Synodality	Low reception	Pre-launch consultations
2	Diocese-wide strategic plan sensitization workshops	Poor attendance or limited/ unavailability of resources to support the workshops	Deanery/Cluster-based scheduling Usage of electronic and print media for sensitisation
3	Parish visioning sessions	Resistance to change	Testimonies & SCC facilitation
4	Training clergy on synodality	Low buy-in	Retreat-based formation
5	Parish councils training	Skills gap	Modular training usage of Trainer of Trainers teams
6	Parish income projects	Market failure	Feasibility studies
7	Establish M&E Office	Staff shortage	Train internal staff
8	M&E framework	Resistance or limited knowledge	Orientation workshops
9	Policy & statute reforms	Legal delays	Canonical consultation
10	Leadership transition protocols	Personal agendas	Clear guidelines
11	Next 5-year plans for parishes and institutions	Poor handover	Documentation

CONCLUSION

This Chapter has given recommendations for pastoral action to enhance the role of strategic pastoral planning in building a self-reliant Church. The recommendations are both general, and, therefore, cross-cutting, and particular to four levels of the Church: national, diocesan, parish/institutional and SCC level.

In general, three types of change have been proposed: developmental, transitional and transformational. Thus, for instance, with regards to dependency mentality, transformational

change has been proposed, with reform focus being stewardship spirituality and expected outcome being cultural conversion. For the challenge of poor planning skills, developmental change has been proposed, with reform focus being capacity building and expected outcome being efficiency in strategic pastoral planning. For addressing the challenge of poverty, transitional change has been proposed, with income generation as a key reform focus and financial sustainability as a primary expected outcome.[259]

Taken together, these recommendations envision a Church that is communion-centered, rooted in shared faith, accountability, and mutual care. They are envision a Church that is participatory, mission-oriented, empowering all the baptized as co-responsible agents of mission of the Church.

We have come to an understanding that behind the successful implementation of the strategic pastoral planning are the following enablers and drivers of change: spiritual driver, leadership and participation driver, structural driver, resource driver, and cultural driver.[260] The spiritual driver focuses on prayer and discernment, whereby planning is rooted in faith, Eucharistic life, and ongoing formation. The leadership driver focuses on synodal and servant leadership, calling for consistent, participatory leadership that empowers active lay participation in strategic management and facilitates continuity and vision. The structural driver focuses on mission-oriented systems that call for transparent governance, accountable financial systems, and functional monitoring and evaluation structures. The resource driver focuses on local assets and capacities, calling for the mobilization and maximum use of resources such as human skills, institutions, and ecological resources. The cultural driver emphasizes localisation and ownership

[259] Benedict XVI, Encyclical Letter *Caritas in Veritate* (June 29, 2009), no. 51, *AAS* 101 (2009), 675–676.
[260] AMECEA Pastoral Department, *Pastoral Planning for a Self-Reliant Church* (Nairobi: AMECEA Gaba Publications, 2018), pp. 45–52.

of diocesan strategic plan, whereby strategic pastoral planning is shaped by lived realities and African communal values that enhance the Church as a Family of God. From these drivers of self-reliance, which are found within diocesan strategic planning, we conclude that the hypothesis of this thesis is indeed proven correct.

Firstly, spiritual and pastoral programmes inherent in the strategic pastoral planning nourishes and forms members of the Church leading in the long-term plan to spiritual and pastoral maturity.[261] In turn, that spiritual and pastoral maturity becomes a driver leading to increased participation of Church members in decision-making and practical involvement in Church programmes and projects.[262] As commented by Chitsulo, with reference to Church at Macedonia in Paul's time, in 2 Corinthians 9:8, when people give their hearts to God, they can do so much more for the Church even beyond what those richer than them can do.[263] Thus as argued by Temu, 'self-reliance of any local Church came as a result of a loving spiritual care of Christians by those who were entrusted with their pastoral care.'[264]

Secondly, based on the resource driver, strategic pastoral plan implementation, by serving both the Church and society through the maximization of human, financial, infrastructural, and ecological resources, can enhance self-reliant initiatives that impact both the Church itself and the wider society.[265]

For Zomba Catholic Diocese, and, by extension, the Church in Africa, self-reliance emerges not as isolation or mere self-sufficiency, but as graced maturity that is spiritually rooted

[261] Vatican Council II, *Gaudium et Spes*, no. 43.
[262] Francis, Encyclical Letter *Fratelli Tutti* (October 3, 2020), no. 77; *AAS* 112 (2020), 972–973.
[263] Interviewed (online) Reverend Dr T. Chitsulo, of Blantyre Synod of CCAP, on 21 January 2026
[264] Reginald Tem, *An Authentic Spiritual Formation of the Laity as the Foundation for a Self-Reliant Church in Africa,* An academic paper presented at the 28th Interdisciplinary Theological Session, CUEA: Faculty of Theology, 4 March 2026.
[265] AMECEA, *Reconciliation, Justice and Peace in the Church-Family of God in Africa* (Nairobi: AMECEA, 2016), 63–66.

and pastorally oriented.[266] Such a Church increases its impact when it embodies the synodal vision of owning the mission, walking together, and sustaining it for generations to come.[267]

[266] Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*, Apostolic Exhortation, no. 25.
[267] Synod of Bishops, *Final Document of the XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops* (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2023), no. 8.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

Strategic Pastoral Planning is such an important tool for building a self-reliant Church. It gives order to pastoral programmes and projects by coming up with priority areas within the mission of the Church towards the attainment of a self-reliant Church. The Pastoral Cycle has been used as the main research method to discuss the challenge of attainment of self-reliance despite the presence of the strategic pastoral plan with Zomba Catholic Diocese as a Case Study.

In Chapter 1, based on Insertion as the first stage of this Case Study we discussed the current situation of Zomba District in general and Zomba Catholic Diocese in particular. We discussed the domains of the life of the people, especially demography, history and economic status provides a context through which the challenge of attaining self-reliance can be understood. The main sources of this information were Church historical documents, Socio-Economic Profile (SEP) of Zomba District, interviews, and personal experience of the researcher. As discussed in the chapter, the Diocese of Zomba has gone through various stages of development from the time of the missionary tutelage to the time of the local Church under local leadership. In both times there were some efforts towards building a self-reliant Church. The conclusion was that the diocese has both potentials and limitations insofar as attainment of self-reliance is concerned. That background information led to the next chapter that analysed the Zomba Diocesan Pastoral Strategic Planning to determine the impact of strategic pastoral planning on building a self-reliant Church.

In Chapter 2, based on Social Analysis as the second stage of the study, and using SWOT Analysis, we discussed the impact that the diocesan strategic pastoral plan of Zomba Catholic Diocese, as a Case Study, has on building a self-reliant Church. Data was collected from various participants including members of the Diocesan Curia, the clergy, members of the parish councils,

religious men and women, members of Small Christian Communities, members of the Catholic Women Association, Catholic Men Association, and the youth. Participants in the research gave their responses to the questionnaires in addition to interviews, and focus group discussions. The data was analysed qualitatively and quantitatively to identify trends, patterns, and themes under each SWOT category.

The research had shown that the diocese has made a positive impact with the strategic pastoral planning for building a self-reliant Church. Among other things, it is providing a shared vision on attaining self-reliance. However, it was also observed that the impact of the progress in implementation of the plan is slow leading to slow attainment of the desired self-reliance. The following seven key challenges were identified as being behind the slow progress in implementing the strategic pastoral plan for the attainment of a self-reliant Church: little familiarity with the diocesan strategic pastoral plan, lack of adaptation of the diocesan strategic pastoral plan into parish, institutional or lay group plans, lack of regular and continued intervals for monitoring and evaluation; resistance to change and stagnated attitude to handouts, little involvement of the laity in planning and discussing the progress of the strategic plan activities, discontinuity of planned programmes and activities when leadership changes, and general poverty as well high unemployment levels.

We discussed these challenges comprehensively using a problem tree approach so as to get to the bottom of the reasons behind these challenges as well as to discuss the effects of these challenges. From these challenges observed in this chapter we claimed with audacity that that despite the progress in attaining a self-reliant Church through strategic pastoral planning, the challenges remain mostly at the managerial level especially with regards to synodal contextualization of the plans as operational plans, trainings as well as monitoring and evaluation

of the plans. These are the gaps that we though through theological reflection and recommendations, solutions could be sought in an attempt to improve the progress of the impact of strategic pastoral planning in building a self-reliant Church.

In Chapter 3, with theological reflection as the third stage of the Pastoral Cycle, we discussed the teachings on planning and self-reliance from the Sacred Scripture, Tradition- like Patristics and Popes-, Theologians- like Patrick Kalilombe and Josephy Healey-, as well as personal experience under the framework of synodality. The insights from these reflections shows that God who plans and provides what is necessary for humanity also entrusts humanity in general and the Church in particular with the work of planning and working for self-reliance insofar as Evangelisation is concerned. The chapter has shown that by working together as a synodal Church communion as a model of Church that will help advance the mission of the Church through participation and involvement of all in planning, implementing and evaluating the plans making the plans cyclic and developing.

In Chapter 4, having noted the need for change and change management of *modus operandi* in order to enhance the role of strategic pastoral planning in building a self-reliant Church we came up with recommendations, both general and particular to four levels of the Church: national, diocesan, parish/institutional and SCC level. Thus, for instance, one of the general recommendations is to develop a people-centred purpose driven congregation. An example of a specific recommendation to the diocese is that a policy of strategic pastoral plan contextualized be set in place for parishes, diocesan institutions up to the grassroots levels of the Church.

Taken together, these recommendations envision a Church that is communion-centered, rooted in shared faith, accountability, and mutual care; participatory, empowering all the baptized

as co-responsible agents of mission; and mission-oriented, integrating evangelization with human development and ecological stewardship.

Through this study we have come to the understanding that behind successful implementation of the strategic pastoral planning are the following drivers of change: spiritual driver, leadership and participation driver, structural driver, resource driver, and cultural driver.[268] From these drivers of self-reliance, which are found within diocesan strategic planning, we concluded that the hypothesis of this thesis is indeed proven correct.

Firstly, spiritual and pastoral programmes inherent in the strategic pastoral planning nourishes and forms members of the Church leading in the long-term plan to spiritual and pastoral maturity.[269] In turn, that spiritual and pastoral maturity becomes a driver leading to increased participation of Church members in decision-making and practical involvement in Church programmes and projects.[270] As commented by Chitsulo, with reference to Church at Macedonia in Paul's time, in 2 Corinthians 9:8, when people give their hearts to God, they can do so much more for the Church even beyond what those richer than them can do.[271] Thus as argued by Temu, 'self-reliance of any local Church came as a result of a loving spiritual care of Christians by those who were entrusted with their pastoral care.'[272]

Secondly, based on the resource driver, strategic pastoral plan implementation, by serving both the Church and society through the maximization of human, financial, infrastructural, and

[268] AMECEA Pastoral Department, *Pastoral Planning for a Self-Reliant Church* (Nairobi: AMECEA Gaba Publications, 2018), pp. 45–52.
[269] Vatican Council II, *Gaudium et Spes*, no. 43.
[270] Francis, Encyclical Letter *Fratelli Tutti* (October 3, 2020), no. 77; *AAS* 112 (2020), 972–973.
[271] Interviewed Reverend Dr T. Chitsulo (online) of Blantyre Synod of CCAP on 21 January 2026.
[272] Reginald Tem, *An Authentic Spiritual Formation of the Laity as the Foundation for a Self-Reliant Church in Africa,* An academic paper presented at the 28th Interdisciplinary Theological Session. CUEA: Faculty of Theology, 4 March 2026.

ecological resources, can enhance self-reliant initiatives that impact both the Church itself and the wider society.[273]

For Zomba Catholic Diocese, and, by extension, the Church in Africa, self-reliance emerges not as isolation or mere self-sufficiency, but as graced maturity that is spiritually rooted and pastorally oriented.[274] Such a Church increases its impact when it embodies the synodal vision of owning the mission, walking together, and sustaining it for generations to come.[275]

The proposed changes for each of the recommendations falls under the following dimensions: developmental, transitional and transformative changes. From the reflections on the previous chapters and the recommendations made the hypothesis points were proved true. Furthermore from the recommendations pastoral implications were identified, which formed the basis for the proposed pastoral action going forward. From this research we have learnt the following five things:

Firstly, that if the Church in Africa is to remain primarily and totally dependent on God, spiritual formation as a life long journey of growing closer to God should be the focus of self-reliance. As argued by Temu with proper interior formation, self-reliance becomes God's reliance. He thus cautions that 'by over-emphasizing self-sufficiency, the Church in Africa can fall victim of ignoring total dependence on God. Hence he argues that spiritual formation preserves the Church from the danger of over-relying on purely human effort in addressing the challenge of self-reliance which can leave her spiritually weak and unable to administer effectively.[276]

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[273] AMECEA, *Reconciliation, Justice and Peace in the Church-Family of God in Africa* (Nairobi: AMECEA, 2016), pp. 63–66.
[274] Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*, Apostolic Exhortation, no. 25.
[275] Synod of Bishops, *Final Document of the XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops* (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2023), no. 8.
[276] Reginald Temu, An Authentic Spiritual Formation of the Laity as the Foundation for a Self-reliant Church in Africa, A paper presented during the 28th Interdisciplinary Theological Session, CUEA: Faculty of Theology, 4 March 2026.

Secondly, that strategic planning is an element within a broader area called strategic management that requires spiritual and intellectual activities of planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation based on key performance indicators.

Thirdly, that although the hierarchy may provide strategic leadership, synodal planning is essential for the successful management of the strategic plan.

Fourthly, that self-reliance is broader than financial independence; that financial self-reliance in ecclesial context is not for self-security but for the sustainability of self-ministering and self-propagating dimensions of the Church.

Fifthly, that, as argued by Rt. Rev. John Oballa Owaa, autonomy detached solidarity leads to neglect of more fragile communities. Hence we need to talk about solidarity when we talk about a self-reliant Church.[277]

The following are by main contributions to the world of learning through this research as far as strategic pastoral planning is concerned:

Firstly, developing and implementing a synodal theological approach to contextual strategic pastoral planning can enhance the self-reliance of the Church at different levels of the Church. It connects pastoral praxis and strategic management in a way that supports expression to Vatican Council ecclesiology and offers practical framework for a self-sustaining Church in the African context.

Secondly, spiritual and pastoral drivers are essential for the realization of a self-ministering, self-propagating and self-sustaining Church. This ensures that self-reliance is rooted in faith and spirituality, not only economics.

[277] Rt Rev. John Oballa Owaa (Bishop of Ngong Diocese, Kenya), Opening Keynote Address for the 28th Interdisciplinary Theological Session, CUEA, 4 March 2026.

Thirdly, strong and networking Church structures like SCCs and pastoral ministries at different levels of the Church help in effective implementation of pastoral strategic plans. Collaboration and co-responsibility have been seen to carry the momentum for strategic pastoral initiatives. Additionally, I envision that adoption of the SCC model of organising the Church can help revive the synodal spirit of communion, participation and mission even in parts of the Church in the world where Christianity is weakening.

Fourthly, regular assessment through measurable pastoral goals, periodic pastoral reviews, financial audits and feedback from parish communities, ensures that strategic pastoral plan remains effective.

For further research this study provides insight and avenues for further research in areas like comparative pastoral planning models, theological foundations of self-reliance, leadership and governance structures, lay and youth participation, Small Christian Communities as planning units, for pastoral plans and monitoring and evaluation frameworks. Longitudinal and cross-cultural studies would further enrich understanding of how strategic pastoral planning contributes to building a self-reliant Church in diverse ecclesial contexts.

By and large, strategic pastoral planning is an essential tool for building a self-reliant Church. The road towards a self-reliant Church is a synodal journey of reform, conversion, and structured change. By integrating developmental, transitional, and transformational change with the recommendations made, and by activating clear drivers of change, the Church can move beyond dependency toward enhanced sustainability, impacting in a greater way its own self-reliance as well as the self-reliance of the greater society.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1, INTERVIEWS

Interview with Mrs Lydia Kenamu (Mukaka), auntie to the researcher, on 24 March 2025

Interview with Emeritus Bishop of Zomba Catholic Diocese, Rt. Rev. Allan Chamgwera on 11 July 2025.

Interview with Mr Paul Mtoliro on 7 August 2025.

Interview with Catechist Yona Chikwakwa on 7 August 2025.

Interview with Fr. Joseph Makawa, Bishop's Secretary, Zomba Diocese, 12 August 2025.

Interview with Paul Malikebu, Zomba Diocese respondent, 18 August 2025.

Interview with Fr Cosmas Tione Namphimba on 30 August 2025.

Interview with Catechist George Liundi Banda on 5 September 2025.

Interview with Fr Samuel Mangulenje, Diocesan Director of Pontifical Missionary Societies, Zomba Catholic Diocese, on 8 September 2025.

Interview with Fr Steven Kaziyale, a medical practitioner working Pirimiti Rural Catholic Hospital, on 8 September 2025.

Interview with Pius Mtike on 22 September 2025.

Interview with Fr Steven Likhucha, of Zomba Catholic Diocese, on 3 October 2025.

Interview (online) with Reverend Dr T. Chitsulo of Blantyre CCAP on 16 and 21 January 2026.

Interview (online) with Reverend Dr Iganatius Suwedi of Zomba Catholic Diocese on 16 January 2026.

Interview (online) with Dr Peter Namphande, a Catholic of Sacred Heart Parish in Zomba Catholic Diocese, on 17 January 2026.

Interview (online) with Dr Immaculate Chamangwana of Zomba Catholic Diocese on 20 January 2026.

APPENDIX 2: KOBO TOOLBOX QUESTIONNAIRE ON THE IMPACT OF STRATEGIC PASTORAL PLANNING ON BUILDING A SELF-RELIANT CHURCH

Researcher: Fr Innocent Chiwanda
Contact number of the researcher: 0895419492

SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

#	QUESTION	RESPONSE	TICK
1a	Are you responding as an individual or as a group?	Individual	
		Group	
1b	Name of the respondent		
1c	Category (s) of the respondents	Diocesan Curia and pastoral department	
		Diocesan Strategic Coordinating Committee (present and former leaders)	
		Diocesan Projects Committee	
		Heads of Pastoral/Social Commissions and Chaplaincies	
		Management Committees of Diocesan Institutions (Education and Health)	
		Parish Pastoral Teams +Parish Moderator, Parish Treasurer and Chairperson of the Finance and Development Committee	
		Diocesan Laity Council (Former and present leaders)	
		Diocesan Executive Committee of the Catholic Men Association (CMA)	
		Diocesan Executive Committee of the Catholic Women Association (CWA)	
		Diocesan Executive Committee of the Youth Council	
		Other professionals Which are those professions?_____ _____	
		Other groups: (Mention the group(s):_____ _____	
1ci	Number of respondents		

1d	Contact number of the respondent:		
1e	Gender of the respondent	Male	
		Female	
		Females and males	
1g	Age range of the respondents	10-19 years	
		20-29 years	
		30-39 years	
		40-49 years	
		50 plus years	
1h	Name of the group leader (if it is a group responding)		
1i	Contact number of the group leader		
1j	Gender of the group responding	Males and females	
		Males only	
		Females only	
2	How long have you been in the diocese?	0-5 years	
		6-10 years	
		11 plus years	

SECTION B: BASIC KNOWLEDGE OF ZOMBA DIOCESAN STRATEGIC PLAN

#	QUESTION	RESPONSE	TICK
3a	How familiar are you with the Zomba Diocesan Strategic plan?	Very familiar	
		A little familiar	
3b	Which dimension of the Zomba Diocesan Strategic Plan are you most familiar with?	Pastoral Programmes and projects	
		Human Resource Management	
		Financial and material resource management	
3c	What role (s) have you played in the Zomba Diocesan Strategic Planning exercise in Zomba Diocesan Strategic Plan?	Diocesan Curia- providing spiritual and pastoral leadership as well as direction and authority.	
		Strategic plan leader (s)- providing evidence-based and data-driven insights as well as overseeing and guiding the planning process	

		Stakeholder (s)- providing insights and feedback as well as implementing the plan	
		Coordinating the contextualization and implementation of the diocesan strategic plan in a parish, institution or lay group	
		None of the above	

SECTION C: IMPACT OF ZOMBA STRATEGIC PASTORAL PLANNING ON BUILDING A SELF-RELIANT CHURCH

#	QUESTION	RESPONSE	TICK
4a	In your own opinion, what has been the general impact of strategic pastoral planning on self-reliance with reference to advancement of pastoral programmes and projects?	Very negative	
		Somewhat negative	
		Neutral	
		Somewhat positive	
		Very positive	
4b			
	In your own opinion, what has been the general impact of strategic pastoral planning on self-reliance with reference to human resource management?	Very negative	
		Somewhat negative	
		Neutral	
		Somewhat positive	
		Very positive	
4c	In your own opinion, what has been the general impact of strategic pastoral planning on self-reliance with reference to financial and material resource management?	Very negative	
		Somewhat negative	
		Neutral	
		Somewhat positive	
		Very positive	
4d	To what degree does your group strategically plan its programmes and mega-projects based on a five-year term guide of the Zomba Diocesan Strategic Plan Framework?	High degree	
		Low degree	
		Not at all	
		Don't know	
4e	How much consultations are made among members of your group and with other relevant experts when strategically planning for self-reliance of your parish, institution or lay group?	Much	
		Little	
		Not at all	
		Don't know	

4f	At what intervals does your group evaluate its contextualized strategic plan?	Annually	
		Mid-way through the 5-year term	
		At the end of the 5-year term	
		Not at all	
4g	Mention any three exemplary groups in the diocese/parish/institution or lay group with regards to successful strategic planning and implementation for a self-reliant Church?	-_____ _____ _____	
4h	Tick indicators you think point to the extent Zomba Diocesan Strategic Plan has positively impacted self-reliance with reference to pastoral programmes and projects	Development of pastoral programmes and projects rooted in actual needs and capability of the local communities leading to increased relevance as well as sense of ownership and responsibility among Church members	
		Increased uniformity in focus and attention on common pastoral needs, aspiration, vision and contextualized priorities in the diocese	
		Increased team work and collaboration in making and implementing pastoral plans	
		Improved sharing of action plans and responsibilities around pastoral programmes and projects leading to improved pastoral outcomes	
		Increased mainstreaming of policies on inclusivity and safeguarding minors in pastoral programmes and projects	
		Improved social response to the vulnerable like those affected by hunger and natural disasters as part of the social dimension of Evangelisation	
		Improved budgeting and funding of pastoral programmes and projects	
		Other Mention it:	
4i	Tick indicators you think point to the extent Zomba Diocesan Strategic Plan has positively impacted self-reliance with	Improved involvement of the Religious and the laity with various charisms and talents in pastoral programmes and projects fostering a deeper sense of community ownership and responsibility	

	regards to human resource mobilization in the diocese	Improved teaching on stewardship and self-reliance leading to more commitment of Christians to support pastoral programmes and projects	
		Increased identification and usage of different talents in the Christian community	
		Timely recruitment and replacement of personnel to ensure adequate personnel around pastoral activities	
		Improved communication on pastoral needs and calls for action	
		Increased involvement of the social department of the diocese in the Social Dimension of Evangelisation	
		Improved promotion of a culture of participation leading to increased voluntary involvement, reduced costs and improved programme outcomes	
		Other Mention it:	
4j	Tick indicators you think point to the extent Zomba Diocesan Strategic Plan has positively impacted self-reliance with regards to Capacity Building on leadership development in the diocese	Increased spirit of team work and collaborative ministry among priests, the Religious and the laity leading to improved sustainability of Church programmes and projects	
		Improved spiritual and pastoral empowerment of the laity in Church activities through retreats, recollections and trainings.	
		Increased promotion of volunteerism and usage of one's talents in the Church	
		Increased adoption and usage of technological tools like radios, television and whatsapp groups for communication, Evangelisation, Catechesis and other Church activities	
		Sustained recruitment and training of new pastoral agents priests, Catechists and other Catechetical instructors	
		Increased leadership competence and confidence among lay leaders through recollection, retreats and trainings.	
		Training and formation programmes leading to a pool of trained local personnel who can lead Church programmes and projects enhancing sustainability	
		Other: Mention it	

4k	Tick indicators you think point to the extent Zomba Diocesan Strategic Plan has positively impacted self-reliance with reference to financial and material resources of the Church	Increased sense of responsibility of the local communities to identify their financial and material needs and obligations and to locally cater for them	
		Increased commitment of Christians to financially support Church programmes and projects through regular tithing and other resource mobilization projects	
		Increased commitment of the social department to and diocesan institutions to financially support Church programmes and projects	
		Increased resource optimization of assets like land and infrastructure to enhance the self-reliance of the Church	
		Improved needs assessment and resource mapping leading to clarification of priorities, resource optimization, elimination of wasteful and unsustainable spending.	
		Increased investment and generation of regular income to support welfare of pastoral agents, pastoral programmes and projects	
		Reduced reliance on foreign aid	
		Other Mention it:	
4l	Tick indicators you think point to the extent Zomba Diocesan Strategic Plan has positively impacted self-reliance with reference to general governance and resource management in the diocese	Increased professional handling of resources through policies and procedures on finances and assets leading to improved responsible use of local resources	
		Increased spirit of team work, collaboration and division of labour in the planning, implementation and evaluation of group activities	
		Improved abiding by legal and regulatory requirements of the country like taxation and employment contracts around pastoral activities	
		Increased levels of monitoring, evaluation, transparency and accountability through tools	

		like audits and progress reports that build trust for more giving to build a self-reliant Church	
		Regular maintenance of utility vehicles and infrastructure to increase their ability to effectively serve the community.	
		Increased building of a culture where giving is seen as a spiritual responsibility rather than just a simple obligation	
		Proper budgeting of programmes and projects and spending of funds within budgetary lines	
		Other Mention it:	

SECTION D: SWOT ANALYSISON THE IMPACT OF ZOMBA DIOCESAN STRATEGIC PLANNING ON BUILDING A SELF-RELIANT CHIRCH

5a	Tick **three main strengths** of the Zomba Strategic pastoral planning for a self-reliant Church	Numerical strength and team work among priests, the Religious and the laity	
		Deep faith-based community spiritually committed to its vision and mission rooted in the Catholic identity.	
		Presence of the strategic planning and implementation skills among members	
		Educational and human capital resources	
		Experience with self-help and development initiatives among members	
		Strong and committed structures like Strategic Plan Coordinating Committees, Small Christian Communities and lay group leadership	
		Existing Church structures and institutions like parish halls, schools and health centres	
		Active lay participation and well organized lay apostolates like CMA, CWA and Youth groups.	
		Other Mention it:_----------	
5b	Tick three main weaknesses of the Zomba Strategic pastoral planning for a self-reliant Church	Lack of strategic planning and management skills	
		Resistance to change and stagnated attitude of handouts	

		Erroneous mentality that the Church is rich and thus fully self-reliant	
		Little formation of the Christians on self-reliance and stewardship	
		Inadequate trainings for different categories of Christians on the diocesan strategic plan	
		Little follow-ups and discussions on the planned activities and their progress by leaders	
		Poor coordination on planning, contextualizing and implementing of the strategic plan at different levels of the Church	
5c	Tick **three main opportunities** of the Zomba Strategic pastoral planning for a self-reliant Church	Availability of different talents among members of the Church	
		Availability of various potential partnership and networking within the diocese and beyond	
		Availability of assets like land and infrastructure for future Church plans and development	
		Lessons on human, financial and material self-reliance from the early missionaries in the diocese	
		Availability of youthful generation with lots of innovative ideas and energy for service in the Church	
		Other Mention it:----------	
5d	Tick **three main threats** to the Zomba Strategic pastoral planning for a self-reliant Church	Lack of contextualization and implementation of the diocesan strategic plan at the parish, institutional and lay group levels	
		Lack of strategic financial planning leading to limited investments and poor financial management	
		Discontinuity of planned programmes and projects with leadership change	
		General poverty of the people and high unemployment levels	
		Harsh external factors like economic instability and unfavorable conditions for investments like raised taxes	
		Theological and cultural attitudes leading to spiritualization of poverty	
		Weak leadership and governance	
		Limited local human capacity and development	

		Minimal lay participation in decision-making process in the Church	
		Other Mention it:- _____	

SECTION E: FINAL REMARKS

6a	Which of the following areas do you think needs special consideration in strategic planning for a self-reliant Church	Strengthening Evangelisation and Catechesis alongside grounding the strategic pastoral plan in the Catholic Social Teaching	
		Close monitoring and evaluation of the strategic plan implementation	
		Prioritising capacity building and creating local economic initiatives like group savings, cooperatives and farming projects managed by the Church or its members	
		Learning from our past successes and failures and from each other in the diocese as well as from others beyond the diocese	
		Trainings on strategic pastoral planning and management	
		Revitalisation of the Finance and Development Committees	
		Setting SMART (specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and time-bound) goals	
		Developing clear human and financial strategies supported by policies	
		Other Mention it:	
7	Any other comments or suggestions with regards to improving the strategic pastoral planning for self-reliance of the diocese?		

Thank you so much for your participation. Your responses are valuable in my academic research. Kindly, I may come back to you for follow-up questions. Thanks in advance for your continued support to this research.

APPENDIX 3: PHONE POLL QUESTIONNAIRE

POLL RESULTS

1. SP Impact areas: Which of the following areas has been the most improved areas in our parishes and lay groups due to strategic pastoral planning?

   Results:

#	AREA	VOTES			TOTAL VOTES
		CLERGY	YOUTH/ YOUNG MEN	CWA	
1	Evangelisation				
2	Women and Youth involvement				
3	Infrastructure development				
4	Catechesis				
5	Financial sustainability of the Church				
6	Reach out to the needy and the vulnerable				
7	Leadership training				
	TOTAL				

2. Which of the following do you see as the main advantage of strategic pastoral planning?

   Responses:

#	STATEMENT	VOTES			TOTAL VOTES
		CLERGY	YOUTH/ YOUNG MEN	CWA	
1	The planning is helping us achieve big goals(projects) gradually but steadily without financial stresses				
2	The planning is helping us have shared sense of purpose with ownership and responsibility				
	TOTAL				

3. **How best can we improve strategic plan implementation in our parishes?**

   Responses:

#	STATEMENT	VOTES			TOTAL VOTES
		CLERGY	YOUTH/ YOUNG MEN	CWA	
1	Consistent discussions and sharing of the plans on regular basis in our different groups including				

	parishes, deaneries and on the diocesan level				
2	Diocesan technical support to financially struggling parishes and diocesan follow-ups				
3	Continued sharing of strategic plan implementation reports on the diocesan level				
	TOTAL				

4. As we come to the close of 10 years of Strategic Plan Implementation we are reaching some tangible milestones in our investment plans and endeavors for a self-reliant Church

#	STATEMENT	VOTES			TOTAL VOTES
		CLERGY	YOUTH/ YOUNG MEN (YCW)	CWA	
1	I strongly disagree		0		
2	I partly disagree				
3	Same/no change				
4	I agree but progress is slow				
5	I strongly agree				
	TOTAL				

APPENDIX 4: LIKERT QUESTIONNAIRE

KAFUKUFUKU PA MA PULANI A DAYOSEZI A MPINGO WODZIDALIRA

Wochititsa: Fr Innocent Chiwanda (0999612741)

Dzina la oyankha _____ Parish:_____

Perekani maganizo anu pochonga pa mlingo wa 1 mpaka 5 pa m'mene mapulani a dayosezi a Mpingo Wodzidalira apititsira Mpingo Wodzidalira patsogolo mu parish kapena bungwe lanu

1= sindikugwiridzana nazo kwambiri (strongly disagree). 5 = ndikugwiridzana nazo kwambiri (strongly agree)

#	CHIGANIZO	1	2	3	4	5
1	Mapulani alimbikitsa Mpingo Wodzidalira mu parish/bungwe lathu					
2	Kutenga nawo mbali kwa akhristu mu ntchito za Mpingo kwapita patsogolo					
3	Ndalama ndi chuma china cha Mpingo monga malo ndi nyumba zikugwiritsidwa bwino ntchito polimbikitsa kudzidalira					
4	Ma pulaniwa alimbikitsa utsogoleri (local leadership) ndi mphamvu zopereka maganizo (decision-making) pakati pa akhristu mu parish yathu/bungwe wathu					
5	Maphunziro (Capacity building and trainings) a utsogoleri akulimbikitsidwa					
6	Anyamata ndi Amayi akupatsidwa mwayo otenga nawo mbali mu ma programme and chitukuko cha Mpingo					
7	Parish/bungwe lathu yapanga ma pulani a zinthu zimene tikufuna kukwaniritsa pa zaka zingapo (long-term strategies)					

APPENDIX 5: SOME PICTORIAL HIGHLIGHTS ON SELF-RELIANCE

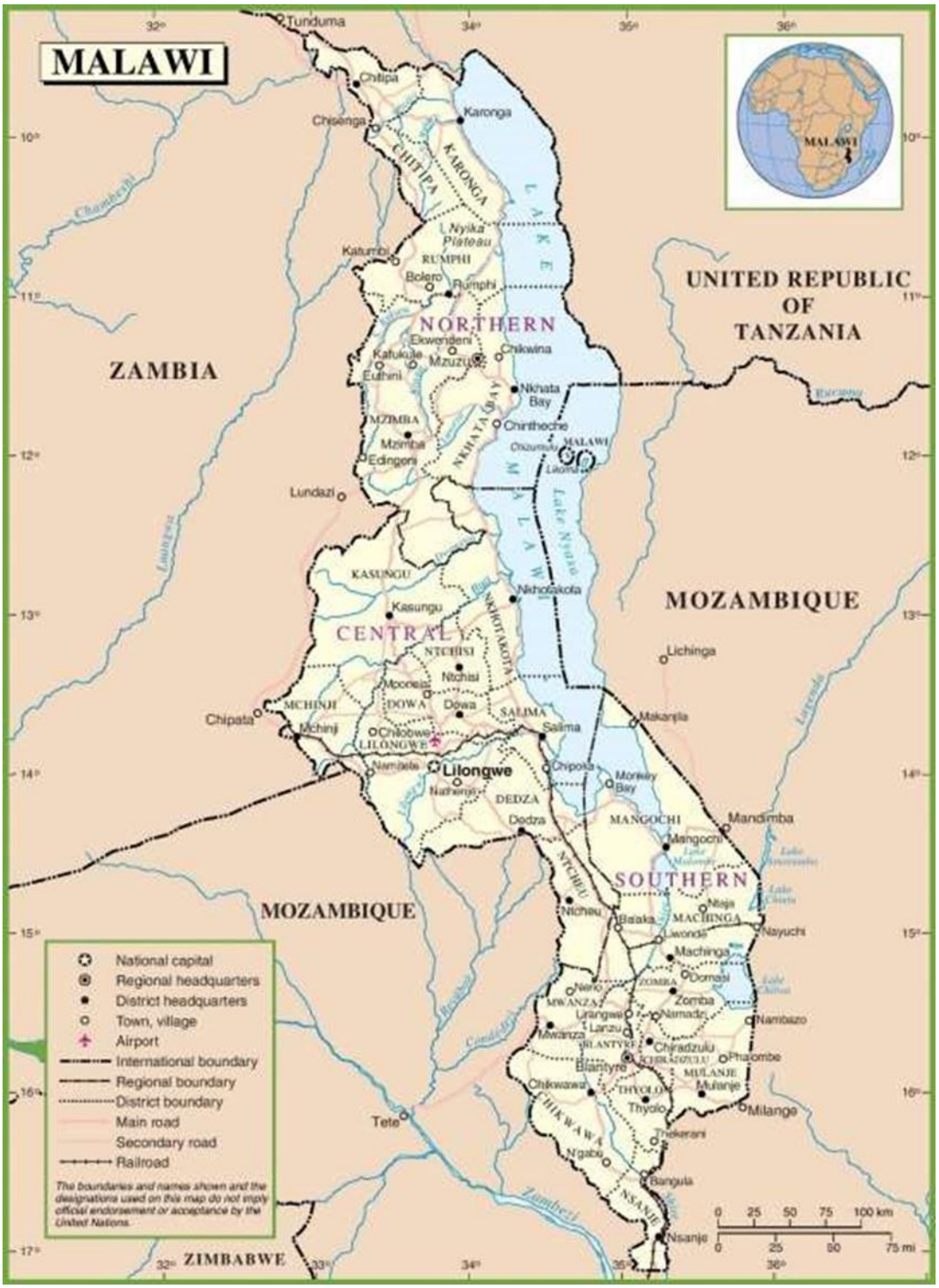


a) Rt Reverend Alfred Mateyu Chaima blessed maize contributed by Catholic Women Association towards support of seminarians.



b) Bishop Chaima posing a picture with aspirants to priesthood after a meeting with me: Asked them to be vigilant.

APPENDIX 6: MAP OF MALAWI



APPENDIX 7: MAP OF ZOMBA DISTRICT

