



# Changing THE WAY WE *care*



## The Role of Catholic Church, Diocesan Family Life Departments in Supporting Care Reform

Report of an Assessment of Diocesan Family Life  
Departments

2023



## INTRODUCTION

The Kenya Conference of Catholic Bishops (KCCB) is the assembly of all Catholic Bishops in the country. As part of KCCB's mission in Kenya, they have a National Family Life Office (NFLO), which is devolved across archdioceses and dioceses. The role of the NFLO is to support stable marriages and responsible parenthood, advancing Catholic social teachings on human life and dignity by putting these into practical action through pastoral work.



National meeting of diocesan Family Life Coordinators on marriage preparation and accompaniment, with Rt. Rev. Wallace Ng'ang'a, Bishop Chairman of KCCB NFLO. Photo by KCCB.

The NFLO works with Diocesan Family Life Departments, headed by a Family Life Coordinator and supported by leaders of family life at parish level, who provide a range of family life training and awareness activities with community members in small Christian communities. The Family Life Departments work in collaboration with the Pastoral Commissions/Departments. These cover topics such as natural family planning, promoting family well-being through The Faithful House couple support program, positive parenting activities, family life education, and violence prevention group activities.

KCCB is taking a leading role in ensuring that every child in Kenya grows up in a loving and safe family environment. They are committed to care reform, aligning with Kenya's national goals to prevent child separation from families, strengthen families, and support the reintegration of separated children.

As part of this commitment, KCCB has partnered with Changing the Way we Care<sup>SM</sup> (CTWWC), a global initiative seeking to catalyze a global movement that puts family care first and reduces the number of children placed in residential care. This partnership involves sharing experiences and learning from CTWWC's expertise in advocating for and implementing care reform strategies globally and nationally. In addition, CTWWC provides capacity strengthening and technical assistance.

Together, KCCB and CTWWC undertook three assessments, including the role of Diocesan Family Life Departments in supporting care reform. They have also conducted:

- A Situation Analysis of Catholic Children Charitable Institutions (CCIs) in Kenya
- A Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices (KAP) Survey of Catholic Church Leadership in Kenya in Relation to Care Reform

This collaborative effort aims to improve outcomes for vulnerable children and promote family-based care across Kenya.

## ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY

An assessment of Diocesan Family Life Departments across 23 dioceses was conducted in 2023. The objective was to identify strengths, opportunities, capacity gaps and recommend strategies for enhancing performance, focusing on promoting family well-being and care reform.

The assessment gathered the responses from Family Life Coordinators, pastoral coordinators and family life leaders who attended the 2023 Family Resilience Conference. Participation was voluntary, with all 19 diocesan representatives present agreeing to participate.

Participants completed a questionnaire with 13 questions related to the areas detailed in Table 1. Each question allowed respondents to rate their department's performance as strong, good, weak, or poor (rated from strong = 4 to poor = 1). Scores across all questions within each area were totaled to provide an overall rating for the Family Life Departments across all 23 dioceses. Individual dioceses were also assessed separately to identify those with strong ratings and those with additional capacity building needs.

Table 1: Family Life Desk Capacity Assessment Areas and Sub-Assessment Areas

CAPACITY ASSESSMENT AREAS	
Family Desk Team, Mission and Resources	Help Desk Services and Network
Team Size	Services/Programs.
Team Capacity	Approach
Team Retention	Reach
Technical Training	Partnerships/Referral Networks
Mission	Visibility
Resources	Feedback
Church Support	

## FINDINGS

Overall average ratings per assessment area are shown in Figure 1 and per diocese in Figure 2 using the scale 1=4, with 4 meaning 'strong'. The findings below summarize the key points identified in the assessment.

Figure 1: Average rating per assessment area and overall

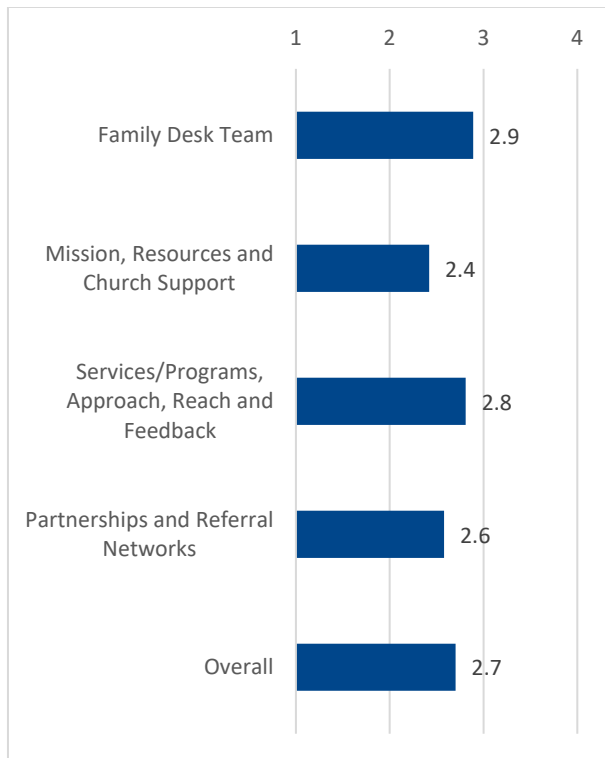
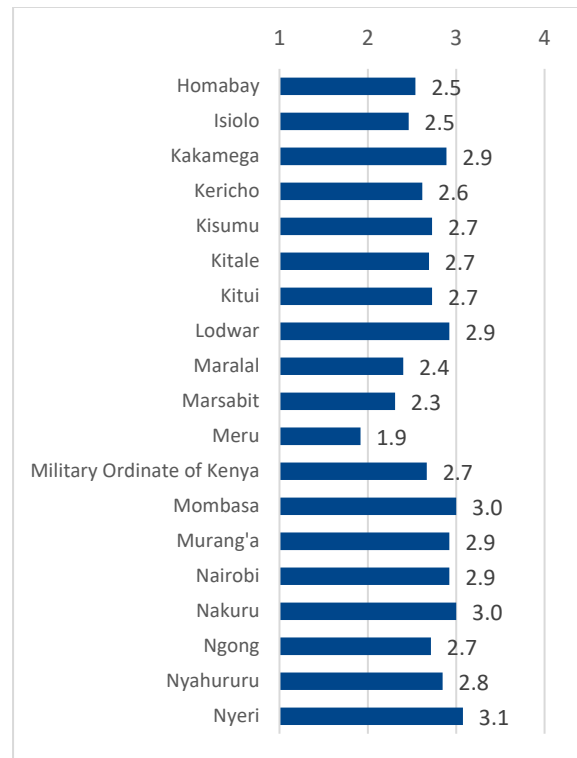


Figure 2: Average rating per diocese

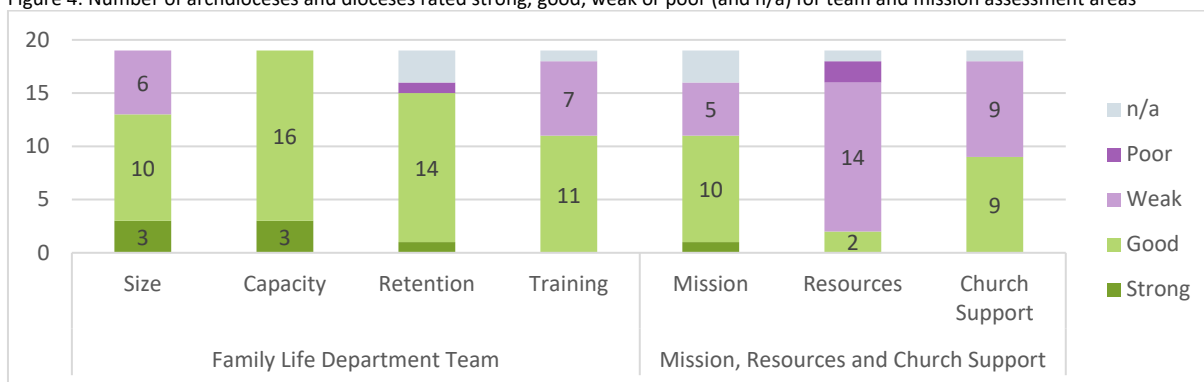


## Family Life Department Team, Mission and Resources

Figure 3: Average scores across all archdioceses and dioceses for team and mission assessment areas



Figure 4: Number of archdioceses and dioceses rated strong, good, weak or poor (and n/a) for team and mission assessment areas



### Family Life Department Team

The Family Life Department team was assessed in four different areas – team size, team capacity, team retention and technical training.

**Team size** assessment varied widely across respondents, with an average of 2.8 or ‘good’ rating. Ten archdioceses and dioceses rated their team size as ‘good’ or ‘strong’. Four of the six dioceses who rated their team sizes as ‘weak’ had no more than two staff, including volunteers. On the other hand, nine out of ten archdioceses and dioceses with a ‘good’ or ‘strong’ rating had between 10 and 96 staff members (including volunteers), averaging around 25 staff.

The main difference between dioceses that felt their team size was ‘good’ and those that rated them as ‘weak’ was not about the availability of full-time staff, but about the number of supporting staff. Five of the seven archdioceses and dioceses with a ‘good’ rating had many part-time staff and, or volunteers. Whilst this was a positive rating, it is important to avoid an overreliance on volunteers who could leave at any time and will require quality support and supervision.

**Team capacity** had a ‘good’ overall average rating (average of 3.2). Capacity refers to education level and work experience. All the archdioceses and dioceses included in this assessment indicated that their current teams possess the necessary capacity for their family life work. Sixteen archdioceses and dioceses rated their capacity as ‘good’, while three archdioceses and dioceses (Kisumu, Nairobi, and Nyeri) rated theirs as ‘strong’. All but one diocese had staff with university degrees (diploma, undergraduate and postgraduate), with one having staff with form four and post-secondary education certificates only.

[Recruiting and building the capacity of additional permanent staff for the FLDs is necessary for quality service provision, including effective supervision of volunteers and part-time staff.](#)

**Team retention** was rated on average as nearly ‘good’ (with an average rating of 2.9). Out of the 16 dioceses that gave a team retention rating, one rated it as ‘strong’, 14 as ‘good’, and one as ‘poor’. Typically, Family Life Coordinators (FLCs)

are engaged for a three-year term in most dioceses. One respondent mentioned that this term is renewable for two additional terms, allowing for a maximum tenure of six years. Another indicated that FLC positions are annually renewable, depending on the appointment. Notably, two dioceses had FLCs in position for eight years, and in Ngong, the FLC had served for 15 years.

**Technical training** was rated 'good' but slightly lower, at 2.6, compared to team size and retention. Among the 18 archdioceses and dioceses that provided ratings, none rated their technical training as 'strong'. Eleven archdioceses and dioceses considered it 'good', while seven rated it as 'weak'.

Training opportunities for FLCs and volunteers included initiatives organized by KCCB, quarterly workshops, seminars at the diocesan level (e.g., Military Ordinariate of Kenya, Nyahururu), and sessions covering positive parenting, psychosocial skills, and Catholic social teachings, among others. Despite these efforts, respondents highlighted several gaps and challenges in training:

- Insufficient training for professionals and volunteers, particularly in community-level activity implementation and supportive supervision for counselors to enhance effective counseling;
- Limited capacity to participate in national-level trainings or organize diocesan-level trainings due to financial constraints;
- Challenges in coordination at parish and deanery levels;
- Lack of external experts to facilitate training sessions.

Participants have recommended more capacity-building interventions to improve the knowledge and competencies of staff and volunteers. Funding has hampered their ability to conduct training of trainers and engage external facilitators. An increased investment in the activities of FLOs should reduce the severity of this challenge.

### **Mission, Resources and Church Support**

The average rating for the three sub-assessment areas – mission implementation, resources, and church support - was 2.4 or 'weak', indicating the need to enhance the translation of the NFLO mission statement into actionable activities, supported by adequate resources and sufficient church support.

**Mission implementation** was rated as 'good' overall (average score of 2.8), with nine of the 16 archdioceses and dioceses that reported in this area rated the implementation of its mission as 'good' and one as 'strong'. Six rated it as 'weak'. The ranking was based not on appropriateness or relevance of the mission itself, but the extent to which the mission and its objectives have been translated into programmes that are being implemented effectively.

**Resource availability** received a very low overall average rating of 2.0, highlighting significant challenges in this area and its impact on the ability of FLDs to adequately support families. Among the eighteen archdioceses and dioceses that responded, fourteen rated resource availability as 'weak' and two as 'poor'. Only Mombasa and Nyeri Archdioceses and dioceses gave a 'good' rating.

Respondents identified several key challenges related to resource availability:

- Limited funding to expand outreach to more families or implement essential activities such as trainings;
- Lack of capacity building opportunities for volunteers and trainers of trainers, especially at the deanery level;
- Inadequate or insufficient training resources, including seminar facilitators and materials;
- Logistical challenges such as insufficient vehicles for the FLO and, in some cases, inadequate office space and furniture.

**Church support** received a slightly higher overall rating than resource availability, with an average score of 2.5, but still categorized as 'weak'. Among the eighteen archdioceses and dioceses that responded, half rated church support as 'good' and the other half as 'weak'. Interestingly, among those archdioceses and dioceses that rated resource availability as 'weak' or 'poor', half still perceived the support they receive from the church as 'good'.

*“Every parish is required to forward 10% of Sunday collections to diocese to help further supplement diocese budget for family life program. Every parish is encouraged to have a family life kitty to cater for family life programs at their level. The church also supports the upkeep to the family life coordinators from the parishes when attending training, meeting, workshops for transports and personal effects.”*

Respondent commenting on church support

This suggests that, while resource availability may be insufficient, the church is making efforts to support the work of the NFLO and FLDs through human and financial resources. One respondent pointed out that an independently run FLO could potentially enhance support for promoters and volunteers.

### Help Desk Services and Network

An overall rating of 2.7 ('good') across services and network assessment areas indicates that service provision has some strengths but could be improved, service delivery approach can be enhanced, more families could be reached, and referral networks could be improved.

Figure 5: Average scores across all archdioceses and dioceses for services and network assessment areas

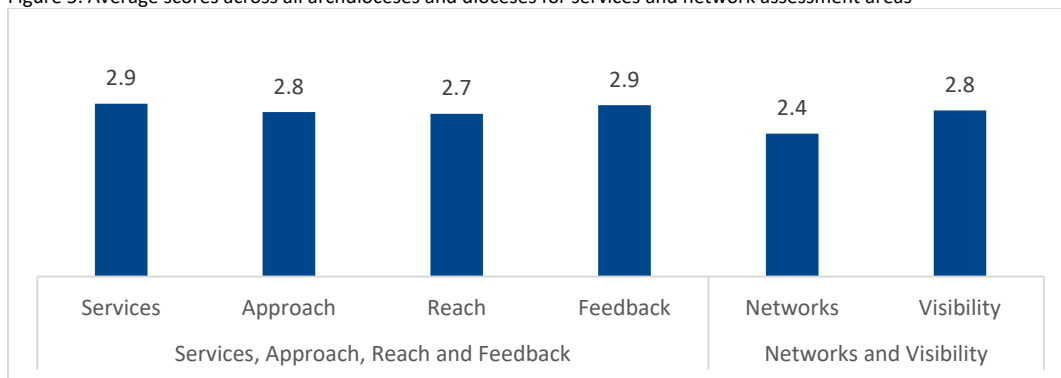
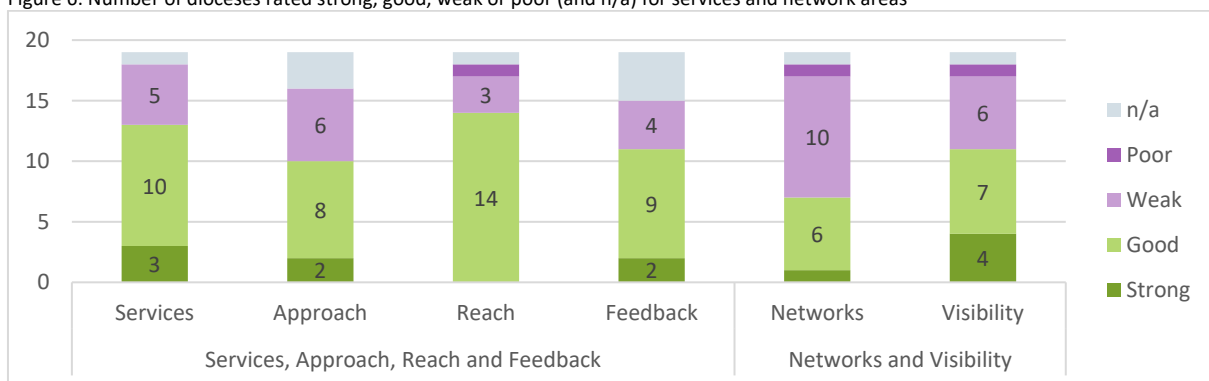


Figure 6: Number of dioceses rated strong, good, weak or poor (and n/a) for services and network areas



### Help Desk Services

**Services/programs** mentioned by respondents included marriage preparations, parenting, education on financial management, natural family planning, family resilience, working with separated families, among others. These were rated overall as 'good' (2.9), with ten giving a rating of 'good' and three as 'strong'.



**Service delivery approach** was generally rated as 'good' with an average score of 2.8, indicating effective practices but also room for improvement. The main delivery methods reported include seminars, workshops, cell meetings, and team talks. One respondent mentioned that the FLO manages service delivery from the diocesan level through parish level down to stations and small Christian communities. In another approach, activities are supervised at the parish level through deanery or parish FLCs and deacon leadership. In one diocese, parish priests collaborate with the pastoral council for activity planning, while the FLC focuses on seminar and workshop facilitation.



Mass of Families with Rt. Rev. Henry Juma Odonya, Bishop of Catholic Diocese of Kitale, during the launch of the Family Life Program in June 2024. Photo by KCCB.

These structured approaches were rated as at least 'good' by eight of the 16 respondents and a further two dioceses gave a 'strong' rating, with the remaining six rating service delivery approach as 'weak'. One of the dioceses that rated it 'strong' reported a cascade of roles involved in service delivery, from the bishop's office overseeing the FLC head, parish family life trainers, to volunteers at local church and small Christian community groups. This structured approach ensures consistent program delivery and feedback mechanisms across all levels.

**Service reach** looks at whether intended FLD service beneficiaries can receive these services. Respondents noted that service beneficiaries include couples, widows and widowers, single parents, church groups such as Catholic Men Association, Catholic Women Association, Pontifical Missionary Childhood, and youth. Overall, around three quarters of respondents rated service reach as 'good', with the main reason provided for not being able to reach more beneficiaries being lack of or inadequate funds.

[With a more decentralized approach, in which parish-level FLDs recruit active and visible couples to serve as models and there is cascade training to outstations, will be one cost-effective approach to expanding FLD reach and increasing the number of beneficiaries.](#)

**Feedback** about service provision is a way of immediately getting feedback on services and, when routinely assessed, is a form of monitoring. This is important for improving service quality, and ensuring service provision meets the needs of intended beneficiaries. Feedback was rated overall as at least 'good', with 11 out of 15 dioceses providing this score. One gave a rating of 'weak' and four did not provide a rating. Feedback was reported as being obtained through interviews after seminars, testimonies from participants and feedback from radio talks, although exactly how feedback is obtained is not specified. One common form of service delivery feedback from parishes to the diocese is regular (quarterly and end of year) meetings during which pastoral groups provide reports on activities, successes, challenges and recommendations. Whilst overall respondents may be close to being satisfied with existing mechanisms for obtaining feedback on service provision, with an average rating of 2.9, it will be important to explore the details of feedback mechanisms further and to see if they provide all the monitoring information that would be useful, to ensure that there is feedback on services overall and how they are being perceived by users. Feedback and monitoring mechanisms also

have the useful function of being able over time to measure service results and any changes in outcome for beneficiaries. This is important for standardization and informed decision making.

Finding out more about what mechanisms are used to generate feedback (for example, use of pre and post-tests or sharing of insights and observations on changes in knowledge and perspectives after changing) is important. Ensuring robust feedback mechanisms is important for informed decision-making.

## Network

Respondents were asked to indicate if the FLDs work with institutions or actors outside the Catholic Church to support families, and if these actors have sufficient partners in the communities to support beneficiaries.

**Partnership/Referral Networks** assessment area was rated 2.4, highlighting the need for efforts to improve partnerships outside the church.

Dioceses partner with several stakeholders or actors outside the Catholic church. These institutions/stakeholders include government institutions like Ministries of Defense and Health, law enforcement agencies (police, courts, prisons), Department of Social Services, education offices and hospitals. They also include non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and local and civil leaders, among others. However, respondents did not indicate the nature of the collaboration, or the specific roles each actor is playing in supporting beneficiaries of the FLDs.

Increasing the number and diversity of stakeholders the FLDs work and partner with, including outside the church structures, is important for expanding the work of FLDs, their reach in terms of communities and churches they serve, as well as the number of beneficiaries.

**Visibility:** Respondents provided a rating based on whether the FLDs are recognized for the family life services they provide within their dioceses and beyond. The average rating for visibility was 2.8, which is a 'good' rating. More respondents (11 of 18 respondents) rated visibility as 'good' or 'strong' and generally noted that the FLO is a highly recognized department within the church structure, known for its work and services to families. Six diocesan representatives rated visibility as 'weak' and one as 'poor'. The respondent who rated visibility as 'poor' noted that this was not because there was a lack of recognition, but because the recognition did not come with the needed support. The respondent noted inadequate funding and the non-establishment of FLDs in some dioceses.



Family Life awareness session for Catholic Women Association with Rt. Rev. Alfred Rotich, Bishop of Catholic Diocese of Kericho, at Sacred Heart Cathedral, August 2023. Photo by KCCB.



## **IMPROVING THE WORK OF THE FAMILY LIFE DEPARTMENTS**

There were several constructive suggestions for improving the work of FLDs to enable them to provide better quality services for all beneficiaries they serve.

### **Enhancing team capacity at all levels**

This is the area that stimulated most suggestions in the survey. Recommendations include enhancing knowledge and skills through capacity building for coordinators from small Christian communities up to the diocesan level, increasing recruitment of couples for training of trainers programs, and organizing regular seminars and networking meetings with external facilitators to expand the training pool.

Overall, there is a strong appeal for investment in recruiting more full-time personnel to mitigate reliance on volunteers who may depart. Additionally, there is a need for logistical support to expand outreach to beneficiaries, especially those in parish outstations. These measures are seen as vital for enhancing the effectiveness and sustainability of family support initiatives within the church's frameworks.

### **Expanding service delivery for greater coverage**

There were calls to expand support to families in general terms. Specific recommendations included the provision of more volunteer training at the grassroots level that would increase coverage, the provision of more training materials, such as manuals or information education and communication materials, and the objective evaluation of beneficiary feedback to improve service delivery.

### **Establishment, strengthening and support to family life structures**

Overall, respondents were positive about the role of FLDs and their existing services or programs and felt it is important to create greater awareness. They also recommend the integration of various programs and services, to increase service reach and uptake. One recommendation included the standardization of the FLDs structure to ensure uniformity in how the office operates.

### **Increasing resources**

Participants also made recommendations on financing or material support for the work of FLDs. These covered the areas of adequate funding for training and for implementing family life activities at the diocese level through sufficient annual financial allocations, investment in logistics for effective service delivery (teaching and learning aids, office equipment, vehicles), incentives for FLD staff and volunteers, and partnering with more organizations to expand the reach of the family life programs.

### **Improving collaboration, referrals and partnerships**

One recommendation that was widely made was to improve collaboration with organizations and institutions outside the church, such as with NGOs and government institutions. Respondents called for specific structures and guidelines for referrals and partnerships.

Overall, a good proportion of participants acknowledged the efforts of the church, but strongly recommended improved funding to support the work of the FLDs.

**Need to know more?** Contact Changing the Way We Care at, [info@ctwwc.org](mailto:info@ctwwc.org) or visit [changingthewaywecare.org](http://changingthewaywecare.org)

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This product is made possible by the generous support of the American people through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The contents are the responsibility of Changing the Way We Care and do not necessarily reflect the views of USAID or the United States Government.

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