

## Background

- Nurses and midwives represent approximately 50% of the global health workforce and 50% of the global health worker shortage (WHO 2022).
- Nine million more nurses and midwives are needed to achieve universal health coverage by 2030 (WHO 2022).
- Malawi has 7 nurses per 10,000 people, compared to 50 in South Africa and 157 in the US (WHO 2018 & 2020).
- In Malawi, 62% of public sector nursing positions are vacant (Malawi HSSP II 2017-2022), straining the country's healthcare system, particularly in rural areas, where HIV prevalence is high and 83% of the population lives.



GAIA launched a **Health Workforce Development Program** in 2005 in Malawi to address a vital need – the HIV/AIDS epidemic was ravaging the country and investment in human resources for health was urgently needed to deliver quality health services like HIV testing, treatment and care.

*"Globally, nurses have helped make considerable progress toward achieving HIV 95-95-95. They are often the primary point of contact for HIV clients in the health system and are critical for meeting patients' individual needs. Nurses are by patients' side from diagnosis to the start of antiretroviral therapy, and in making sure patients adhere to treatment."*

– USAID Systems and Program Sustainability Division 2020 –

## Description

Since 2005, GAIA has worked with the Malawi Ministry of Health (MoH) and key partners to build a competent nursing workforce through nursing scholarships and fellowships. In 2021, USAID made a five-year investment to significantly expand these programs.

### Scholarships increase the number of qualified nurses entering the workforce equipped to respond to global health threats like HIV/AIDS:

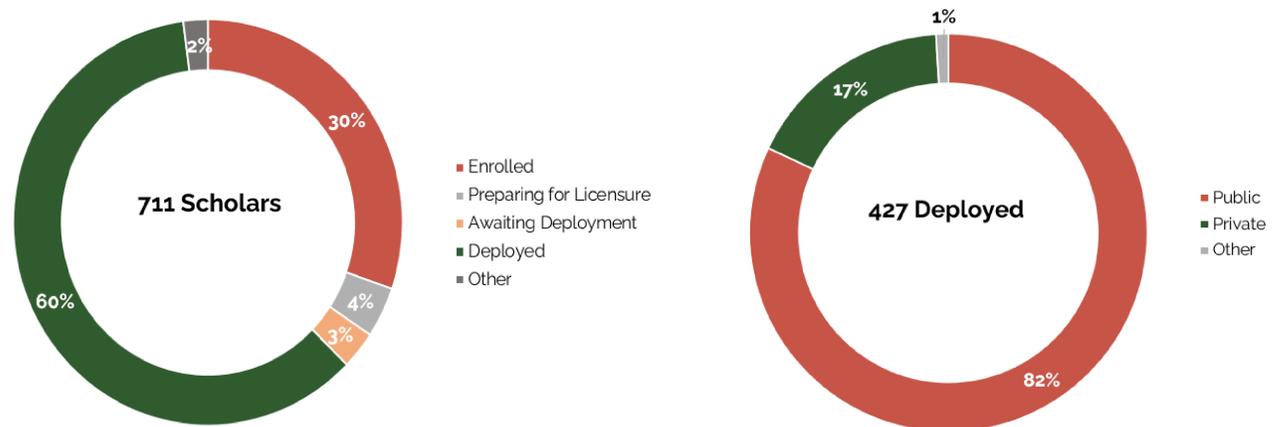
- **Criteria:** GAIA awards scholarships in partnership with nursing colleges, prioritizing students who are unable to pay school fees and/or who lost one or both parents.
- **Support:** Tuition, psychosocial support, living stipends, clinical supplies, preparation and payment for licensure exams, and ongoing follow-up ensures students complete their studies on-time and are retained in the local health workforce.
- **Service Commitments:** Scholars remain working in Malawi for the same number of years that they were sponsored (2-4), incentivizing qualified health professionals to remain in-country, preventing "brain drain," and helping to rebuild health infrastructure in the long-term.

### Fellowships bridge critical staffing gaps at public health facilities, increasing services to vulnerable high HIV-prevalence communities.

- **Criteria:** GAIA partners with the MoH and District Health Offices to interview and select fellows, prioritizing newly graduated nurses and nurses working part-time at public health facilities in priority health areas.
- **Support:** Stable salaries and training in antiretroviral therapy (ART), HIV service provision and maternal, newborn and child health (MNCH) promotes continued learning, skill building and clinical practice while new health workers await permanent employment.

## Results

**Scholarships:** GAIA has provided scholarships to **711** socioeconomically disadvantaged Malawian nursing students (76% female; 54% lost one or both parents) since 2005. With support from partners like USAID and UCSF Global Action in Nursing (GAIN), GAIA will grow Malawi's health workforce by **320 nurses by 2026**.

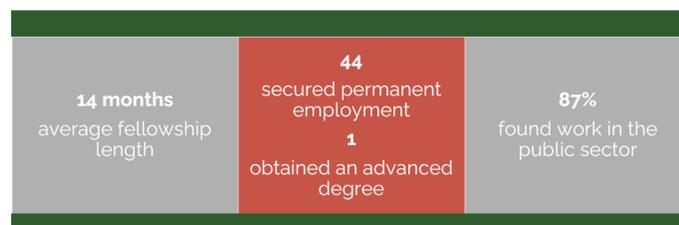


15+ years of implementation shows that GAIA's Scholarship Model works. **10%** of public sector nurses in Malawi are GAIA Scholars. Of 498 total graduates: **86%** (427) are deployed across 27 of Malawi's 28 districts and **99%** remain in Malawi. **57%** of deployed Scholars hold leadership positions and **9%** work as educators. Scholarships help nurses build confidence and skills to lead, educate and serve on the frontline to end the HIV epidemic.

**Fellowships:** GAIA has deployed **176 nurse fellows** to public sector health facilities across **9 districts** in Malawi to date in partnership with the Steward Family Foundation and USAID.

During the pilot phase, **45 fellows** (73% female) were deployed to rural facilities in Mulanje. Fellows grew the workforce by 11% and supported a 23% increase of people living with HIV initiated on treatment.

Scaled in 2021, **131 fellows** (60% female) have been deployed to 49 health facilities across 9 districts. 32% are in management positions and 117 have received training. By 2026, GAIA/USAID aims to achieve:



## Conclusion

With HIV prevention, testing and treatment tools available, the greatest threat to continued progress in the battle against HIV is a lack of skilled personnel. Ending the HIV/AIDS epidemic demands robust investment in human resources for health. GAIA programs provide pathways out of poverty and produce competent nurses equipped to respond to global health threats. Further, through education and economic opportunity, supported individuals and their families are able to reduce their risk of HIV transmission.

## Acknowledgements

GAIA thanks all of our partners whose generous support makes this work possible, including the Malawi MOH, Kamuzu University of Health Sciences, GAIN, the Gruber Family Foundation, Steward Family Foundation, The Elizabeth Taylor AIDS Foundation and USAID.

