

[GAIA] global health

Annual Report 2021



The Art of the Pivot

As I write this, our Malawi team is scrambling to meet an urgent request to provide emergency clinical health services at displaced person camps in response to massive flooding. Joyce and the Malawi team are repurposing vehicles, crafting agreements with district health offices to supply medicines, hiring temporary clinical staff and drivers, and negotiating fuel donations from partner organizations. All of this, while juggling a vastly expanded program team (still dressed head-to-toe in PPE) that continues to have a remarkable impact.

Flexibility and nimbleness has been part of GAIA's DNA from the beginning. Our Mobile Health Clinic Program, for example, began with a mandate to provide HIV testing and related clinical services, but also added malaria testing/treatment, family planning, and a host of other primary health services not available in these off-the-grid locations. The Nursing Scholar Program added a fellowship component when deployment was shown to be an obstacle to addressing the dire nursing shortage, and so on.

The ability to pivot is essential where resources are limited and needs change quickly. But the mark of a successful pivot is one that doesn't sacrifice hard-earned impact in long-term priority areas. Consider a few milestones achieved despite the added degree of difficulty faced this year due to COVID-19:

- **HIV:** While UNAIDS reported about the backsliding that COVID-19 disruptions caused globally, GAIA and Malawi continued to make progress in the fight to end AIDS by 2030. In fact, while HIV testing declined globally by 22% during the pandemic, HIV testing increased by 22% at GAIA mobile clinics.
- **Mobile Health Clinics:** In the course of expanding services to a new district (Mangochi), the program provided 225,000 client visits in 2021 alone.
- **Nursing Scholars:** GAIA crested the 500th nurse graduate threshold in 2021, and added 110 to the pipeline, along with an additional 92 nursing fellows deployed.

In this Annual Report, you'll read about these achievements and much more—all requiring swift responses to change with skillful pivots that don't sacrifice prior program commitments. These successes are getting GAIA noticed, too, such as USAID entrusting steady funding direct to Malawi to achieve national goals for HIV and Human Resources for Health.

Though I encourage Joyce to appreciate the successes during our regular zoom sessions, she usually laughs...and pivots back to work. There are families to attend to.



Todd Schafer, Executive Director

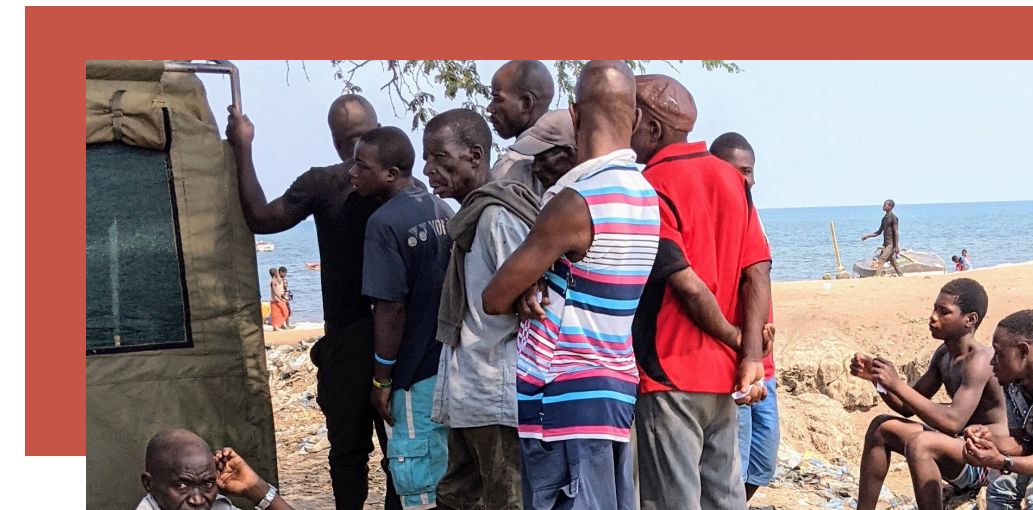
Program Impact: The Challenge of Dual Epidemics

While COVID-19 captured the world's headlines (again) in 2021, Africa's challenge was to mount an effective response without compromising the hard-earned gains of recent decades on other health fronts, most notably HIV. Together with our partners in the Malawian government and non-governmental sector, GAIA spent the year juggling these dual priorities—with striking success.

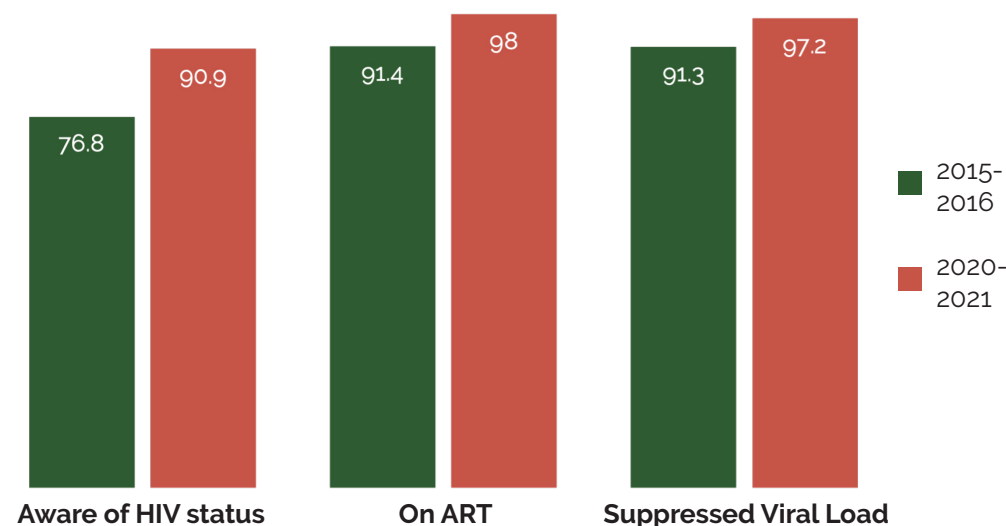
In September 2021, The Global Fund declared COVID-19 a major setback in the fight against HIV/AIDS, reporting that HIV testing services (HTS) dropped 22% over the previous year globally. In Malawi, this presented a grave threat to the dramatic progress made in recent years to achieve UNAIDS 95-95-95 targets, particularly for hard-to-reach communities.

In stark contrast to the global trend, however, GAIA increased HIV testing at mobile clinics by 22% during the pandemic. Moreover, of the 7,736 people tested for HIV at mobile clinics during the 21 months since the April 2020 lockdown, GAIA successfully reached 90% of the 132 testing positive for follow-up in their homes and linked 88% to treatment.

GAIA was able to maintain access to essential health services for our vulnerable, rural clients thanks to smart pivots at our mobile health clinics: protecting staff, clients, and government partners with PPE; altering clinic workflow and care protocols to enhance safety; adding staff to reduce the length of client visits and promote distancing; and improving handwashing protocols and ventilation.



Malawi UNAIDS 95-95-95 achievements (as of early 2021, per MPHIA)



GAIA's programmatic resilience contributed mightily to the country's continued progress on the HIV front (see bar chart at left). **According to preliminary 2021 data, Malawi achieved the 2025 UNAIDS 95-95-95 targets four years early, putting the country on course to end the HIV epidemic by 2030.** The COVID-19 challenge has demonstrated, once again, the adaptability of GAIA's flexible, community-based outreach approach to rural health system strengthening and rapid crisis response.



Accelerating Impact: GAIA's new strategic plan charts the course to 2025

2021-2025 Strategic Programmatic Goals

- 1 Enable individuals and communities to optimize their health in rural sub-Saharan Africa
- 2 Strengthen the capacity of the health system to ensure universal health coverage where we work

Progress in Year One

Programmatically, by the end of 2021, GAIA increased the population we serve by nearly **40%**, well on the way to doubling the number of rural Malawians with increased access to health care and education through outreach community health services by 2025. With the launch of the USAID-funded Human Resources for Health (HRH) program and partnership with Global Action in Nursing, we have inaugurated our largest one-year intake of nurses ever into our scholarship program, and have already secured funding to increase the number of graduates supported by GAIA by nearly **70%**, adding 320 nurses to the health workforce by 2025.

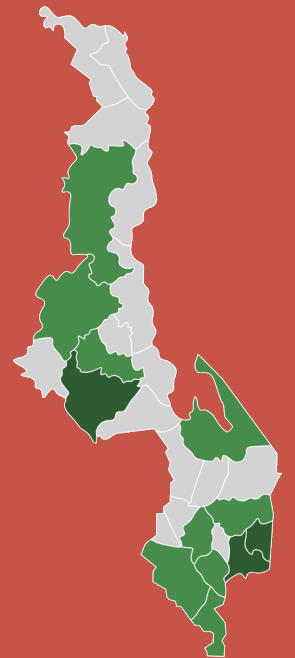
2021-2025 Strategic Organizational Goals

- 1 Foster the independent sustainability of GAIA Malawi
- 2 Enhance and expand partnerships
- 3 Build staff and organizational capacity
- 4 Strengthen organizational systems
- 5 Diversify funding and increase fundraising capacity to match programmatic expansion
- 6 Expand our geographic footprint

Progress in Year One

Organizationally, GAIA US has provided technical assistance to GAIA Malawi, assisting them in securing their first direct award from USAID. GAIA joined the Community Health Impact Coalition in 2021 to advocate for and advance the important role community based health workers play in rural Africa. GAIA has added significant finance and M&E capacity throughout the organization to buttress program expansion. We launched mobile clinics in a third southern district, are supporting children living with or at extreme risk of HIV in a fourth district, and established relationships with four new nurse training institutions, dramatically expanding our geographic reach within Malawi.

In 2021, GAIA expanded its geographic footprint **from three districts** (dark green below) **to 12** (light green), representing significant progress toward our strategic organizational goals for 2025.



GAIA's Theory of Change

Our theory is that if rural communities have access to easily available and acceptable healthcare of high quality, and we create an enabling environment for people to utilize those services, Malawians can optimize their health and thrive. See GAIA's Monitoring, Evaluation, Research, and Learning Strategy to learn more.

GAIA provides **community-based healthcare** through

1. Community outreach and education
2. Mobile health clinics

GAIA provides **health worker training support** through

1. Pre-service and in-service health worker training
2. Deployment support for health workers

Rural communities have access to quality healthcare that is **accepted locally**

Young people, especially women, are **empowered** socio-economically

The **availability** of qualified health workers increases

Health literacy improves

Preventative and health seeking **behaviors** increase

Health systems are strengthened

Morbidity and mortality due to preventable and treatable conditions are **reduced**

People in rural communities **thrive**, living healthier and more productive lives



Health Workforce Development

Growing GAIA's Reach & Expanding Partnerships

In May 2021, USAID made a five-year investment in GAIA's Health Workforce Development Program, representing the first USAID prime award granted to GAIA Malawi, with GAIA US providing technical assistance and capacity building for the Malawi team. Through this Human Resources for Health (HRH) Project, existing partnerships were strengthened, new relationships were formed with four new nursing institutions, and GAIA deepened relationships with health facilities, nursing regulatory bodies, peers in the global health space, and Ministry of Health representatives. Ultimately, 2021 reaffirmed GAIA's role as a key player in the effort to fill critical human resources gaps in health facilities serving Malawi's most vulnerable citizens.



510
nursing scholar
graduates to date

The HRH Project will address Malawi's health worker shortage by graduating and deploying new nurses and improving the quality of nursing education and clinical practice.

Achievements in 2021

- **90** USAID-funded scholarships awarded to first-year nursing students
- **92** nurse fellows deployed across 7 districts

2026 HRH Project Targets

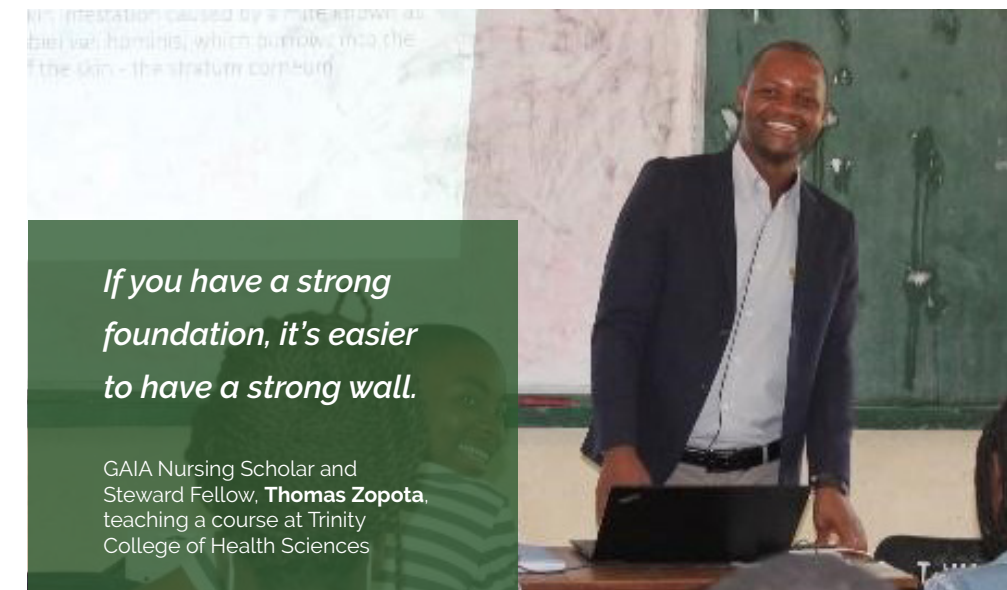
- **260** nurses and midwives graduated
- **240** newly graduated nurses and midwives deployed to fill gaps at understaffed health facilities through one-year paid fellowships
- **1** nursing regulatory body, **4** nurse training institutions, **7** teaching hospitals, and **9** district local governments provided with critical capacity building to improve nursing education, healthcare provision, and human resource tracking

Health Worker Story from the Field: Thomas Zopota

Thomas grew up in a poor family of eight children. His parents died before he turned fifteen. Having witnessed their suffering, Thomas wanted to become a nurse but didn't have funds to pay for college. In 2011, after starting nursing school and unable to pay tuition, Thomas was selected as a **GAIA Nursing Scholar**. With fees paid, he had peace of mind and could focus on his studies.

After graduation, Thomas received a **GAIA Steward Fellowship**—a two-year, full-time nursing placement for new nurses. As a Fellow, he had a stable income and could support himself and his siblings.

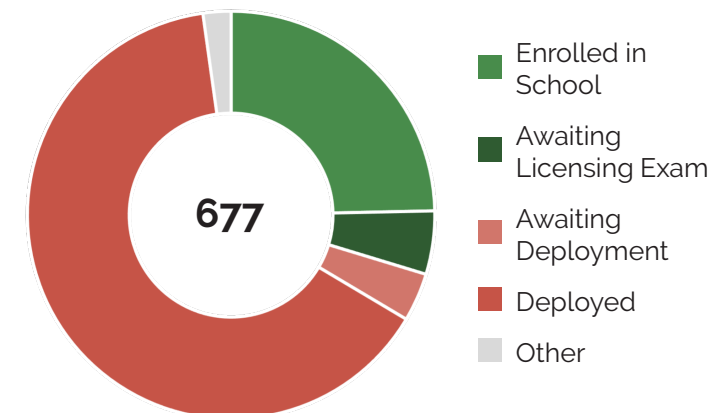
Following the fellowship, Thomas secured a position at Nsanje District Hospital, where he was quickly promoted to coordinate district-level reproductive health services. Confronted with Malawi's high prevalence of cervical cancer, Thomas joined the GAIA-funded Cervical Cancer Screening Project. To date, this project has screened 3,800+ women, treating those with precancerous lesions immediately and referring those with cancer for care. Today, Thomas is a Lecturer at Trinity College of Health Sciences, and he is pursuing his Master's in Public Health.



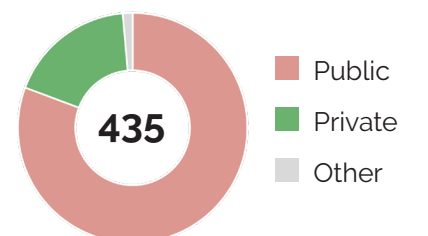
If you have a strong foundation, it's easier to have a strong wall.

GAIA Nursing Scholar and Steward Fellow, **Thomas Zopota**, teaching a course at Trinity College of Health Sciences

99% of deployed GAIA Nursing Scholars have remained working in Malawi



Of those deployed, 81% have remained in the public sector



[The GAIA scholarship] really means a lot to me because it has lifted a very big weight off my mother's shoulders. As a girl, a lot of people want to help you but, at the same time, they may want to take advantage of you. It was a very big challenge for me, because I really wanted to pursue my dream, but when I asked for help, people would always ask for something in return.

Community-Based Health Services

GAIA's Elizabeth Taylor Mobile Health Clinics now serve **1,200,000** Malawians in 3 Southern Districts

In May and August of 2021, GAIA launched two new clinics in Mangochi district, bringing the total number of clinics to 7 — serving 35 sites weekly — across 3 southern districts. The new clinics in Mangochi provide welcome and much-needed access to care for the people in this poor, rural district and bring the total number of Malawians served by the clinics and within an hour's walk of high quality care to 1.2 million.

Standing before a large crowd on the Mangochi clinic's first day, the Village Headman greeted the Mobile Health Clinic (MHC) team on behalf of the community: **"We are so excited and feel loved with the presence of the clinic close to us. And I am one of your patients—I have been sick for two weeks without accessing health care... We are blessed with the coming of this clinic."**

In preparation for expansion to Mangochi district, GAIA conducted a Baseline Needs Assessment, confirming the community's need for improved access to health care:

- Only 17% of respondents reported living within 5 kilometers of the nearest health facility.
- 81% of those surveyed travel over one hour, almost half travel 2 hours or more, and 25% travel more than 3 hours to the nearest health facility.
- Furthermore, for about three-quarters of those surveyed, the nearest health facility is fee-based, often a barrier for those seeking care.
- Responses also reflected a strong desire for consistent, compassionate, and respectful care—attributes that GAIA considers integral to the care we provide.

2021 Achievements

7 mobile clinics	225,882 total visits
36,583 malaria visits	4,248 tested for HIV
21,303 family planning consultations	90% linked to treatment

2.4+
million clinic visits provided to date



Expanded Community-Based Services for Vulnerable Clients

GAIA's Mobile Health Clinic program, with key support from The Elizabeth Taylor AIDS Foundation, expanded services in 2021, making it easier for pregnant women and those living with HIV to access essential routine care close to their homes. Our Mangochi clinic began providing antenatal services, and in both Mangochi and Phalombe districts, we facilitated community-based **Antiretroviral Therapy (ART)** provision through a new partnership with Baylor College of Medicine Children's Foundation, making it easier for pregnant women and those living with HIV to access essential routine care close to their homes. Additionally, working in partnership with government supported community health workers, we improved access to child growth monitoring and COVID-19 vaccination at many of our clinic stops.



A clinic health worker tests a child for malaria at the Mangochi mobile clinic.

Ana Patsogolo (Children First) Activity Closes the Gap for Children in the HIV Care Continuum

In the second year implementing the **Ana Patsogolo (Children First) Activity**, GAIA expanded program activities and geographical scope, adding Thyolo district in addition to Mulanje and Phalombe districts in partnership with World Education Inc./Bantwana Initiative and USAID through 2025. Ana Patsogolo links extreme high-risk children with HIV prevention and testing services, providing social support and wrap-around health services to improve treatment initiation and adherence when they test positive. During the past year, GAIA enrolled 15,546 orphans and vulnerable children and 6,448 adolescent girls and young women in the program. GAIA increased the number of children living with HIV (CLHIV) receiving treatment services by 143%, from 2,802 to 6,826. Individual case management ensured retention of 99% of enrolled CLHIV and 80% achieved viral suppression—10% higher than the national average, though still below suppression rates for adults living with HIV. Emergency nutrition, adherence counseling, home visits, and case conferences were provided to CLHIV with high viral load, and adolescents were enrolled in teen clubs to promote disclosure and adherence, provide recreational and psychosocial support and life skills, and support for their caregivers.



Caregivers of children living with HIV participate in Village Savings and Loans Groups to increase financial literacy, provide small loans for income generating activities, and act as a social safety net in times of crisis.



News and Notes

GAIA's Celebration of Frontline Healthcare Workers

On June 27th, GAIA's Gala took attendees on a virtual trip to Malawi to celebrate our frontline workers and witness their dedication to providing quality healthcare in a year filled with enormous obstacles. The Gruber Family Foundation was presented the Global Citizen Award for their incredible support of the Nursing Scholar Program since its inception in 2004. The event can still be enjoyed at www.gaiaglobalhealth.org/get-involved.

GAIA Malawi's Nurses Are Recognized Internationally

The Association of Nurses in AIDS Care (ANAC) honored Lucy Nyirenda, RNM, MSc, GAIA Malawi's Ana Patsogolo Activity Program Manager, with its Excellence in Global HIV Nursing award in November 2021. The award included an all-expenses-paid trip to ANAC's annual conference in Washington, DC., and recognized Lucy's outstanding work in maternal and child health and HIV prevention among adolescent girls and young women.

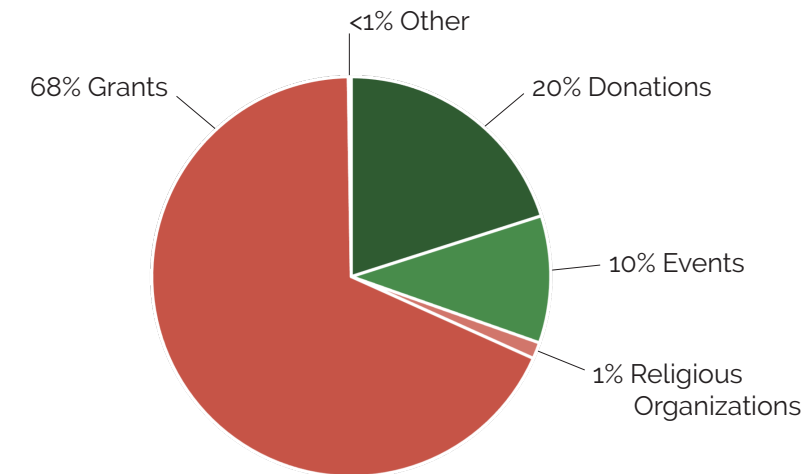
While in the US, Lucy flew on to San Francisco to meet with US staff and donors and appeared as the featured guest on the inaugural episode of GAIA's Global Nurses' Corner hosted by GAIA board members, Melanie Norris, RN, MSN, PNP, and Kaboni Gondwe, PhD, RN. Watch at www.gaiaglobalhealth.org.



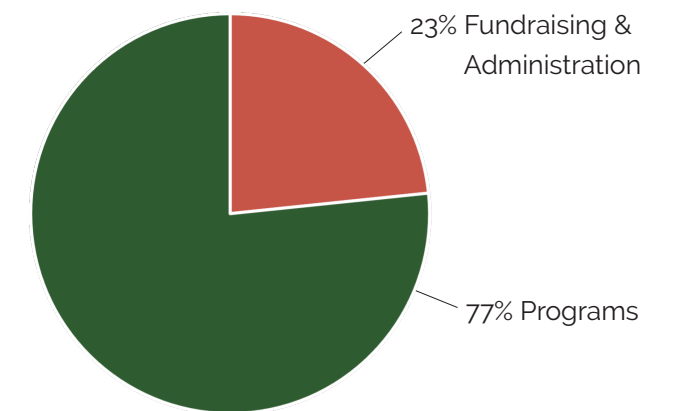
2021 Financials

In 2021, GAIA's cash-basis income totaled **\$4,289,023** and expenses* totaled **\$4,701,376** (unaudited). GAIA has an annual accrual basis independent audit each fiscal year. The 2021 audit report is available at www.gaiaglobalhealth.org.

Income 2021



Expenses 2021



* Note: Expenses include significant one-time capacity investments in anticipation of significant, long-term program growth.

GAIA Leadership

William Rankin, Co-Founder | Charles Wilson, Co-Founder

Malawi Lead Staff: Joyce Jere, Country Director | Nelson Khozomba, Program Manager | Adalireni Manyungwa Nkhata, Finance & Administration Manager *GAIA currently employs 110 additional Malawi-based staff

U.S. Staff: Todd Schafer, Executive Director | Ellen Schell, Senior Advisor | Beth Geoffroy, Director of Programs & Strategic Partnerships | Molly Brostrom, Program and Grants Officer | Kelsey Fisher, Program and Grants Officer | Marcel Thanasack, Director of Finance | Ninon Pallavicini, Events & Operations Manager | Chloe Frank, Development & Communications Associate

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