



# Strategic Plan

2026-2030

Resilience & Opportunity



Improving  
health at  
the far end  
of the road.



## Our Vision

A world where health outcomes are not determined by who you are or where you live.

## Our Mission

GAIA strengthens healthcare in underserved African communities.

**H**undreds of millions of Africans lack access to healthcare simply because of where they live. In vast rural regions, clinics and hospitals are separated from communities by long distances, poor roads, and costly transport. This geographic isolation means that treatable diseases such as malaria, HIV, and pneumonia remain among the leading causes of death, and prevention-focused “wellness” visits are a luxury. The tragedy of this gap is deepening, as medical advances have dramatically improved the prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of these same illnesses. In Malawi, therefore, where more than half the population lives beyond walking distance of a health facility, and widespread poverty prohibits transport, millions are at risk of preventable illness and death.

GAIA was created twenty-five years ago to bridge these distances. Whether by driving mobile clinics to yawning gaps in the healthcare grid, or by growing the professional nursing workforce to staff future rural clinics, GAIA brings the medical breakthroughs – and improved health outcomes – of the global north to the “far end of the road” in rural Africa.

Joint interventions with our partners in the Ministry of Health and NGO community have produced previously unthinkable progress: Malawi is now on track to end the AIDS epidemic by the end of this decade, while making demonstrable reductions in child and maternal mortality. Evidence of broader impact? Life expectancy in Malawi is more than 20 years higher than at our founding.

GAIA's growing impact is the result of an increasingly professional local staff in Malawi, enormously generous support in the U.S., and a growing reputation for cost-effectiveness and integrity in program delivery among institutional donors. The success of the 2021-2025 Strategic Plan (“Accelerating Impact”) was built upon these three pillars. In the past year, however, the global health world was shaken by the dissolution of the world's largest donor agency (USAID) and the chaos that has rippled through donor institutions worldwide.

GAIA was not immune to this, losing one-third of our operating budget overnight.

There is only one path forward: **together**. GAIA has demonstrated enormous **RESILIENCE** this past year by walking this path. Despite the murky financial future, however, GAIA aims for even greater impact to meet growing need. Through coordinated program partnerships, co-funding arrangements, and creative alignments with like-minded organizations, GAIA's next five years will sustain the traction and gains of the previous 25, while capitalizing on **OPPORTUNITY** in our path to grow in footprint and impact.

The African proverb “If you want to go fast, go alone; if you want to go far, go together” resonates deeply in this new world.





# GAIA: Improving Health at the Far End of the Road

GAIA believes that everyone deserves access to quality healthcare, no matter where they live or who they are. In partnership with government and local communities, we strengthen health systems by filling gaps in the healthcare grid now and increasing capacity for the long term.

We provide **community-based health services** and health education to under-served populations in rural communities, while providing **health workforce development** and promoting equitable deployment of frontline providers.

# Community-based healthcare

## Improving health now

Where fixed health facilities are limited, chronic conditions are on the rise, and infectious diseases require timely, flexible responses, GAIA brings healthcare to the community. Mobile outreach services are proven to effectively fill gaps in the existing healthcare grid and can shift priorities as needs and context change.



GAIA's mobile clinics provide basic primary healthcare to meet the needs of the local community where gaps in health infrastructure exist.



Our village-based outreach programs focus on health education, disease prevention, and proactive healthcare in the communities surrounding mobile clinic sites.



GAIA provides sexual reproductive health services, including perinatal health services to reduce Malawi's high rates of maternal and neonatal mortality, and community-based HIV testing services and follow-up care to limit transmission and end the epidemic.

# Health workforce development

## Increasing capacity for the future

In response to chronic need and limited government resources for health, GAIA builds long-term health infrastructure by funding the next generation of frontline healthcare workers. Working with Ministries of Health and partnering with local universities, GAIA supports the education and deployment of needed health worker cadres. GAIA has implemented scholarship and fellowship programs in Malawi, Liberia, and, most recently, in Zambia.



GAIA's Nursing Scholarship Program provides wrap-around support for economically disadvantaged nursing students so that high-quality health workers are trained and immediately licensed. Scholarships, clinical supplies, psychosocial support, a monthly stipend, and a post-graduation service commitment ensure students can complete their studies on time and will be retained in the local health workforce. In Malawi, where we have provided the majority of our scholarships, 99% of graduates remain working in-country and 82% work in the public sector.



To ensure equitable human resources for health throughout the region, we work with governments to deploy new health workers through GAIA's Nursing Fellowship Program to bridge the gap between graduation, licensure, and deployment to permanent positions. In-service fellow trainings on priority areas like Antiretroviral Therapy, Maternal Newborn and Child Health, Integrated Management of Childhood Illness, and Emergency Obstetrics and Newborn Care provide nurses with the necessary skills to improve quality of care.

# Our Work

Throughout our 25-year history, GAIA has decreased deaths due to preventable and treatable conditions and improved lives in remote, rural communities. More than 3 million mobile clinic visits and targeted community outreach efforts resulted in:

**129,000+**

HIV tests conducted, with a decrease in positive results from 23% (2008) to 2% (2025) as those testing positive are connected to and retained in treatment, halting onward transmission.

**640,000 & 100,000**

malaria and pneumonia cases treated, respectively, both key drivers of underfive mortality.

**177,000+**

sexual and reproductive health consultations, enabling safe birth spacing and improving maternal, neonatal, and women's health.

**39,000+**

orphans and vulnerable children provided with education and psychosocial support, reducing school dropout, HIV risk, and adolescent pregnancy and marriage.

**775**

nurses graduated in Malawi, Liberia and Zambia. GAIA graduates comprise 10% of all nurses working in Malawi's public health sector and employed nationwide.

**368**

nurses provided with fellowships in Malawi and Zambia. GAIA fellows fill in critical health care gaps at high-need medical facilities across rural areas.

**24**

peer-reviewed journal articles disseminating knowledge of what works in remote and rural, high-disease-prevalent areas, informing discourse among the global health community.

# Our Impact

With GAIA's support, the number of annual AIDS deaths in Malawi has declined by 81% since 2000, the number of new HIV infections in Malawi has dropped by 88% (including a 93% reduction among children), and the country's death rate from malaria has fallen by roughly two-thirds. These two improvements have driven an historic increase in life expectancy, growing by more than twenty years in the past twenty-five.

In the high HIV-burden remote districts where GAIA provides outreach health services in partnership with the District Health Offices (DHOs), the Antiretroviral Therapy coverage rates for people living with HIV are among the highest in the country. Working with the DHOs, GAIA has been a key partner in Malawi's success in achieving viral suppression for 86% of the country's population living with HIV. As a result, Malawi is one of only a few African countries on track to end the AIDS epidemic by the end of the decade.



## 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, they can optimize their health and thrive. See GAIA's Monitoring, Evaluation, Research, and Learning Strategy to learn more.

GAIA provides **community-based healthcare** through Mobile Health Clinics, Community Outreach, and Education

GAIA provides **health worker training support** through pre-service and in-service health worker training and 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



# History and Structure

In 2000, Episcopal priest Bill Rankin and renowned neurosurgeon Dr. Charlie Wilson founded GAIA to increase health equity globally and to bring life-saving HIV treatment to the countries most impacted by the AIDS epidemic. Throughout our history, GAIA has expanded our services to provide compassionate, client-centered healthcare to meet immediate needs while strengthening Malawi's healthcare workforce for the long-term.

In 2007, GAIA Malawi was formally established as an independent, but closely aligned, entity to the U.S. organization. With its own self-selected Board of Directors and a 100% Malawian staff, GAIA Malawi works closely with GAIA U.S. to design and execute cost-effective program responses to the evolving health needs of Malawi's rural poor. All program interventions are developed with key input from the communities served and executed in partnership with the Government of Malawi, Ministry of Health and local and international NGOs.

# Our Guiding Principles



**Health equity.** All people, regardless of circumstances, deserve access to quality care.



**Empathetic care.** Our work is human centered, focusing on the client, not merely preventing or treating the illness. Our staff and frontline health workers serve clients with complex healthcare needs. Our programs are specifically designed to be inclusive and to destigmatize care, meeting clients where they are, literally and figuratively.



**Local leadership.** GAIA believes local leaders with on-the-ground experience are best placed to design and implement our evidence-based programs. GAIA Malawi's team is 100% Malawian.



**Community-driven.** Program effectiveness and sustainability require the direct involvement of those GAIA serves in both planning and program implementation. Through years of delivering on program promises and addressing needs identified by the community, GAIA has earned the trust of the local residents and their leaders.



**Impact-driven.** Programs must be evidenced-based, accountable, and provable. We rigorously test our initiatives and promote the replication of successful models, to ensure the broadest possible impact.



**Integrity and transparency.** GAIA is accountable to its clients and partners and delivers on its promise to use resources efficiently.



**Sustainable, adaptable solutions.** GAIA provides healthcare that will meet the evolving needs of the population and be sustained for the long term. Our community partners keep a pulse on what is working well, and what is not, so we can adapt quickly to the changing health landscape and context in which we work.



**Collective impact.** No organization can reach ambitious goals alone. GAIA harnesses the power of partnerships with local and national governments, local and international non-governmental organizations, and Malawi- and US- based institutions to solve the greatest health problems in the areas in which we work.



# Strategic Plan 2026-2030

Over the next five years, GAIA will leverage the experience, credibility, and connections we've built over our first 25 years to **strengthen our resilience** and **extend our impact**.

We will support over **1.5 million clinic visits**, decreasing preventable morbidity and mortality across rural Malawi. We will **expand by over 50%** the number of GAIA nursing graduates working in health facilities nationwide, bolstering the health infrastructure for millions of Malawians for the long term.

GAIA's programmatic goals and objectives align with the **3rd United National Sustainable Development Goal (SDG): Good Health and Well-Being** and support achievement of the following bold SDG targets **by 2030**:

- End the epidemics of AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria, and other neglected communicable diseases;
- Reduce by one-third the premature mortality from non-communicable diseases through prevention and treatment;
- Ensure the universal access to sexual and reproductive healthcare services, including for family planning, information, and education;
- Achieve universal health coverage and access to essential healthcare services; and
- Increase the recruitment, deployment, training, and retention of healthcare workers.

# Programmatic Goals and Objectives

## **Goal 1:** Empower vulnerable individuals and communities to optimize their health in rural sub-Saharan Africa

Objective 1a: Improve health literacy and promote healthy behaviors related to life-threatening communicable and non-communicable disease and sexual and reproductive health for millions of rural Malawians.

Objective 1b: Increase availability of high quality, community-based healthcare for low-resourced rural populations across southern districts of Malawi.

### **2030 Targets:**

- Malawi to achieve the end of the HIV/AIDS epidemic
- Eliminate maternal transmission of HIV, hepatitis B, and syphilis in the districts where work
- Reduce malaria cases at GAIA mobile clinics by 90% (based on a 2020 baseline)
- Triple the share of “wellness visits” at GAIA mobile clinics, including family planning, antenatal care, postnatal care, screenings, and other services
- Expand GAIA and government collaboration in staffing, training, and quality improvement of rural healthcare delivery
- Increase the number and geographic reach of mobile clinics in partnership with the Ministry of Health

## **Goal 2:** Strengthen the capacity of the health system through nurse training and fellowship programs

Objective 2a: Increase the availability of qualified health workers, specifically working nurses, employed at government health facilities nationwide

### **2030 Targets:**

- Surpass 1,000 GAIA nursing graduates
- Surpass 500 GAIA nursing fellows
- Expand the Zambia Health Workforce Program pilot into a full-scale program, supporting scholarships for upgrading programs and fellowships
- Align training programs to current healthcare priorities to ensure that every nursing graduate is employed within 12 months

# Organizational Goals and Objectives

To increase our impact between 2026 and 2030, GAIA will build upon its already strong infrastructure towards the following organizational goals:

- 1 Foster the independent sustainability of GAIA Malawi.** GAIA US will provide technical assistance to increase direct funding and local support for GAIA Malawi. The foundation of our work is supporting GAIA Malawi leaders to build local capacity. Our locally-led Malawi team has been extremely successful, not only building the capacity for the long-term workforce, but independently winning and managing financial awards for the organization's mission.
- 2 Diversify funding and increase fundraising capacity to match programmatic goals.** Given the unpredictable and evolving funding landscape for global health, it is essential that GAIA diversifies its funding base, extending beyond its generous core funders to include additional individuals, families, religious organizations, foundations, corporate support, and eventually a rebound of government and multilateral assistance.
- 3 Strengthen collaboration with the Malawian government.** GAIA has made great progress in aligning programs with priorities of the Malawian government, which has led to increased support from the Ministry of Health as well as District Health Offices. GAIA and the Malawian government recognize these synergies and seek to build on them.
- 4 Enhance the quality of services.** The medical landscape in Malawi is evolving, with the decrease of communicable diseases like HIV and malaria, and the increase of a host of other non-communicable health issues. GAIA will adapt our high-quality services to meet current needs of rural populations.
- 5 Improve healthcare delivery through research partnerships.** GAIA seeks to validate and improve the efficacy of its programs through research partnerships involving the Ministry of Health, Malawian researchers, and international organizations.



## Geographic Focus

GAIA partners with local governments and Ministries of Health to determine priority services and sites, to share costs, and to ensure we adapt to changing local needs and emerging challenges.

While building on our track record of success and critical relationships in Malawi, and more recently Zambia, as resources and opportunities permit, GAIA will seek new partnerships within Malawi and neighboring African countries to improve access to healthcare in rural areas now and build a resilient health workforce for the future.



# Acknowledgements

We are grateful to the following individuals and partners for providing input and support for GAIA Global Health's 2026-2030 Strategic Plan.

## Board of Trustees

Philip Arscott  
Jim Cashel, Chair  
John Cullison  
Bob Daily  
Phil Darrow  
Lisa Deal  
Erin Fish  
Brian Frantz  
Joel Goldman  
Kaboni Gondwe  
Michael Gottlieb

Galym Imanbayev  
Nina Kola  
Zander MacQuitty  
Timi Most  
Ashley Paff, Vice Chair  
Andy Pflaum  
Mel Sahyun  
Ellen Schell  
Azmat Siddiqi  
Ivan Weinberg

### Emeritus

Martha Arscott  
Christine Simpson Brent  
Haile Debas  
Laurie Hunter  
Bob McCaskill  
Timothy Mohan  
Geoff Peck  
Michael Lockhart

## Medical Advisory Board

Thomas J. Coates • Professor, Infectious Diseases, UCLA  
Richard G.A. Feachem • Professor, Epidemiology & Biostatistics, UCSF  
William L. Holzemer • Dean, School of Nursing, Rutgers University  
Jay A. Levy • Professor of Medicine, UCSF  
Melanie Norris • Nurse Practitioner, Lucile Salter Packard Children's Hospital At Stanford  
Nancy S. Padian • Professor of Epidemiology, School of Public Health, UCB  
Jean L. Richardson • Professor of Preventive Medicine, USC  
Paul Volberding • Professor of Medicine, UCSF  
A Eugene Washington • Chancellor, School of Medicine, Duke University  
Dean L. Winslow • Professor of Medicine, Stanford University

## Partners



Catholic Relief Services, Zambia  
Chapman and Cutler, LLP  
Christian Health Association of Malawi  
The Elizabeth Taylor AIDS Foundation  
Gilead Sciences, Inc.  
Global Action in Nursing (GAIN), UCSF  
Global Strategies  
Gruber Family Foundation  
Health Carousel Foundation  
HRH Foundation  
Institute for Global Health Studies, UCSF  
Inteleos Foundation  
Kamuzu University of Health Sciences (Malawi)  
Lusaka College of Nursing (Zambia)  
Malawi Ministry of Health and Population  
Malawi University of Science and Technology  
Million Lives Collective  
Morrison Foerster  
Mzuzu College of Nursing (Malawi)  
Nkhoma College of Nursing (Malawi)  
PEPFAR  
St. John of God College of Health Sciences (Malawi)  
St. Luke's College of Health Sciences (Malawi)  
Trinity College of Health Sciences (Malawi)  
Uplift Malawi  
ViiV Healthcare  
We Are One World Foundation  
Zambia Ministry of Health

# [GAIA global health]



66 Franklin St., Suite 300,  
Oakland, CA 94607

[info@gaiaglobalhealth.org](mailto:info@gaiaglobalhealth.org)

415.461.7196

[www.gaiaglobalhealth.org](http://www.gaiaglobalhealth.org)