

GAIA Mobile Health Clinics

Cost-efficient, Sustainable, Flexible Model for Improving Access to Health Care

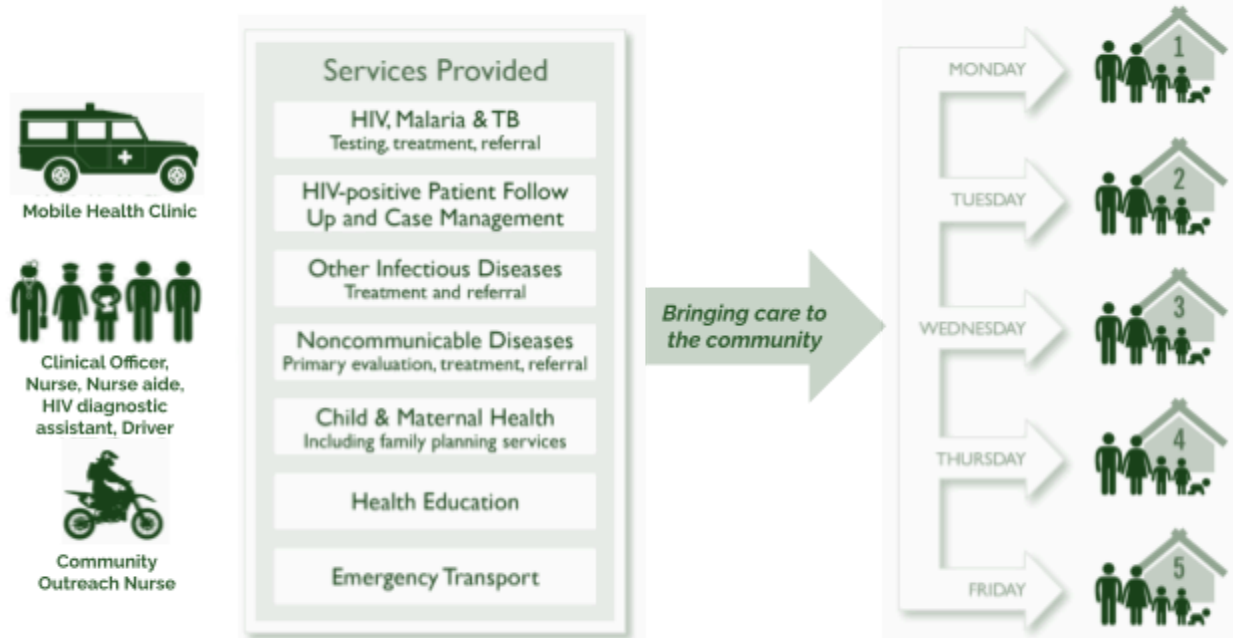
Challenge

In Malawi, more than three quarters of the country's 22 million citizens live in rural areas and 40% live further than 5 kilometers from the nearest health care facility. The distance that villagers must travel to access health care adversely affects health-seeking behaviors and health outcomes, which is particularly harmful for children under five and pregnant women, in a country with high HIV and malaria burden. Malawians who are able to reach a government health facility often find shortages of district health personnel, medications, and supplies. The government aspires to universal health coverage for all of its citizens, yet currently lacks the resources to staff and operate a fixed clinic in every rural community.

Solution

GAIA's Mobile Health Clinic program is a cost-efficient, targeted response to a critical development need. GAIA's eight mobile clinics bring access to health care to more than a half million villagers at 38 different community health clinics in three remote, rural districts. Operating out of a Toyota Land Cruiser stocked with clinical supplies and medicines and staffed by six personnel - a clinical officer, nurse, nurse's aide, HIV diagnostic assistant, driver and data clerk - mobile clinics set up in a community-identified location - places of worship, schools or community buildings. Clinic staff provide critical preventive services including antenatal and postnatal care, care for acute and potentially life-threatening conditions, such as malaria and pneumonia, and chronic conditions such as hypertension, HIV, and epilepsy, treating almost 150 patients daily. Working in partnership with the Ministry of Health and District Health Offices, GAIA's mobile clinics extend the reach of the government's evolving health system and create an effective continuum of care for rural villagers.

Bring Health Care to the Community Expanding access to care through Mobile Health Clinics



1 Mobile Health Clinic + 6 Personnel + 5 Villages = 35,000 Client Visits per Year



Impact

With over 3.4 million clinic visits to date, GAIA's Mobile Health Clinics have proven to be a highly efficient, cost-effective, and replicable solution to providing primary care, including the prevention and management of infectious diseases in some of the poorest and most remote regions of Malawi. With GAIA's support, disease burden, most notably for HIV/AIDS, has dropped across southern Malawi — **annual AIDS-related deaths have decreased by 73%**, (51,000 in 2008 to 14,000 in 2024), **annual rates of new HIV infections have dropped 81%** (63,000 in 2008 to 12,000 cases in 2024), and **malaria deaths in children have been cut by more than half** (2008-2024).

Achievements since 2008

- 3.4 million clinic visits to date
- 636,000 malaria cases treated
- 176,000 sexual and reproductive health visits
- 129,153 people tested for HIV
- Connecting 7,921 people tested positive for HIV to treatment

A Recognized Model

GAIA's Mobile Health Clinics have been recognized by the international global health community, notably at the [2022 International AIDS conference](#) and by UNAIDS ([Knowledge is Power](#), page 52) as an effective way to reach remote populations with basic healthcare services including HIV testing and treatment, key to ending the HIV epidemic; and have been evaluated in the following peer reviewed journal publications — [AIDS, Public Health Action](#) and [Rural and Remote Health](#).

GAIA is data driven, employing a rigorous monitoring and evaluation strategy. Changes in the Mobile Health Clinic program design are made in response to rigorously tracked program performance and implementation research, as well as in response to shifting local and national health priorities or disease outbreaks. We systematically share clinic service data from the program's electronic health record system into national health reporting systems.

Return on Investment

Each Mobile Health Clinic serves almost 35,000 clients per year. Direct annual costs per vehicle (staff, equipment, medicine, and maintenance) are roughly \$100,000 per year, representing an average per visit cost of less than \$3. Mobile Health Clinics avoid the expense of constructing and maintaining fixed facilities, and through its five weekly sites, a single mobile clinic can provide reliable health care to a catchment area of 400 square kilometers, home to hundreds of thousands of rural Malawians.

History

In 2008, with funding from **The Elizabeth Taylor AIDS Foundation**, GAIA began operating Mobile Health Clinics to meet an urgent need: the AIDS epidemic was ravaging the country, and a large percentage of Malawi's rural population lived too far from a health facility to receive testing or care. Today, with additional funding from **Gilead Sciences** and **ViiV Healthcare**, GAIA has helped Malawi to meet UNAIDS 95-95-95 targets ahead of schedule, even in the remote districts with the highest HIV prevalence where we work.

In 2021, responding to Malawi's stubbornly high maternal and infant mortality rates, we launched new clinics in Mangochi district, adding a robust model of **community-based antenatal and postnatal care**.

