

# GAIA 2020 FINAL REPORT

## Dining for Women

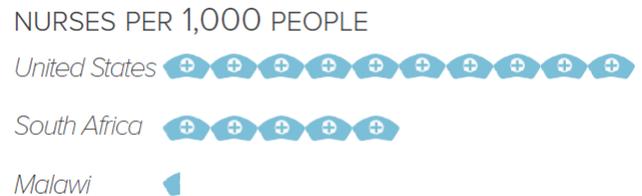


Organization name: Global AIDS Interfaith Alliance (GAIA)  
 Project title: Building the Healthcare Workforce in Malawi  
 Grant amount: \$49,445 over 2 years  
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### PROJECT OUTCOMES

GAIA’s Nursing Scholar Program addresses three critical needs in Malawi:

- 1. Health Worker Shortage.** In Malawi, one of the poorest countries of the world, an estimated 15 million of the country’s 19 million residents live, on average, an hour’s walk or more from the nearest health facility, and often find shortages of qualified health personnel when they seek services. Widespread poverty and the HIV/AIDS epidemic have led to a chronic shortage of qualified health professionals, felt most acutely in government facilities where **62% of nursing positions remain vacant.**



- 2. Infectious Disease.** Frontline health workers are critical to Malawi’s battle against infectious and deadly disease - not only COVID-19 in the spotlight today, but also malaria, TB and HIV/AIDS. In June of this year, Malawi met the UNAIDS ambitious 90-90-90 targets, keeping the country on track to end the AIDS epidemic by 2030. The work is not done, however: with more than one million people infected with HIV, a high population growth rate, and Covid-19 still looming, Malawi continues to have an

urgent need for expanded access to primary and HIV care to reach the UNAIDS 2025 targets of 95-95-95.

- 3. Women's Education and Empowerment.** Education and empowerment of girls and women is critical to achieving Malawi's full economic development potential, yet opportunities for girls and women lag behind those of their male peers and fewer than 3% of females have attained post-secondary education.

## PROJECT ACCOMPLISHMENTS

In February 2020, we inaugurated 30 new GAIA Nursing Scholars, bringing the total number of in school nurses currently supported by GAIA to 94, and 567 supported since program inception. GAIA's Nursing Scholar Program is making a significant dent in Malawi's dire shortage of nurses: *our nursing scholar graduates comprise almost 10% of all nurses currently working in Malawi's public sector, and they are posted in 27 of Malawi's 28 districts.* And the program is having a lasting impact on the women empowered through the program: surveys show that *GAIA nursing scholars rank highly in key women's empowerment indicators; almost 60% of our graduates move on to management positions in their employment.* Furthermore, the program's comprehensive support yields impressive results: *GAIA Nursing Scholars graduate on time and consistently achieve passage rates on national licensing exams equal to or above the national average.* GAIA has closed the gap in passage rates between these poor students and their better-resourced classmates.

**Results for the specific targets set for the Dining for Women project are described on page 3.**



## GAIA / DINING FOR WOMEN OUTCOMES REPORT

Anticipated Outcomes / Targets*	Results
<p><b>Outcome 1.</b> Increase number of qualified, disadvantaged young people able to attend nursing school.</p> <p><b>Target:</b> 20 young women (over 2 years) sponsored through nursing school and work in the public sector post graduation.</p>	<p><b>Achieved:</b> 10 young women finished nursing school in year one and 10 additional 10 Dining for Women nurses graduated in January 2020 - all on time, and one with credit (honors)! These Nursing Scholar graduates took Licensing exams in October (exams were delayed from April to October 2020 due to COVID-19 shutdown restrictions) and are currently awaiting results (expected to be available in January 2021).</p> <p>Of the ten graduates from the first year of Dining for Women support, 9 are currently deployed across 7 districts and one is in the interviewing process.</p>
<p><b>Outcome 2.</b> Increase on-time nurse graduation and licensing exam pass rate.</p> <p><b>Target.</b> 90% of Scholars graduate on time; 75% pass licensing exam on first attempt.</p>	<p><b>Achieved:</b> 100% of scholars graduated on time and 100% of the first cohort of 10 passed licensing exam on first attempt. The second cohort is awaiting licensing exam results, expected in January 2021.</p>
<p><b>Outcome 3.</b> Improve capacity of nursing training at colleges and universities</p> <p><b>Target.</b> 10% of graduates working at nurse training institutions.</p>	<p><b>Achieved:</b> 9% of all graduates are working as educators.</p>
<p><b>Outcome 4.</b> Improve long-term nurse retention in the public sector workforce.</p> <p><b>Target.</b> 95% of graduates successfully complete service commitment; 80% remain in the public sector post completion of service commitment.</p>	<p><b>Achieved:</b> 97% of graduates successfully completed service commitment; 83% remain in the public sector post completion of service commitment.</p>
<p><b>Outcome 5.</b> Increase female empowerment.</p> <p><b>Target.</b> 60% of Scholars support family members; 25% of NSP graduates hold management positions; 15% of scholars advance their degree post completion of the program.</p>	<p><b>Achieved:</b> 91% of Scholars surveyed in 2019 support family members; 64% of graduates have held management positions; 14% of graduates have advanced their degree post completion of the program.</p>

## NUMBER OF BENEFICIARIES

The number of beneficiaries did not change: project support from Dining for Women funded the fourth and final year of nursing school for 20 students at Kamuzu College of Nursing (10 in year one cohort and 10 in year two cohort).

## CHALLENGES FACED AND HOW THEY WERE ADDRESSED

The most significant and ongoing challenge for the GAIA Nursing Scholar Program is of course the COVID-19 pandemic. While confirmed COVID-19 pandemic cases in Malawi are low (6051 cases and 186 deaths as of December 8), the threat remains and there is no near-term prospect of a vaccine for the country. GAIA has worked intensely with government partners to prevent and mitigate the potential impact of the pandemic through a campaign that provided protective gear for health workers; soap, washbasins and masks for rural communities; and amplification of key COVID-19 prevention messages.

After Malawi's first confirmed COVID-19 cases in early April, the government was quick to implement restrictions and social distancing protocols. As a result, the April Nurse Licensure Exams were cancelled (they usually run in April and October); and nursing schools closed. During this time, GAIA continued to connect with scholars offering psychosocial support to ensure they remained in school and support those graduates awaiting licensing and deployment. In September, nursing schools began a phased reopening, with increased dependence on independent study and online learning. GAIA is helping students meet the new challenges by providing students with financial constraints with tablets to support online learning. All scholars currently in school returned to campus as expected. (One student is on a one year medical leave to care for an ill parent; GAIA is providing support to the affected student by working with the Dean of Students to ensure the college will be ready to welcome her back mid-2021). In addition, GAIA is providing COVID-19 prevention commodities for the nursing institutions (extra masks, hand washing stations, hand sanitizer). GAIA has maintained regular contacts with the second cohort of graduates to ensure they remained committed to working in Malawi's health sector once exam results are released.



The 2020 intake of new students at nursing schools has been delayed from November 2020 to January 2021.

## ORGANIZATION AND PROJECT SITUATION

Over the last two years, GAIA has continued to refine our strategy in partnership with local government and the communities we serve and in early 2021, we will issue a new five year strategic plan, describing our focus and objectives for the next five years. A key part of our focus will continue to be the Nursing Scholar Program, which, as described below, may be on the verge of significant expansion.

In March of 2020, GAIA submitted an application for institutional funding to support a significant increase in students over the next 5 years, as well as to support a one year fellowship following graduation that will minimize the time between graduation, licensing and employment and build the clinical skills of new nurses graduates. In December 2020, GAIA received notice that it was a finalist for the award and resubmitted the application with requested changes. If GAIA is awarded the contract in 2021, over the next five years it would result in 260 new nursing graduates and 240 one year fellowships at Ministry of Health facilities, improving clinical instruction in nursing colleges and district health facilities where student do clinical rotations, and building the capacity of Malawi's regulatory bodies to implement health worker deployment and tracking nationwide that improves the density and distribution of nurses in the country.

## IMPORTANT LESSONS LEARNED

GAIA's **comprehensive support** of nurse scholars continues to distinguish the program and yield strong results: GAIA Nursing Scholars graduate on time and consistently achieve national licensing exams passage rates equal to or above the national average, *closing the gap between these poor students and their better-resourced classmates*. This comprehensive support includes tuition, clinical supplies, materials (to which we have now added tablets as a result of increased reliance on online



learning), exam fees, uniforms, a modest living stipend and follow-up from program staff to encourage and monitor student progression and on-time graduation, and is critical for retaining disadvantaged students and ensuring their success.

GAIA Nursing Scholars' **service commitment** - an agreement to work in Malawi health facilities upon graduation for the same number of years they were sponsored - also lends to impressive results: *97% of graduates complete their service commitment; and 99% of graduates have remained working in Malawi to date*.

Funding permitting, GAIA plans to build on the success of the service agreement by adding one-year fellowship support of new graduates. These fellowships will help ensure our graduates are able to immediately serve as needed and will not only build the clinical skills of newly graduated nurses but also help address the government backlog in deployment of nurses and a maldistribution of nurses nationwide.

## ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGES DUE TO THIS PROJECT

With the generous support of our funders - including Dining for Women, GAIA's Nursing Scholar Program has earned tremendous respect and partnership from communities, nursing colleges, and the government. It is this respect and success that propelled GAIA to the final stages of a significant new contract that will allow for significant expansion of the Nursing Scholar Program (as described above).

## UNEXPECTED EVENTS AND OUTCOMES, INCLUDING BENEFITS

See Covid-19 challenges and unexpected benefits of significant new expansion described above.

## STRATEGY CHANGES AS A RESULT OF OBSTACLES ENCOUNTERED

As the Covid-19 pandemic moved parts of nursing scholars' education online, GAIA noted that many scholars - due to severe financial constraints - were trying to do their online studies on phones and so we procured tablets for our current scholars in need and have added tablets to the materials provided to new scholars going forward given the increasing reliance on virtual classes and online libraries.

Early this year, when nursing colleges identified fourth year students who were at risk of dropping out due to lack of school fees, GAIA committed to support 10 students in their final year, meeting a critical need at a critical time. Funding permitting, GAIA will continue to work with partners to meet challenges and obstacles with innovative solutions in support of the goal of addressing Malawi's dire shortage of nurses.



## LIVES TOUCHED BY THE PROJECT

The project support from Dining for Women directly funded the fourth and final year of nursing school for 20 students at Kamuzu College of Nursing (10 in year one and 10 in year two), providing the support that allowed them to become nurses. And each nurse serves an estimated 300,000 patients during her career.

Dining for Women support also had an impact on the families of these students: Our surveys show that, on average, two-thirds of GAIA Scholars support younger siblings with their living stipend. Thus, an estimated 60 siblings or extended family members benefited from the two-year program support through improved nutrition and educational (primary/secondary school) support.

**“During this pandemic, as a nurse midwife, my role has been to provide information about covid 19, how it is transmitted, prevention and treatment. Working in isolation units, I take personal initiative, and make sure to put on full personal protective equipment as I deliver my services to people.”**

**- LUSUNGU NYIRENDA**

2019 Graduate, Working in Mzuzu

## METRICS AND METHODS TO MONITOR SUCCESS

GAIA's Nursing Scholar assessment, monitoring and follow-up tools have been recognized as best practice by regional scholarship providers. GAIA's M&E staff use a customized Salesforce database (*GAIA Scholar Connect*) to track scholars and evaluate program performance. *GAIA Scholar Connect* monitors Scholars from inauguration into the program through at least four years post-graduation, tracking academic results, licensure, deployments, worksite updates, routine Scholar check-ins, and funding information. GAIA uses an integrated SMS messaging system and social media channels like whatsapp and facebook to efficiently communicate with Scholars, including conducting annual surveys that help assess impact on empowerment and health care capacity. (Please see metrics on Page 3.)

## ONGOING PLANS AND EXPECTED RESULTS

In January 2021, GAIA will welcome **20 new Nursing Scholars**, continuing to close the critical human resource gap in Malawi's frontline health workforce.

As noted above, GAIA's Nursing Scholar Program has earned tremendous respect and partnership from communities, nursing colleges, and the government, helping us to reach the final stages of a significant new funding agreement that will allow us to greatly expand the number of scholars we support and help ensure their deployment with fellowships. If GAIA is awarded this new contract in 2021, over the next five years it would result in 260 new nursing graduates and 240 one year fellowships at Ministry of Health facilities, improving clinical instruction in nursing colleges and district health facilities where student do clinical rotations, and building the capacity of Malawi's regulatory bodies to implement health worker deployment and tracking nationwide that improves the density and distribution of nurses in the country.

## DETAILED LIST OF ALL EXPENSES DURING THE DFW GRANT CYCLE

Please see attached budget versus actual expenses document.

## HOW THE DFW GRANT AND PARTNERSHIP HELPED GAIA

DFW funding was critical to the successful implementation of GAIA's Nursing Scholars Program (NSP) over the last two years. And, as noted above, it is this success, including a demonstration of the NSP's ability to attract diverse funding - from nonprofits like DFW, individuals, churches, foundations and government - that helped GAIA reach the final stages of a funding contract that will enable us to significantly expand the program and further address Malawi's dire need for frontline health workers.

## Health Worker Story from the Field

### GAIA Nursing Scholar Program Empowers Success and Independence

My name is Esther Phanya and I am from Mphonde village in the Chikwawa District, where I was born into a family of 3 girls. My Father died in 2003 when I was 7 years old, and our family moved to my grandparents village and I was given the responsibility of caring for their livestock. Since this required following the goats and cows into the bush and mountains, my time at school was limited.



After two years, my uncle saw how well I was performing in class despite taking care of the livestock, and took me to live with his family in Zomba. I finished secondary school there, scoring high enough to qualify for selection to University of Malawi at Kamuzu College of Nursing. I have long dreamt of becoming a nurse. Since a young age, people have called me “Esther the nurse” because I was very quiet, humble and good-hearted, the character attached to a Nurse.

I was very happy to be selected to the University, Kamuzu College of Nursing, but at the same time, worried where I could get the tuition fees from. My uncle could not afford the required amount because he had a lot of other children under his responsibility. I cried all day and night as my celebrated story turned sour. My mother then sold the only cow she had to pay for me to start my studies. I was so grateful, but also wondered how I would afford the other years of studies.

During my first days in college, I heard about the GAIA Nursing Scholarship. I was so happy to hear about this and applied with all the hope that my life story is now going to change as I will concentrate on my studies without tuition fears. Thanks to the GAIA Nursing Scholarship, I was successful and finished school with all the support I never imagined in my life.

I finished my studies in 2018 and began an internship in the department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology started working at Queen Elizabeth Central Hospital. I then found an opportunity to work with Medicins Sans Frontiers on a cervical cancer project where we are working to improve the screening, surgical and palliative management of women with cervical cancer. Although COVID-19 has put most of the project activities on pause, I am grateful and proud to report that I am now independent and supporting my family, thanks to GAIA's Nursing Scholarship.

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**Zikomo! (and enjoy [this link](#) to our newest GAIA video)**