Global AIDS Interfaith Alliance

The mission of Global AIDS Interfaith Alliance (GAIA) is to provide basic health services, targeting prevention, care, and support in communities affected by HIV, AIDS, TB and malaria in Africa.
Six out of twenty-five. That was the number of positive HIV tests sitting in the box outside the GAIA Elizabeth Taylor Mobile Health Clinic I was visiting in Mulanje District, Malawi in December 2011. Initially, 24 people had come for testing that day, but during the counseling sessions, GAIA Project Officer and registered nurse Alice Bvumbwe, noticed an unhealthy baby on the back of one of the women receiving a “positive” result, and urged that the infant be tested. A few minutes later, a sixth positive.

Alice offered calm, reassuring guidance on the steps to be taken. Not to prepare for death, but to fight back against this awful disease. Less than a week later, mother and child would begin antiretroviral therapy. Two lives saved.

I asked Alice how she knew that the baby was sick, as to my eye the child had merely the standard runny nose and watery eyes of dozens of other children at the clinic. “How old do you think that baby is?” she asked me in response. “Eight, nine months?” Alice paused, and then wearily responded, “She is three years, three months.”

All across Sub-Saharan Africa, more than a million people continue to die each year from a disease for which there is now effective treatment. But many fewer in Mulanje District, thanks to antiretroviral drugs. Thanks to Mobile Clinics. Thanks to Community Caregivers. Thanks to Alice. Thanks to GAIA.

Through the Mobile Clinics, GAIA Villages, Microfinance programs, and Nursing Scholars, GAIA is responding to enormous need in transformative ways. I am honored and energized as I take the helm of this critically important organization.

Todd Schafer
GAIA CEO
**GAIA program locations in Malawi.**

- **Mzimba District**
  - Nursing scholars attend Mzuzu University

- **Lilongwe District**
  - Lilongwe: Capital City
  - Nursing scholars attend Kamuzu College of Nursing

- **Blantyre District**
  - GAIA Head Office

- **Mulanje District**
  - Villages Program
  - Mobile Clinics

- **Thyolo District**
  - Microfinance Program

- **Mzuzu District**
  - Nursing scholars attend Mzuzu University

- **Lilongwe District**
  - Lilongwe: Capital City
  - Nursing scholars attend Kamuzu College of Nursing

**Map Highlights:**

- **Mkanda Clinic Stops**
- **Chitakale Clinic Stops**
- **Muloza Clinic Stops**
- **GAIA Mulanje Office**
- **GAIA Muloza Office**

- **Mabuka 20 Villages** (entered 6/10)
- **Njema 20 Villages** (entered 12/10)
- **Mkanda 20 Villages** (entered 3/11)**
The GAIA Villages project is now in its 9th year. It has been replicated in 137 villages, covering a total population of 150,000 Malawians since 2003. The project actively serves a community for three years, educating rural villagers about prevention and treatment of TB, malaria, and HIV. GAIA’s strategy empowers communities, combining continued support of orphans and home-based care patients, health education, and support for income generating activities to extend GAIA’s impact long after leaving the community.

Agnes, a 66 year old widow, cares for three orphaned grandchildren, one boy and two girls, whose parents died in 2004 and 2005. Prior to GAIA’s arrival in her community, she and the children barely eked out a living working as day laborers. The children were unable to attend primary school even though it is free, as they were busy working and lacked the necessary money for food and school supplies. GAIA’s arrival in her village in 2008 was a blessing.

While GAIA operates in a community, households caring for orphans, such as Agnes’s, are provided with supplemental food, blankets, clothing, shoes, school supplies, and school tuitions for those in high school. These small items enable orphans like Agnes’s grandchildren to attend primary school. GAIA-employed Community Caregivers and Village Coordinators are responsible for registering all orphans, referring villagers for HIV testing and placing ill villagers in our home-based care program until they are healthier.

During the last year of the project, Agnes and other villagers caring for ill family members or orphans, learn how to conduct income generating activities, such as goat cultivation, which help to support communities after GAIA has left a village. Agnes was selected to receive two goats in 2010, which delivered three offspring in 2011. She kept the offspring and, as part of the program, passed on the two adult goats to the next beneficiary in her village. Agnes now uses the goat droppings as manure for her garden and plans to spend money she earns on her grandchildren’s expenses. Her grandson will attend high school next year. When GAIA leaves a community, we continue to pay tuition for orphans who began high school during the project. This support gives orphans a chance for a bright future in a country where only 12% of children graduate from high school.

In 2011, GAIA entered 20 new villages, bringing the number of operational GAIA villages to 60.
In 2011, 3 GAIA Elizabeth Taylor Mobile Health Clinics logged over 121,000 patient visits for illness.
Last summer, Asmaa brought her youngest daughter Teleza to one of the GAIA Elizabeth Taylor Mobile Health Clinics. She was worried because the child was losing weight and suffering from recurring fevers. Like the other village mothers, Asmaa carried her sick child to the clinic stop nearest her village and lined up early to wait for treatment. While she waited, a nurse delivered a health talk about HIV/AIDS and basic health issues.

After seeing Teleza, a Clinical Officer prescribed antibiotics to help the child fight an infection. He asked Asmaa to bring the child back the following week for a follow-up appointment.

While walking home that afternoon, Asmaa thought about what she had learned about HIV during the health talk. She wondered if HIV might explain Teleza’s health problems. When she arrived home, Asmaa talked to her husband Moses about what she learned about HIV symptoms, and asked him to go with her to the clinic to get an HIV test.

The next week, the couple returned with Teleza to the clinic stop and requested HIV counseling and testing. Mother and daughter both tested positive, but Moses tested negative. He was told to return with the couple’s six other children for follow-up testing. Moses returned to the clinic with his other six children; they all tested negative for the virus.

In Malawi, women of childbearing age, like Asmaa, are more likely to accompany sick children to medical appointments. GAIA’s mobile health clinics provide integrated healthcare services including same-day HIV testing, prenatal care, treatment of malaria and tuberculosis, and health education.

In 2011, the clinics tested 5,013 women for HIV and 985 men; 15% of the women tested for HIV tested positive compared to 27% of men. Clearly, village women are listening to the health talks and taking advantage of the free HIV counseling and testing offered through the clinics.

Today, Asmaa and Moses remain married. With the help of antiretroviral therapy, Teleza’s appetite has increased and she is gaining weight again. Both Asmaa and Teleza are being monitored and treated. The family is grateful for the HIV counseling and testing available through the GAIA Elizabeth Taylor Mobile Health clinics. With GAIA’s support, Moses will remain HIV-negative, and he and Asmaa will live to raise their seven children together.
GAIA's Nursing Scholarship program helps to build healthcare capacity in Malawi by ensuring that under-staffed healthcare facilities are able to hire qualified, competent nurses.
A major obstacle to improving HIV prevention and care in Malawi is the lack of trained healthcare professionals, particularly nurses. GAIA’s Nursing Scholarship program supports the growth of the healthcare workforce by providing scholarships to underprivileged nursing students, such as girls who are AIDS orphans or supporting dependents. After graduation, the scholars commit to working in Malawi’s state-run hospitals for at least the same number of years that they received scholarships.

In 2010 GAIA won a 5-year $1.7 million dollar grant from USAID, and agreed to match that in fundraising. Under the grant, GAIA is working with the Malawi Ministry of Health to upgrade the capacity of practicing nurses and nursing faculty. GAIA trained 160 nurses in antiretroviral therapy and 10 nurses in basic emergency obstetric and neonatal care in 2011, and will add training in triage in 2012.

USAID money will also fund 42 new nursing scholars, 20 beginning in 2011 and 22 in 2012. GAIA matched this with support from the Gruber Family Foundation and others. Together with continuing GAIA scholars, the total number of nursing scholars reached 181 in 2011. By early 2012 the Nursing Scholarship program will have graduated 126 nurses and will be supporting 175 scholars in school.

**Nellipher’s Story**

My name is Nellipher, and I am the sixth of eight children. My mother never went to school while my father went as far as standard 2 (second grade in the U.S.), and my elder brothers and sisters never went far with education. I was able to get to the secondary school level and my brother-in-law, a teacher, was paying school fees for me. When I was accepted as a nursing student at Kamuzu College of Nursing (KCN), my parents could not help me financially, they had nothing. My brother-in-law encouraged me to go. He told me if things got worse I could withdraw.

I began nursing school and life was not easy. It was tough and expensive. I had absolutely nothing and on top of that I left my little baby girl whom I was breast feeding. There was no money to buy milk for her. I did not have groceries, school supplies, even bedding: only an old tattered blanket. I could not concentrate in class. I could only think of the resources I lacked and my baby.

One day, I remember, we were going to a nearby hospital to observe wound dressing. My fellow students managed to buy uniforms but I did not have one. We were also told to buy equipment like stethoscopes and thermometers. I had no money to buy anything. The day came and everyone was supposed to be in uniform. I remember I borrowed a uniform from my friend and it was too big for me.

Then I heard about GAIA’s scholarships to support young women in nursing school. I applied and was lucky enough to be selected. My life changed completely. I received uniforms, a nurse’s watch and many other necessary things. When I got my first pocket money, I managed to buy bedding and some clothes. Groceries and school supplies were no longer a problem. I stopped begging from my friends. The GAIA scholarship has helped me throughout my stay at KCN.

GAIA scholarships are helping many students. I would have failed to pursue my Bachelor of Science in Nursing and Midwifery without this help. It brought peace inside me and improved my academic concentration. I am now equipped with skills and knowledge and I am ready to serve Malawians anywhere I am posted. I want to go further with my education. I would really like to obtain my masters in midwifery so that I can contribute to the reduction of maternal and neonatal mortality.

I thank you for your support.
828 Women Entrepreneurs received microfinance loans in 2011.
What does a loan mean to a poor village woman?

When International Programs Director, Ellen Schell and trustee Michael Lockhart visited a GAIA Microfinance group in July they heard this story from one entrepreneur: Married with 5 children of her own, Eness also cares for 2 orphans who share her home. Fortunately, her husband has work so her earnings add to the household income. She trades in beans, buying them in nearby Mozambique and selling them in Malawi, using a minibus to get there.

With the profits from her business, Eness has bought her children shoes and clothes, and has paid high school fees. Two of the children have now finished secondary school and are taking their exit exams. She tries to save at least MK500 ($3.00) each month from her profits so she can build up her savings. Eness told us she had been helped by the loan, and is eager to grow her business further. She is ready to take a larger loan that can bring greater profits.

GAIA’s Microfinance program targets poor women who do not have the collateral for traditional loans. Instead, they form themselves into groups of 10-15 women to take out a loan together, an advantageous strategy. GAIA trains the groups, such as Eness’ Tawomboledwa club, in basic economic principles. Women learn the importance of savings, re-investing profits in the business, credit procedures, as well as how to manage group dynamics. Before receiving the loan, the group is required to deposit in a bank savings account 10% of the amount of the loan they wish to take out. The savings serves as a commitment deposit demonstrating their pledge to repay. Women choose other group members whom they trust, share business ideas, help one another, and encourage timely repayment.

In 2011, 69 groups served a total 828 women who received loans. At year’s end, the repayment rate for completed loan cycles in 2011 was 96 percent, testifying to the commitment of these women to achieve financial independence and care for themselves and their families.
NET BY NET, PROTECTING FAMILIES FROM MALARIA

In Africa, a child dies every 45 seconds from malaria. Malaria and HIV combine in a dangerous interaction: Children and adults who are HIV positive suffer more severely from malaria, and malaria increases the level of HIV virus in the blood as much as seven fold. However, malaria is 100% preventable, and much of the risk can be abated with the proper use of anti-mosquito bed nets. In the summer of 2011, GAIA supporters participated in the Net by Net Campaign to purchase bed nets, convey them to rural Malawi villages, and undertake the necessary education concerning their proper use.

In October, GAIA staff distributed over 5,800 bed nets to families in rural Mlanje district, protecting 11,600 children, women and men from contracting malaria. GAIA is grateful to The Milagro Foundation, Institute for Family Development International, St. Matthews School in Pacific Palisades, and our many Net by Net donors for their commitment to preventing malaria in Malawi.
GAIA EVENTS DREW CROWDS IN CALIFORNIA AND NEW YORK IN 2011

GAIA hosted four large benefit events in 2011, featuring an array of inspiring speakers: a celebrated public radio host, a Malawian Fulbright Scholar, pre-eminent HIV/AIDS physicians and prominent clergy.

Village by Village: A Garden Party for GAIA - Kentfield, CA

On May 15th, the Village by Village: A Garden Party for GAIA event in Kentfield, California raised over $300,000 for our services in Malawi. Dr. Michael Krasny, host of KQED’s Forum, emceeed while trustee Joy Mistele chaired the event, held at the stunning home of Erin and Rob Becker, creator of Defending the Caveman. More than 300 guests browsed exhibits, sampled African wines, and enjoyed live music.

Attendees responded generously to the appeal by Malawian Kaboni Gondwe, a recipient of the GAIA Nursing Scholarship Fund and current Fulbright Scholar. Orphaned as a child, she told the gathering that she dreamed of becoming a nurse but had no resources, until she learned about GAIA: “I am here to tell you that GAIA has made a huge difference in my life and in so many others.”

In the fall, friends celebrated Co-Founder and President Emeritus Bill Rankin at three Leadership Celebrations in California and New York.

Athenaeum
Pasadena, CA

At the historic Athenaeum, The Reverend Dr. George Regas and GAIA Trustee Dr. Michael Gottlieb spoke. Gottlieb said “Bill Rankin did not remain silent [about AIDS]. He appreciated the complexity of HIV in Malawi and addressed it with a simple, common sense holistic approach that works.”

Dr. Michael Gottlieb, GAIA Trustee. Dr. Gottlieb identified the virus later known as AIDS in 1981.

Golden Gate Club
San Francisco, CA

At the Golden Gate Club in San Francisco, CA, Dr. Paul Volberding, director of the Center for AIDS Research at UCSF, joined Regas on the podium. Rankin himself then spoke, contrasting the optimistic situation in the US to that in Malawi, where for every two people who are diagnosed and treated for HIV/AIDS, three are newly infected.

From left: Rev. David Anderson, Dr. Bill Rankin, GAIA Nursing Scholar Kaboni Gondwe, CEO Todd Schafer, and Tyler Kepner.

Blind Brook Club
Purchase, NY

At the Blind Brook Club in Purchase, NY, Rector David Anderson spoke: “Bill taught all of us how to care — for one person. He never let the sheer numbers daunt him — the millions suffering from this, the thousands with that. He understood that when we seek simply to serve, then we can do simply what lies at hand.”
### GAIA Accomplishments 2011

#### GAIA Villages Intervention

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Women's Empowerment</td>
<td>Community caregivers trained in home-based care, HIV prevention, and orphan care</td>
<td>234</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orphan Care</td>
<td>Orphans cared for</td>
<td>4,275</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Orphans assisted with secondary school tuitions</td>
<td>218+</td>
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<tr>
<td>HIV Prevention</td>
<td>Number referred for HIV testing</td>
<td>7,363</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% tested HIV+ (of those that revealed results to GAIA)</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>People reached with HIV prevention messages</td>
<td>54,000+</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Youth prevention clubs funded</td>
<td>48</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Youth served through youth clubs</td>
<td>2,526</td>
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<tr>
<td>Home-Based Care</td>
<td>Home-bound patients cared for</td>
<td>372</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>HIV+ children provided with nutritional supplementation and/or transport to follow-up clinics</td>
<td>1,003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malaria Prevention</td>
<td>Insecticide treated bed nets distributed</td>
<td>5,800</td>
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#### GAIA Elizabeth Taylor Mobile Health Clinics

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<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of Mobile Clinics</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of client visits for illness</td>
<td></td>
<td>121,820</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of client visits for growth monitoring</td>
<td></td>
<td>38,720</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of clients tested for HIV</td>
<td></td>
<td>5,998</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% tested HIV+</td>
<td></td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of clients treated for malaria</td>
<td></td>
<td>38,075</td>
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#### Nursing Education Program

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<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students under sponsorship</td>
<td></td>
<td>181</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of nursing school graduates (as of Feb 2012)</td>
<td></td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of scholars deployed at Government Health Facilities and Nursing Colleges</td>
<td></td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of practicing nurses and nursing faculty trained in antiretroviral therapy</td>
<td></td>
<td>160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of practicing nurses and nursing faculty trained in basic emergency obstetric and neonatal care</td>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
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#### Microfinance Program

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Women receiving microloans</td>
<td></td>
<td>828</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of borrowing groups</td>
<td></td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total principal loaned</td>
<td>$68,434</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repayment rate</td>
<td>96%</td>
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We are grateful to all our wonderful volunteers who have worked tirelessly on behalf of GAIA. Thank you.