Nursing Scholars

Wrap around support to build the healthcare workforce

The HIV/AIDS epidemic and widespread poverty have led to a chronic shortage of qualified health professionals in Malawi. A small pool of nurses forms the backbone of healthcare delivery, particularly in rural areas where they are often the only trained healthcare providers. Nationwide, the shortage is most acute in government facilities where 60% of nursing positions remain vacant.

GAIA’s Nursing Scholars Program provides comprehensive support, including tuition, clinical supplies, exam fees, uniforms, a modest living stipend and follow-up from program staff to encourage and monitor student progression and on-time graduation. In exchange for program support, GAIA Nursing Scholars commit to work in government health facilities upon graduation, in service of the country’s poorest people, for the same number of years they were sponsored.

GAIA thanks Dining for Women for its generosity and support of our Nursing Scholars Program.

1. Key Information

   Organization name: Global AIDS Interfaith Alliance (GAIA)
   Project title: Building the Healthcare Workforce in Malawi
   Grant amount: $49,445 over 2 years
   Contact: Kristin Nash
       Program Grants Manager
   Address: 2171 Francisco Blvd. E. Suite I
       San Rafael, CA 94901

2. Project Outcomes

   Indicators 1-2 Reflect Dining for Women-supported Scholars

   Outcome 1: Increase number of qualified, disadvantaged young women able to attend nursing school.
   Target: 20 young women (over 2 years) sponsored through nursing school and work in the public sector post graduation.
   Achieved: 10 young women finished nursing school and passed licensing exams in year one. 10 fourth year students are in progress.
Outcome 2: Increase on-time nurse graduation and licensing exam pass rate.
Target: 90% of Scholars graduate on time; 75% pass licensing exam on first attempt.
Achieved: 100% of scholars graduated on time and 100% passed licensing exam on first attempt.

Indicators 3-5 Reflect Program-wide Data

Outcome 3: Improve capacity of nursing training at colleges and universities.
Target: 10% of graduates working at nurse training institutions.
Achieved: 9% of all graduates are working as educators.

Outcome 4: Improve long-term nurse retention in the public sector workforce.
Targets: 95% of graduates successfully complete service commitment; 80% remain in the public sector post completion of service commitment.
Achieved: 96% of graduates successfully completed service commitment; 84% remain in the public sector post completion of service commitment.

Outcome 5: Increase female empowerment.
Targets: 60% of Scholars support family members; 25% of NSP graduates hold management positions; 15% of scholars advance their degree post completion of the program.
Achieved: 91% of Scholars surveyed in 2019 support family members; 56% of graduates hold management positions; 15% of graduates have advanced their degree post completion of the program.

3. Has funding changed for this project?

GAIA’s Nursing Scholars program has supported more than 530 nurses since 2005. Funding has grown slowly and steadily over those years and is comprised of gifts from individuals, foundations and government. In the past year, we have not received any unexpected funding. However, we are currently awaiting news on a USAID grant and a UCSF grant that would enable us to further expand the program.

4. Is your organization or project situation different than presented in the approved proposal?

GAIA has not had any organizational changes. Changes to the project situation include slower than expected government deployments for new nurses. As a result, GAIA has developed a Fellows program that includes an internship to build skills in our graduates as they await deployment. No Dining for Women funds have been used for the Fellows program.

5. Have the number of beneficiaries changed?

No, as outlined in the original proposal, Dining for Women funds are supporting 20 nurses total to finish their fourth and final year of nursing school (10 in year one of funding and 10 in year 2) and transition to careers as nurses.

6. What challenges are you facing as you move forward with this project? How are you approaching these challenges?

The primary challenge is the slower than expected pace of nursing deployments as outlined in question #4 above. We are addressing this challenge through direct advocacy with the Malawi Ministry of Health.
Department of Human Resources, responsible for deployments. We are also helping the new graduates with resume/interview techniques. And we are helping to secure employment with CHAM and private systems. In addition, as stated above, we are aiming to include an internship for our graduates to bridge the gap. Fundraising for this new program, in addition to the nursing scholars program, is another challenge.

7. Have you revised your original objectives since the project began?

No.

8. What progress have you made toward achieving your objectives? Please address each stated objective.

Detail provided in question #2 above.

9. Do you anticipate any difficulties in completing your project in the timeframe outlined in your proposal?

No, GAIA has been implementing its Nursing Scholars Program since 2005. Our partnerships with the nursing schools are longstanding and we have a track-record of achieving and supporting scholars to finish training on time.

My Fourth and Final Year of Nursing School

Jane Phiri is part of Dining for Women’s Second Cohort of Students who Have Just Started Their Fourth and Final Year of Nursing School

I am Jane Phiri, a Kamuzu College of Nursing graduate, who happened to be one of the GAIA scholars by grace. I was born in a family of four with two elder brothers and a younger sister and both my parents have passed away. I did my primary school and got selected to secondary school in 2010. With the lack of school fees I was put on a government bursary so that I managed to complete my secondary education. I was then selected to college to do a Bachelor of Science degree in Nursing and Midwifery at Kamuzu College of Nursing, however, I had no hope on where the tuition fee would come from. The first few days of college were challenging as everything needed money. Just to be registered with the college one was supposed to have paid almost half of the tuition fee, talk of food, accommodation, all which required money. I then applied for the GAIA scholarship and indeed was granted the privilege to become one of the GAIA scholars a thing to which I will forever be grateful for GAIA brought my smile back and made my learning possible.

Indeed the GAIA scholarship was my rescue in time of need. With the GAIA scholarship I was able to attend classes in time without any delay as our tuition,
accommodation and allowances would always come in time. This made it possible for me to focus more on my studies without any worries on what I will eat or who will cater for my tuition. The allowance also allowed me to cater for stationery requirements that all added to making my studying life easier. It also helped to cater for my transport to the clinical sites as at times the school would make us to use our own transport to the clinical area allocated. With the relief on the problems that were to hinder my education, I write to you that I made it to the final destination of the program and passed the end of program exams with flying colors. During the course of my study I was awarded a best student award twice. All these achievements and ability to excel academically were all made possible because of the GAIA scholarship.

I write with all smiles that indeed I am a proud and happy GAIA scholar. GAIA has made it possible for me to achieve my dreams and finish my tertiary education so that I get my Bachelor’s degree in Nursing and Midwifery. What remains of me is to help out the larger population and all those requiring my care so as to show out all the skills acquired. And above all help someone that will be in need the way I once was. To the funders of the GAIA scholarship, am forever grateful and may you remain blessed.

We thank Dining for Women for your commitment to GAIA. Your compassion and generosity has helped empower young women and fill urgently needed nursing positions, which serve the country’s poorest and most vulnerable. Zikomo!