

## GAIA Update

### June, 2007 - Nurses, Hospitals, and Clinics



In the past few years we have expanded into the Thyolo (pronounced "Cho Low") District of Malawi, with its many tea plantations and male migrant laborers. There is much poverty here and high HIV prevalence.

In Thyolo is a Doctors Without Borders hospital. The organization recently released a report in which a Thyolo nurse was thus quoted: "Look at this ward here, look at all these patients! Tonight there will be one nurse to look after them all. What kind of nursing is this? How can we give patients the care they need?"

Malawi's physician per person ratio is 1 to more than 100,000 people. For comparison, the US ratio is 250 per 100,000.

Malawi has only 29 nurses for every 100,000 people. Again for comparison, the US has more than 900 per 100,000. Nursing training is good in Malawi, but nurses leave for much higher wages in wealthy countries, including the U.S.

We are able to ease this situation. We now sponsor 58 women in RN training. In the photo you can see some of them receiving their pins. One thousand dollars pays tuition, room and board for each student for a full year, and provides a small living stipend, nurse uniform, shoes, stethoscope, blood pressure cuff, and watch. In exchange for the GAIA nursing scholarship, the students sign a bond obliging them to serve in government or "mission" hospitals for 4 years after graduation.

We help St. Luke's Anglican Hospital in Malosa with anti-HIV medication roll out. Our funds enabled a very successful educational campaign for people in surrounding villages concerning these meds, and monitoring of patients using them.

We helped fund a multi-service wing at Embangweni (Presbyterian) Hospital. This provides pre and postnatal care, and HIV and other sexually transmitted illness testing and treatment. And we helped a Baptist hospital add an HIV counseling and testing room to their multi-service facility.

Most of our U.S. staff will be in Malawi at different times in the June through September period. We will visit places like the ones named in this update, we will discuss with our Malawi staff how everyone

can do their jobs better, and we will assess numerous village orphan and home-based care projects.

We will see people who are alive because we exist, and I can guarantee that at every stop people will say, "Please thank our sisters and brothers in America. Their help is so important, and they have been so very kind." And so it is, and so you are.

William Rankin