

## GAIA's Programs Reach 20 New Villages in Mulanje



In June I had the remarkable privilege of representing our U.S. Staff at the opening of the GAIA Villages project in the Mulanje District. The district, which boasts beautiful Mulanje Mountain, is even more remote, impoverished, and underserved than where we have worked before.

Alice Bvumbwe, our wonderful Southern Region Projects Officer, worked hard to orchestrate this moving event. She has been the supervisor for our intensive village interventions since we developed the original model with funding from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. In Mulanje she recruited 4 new project coordinators, 3 of them nurses with backgrounds in community nursing, and the fourth having expertise in community development. They quickly gained the confidence and cooperation of the village headmen and other key leaders. The 84 village women that now serve as Caregivers under the coordinators have already identified 2,164 orphans in the 20 villages, and have begun distribution of essential supplementary food and school supplies, while providing 172 patients with

home-based care. They are also giving health talks and counseling on HIV prevention and other health topics.

The opening ceremonies marking the official launch of the project featured traditional dances, dramatic presentations about HIV prevention, speeches from local leaders, and wonderful singing and drumming. We were delighted that over 35 village headmen, 8 district government officials, the Senior Chief for the region, and some 500 villagers attended the festivities. As we watched the dancing, Jones Laviwa, GAIA's Country Director, leaned over to me and whispered, "I'm really impressed. The number of villagers and headmen here shows that the community has owned this project!" GAIA's strength is our work with communities and the ability of Malawi staff to gain the "buy-in" of the people and their leaders. This ceremony testified to their great work!

— Ellen Schell

# Breaking Ground at Ludzi Parish's New Birthing Center

With much help from Agnes Grohs and many friends in southern California, GAIA supports the construction of a new birthing center at St. Joseph's Hospital in Ludzi Parish, near Malawi's western border with Zambia. The Center will be able to handle complicated births, which are responsible for high maternal and infant mortality rates in nearby villages. St. Joseph's serves a catchment area of 26,152 people, of whom 6,016 are women of child-bearing age. Currently the hospital has about 2,000 deliveries per year. Over 15% of these are considered "complicated" because they require cesarean sections, blood transfusions, and/or other surgical procedures that the hospital has been unable to provide. The newly constructed Center will serve more women, increasing the number of deliveries per year while successfully managing more complicated births.

At the moment, many local village women deliver their babies at home. If there are complications the women were reluctant to be transported to St. Joseph's because they were unable to pay hospital fees. Moreover at St. Joseph's there has been a shortage of life-saving equipment and infrastructure, so the hospital's staff could not handle complicated deliveries.



*Bill Rankin and GAIA supporter Agnes Grohs.*



Following negotiations between the Catholic Diocese and the Government of Malawi, the parties have recently signed an agreement enabling access by impoverished local women to free maternal and neonatal health services. The government will be financially responsible for all the women's hospital costs and the safe birthing facility will make labor and delivery a non-dangerous process. Altogether, maternal and infant mortality – just words to distant people, but horrifying realities up close – will be greatly reduced in the catchment area as women obtain an improved chance to deliver their babies safely.

## Congresswoman Capps Visits GAIA Project in Malawi

U.S. Congresswoman Lois Capps spent a July afternoon at the Mphatso Home-Based Care project in Malawi's central region. "I am very familiar with GAIA," she writes, "And wanted to use this opportunity to see firsthand the work that GAIA is doing in Malawi. I met with orphan and home care specialists, and also spoke with GAIA's wonderful nurse, Gertrude Chipungu. The needs of the people were serious but certainly not insurmountable. People required assistance with basic needs like obtaining food, shelter, work, transportation, and health care."

A nurse by training, Congresswoman Capps was sworn into office in 1998. She serves District

23 representing portions of Santa Barbara, Ventura, and San Luis Obispo counties. She became familiar with GAIA four years ago when she heard Trustee Dr. Sharon Youmans speak at Trinity Episcopal Church in Santa Barbara.

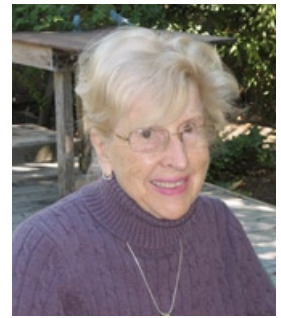
Since her trip to Malawi, Congresswoman Capps observes, "I had a very positive impression of the critical work that GAIA is doing. While not everyone can personally travel to Malawi, many of us can make a difference in the lives of Malawians by learning more. The U.S. can and should be a better partner in supporting international aid efforts and providing much needed support to our neighbors in developing nations."



*Congresswoman Lois Capps meets with the chairwoman of Mphatso's Home-Based Care project.*

# Returning the Gift

As a young nurse, Maggie Feldstein joined the army and shipped out to a general hospital near Oxford, England three months before WWII's D-Day. Until she had use of advanced medicines, such as the army-commandeered penicillin, she applied home-made mustard plasters and flaxseed poultices. She met her future husband, who ran the hospital's lab, and returned to the U.S. where she continued a life of public service—Maggie pursued a life-long career as a nurse.



*Maggie Feldstein*

Without scholarship assistance, Maggie would not have been able to attend nursing school. "There was some doubt about whether I could go to nursing school because of the Depression," she says. "My father was out of work and we hardly had enough food. He wrote to his mother in England who lived comfortably and paid for my nursing education. When I learned about the GAIA Nursing Scholarship Fund, I jumped at the chance to help and will continue to jump."

Shirley Garrison also graduated high school during the Depression. Her parents didn't have enough money to send her to college, and suggested she volunteer at the local hospital to see if she liked nursing. Shirley went into training at Cumberland Hospital in Brooklyn where the tuition was \$85 a year. Shirley finished just as World War II broke out and went into the service. She was stationed at the Brooklyn Naval Hospital, where she took care of wounded from the European theatre, mostly head injuries. Then she was moved to a naval base in Edenton, North Carolina. She remembers giving immunizations to a long line of naval pilots. This was during the last part of the war, and they were destined to go to the Pacific.



*Shirley Garrison and Ellen Schell.*

"I remember thinking that a lot of these men would never come back," she says.

After raising her children, Shirley went back to school and eventually earned a master's in nursing and doctorate in education. She taught nursing in Egypt and Saudi Arabia and was head of Nursing Education at the Jewish Home in San Francisco for many years.

Shirley's father came to the US from Italy when he was about 6 years old. Both her mother and father had only a 6th grade education. Shirley related that her father used to say to her, "If you can get an education, do it. Take advantage of it." Now Shirley says, "I want to help these young Malawian women have the same opportunity."

Along with several generous donors, Maggie and Shirley help us keep 98 young Malawi women in Malawi nursing schools. The first cohort of these has recently graduated and joined the nursing workforce to strengthen the country's fragile healthcare infrastructure. The Malawi Minister of Health said at the July 2008 induction ceremony of 20 brand new nursing students that GAIA's contribution – and that of several others, notably, Linda Gruber – is enabling this poverty-stricken nation to possess a lively hope for its future.

We are extremely grateful to all who help young Malawian women become nurses, and to Malawi's nurses who continue to care for their country's people in the face of a serious health crisis.



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GAIA's mission is to partner with organizations in resource poor countries for community-based HIV prevention and care.

## Give a Meaningful Holiday Gift

This holiday season choose to give a meaningful gift to a loved one. Through GAIA's Alternative Gift Market (AGM), you can acknowledge a friend or family member over the holidays while providing support to children and families living in Malawi's poorest villages. When you give in honor of a friend or loved one, they will receive a lovely card announcing your gift (see adjacent), and you will receive a letter acknowledging your tax-deductible contribution. Gifts can be made at [www.thegaia.org](http://www.thegaia.org) or by calling 415-461-7196.

Many congregations and civic groups make GAIA part of their holiday giving by providing our brochures at holiday fairs, services and events, thereby encouraging members to participate. We happily provide our congregational partners with GAIA brochures that explain our work in greater detail. If your congregation would like to host an AGM, please visit [www.thegaia.org](http://www.thegaia.org) or contact GAIA's Development Associate, Lea Wood, at (415) 461-7196 ext. 13 or [lea@thegaia.org](mailto:lea@thegaia.org).



## Take Advantage of the Tax-Free IRA Rollover

Renewed in October, you can make a gift from your IRA to GAIA and exclude the transferred amount from your taxable income. This benefit is retroactive to Jan. 1, 2008, and will apply to gifts made through Dec. 31, 2009.

- You must be 70 ½ or older
- The transfer must go directly from your IRA to GAIA
- Your gift cannot exceed \$100,000

Contact Amy Rankin-Williams, Development Director, for more information 415-461-7196 or [amyrw@thegaia.org](mailto:amyrw@thegaia.org)