

## Targeted Community Programs for HIV Prevention and Care

Since 2003, GAIA has trained local women to coordinate HIV prevention, home-based care for those living with HIV, and orphan care throughout southern rural Malawi, contributing to reductions in the burden of HIV in the country. Since then, life expectancy in Malawi has risen from 42 to 63 years, the annual rate of new HIV infections decreased by more than 50%, from 84,000 to 39,000 cases, and annual AIDS-related deaths decreased by more than 75%, from 76,000 to 17,000. In the communities where GAIA operates, access to care and treatment has increased by 41%, and comprehensive knowledge of HIV and prevention increased, with 20% more women able to properly identify how to prevent and treat the disease and 26% more women reporting having ever been tested for HIV. In addition, GAIA’s programs have improved quality of life and reduced the need for end-of-life home-based care.

While incredible gains have been made, the face of the epidemic is changing, with the majority of new infections occurring among youth, especially girls and young women.<sup>1</sup> In 2017 more than one third of new infection were among 15-24 year olds and, 70% of these new HIV infections occurred in females.<sup>2</sup> IN areas where GAIA works, girls ages 15-19 are four times as likely as male peers to test HIV-positive and those ages 20-24 were twice as likely to test positive.<sup>1</sup> In addition, there remain roughly half a million children under 18 who have been orphaned due to HIV. And rates of testing among men lag behind those of women –18% fewer men have ever been tested for HIV – placing men at higher risk of remaining undiagnosed and unknowingly transmitting the infection to sexual partners.



In response to the evolving HIV epidemic in Malawi, GAIA has refocused our community-based work for people at highest risk of HIV and AIDS, including: 1) HIV prevention among youth and other high-risk populations, including adolescent girls, orphans and men, 2) targeted, community based HIV case finding and index testing, and 3) rapid linkage to HIV treatment and adherence support for the newly diagnosed. GAIA’s Targeted Community Programs focus on whole communities while prioritizing the most vulnerable and high-risk populations. Our Targeted Community Programs aims to maximize impact and drive progress toward the UNAIDS’ 2020 90-90-90 HIV treatment targets: 90% of all people living with HIV learn their status, 90% of those aware are on treatment, and 90% of those on treatment achieve viral suppression [non-infectious]. In doing so, by 2020 we will tip the epidemic to its breaking point.



### Specific Program Objectives:

- **Objective 1:** Prevention of HIV infection among adolescents and youth ages 15-24, especially girls who are at highest risk and orphans, through evidence based, high impact prevention services and psychosocial and educational support
- **Objective 2:** Early identification of HIV through targeted HIV testing services for high-risk populations
- **Objective 3:** Initiation of treatment within two weeks of HIV diagnosis and referral for adherence support within one month of initiation of treatment

<sup>1</sup> Going door-to-door to reach men and young people with HIV testing services to achieve the 90-90-90 treatment targets, Public Health Action, 2017