



SEED GLOBAL HEALTH IN MALAWI

Seed Global Health (Seed) has worked in Malawi since 2013 to train doctors, nurses, and midwives, in close collaboration with the government and our in-country partners, so as to ensure access to high-quality care.

The country has made significant progress towards human development and improving individual health outcomes. Malawi is one of the few sub-Saharan African countries that achieved Millennium Development Goal 4 (MDG 4) for child survival by 2015, for example. Still, critical gaps remain in meeting the growing health needs of the country's population and in ensuring the delivery of essential health services.



THE CHALLENGE

Malawi is committed to achieving universal health coverage (UHC) by 2030, as part of the Sustainable Development Goals. Health workers are the key link to bridging the gaps that exist in access to care and accelerating movement toward attaining UHC. However, there are simply not enough skilled health professionals in Malawi to provide quality care; train future generations of doctors, nurses, and midwives; or help solve the underlying problems that distress the country's health system.

Maternal mortality is high at 439 deaths per 100,000 live births,¹ for example. Largely preventable illnesses like diarrhea, malaria, and pneumonia remain the main causes of child mortality in the country. There is a high prevalence of mental health problems and limited access to mental health services—with 0.01 psychiatrists and 0.22 psychiatric nurses per 100,000 people.²

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THE SOLUTION

Seed's model is built around the basic but essential belief that long-term sustainable partnerships, rather than temporary gap-filling measures, deliver more lasting and meaningful improvements in a country's health ecosystem. We believe in the power of people to effect and sustain changes in health education, delivery of care, and health systems. As such, we are intentionally focused on human resource for health capacity-building at the individual, institutional, and national level through sustained collaborative engagement with our partners.

Doctors, nurses, and midwives possess the advanced training and expertise critical to addressing the double burden of communicable and noncommunicable diseases with which Malawi is grappling. In order to tackle these health challenges and make UHC a reality in the country, we need to make the essential investment in health professionals. Seed's core strategy centers on placing skilled and qualified physician, nurse, and midwife educators in visiting faculty roles at partner institutions in Malawi for a minimum of one academic year. We provide a diverse and complementary package of services that range from curriculum co-development to practice improvement to issue-based advocacy.

By supporting the training of health professionals, we increase the supply of essential skilled health workers that are locally-trained and locally-rooted, able to meet the specific health needs of their communities. Additionally, these health professionals go on to train future generations and take on leadership positions within the health system, serving as agents of change.

1. National Statistical Office, Zomba, Malawi and The DHS Program, ICF. (February 2017). Malawi Demographic and Health Survey: 2015-16. Retrieved from: <https://dhsprogram.com/pubs/pdf/FR319/FR319.pdf>

2. Udedi, M. (July 2016). Improving Access to Mental Health in Malawi. Retrieved from: <https://www.afidp.org/download/research-briefs/policy-briefs/Improving-access-to-mental-health-services-in-Malawi.pdf>



Our goals and priorities in Malawi are driven by our vision and critically, by the needs of the country, partner institutions, and communities we serve. Based on our expertise, previous experience in Malawi, and the government's health priorities, Seed supports three key focus areas in the country:

Community Health

1

Community health is critical to improving the health and well-being of populations in Malawi and elsewhere. In Malawi, the specialty contributed to significant improvements in health outcomes, particularly in the achievement of MDG 4. However, the country's community health system is unable to meet the demands of its mostly rural populations. At the heart of its challenges, Malawi faces a paucity of skilled health professionals. To meet the diverse health needs of the country, it is essential to train and recruit the full range of cadres that can provide crucial services to Malawians at all district levels.

Maternal, Newborn, and Child Health (MNCH)

2

Despite advances Malawi has made, maternal, newborn, and child mortality remain high. For example, one in 16 children dies before his or her fifth birthday, two-thirds of these deaths occur during infancy.³ There remains a high rate of perinatal mortality attributed to persistently low rates of antenatal care, poor quality of care during labor, and lack of postnatal care. There is a great need to build the capacity of doctors, nurses, midwives, and specialists to further improve outcomes and reduce both maternal and child mortality.

Mental Health

3

Mental health is a critical issue that needs to be addressed at all levels of Malawi's health system and it is a priority of the government. To date, however, mental health services have not been adequately integrated into primary health care. Stigma, lack of knowledge, and a scarcity of mental health professionals limits access to much-needed services. Very few institutions have the ability to help train specialized mental health professionals. Additionally, general health workers are most often not equipped to deal with mental health issues. Service delivery can improve through the increased training of mental health workers and integration of mental health diagnosis, prevention, and management skills into the training of all cadres of the workforce, particularly at the primary level so that more of the population can be assisted.

OUR STRATEGY

EDUCATION

Seed strengthens the quality of health professional education by engaging partner institutions and their faculty and staff so that institutions are better able to provide quality training/teaching in medicine, nursing, and midwifery.



PRACTICE

Seed enhances the quality of clinical practice by strengthening the skills of local health providers, faculty, and students/trainees through mentorship and training.



POLICY

Seed advocates globally and in-country to elevate policies that support strong health professional education and practice and create an enabling environment for health workers to deliver care.



To ensure lasting change, our work in community health, MNCH, and mental health is structured around our three interrelated strategic pillars: education, practice, and policy.

This holistic approach enables Seed and our Malawian partners to build out complete and strong health workforce teams that can provide their patients with high-quality care and improve health outcomes across the country.

3. National Statistical Office, Zomba, Malawi and The DHS Program, ICF. (February 2017). Malawi Demographic and Health Survey: 2015-16. Retrieved from: <https://dhsprogram.com/pubs/pdf/FR319/FR319.pdf>



OUR GOAL IN MALAWI

To equip doctors, nurses, and midwives to deliver quality care, provide ongoing education across the health workforce, hold health leadership positions, and ensure the resiliency of Malawi's health system.

Ultimately, this will ensure that good health becomes the right of all and not the privilege of a few.

IMPACT IN MALAWI

55

Physician, Nurse, and Midwife Educators who worked alongside local Malawian faculty to teach close to 5,000 trainees in specialties ranging from family medicine to obstetrics and gynecology to mental health.

MALAWI AT A GLANCE

Population: 17.5 million
Medical School: 1
Nursing Schools: 14

Doctors, nurses, midwives:
less than 4 doctors, nurses, and/or
midwives per 10,000 people

ENHANCING FAMILY MEDICINE TRAINING

Over three years ago, Seed partnered with the University of Malawi, College of Medicine to help establish the first family medicine training program in the country. Led by a former Seed Educator, the partnership expanded and began working with Swedish Medical Center, the largest nonprofit health provider in the greater Seattle area. Now, Swedish Medical Center family medicine residents rotate at clinical sites in Malawi alongside Malawian residents, medical students, and hospital staff; everyone is mentored by a Seed Educator. Through this exchange, Malawian family medicine students benefit from an increased number of faculty and mentors. The US residents gain experience as providers in low-resource settings, enhance their clinical judgement, and learn how to best use available clinical resources. Today, there are two clinical training sites in Malawi, where each year, Seed Educators work with their local counterparts to train the next generation of providers who are qualified to deliver comprehensive care to patients of all ages with a range of conditions.

INCREASING ACCESS TO LEARNING

In Malawi, nurses are the backbone of the health system. To increase the number of adequately trained nurses, a Seed Educator at St. John of God College (SJOG), sought to help establish two nursing programs at the college—a BSc in Nursing and Midwifery and a Certificate in Midwifery. With support from Seed, the educator and her SJOG colleagues organized a four-day meeting with more than 30 stakeholders from the Ministry of Health, Mzuzu Central Hospital, and other Malawian nursing schools to review the curriculum, discuss pedagogy, and develop learning resources for the new programs. With these programs, SJOG can now provide more opportunities for nursing students, train highly skilled providers, and eventually fill those vacant positions, closing the gap in nursing care in Malawi.

To learn more about our work:

Visit our website: www.seedglobalhealth.org

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