



Seed
GLOBAL HEALTH



Fortifying the Frontline: Strengthening the Health Workforce in Malawi

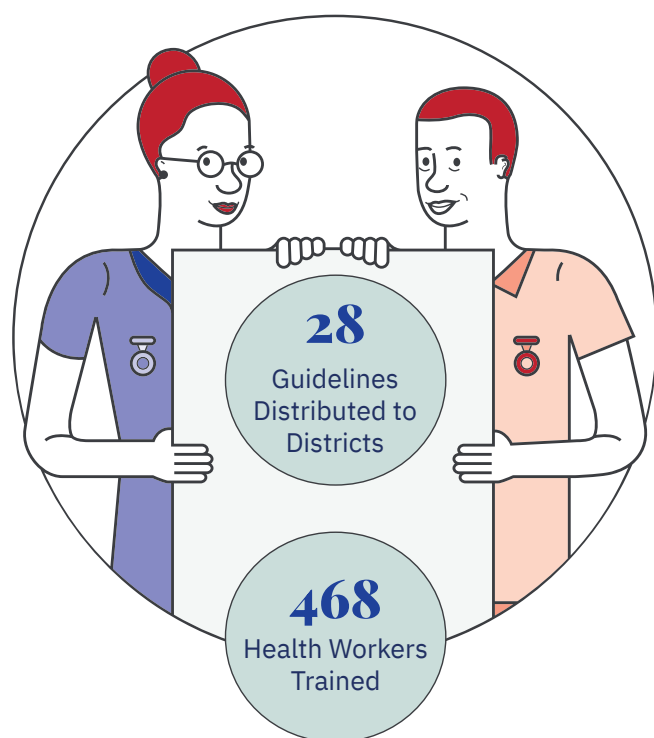
Photo Credit:
Seed Global Health

Seed Global Health (Seed) has worked in Malawi since 2013, in collaboration with the government and our in-country partners, building the capacity of doctors, nurses, and midwives so as to enable access to high-quality care. Our work in Malawi over the past years is fundamental and critical to addressing health challenges of all types. It has also helped position us to assist in the Malawian COVID-19 response.

From the onset of the pandemic, we mobilized early, rapidly, and comprehensively —

Guided by the priorities identified by the Ministry of Health (MOH) and our partners' urgent needs. Leveraging Seed's technical expertise and experience in the country, we organized our support around three primary objectives — **maintaining essential health services, strengthening the health workforce, and enhancing mental health.**

MAINTAINING ESSENTIAL HEALTH SERVICES



A pre- and post-training assessment showed **an average increase of 79 percent** in health worker knowledge and skills on COVID-19 case management. Equipped with critical information, the health workers went on to improve service delivery at the hospital.

To mitigate potential setbacks on progress made in maternal, newborn, and child health in Malawi, Seed provided technical assistance to the MOH in the development of national COVID-19 maternal, newborn, and child health protocols. These guidelines were distributed to all 28 districts to ensure that health workers were equipped to provide safe and high-quality care to mothers and babies in their communities during the pandemic. Seed continues to support partners, including participants from 10 district health facilities, in conducting virtual training to share experiences and lessons learned in COVID-19 and pregnancy management.

In Blantyre, Seed supported Queen Elizabeth Central Hospital in training 468 health workers on COVID-19 facility preparedness; screening and triage; sample collection and handling; critical care; and infection prevention and control. Our goal was to prepare health workers across all departments at the hospital for their active involvement in the pandemic response. A pre- and post-training assessment showed an average increase of 79 percent in health worker knowledge and skills on COVID-19 case management. Equipped with critical information, the health workers went on to improve service delivery at the hospital.

STRENGTHENING THE HEALTH WORKFORCE

In support of the 2020 Nightingale Challenge, and catalyzed by the International Year of the Nurse and the Midwife, Seed supported the creation of a 10-month long mentorship program for 50 young nurses and midwives in Malawi.

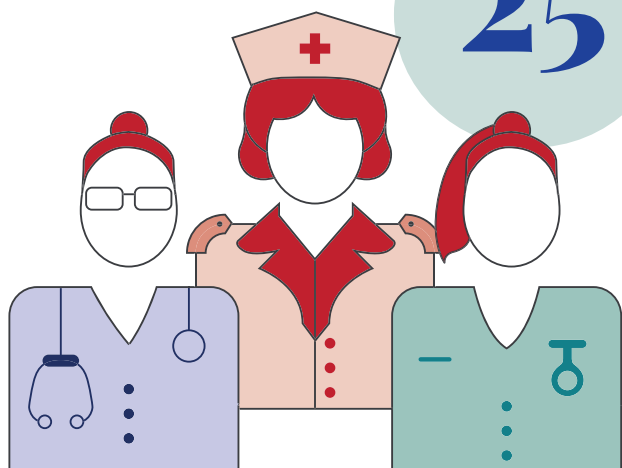
With assistance from 25 mentors, the mentees got an opportunity to enhance their skills enabling them to lead, innovate, and advocate within the health system.

Through collaboration with our partners, we called for the recruitment of additional nurses and midwives to meet the increased demand for services created by the pandemic. To ensure that health workers were protected, we provided personal protective equipment to all our partner institutions in the country.



50

25



Matched 50
young nurses and
midwives with 25
mentors.

ENHANCING MENTAL HEALTH

Mental health is a critical issue in Malawi as well as globally; with up to 1.1 billion people affected by mental or substance use disorders across the world. In Malawi, it is estimated that up to 35 percent of patients seeking care have untreated mental health disorders. Stigma, lack of knowledge, and a scarcity of mental health professionals limits access to much-needed services while the need, especially in the face of health crises like COVID-19, is significant.

Very few institutions are equipped to train specialized mental health professionals. Additionally, health workers are often not empowered or trained to address critical mental health issues among the general population. **To close these gaps, Seed partnered with St. John of God College of Health Sciences (SJOG) to strengthen mental health education and advocate for policies to better integrate mental health services into primary care delivery.**

In October 2020, Seed collaborated with SJOG to create workshops to share teaching strategies with mental health faculty at the college. As part of our partnership, Seed will continue to collaborate with SJOG and local faculty to refine the curriculum modules. Our collective goal is to improve service delivery 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 people are assisted.

Recently, SJOG facilitated the formation of 6 mental health support groups to advocate for both patients and health professionals in an effort to strengthen access to timely, contextual, and effective mental health services.

For more information, please visit www.seedglobalhealth.org
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