

**[GAIA]** global health

2020  
Annual Report



In 2020, Malawi achieved 90-90-90, on track to end the AIDS epidemic by 2030!

The goalposts have already shifted to 95-95-95 by 2025.



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Dear friends of GAIA,

Our 20th anniversary year – 2020 – was not what we had anticipated. Rather than celebrating another important rung on Malawi’s ladder to healthcare accessibility for all, we spent the year draped head-to-toe in personal protective equipment while clinging to the ladder our colleagues and partners had painstakingly built. From the onset of the outbreak, Joyce and her team were clear that battling COVID-19 (and staying safe) was objective #1, and still they persevered in providing critical clinical services and growing the healthcare workforce of tomorrow.

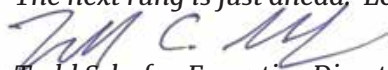
GAIA achieved remarkable milestones in 2020, despite the unexpected challenges of the pandemic. In our Strategic Plan 2015-2020, GAIA committed to achieving the UNAIDS tipping point in Malawi’s HIV epidemic whereby 90% of people living with HIV know their status, 90% of these individuals begin Anti-Retroviral Therapy (ART), and 90% of those on ART achieve viral suppression (rendering them not only healthy but non-infectious). The decision set off a surge in testing, linkage to treatment, and support activities, and it produced a stunning result:

In 2020, Malawi has achieved 90-90-90, and is on track to end the epidemic by 2030!

Looking ahead we know that major challenges remain, but so do new and important opportunities. The goalposts have already shifted to 95-95-95 -- including in our own soon-to-be-released Strategic Plan 2021-2025 -- in order to reach the more than 300,000 HIV+ Malawians not yet virally suppressed. And, while the gains in reducing childhood malaria are striking, 13,000 children under 5 were treated for malaria at our Mobile Health Clinics this year alone. The need for other children's health services, as well as sexual and reproductive health services for adolescents and young women, continue to outpace demand. The increase in chronic disease requires more attention than ever and Malawi still faces a daunting deficit in its healthcare workforce.

We are proud to do this work in the nation that **The Economist** named 2020’s “Country of the Year” for its commitment to democracy, and to embrace the new government’s philosophy of “Tonse,” meaning “all of us together.” Government and partners. Malawi and U.S. staff and supporters. Past, present, and future. All of us.

*The next rung is just ahead. Let’s grasp it together. Tonse.*

  
Todd Schafer, Executive Director

# GAIA's COVID-19 Emergency Response



**Thanks to the tremendous outpouring of support from our generous donors, GAIA served as a critical partner to the government of Malawi in the effort to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in the districts where we work.**

When the pandemic arrived in Malawi in March 2020, GAIA quickly moved to protect our Mobile Health Clinic workers with **full personal protective equipment (PPE)** and assist our government partners in the district health offices to obtain critical prevention commodities.

We trained GAIA and district health facility staff on COVID-19 transmission and prevention guidelines and case management, and implemented rigorous social distancing, hygiene, and safety protocols at mobile health clinics. GAIA directly distributed essential prevention and hygiene supplies to more than 10,550 households in Mulanje district, primarily targeting vulnerable elderly populations. **These distributions included: 10,550 handwashing stations and 155,580 tablets of soap, and more than 10,390 locally sewn cloth face masks.**

During 2020, COVID-19 infections in Malawi were limited to fewer than 6,600 confirmed cases and 189 deaths in a population of 19 million.



**<1%**

**Fewer than 1% of the country's COVID-19 cases occurred in the districts where GAIA operates - an area that includes 6% of Malawi's population.**

While January 2021 brought a surge of cases to Malawi and the region -- the number of cases has risen above 34,000 and deaths to 1,147 in Malawi -- quick and aggressive action taken by President Lazarus Chakwera helped bring down the January surge and the number of new cases has declined to 2020 levels. And vaccinations have begun, including of GAIA's staff!

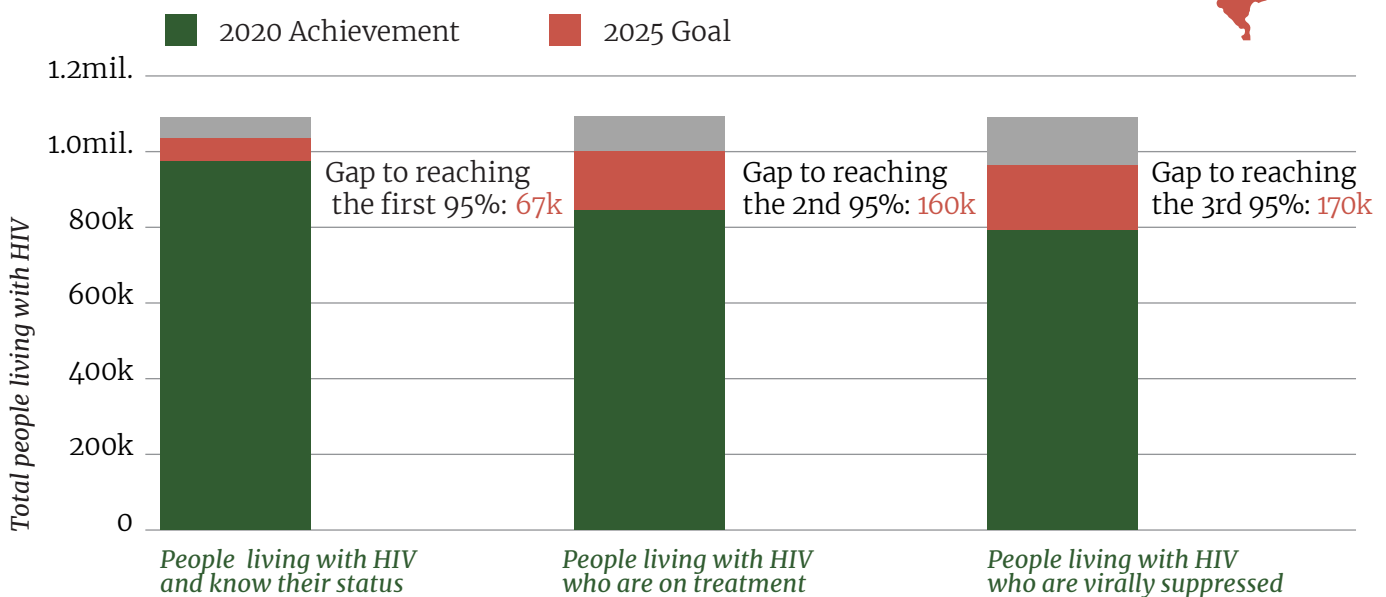
# Milestones

## UNAIDS 90-90-90 Targets Achieved in June 2020

In June of this year, Malawi became one of a handful of countries globally to achieve UNAIDS' ambitious 90-90-90 targets, with 91% of people HIV+ knowing their status, 87% of people HIV+ on treatment, and 94% of those on treatment virally suppressed, tipping the scales toward ending the AIDS epidemic by 2030. The Malawi Ministry of Health and Population has now set the bar higher, targeting 95-95-95 by 2025. From its inception, GAIA has worked tirelessly to improve the lives of those living with HIV and end the AIDS epidemic. We are proud to be a key partner in Malawi's remarkable progress in testing people for HIV, linking them to treatment and supporting treatment adherence.



### Achieving 90-90-90 in Malawi and working toward 95-95-95

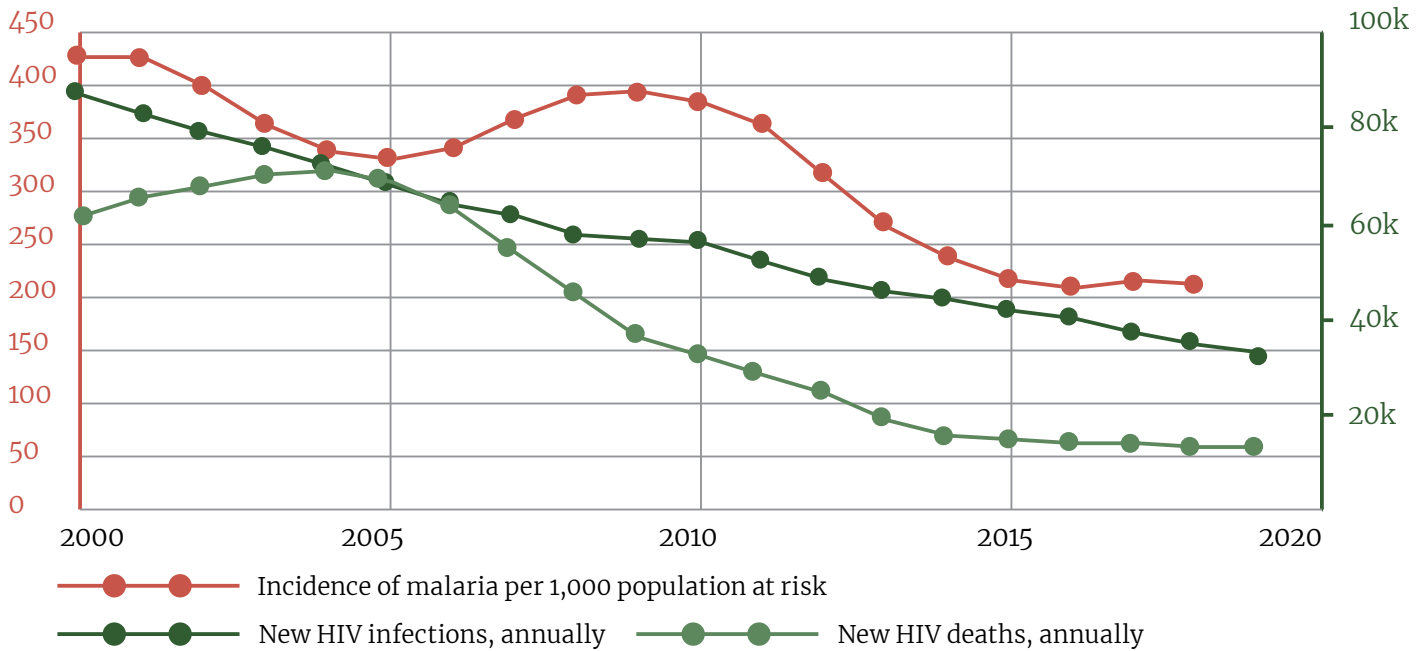


Note: The 90-90-90 target achieves the goal of 73% of people living with HIV virally suppressed (90x90x90). Malawi exceeded this goal, with 74% of people living with HIV virally suppressed (91x87x94). Epidemiological modeling suggests that achieving the goal of 73% of all people living with HIV reaching viral suppression by 2020 will enable the world to end the AIDS epidemic by 2030.

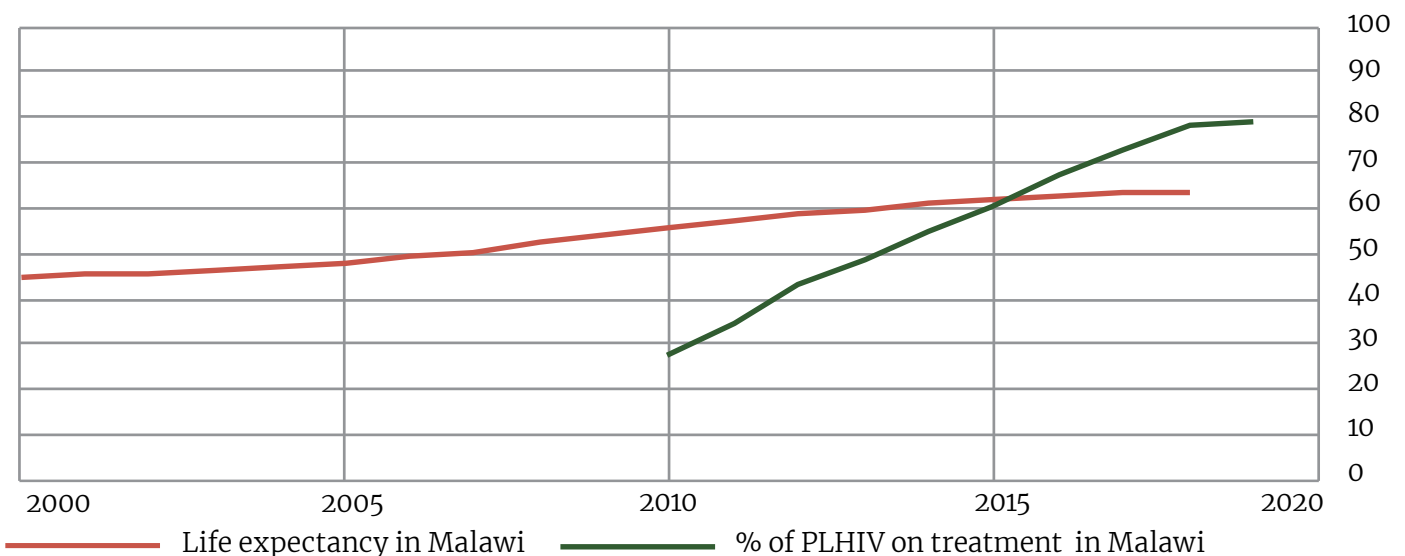
## 2 Million Clinic Visits, and Counting!

In April 2020, GAIA's Elizabeth Taylor Mobile Health Clinic program provided its 2 millionth mobile clinic visit! Since October 2008, GAIA Mobile Health Clinics have provided 2,182,401 client visits. Our clinics successfully integrate and destigmatize care seeking, providing basic primary health services with integrated HIV care, to address the most pressing health concerns of rural populations, close to their homes. We have treated more than 202,000 potentially life-threatening cases of malaria in children under 5, linked 5,400 HIV+ individuals with life-saving treatment and care, and provided one-on-one and group health education counseling to millions more. In 2020, we deepened our partnership with local ministries of health, jointly extending the reach of current government health infrastructure, ensuring there are fewer and fewer "underserved communities."

### Leveraging the success of GAIA's first twenty years over the next five.



- HIV-related deaths in Malawi are down 59% since 2010.
- New HIV infections are down 41% since 2010.
- Malaria deaths in children under 5 have been cut in half (2006-2015).



Since 2000, life expectancy in Malawi has increased by nearly 20 years and the percentage of people living with HIV (PLHIV) on treatment has increased by 79%.

# Health Workforce Development



GAIA inaugurated 30 new students into the Nursing Scholar Program in February 2020, 20 1st years and 10 4th years who were at risk of dropping out of school.

## GAIA Nursing Scholars Remain Resilient During Pandemic

When the COVID-19 pandemic arrived in Malawi in March 2020, the government quickly imposed lockdown restrictions and closed all schools, including nursing colleges. Schools remained closed until September, and reopening came with increased dependence on independent study and online learning, a challenge in the Malawi context.

Despite these significant disruptions, GAIA's Nursing Scholars stayed focused on their studies. During the lockdown, GAIA provided scholars with psychosocial support to help them cope with remote learning. GAIA also provided tablets so that scholars could participate in online learning and remain in school. Needless to say, GAIA Scholars were thrilled when their campuses reopened and they could return to in-person learning.

*I was so happy to come back to school, and to continue with my studies was an amazing feeling.*

**-Prisca Kaonga**  
GAIA third year Nursing Scholar

**100% of new GAIA nursing graduates passed licensing exams this January despite 2020's significant disruptions and six-month school closures.**

## GAIA Nursing Scholar Graduates Help Combat COVID-19

2020 was a year unlike any other for our nursing students, but also for our Scholar graduates. GAIA-supported nurses were on the frontlines, with 415 nurses -- 25 newly deployed in 2020 -- working across Malawi in district hospitals and serving those in the most rural communities. They faced many of the same challenges US health workers faced -- limited testing capacity and PPE availability, and the risk and discrimination that came along with working to treat those who fell ill. Many nurses spent time in quarantine and/or became sick themselves, but they returned to work to do it all again.

477 GAIA Nursing Scholar Graduates to date!

### From Ebola to COVID-19:

#### *GAIA Helps Liberia Build Back its Nursing Workforce*

The Ebola outbreak of 2014 devastated Liberia's already fragile healthcare infrastructure -- 8% of the country's doctors, nurses and midwives were lost to the epidemic. In 2015, GAIA responded to this need and replicated our successful Nursing Scholar Program in Liberia, beginning with a cohort of 8 students, and adding a second cohort of 5 students in 2018. As of December 2020, these nursing scholars in Liberia have all graduated, and in 2021 they will be licensed and deployed to fight the current pandemic, COVID-19. ***Liberia, like many other countries in Africa, has had a strong public health response to the COVID-19 pandemic, incorporating lessons learned and infrastructure built while combating the Ebola crisis, including a relatively high level of vaccine acceptance.***



GAIA's first two Liberia Nursing Scholar cohorts pose for a picture. The second cohort graduated in 2020.

# Community-Based Health Services

While COVID-19 was the headline for 2020, an important part of the story is that GAIA's Mobile Health Clinic teams continued work on the front lines, committed to providing care to the rural communities we serve, bolstered by protection from full PPE. Throughout the pandemic, global health experts have warned about the real danger of backtracking on progress made in fighting HIV and other infectious diseases as a result of the pandemic. Recognizing the need to continue providing essential services to our clients, *in 2020, GAIA's Mobile Health Clinics operated on schedule 98% of the time.*

**GAIA's Elizabeth Taylor  
Mobile Health Clinics  
Maintain Access to Essential  
Services Despite the Pandemic**

## Mobile Health Clinics in 2020

**272,208**

preventative and curative  
visits provided

**51,086**

malaria cases treated

**21,681**

sexual and reproductive health  
visits provided



GAIA's Mobile Health Clinic staff are draped in head-to-toe PPE to keep themselves and the clients they serve healthy and safe.

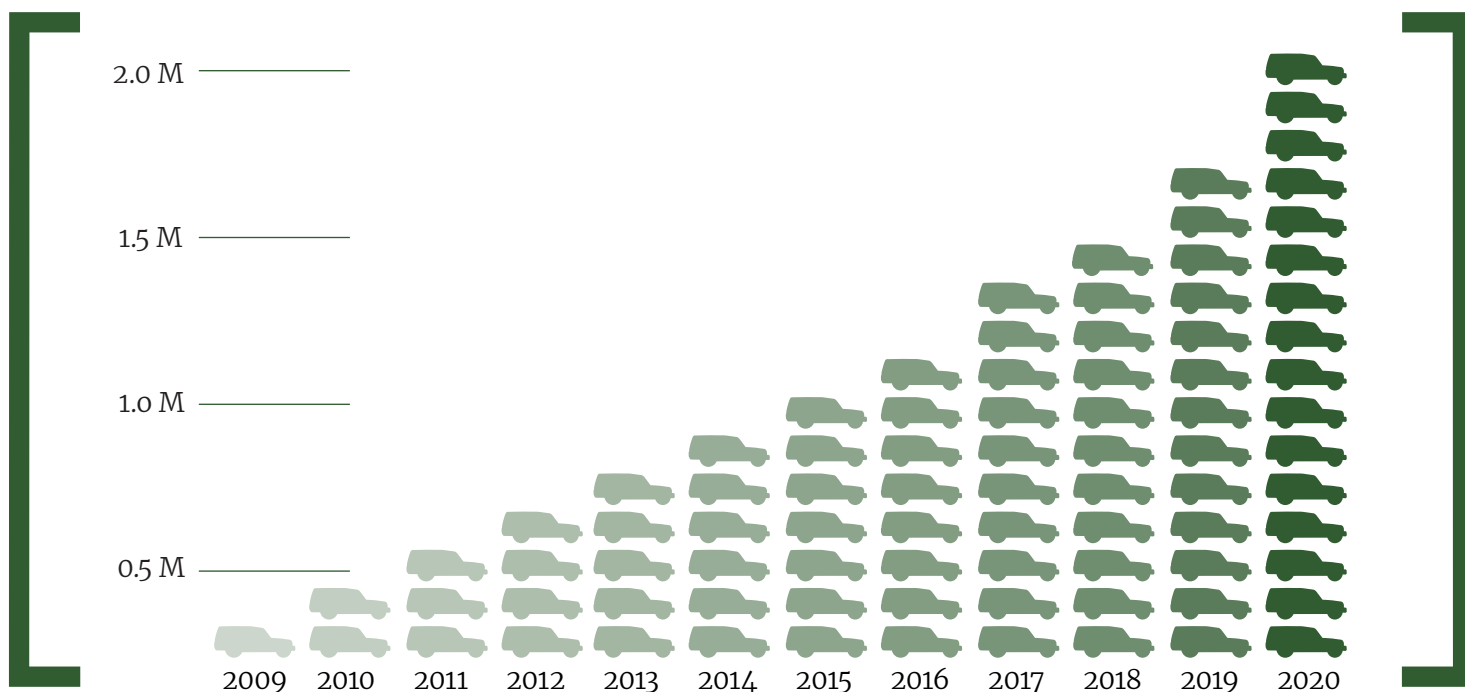


In 2020, GAIA tested 4,370 clients for HIV, with 3% testing positive. By the end of the year 83% of those testing positive were confirmed to have started ART.

Thirty percent (15,192) of those treated for malaria were children under 5, who, along with pregnant women, are most at risk for death from malaria. The clinics also treated 1,535 children under 5 for pneumonia, a condition that accounts for 13% of deaths within that demographic in Malawi.

The mobile clinic teams' ability to provide nearly the same number of visits as in 2019 despite the pandemic is a testament to the rigorous COVID-19 prevention and protocols -- including triaging, social distancing, hygiene, and extra vital checks -- instituted by the Malawi staff. We salute these frontline workers and their essential work!

## Achieving 2 million client visits GAIA Mobile Health Clinics



## Critical Pandemic Aid for Orphan-Headed Households

GAIA's Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVC) program continues to provide school supports, hygiene supplies, and food supplements for orphan headed households, enabling them to remain in school, rather than dropping out to work.

In October 2020, GAIA staff discovered that pandemic circumstances were exacerbating the living challenges of many of these households, and organized emergency relief for these vulnerable children and youth. The December distribution included mattresses, blankets and bed nets, buckets and soap, and additional rations of sibusiso (a protein supplement) and likuni phala (maize cereal).

*An orphan headed household receives essential supplies so they can remain healthy and in school.*

# Spotlight on Children:

## Preventing HIV and Reducing Vulnerability Among Children and Adolescents

In last year's annual report, we highlighted that, while much progress has been made toward 90-90-90, children were lagging behind. Malawi has surpassed 90-90-90 overall, but only 74% of children living with HIV know their HIV status. In our effort to close this gap, GAIA Malawi has leveraged its 15 years of experience working with high risk orphans and vulnerable children to co-implement the **Ana Patsogolo (Children First) Activity** in Mulanje and Phalombe districts in partnership with World Education Initiative/Bantwana and USAID through 2025. **Ana Patsogolo** will link those living with HIV to testing and treatment, providing social supports and wrap around health services to improve treatment initiation and adherence to ensure they thrive. In year one of program activity (2020-2021), GAIA will **identify and link more than 35,000 high-risk orphans and vulnerable children and adolescent girls and young women** to program services. We will coordinate multi-layered programming to strengthen families and increase uptake of health and HIV services and improve school retention. GAIA Malawi is collaborating with Bantwana and 4 other local NGOs and clinical partners to strengthen national referral and child protection systems.

## Mawa Girls Services Improved Sexual and Reproductive Health Knowledge and Service Access Despite Pandemic Closures

In response to the pandemic, the Government of Malawi closed schools and community-based social services in March 2020, with a phased reopening of schools not until September/October. This impacted delivery of Mawa Girls, the GAIA/Sentebale program that aims to improve educational and health outcomes among adolescent girls through school-based clubs and psychosocial support. Despite this challenge, during the 2019-2020 school year, GAIA supported 359 girls in the Mawa Girls program.

**From the pre- to post-program assessment, the number of girls who:**

- **knew their HIV status increased by 12%**
- **had ever accessed sexual and reproductive health services increased by 50%**
- **had ever accessed youth friendly health services increased 9 fold**

Additionally, 92% of girls' guardians attended a caregiver information session to learn how to support their girls to remain in school, prevent child marriage, and avoid adolescent pregnancy. In 2021, girls previously supported by the Mawa Girls program will be supported by the new **Ana Patsogolo Activity** described above.



*Masked and distanced Mawa Girls attended their program graduation ceremony in January 2021*

# Financial Statement

| Individual Giving            | 2020                | 2020 |
|------------------------------|---------------------|------|
| Donations                    | \$ 679,273          | 22%  |
| Events                       | \$ 861,218          | 28%  |
| <b>Institutional Giving</b>  |                     |      |
| Religious Orgs.              | \$ 108,917          | 4%   |
| Grants                       | \$ 1,403,705        | 46%  |
| Other                        | \$ 2,070            | 0%   |
| <b>Total</b>                 | <b>\$ 3,055,183</b> |      |
| Expenses 2020                | 2020                | 2020 |
| Fundraising & Administration | \$589,318           | 19%  |
| Programs                     | \$ 2,442,943        | 81%  |
| <b>Total</b>                 | <b>\$ 3,032,261</b> |      |
| <b>Net Income</b>            | <b>\$ 22,922</b>    |      |

In 2020, GAIA's cash-basis income totaled \$3,055,183 and expenses totaled \$3,032,261 (unaudited). GAIA has an annual accrual basis independent audit each fiscal year. The 2020 audit report will be available at [www.gaiaglobalhealth.org](http://www.gaiaglobalhealth.org) later in 2021.

## GAIA Staff & Trustees

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