

MALAWI

**THE NEED:**

A landlocked country in Southern Africa, Malawi has one of the lowest Human Development Index rankings in the world: 170 out of 188 countries. Agriculture is the primary industry, employing over 80% of the working age population. Food insecurity is chronic, and is exacerbated by extensive monocropping of maize and an over-dependence on rain-fed agriculture. Food security and human development are further constrained by malaria, HIV/AIDS and high infant and maternal mortality rates. Total adult HIV prevalence is 8.8% and 17.8% among urban women.



GEOGRAPHIC FOCUS AREAS: Nation-wide; Emphasis in Balaka and Machinga Districts

TECHNICAL EXPERTISE: Food & Nutrition Security; HIV/AIDS; Disaster Risk Reduction; Maternal, Neonatal & Child Health; Vulnerable Children / Youth; and Economic Development

**OVERVIEW**

PCI has operated in Malawi since 2007, when it began activities by leading an innovative Global Development Alliance initiative to strengthen aquaculture value chains for fish farmers and other related micro, small and medium enterprises in the southern Zomba River basin. Since that time, PCI has expanded its efforts to include important initiatives in HIV/AIDS prevention, treatment and care and support; food security; maternal, newborn and child health and nutrition; women's empowerment; vulnerability reduction among adolescent girls and young women; and disaster prevention, response and mitigation.

COMBATING FOOD INSECURITY

Since 2009, PCI has implemented integrated food security programs in Southern Malawi's Balaka and Machinga districts. Designed to improve maternal and child health, nutritional status, and food security for vulnerable households, these projects have provided farmers with training, tools and inputs required to grow high-yield crops using conservation agriculture techniques, small-scale irrigation systems to improve depleted soils and extend growing seasons, innovative livestock rearing and pass-on systems, and training of para-veterinarians with linkages to private sector drug suppliers. Mother and Father Care Groups promote improved health and nutrition practices at the community and household levels. Additionally, PCI provides training to help communities start and manage savings and loan groups to support women's empowerment and leadership development, entrepreneurship, and other productive investments in the health and welfare of families and communities.

Smallholder farmer training on conservation agriculture technologies has resulted in improved crop production practices for over 21,000 low-income households. These practices will help farmers to achieve higher crop yields, better food security and improved incomes.

ADDRESSING NATURAL DISASTERS

Since 2013, PCI has partnered with USAID's Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance to mitigate the human suffering in Malawi caused by droughts, floods, and armyworm infestations. This work has focused on vulnerable households in the districts of Balaka and Machinga, where climatic shocks are the new "norm" rather than rare occurrences. PCI reinforces the coping mechanisms of households in areas of high water scarcity through improving access to drought tolerant crops and improved production technologies through community-level projects to increase natural water retention in soils and recharge aquifers, help communities establish nurseries, afforestation/reforestation programs, watershed rehabilitation, and riverbank restoration; and through borehole rehabilitation and sanitation improvement. PCI also helps district governments develop contingency

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plans for natural disasters, establish early warning systems for armyworm attacks; train civil protection committees on environmental disaster management, and conduct simulations for flood evacuation and first aid provision for victims.



FAMILY-CENTERED MATERNAL & CHILD HEALTH

Since 2010, PCI has been addressing the needs of vulnerable children in Malawi through organizing and maintaining Care Groups for caregivers of these children. In 2017, these Care Groups empowered over 70,000 families through peer-to-peer education in maternal and child health with a focus on infant and young child feeding; water, sanitation and hygiene; management of childhood illnesses like malaria, pneumonia and diarrhea, and reproductive health. Caregivers involved in PCI's Care Groups have shown substantial changes in positive health practices. As an example, Balaka was just named Malawi's first "Open Defecation Free" district of the country, and special recognition was given to PCI for its contributions to this public health achievement. Under Every Preemie SCALE, PCI has also developed the Family-Care Model to improve survival among pre-term and low birthweight babies that frequently die in Malawi due to their need for special attention. PCI has also assisted with child abuse and exploitation response, promoted primary school retention, and increased financial and academic support to participating children.



HIV/AIDS PREVENTION, TREATMENT AND SUPPORT

In Malawi, where the national HIV prevalence rate is 8.8%, and up to 17.8% for women living in urban areas, PCI has worked with the U.S. Department of Defense HIV/AIDS Prevention Program since 2009 to deliver prevention strategies, testing, treatment and care and support. In 2017 alone, we reached 38,000 people with prevention strategies and tested over 31,000. This is a nation-wide program whose unique features include the engagement of chaplains for disseminating HIV/AIDS prevention messages to youth and couples; moonlight HIV test services in high-risk "hotspots" for HIV transmission; mentoring clinical health care providers; self-help groups for people living with HIV, focusing on empowerment, prevention, and care and support; training HIV-positive military personnel as peer educators to strengthen prevention efforts among soldiers and their families; creating demand for male circumcision; utilizing Theatre for Development; training of gender-based violence champions, and supporting adolescent and young women to stay HIV-free.

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

- Over 33,000 women participate in Women Empowered social and economic empowerment groups, which have collectively saved over \$1.5 million dollars, with a return on savings of 42% and loan fund utilization at 78%, enabling them to mitigate and cope with shocks, provide more diverse and nutritious food for families, invest in businesses, and increase their confidence and voice, contributing to enhanced participation in the community, and more equitable decision-making at the household and community level.
- Over 70,000 women and men are participating in Care Groups, which promote improved hygiene and sanitation, improved use of locally available nutritious foods and improved maternal and child health practices.
- Over 9,000 hectares under improved agriculture technologies or land management practices, including conservation agriculture.
- Over 7,500 women and men are implementing risk-reducing practices/actions to improve resilience to climate change, having mapped their vulnerabilities and resources and generated mitigation strategies, such as reforestation and early warning systems.

PCI/MALAWI

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