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Creating a More Vibrant Private Health Sector in Malawi

Located in southern Africa, Malawi is home to just under 14 million people, 72 percent of whom live in poverty. In 2010, Malawi was ranked 153rd in the Human Development Index and as of 2007, life expectancy at birth was only 44 years. The people of Malawi contend with numerous health and economic challenges.

While the public sector is the largest provider of health services, approximately 40 percent of services are provided by private providers (nonprofits, for-profit entities, and professional associations). The Christian Health Association of Malawi (CHAM) provides approximately 37 percent of the health care in the country. The participation of private providers is critical to expand access to essential health services in Malawi, especially in rural areas.

SHOPS Program Goals

In 2011, USAID/Malawi asked the SHOPS project to conduct a private health sector assessment with the aim of improving service quality and sustainability of private practices. The assessment found enormous challenges impacting the sustainability of CHAM, and opportunities for better organization, engagement, and financing of the growing commercial health sector, which constitutes less than 3 percent of total health services in Malawi. The assessment also found insufficient and unorganized private sector representation in key policy decisionmaking bodies and high barriers to entry for private practice.

Based on these findings and input from private and public stakeholders, the SHOPS team in Malawi developed a comprehensive plan for building an enabling policy environment for the private health sector, assessing the sustainability of CHAM and other nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), improving the quality of service delivery of for-profit organizations, and increasing the demand for diarrhea prevention and treatment products and services. The project also conducted a detailed census of all private health facilities and gave recommendations to achieve greater public-private coordination.



Jessica Scranton

St. Gabriel's Hospital, a Christian Health Association of Malawi facility. CHAM, a network of nonprofit health facilities, provides 37 percent of the health care in Malawi.

Malawi Private Health Sector by the Numbers

- 2,492 providers
- 763 facilities
- 96% of providers belong to a professional association
- 88% of facilities offer at least one maternal and/or child health service
- 76% of facilities offer oral contraceptives
- 61% of facilities are affiliated with an NGO

SHOPS Activities

Strengthening the Enabling Environment

SHOPS assisted key public and private sector stakeholders in building a policy environment that is conducive to establishing public-private partnerships (PPPs) in health. The project worked closely with the Ministry of Health and private sector stakeholders to rejuvenate the PPP technical working group for health and frame the Ministry's approach to health PPPs. The Ministry now houses a PPP unit with a dedicated desk officer.

Revising Service Level Agreements to Strengthen Public-Private Partnerships

The project worked with the Ministry of Health and CHAM to review the policy governing service level agreements that allow rural and poor populations to access free public health care through the CHAM network of facilities. Through the project's facilitation, 69 facilities and associated district health offices were trained in the new service level agreement guidelines. To enable effective administration of the agreements, SHOPS proposed a revised price list and verified it by conducting a costing study of nine facilities.

Improving Service Delivery in the Private Sector through Regulatory Boards

SHOPS assisted three national regulatory boards in revising their accreditation and monitoring tools. The project supported the Malawi Medical Council and the Malawi Nurses and Midwives' Council in using their updated tools to inspect 124 facilities. Both councils found gaps in service delivery among many of the facilities and provided recommendations and training opportunities to address these gaps. SHOPS also assisted the Malawi Pharmacy and Poisons Board review in updating its Good Manufacturing Practices inspection tool. Through SHOPS interventions, the regulatory bodies have gained insights into the challenges that private providers face to maintain a high quality of care and the importance of continued provider education to meet national standards.

Increasing the Sustainability of Faith-Based Organizations

SHOPS performed an assessment of the capacity and sustainability of select CHAM member units using the ProCapacity Index.™ Between 2012 and 2013, SHOPS indexed nine CHAM facilities and identified critical organizational needs, which it addressed through the following interventions: business and financial management training, lean clinical efficiency training, governance and board development, strategic planning support, fundraising and grants development, and enterprise development.

Measuring NGO Sustainability

The SHOPS project developed the ProCapacity Index™ to measure the sustainability of NGOs. ProCap uses a balanced scorecard approach that assesses health clinics against 28 qualitative and quantitative indicators across three areas of sustainability: financial strength, programmatic performance, and organizational development.

Improving Financial Management of Private Practitioners

The SHOPS project trained private providers from the Banja la Mtsogolo network (under Marie Stopes International), SafePlan franchises (under Population Services International), and other for-profit facilities in the basics of business and financial management. Private health practitioners learned skills such as bookkeeping, cash flow projection, and stock management. SHOPS trained nearly 70 providers in 2012 and plans to train 130 more in the upcoming year.

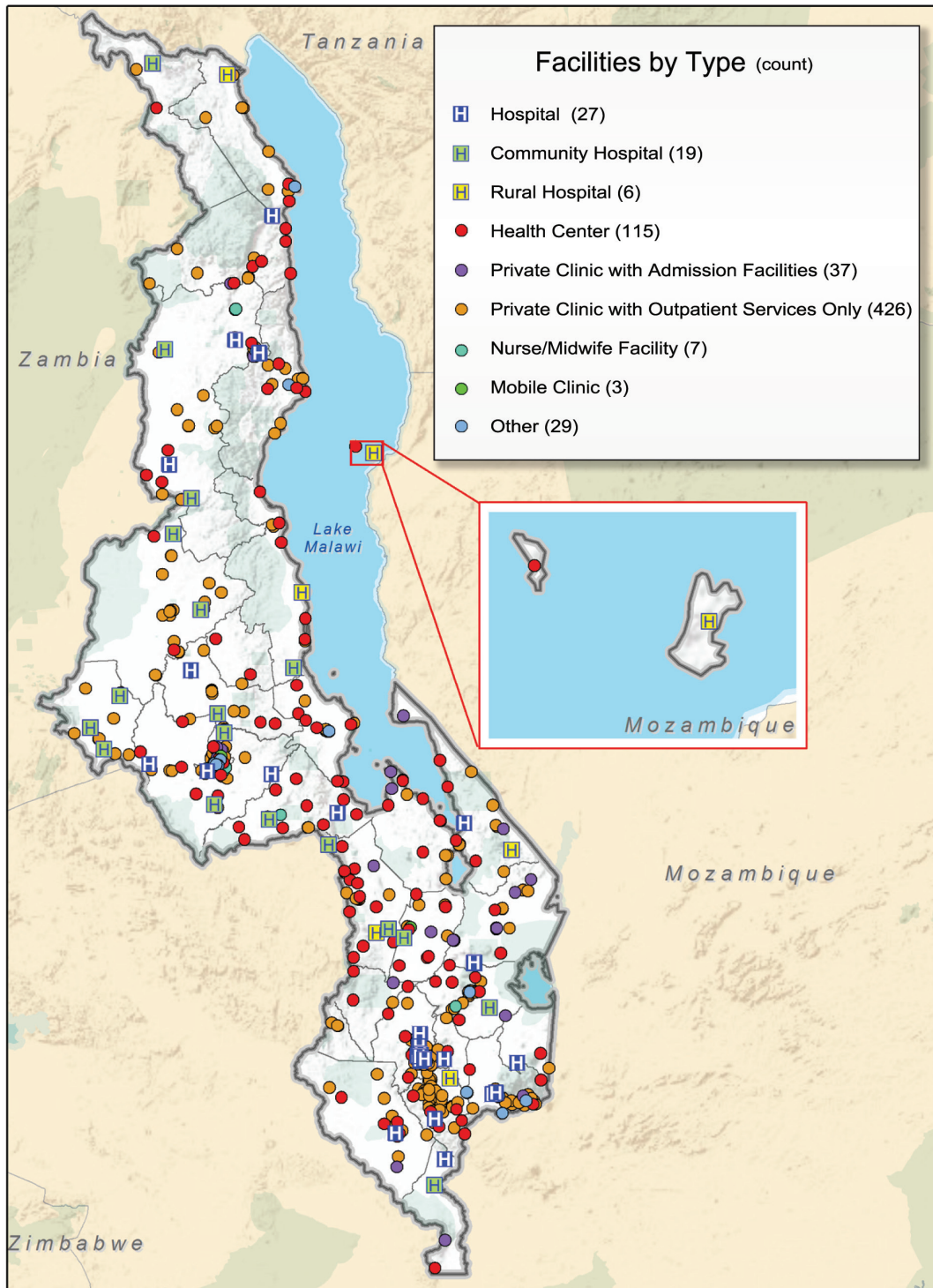
Building Capacity to Provide Pediatric Emergency Care

To improve quality pediatric emergency care, SHOPS partnered with the Acute Respiratory Infection Programme within the Ministry of Health to conduct an Emergency Triage Assessment and Treatment training course in Blantyre for health workers from private clinics. SHOPS trained 22 participants in emergency pediatric case management. The project will continue to offer vital neonatal and child health trainings to improve the services offered by private providers.

Identifying the Private Sector through a Census

SHOPS conducted a private provider census to describe the size, scope, and geographic distribution of private health facilities and providers. The exercise identified the number of facilities and providers, their locations, the types of services they provide, the trainings they desire, and the obstacles they face in expanding their businesses. It also showed geographic gaps in health coverage: approximately 85 percent of the population lives in rural areas, but only 49 percent of private facilities are located there. Data collected through this activity have the potential to inform programmatic interventions and policies to increase health coverage and access. For example, SHOPS coordinated trainings on the use of zinc and oral rehydration salts to treat diarrhea for private providers who were identified in the census as not having completed this training.

Malawi



SHOPS conducted a census in Malawi to describe the size, scope, and geographic distribution of private health providers in the country, and produced several maps to illustrate the findings. This map shows the locations of various types of private facilities. Other maps show the density of private facilities, number of providers by facility, facilities that offer family planning and HIV services, and network affiliations. View the maps at www.shopsproject.org.

Assessing the Water Treatment Product Market

SHOPS conducted a pilot to assess the potential of distributing water treatment products through various channels. The project partnered with Population Services International to market WaterGuard; supported the Clinton Health Access Initiative in continuing its hygiene kit distribution program through antenatal clinics; and supplied WaterGuard to the Millennium Village Project's Women Direct to Home Distribution project. SHOPS also provided one of the district health offices with free HTH and trained health surveillance assistants in dosing and storage techniques. These efforts resulted in the treatment of approximately 215 million liters of water. Next, SHOPS will recommend a cost-effective method to reach rural populations with diarrhea prevention and water treatment products, which will be scaled up through market-based models in the coming year.

Combating Childhood Diarrhea

WHO and UNICEF developed guidelines in 2004 that recommend zinc and oral rehydration salts to treat pediatric diarrhea. To create awareness of these guidelines, which have only recently been adopted in Malawi, SHOPS trained nearly 460 private providers and developed, produced, and placed advertisements in four languages on two popular radio stations and seven billboards.



Jessica Scranton

Increasing Access to AIDS and Tuberculosis Care

Continuum of care is essential to treat AIDS and tuberculosis, which often accompanies it. To increase the pool of providers accredited to administer AIDS and tuberculosis treatment, the Malawi Business Coalition Against HIV/AIDS used data from the SHOPS private provider census and grant money from the project to train 30 private providers in clinical management of AIDS and 29 in tuberculosis care. The coalition aims to establish AIDS-specific service level agreements with the newly accredited providers.

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For more information about the SHOPS project, visit: www.shopsproject.org



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