

PEACE CORPS
MALAWI
ANNUAL REPORT



2020

WHAT IS PEACE CORPS?

Our mission is to promote world peace and friendship by fulfilling three goals:

1. To help the people of interested countries in meeting their need for trained human resources.
2. To promote a better understanding of Americans on the part of the peoples served.
3. To promote a better understanding of other peoples on the part of Americans.

WHAT DO WE DO?

Peace Corps is an agency of the United States Government that is present in over 60 countries. We provide trained Volunteers to countries which request assistance. Our Volunteers work hand-in-hand with local counterparts and community members to build capacity at a grassroots level and to strengthen systems, often where demand for these systems is highest and resources are low.

WHERE DO WE WORK?

By invitation of the Government of Malawi, our Volunteers live and work in rural communities throughout the country. A community must request the assistance of a Volunteer. Specifically, Volunteers in Malawi are assigned to work with:

- Community Day Secondary Schools
- Health Centers
- Extension Planning Areas
- Universities in Malawi
- Other NGOs and governmental institutions

WHO ARE PEACE CORPS VOLUNTEERS?

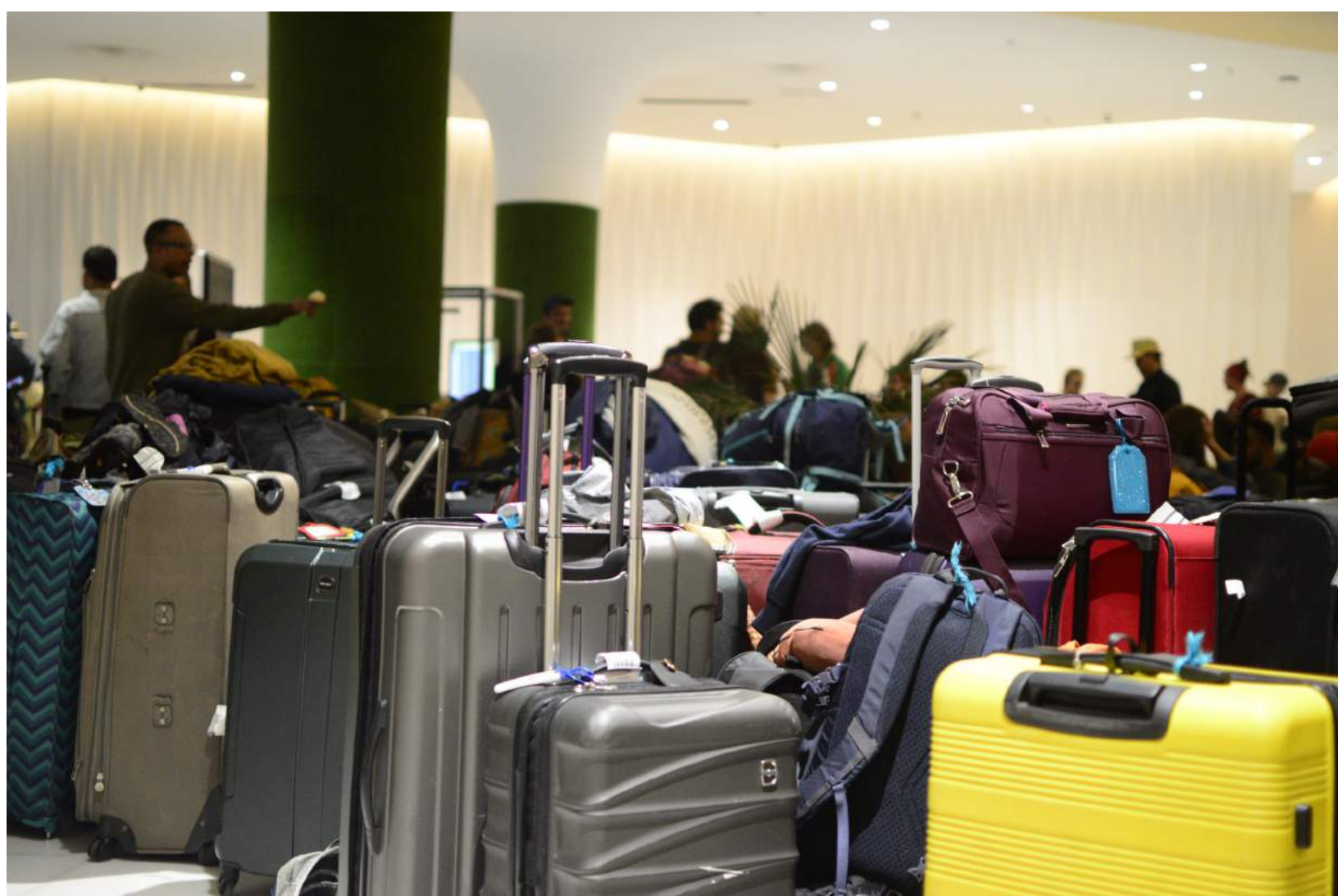
Applicants for Peace Corps service are American citizens who are well educated, experienced and skilled, open minded, and flexible. Our Volunteers represent the diversity of the American people and come from all walks of life and experience. Volunteers commit to living in Malawian communities in order to serve where the need is greatest. Upon arrival in Malawi, all Volunteers go through 10 weeks of intensive Pre-Service Training during which they learn additional technical skills that apply to their project, local languages, and Malawian culture.



A YEAR LIKE NO OTHER

2020 was an unprecedented year for Peace Corps, Malawi, and the globe. In March, Peace Corps Headquarters announced that it would temporarily suspend Volunteer operations and evacuate Volunteers from all posts globally due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

In the time since, Peace Corps Malawi's priority has shifted inward as we have honed in on our operations and sustainability. This includes communicating with and supporting, when possible, trained counterparts and community members. We are ready to return Volunteers to Malawi when conditions are conducive. Our results from this fiscal year may not have reached such heights as in past years, but we are proud to present to you our Annual Report showcasing the impact of Peace Corps Malawi projects from October 2019-September 2020.



YOUTH HEALTH & SYSTEMS STRENGTHENING

Peace Corps Volunteers work within Malawi's Ministry of Health facilities, typically at community hospitals and rural health centers. In 2019-2020, Volunteers served alongside health center staff and community members on a range of activities to promote HIV prevention and testing; nutrition education; youth friendly health services; malaria prevention; and general hygiene.

2
0
2
0



1,892

Individuals who received
malaria prevention
education

2,069

participants in evidence-
based interventions on
gender norms

1,816

individuals of the priority
population reached with an
evidence-based, standardized
HIV prevention
intervention



Project lifetime

2019-present



Story from the Field

“When interacting with the secondary school in the community in which I served as a Youth Health Advisor with Peace Corps Malawi, I noticed that a high proportion of girls were dropping out of school. While it is a complex issue as to why, upon talking to teachers and students, I discovered that many dropped out for reasons such as marriage, early pregnancy, menstruation, and a general lack of positive influences to encourage attendance at school.

One simple way that we could address this problem was through introducing a “Pad Project” intervention where girls could learn to make reusable sanitary pads and also gather information about menstruation, pregnancy, and self esteem.

My counterpart and I worked on the structure, script, and translations necessary for the project. When we met with the girls, we detailed and talked through each step of making a reusable menstrual pad. Local girls who had participated previously in Pad Projects also assisted us by going through instructions in the local language, helping us to guide the discussion, and teaching the girls how to use a sewing machine that we had found.

It was a very proud moment for my counterpart and I since we were able to take a step back and allow these equipped and empowered women to lead and steer the intervention. The women who stepped up were able to practice the skills they had learned previously and act as natural leaders. To have a positive platform on which women feel capable to create positive behavior change in their community is a key element of sustainable programming.

After completing the activity we noticed many benefits among this group of leaders including the level of positivity, encouragement, and determination they exhibited to provide resources and education for female youth in their community. Additionally, participants learned new skills and also developed hope for the futures of their daughters. “

Feven Tewolde, Youth Health Advisor, 2019-20

36,447

individuals who received
malaria prevention
education

10,818

participants in evidence-
based interventions on
gender norms

8,619

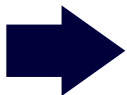
individuals of the priority
population reached with
an evidence-based
standardized HIV
prevention
intervention

ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

Peace Corps Volunteers partner with the Ministry of Education to teach in rural secondary schools. Across Malawi, they work to increase English language and literacy skills among their students. Volunteers facilitate teacher professional development by hosting pedagogical workshops and sharing best practices—all while working to build support among students, teachers, and communities to practice gender equality in the classroom.

As one of Peace Corps Malawi's main initiatives, improving literacy is the lens through which our Education Volunteers see their work. Volunteers work with students primarily in English literacy and language, knowing that strong reading, writing, and speaking skills translate to higher achievement in all subject areas. Dedicated to expanding reading culture in Malawi, on Drop Everything And Read (DEAR) Day, Volunteers encourage students to open books and spark their imaginations through interactive lessons and community activities.

2
0
2
0



4,911

participants in DEAR Days
activities to promote
reading and literacy

2,456

students gained access
to reading & resource
materials through a
school library

2,049

students who improved
English proficiency based on
class lessons or extracurricular
activities



Project lifetime

2015-2020



Story from the Field

“The project that I am most proud of initiating during my Peace Corps service was the development of a student newsletter at the secondary school where I am serving. With the help of four staff members, including my primary teaching counterpart, Frank, the school helped over 70 students to express their own thoughts, words, and ideas in a student-run newsletter.

The students gathered information, reported news, and edited articles together which resulted in five total editions, so far. Each newsletter covered what was happening in their homes, school, communities, country, and the world. The newsletter team met after school every week for the entirety of my service.

Not only did the newsletter promote English literacy, but it also aided in the development of basic computer skills since the school’s computer lab was utilized for editing sessions. Students arrived at meetings with pre-planned topics, categorized across 15 different sections. The most popular topics of writing were: Creative Writing, Education, Environment, Local News, Sports, and Politics. All articles went through an editing phase headed by two student Editor-in-Chiefs, myself, and Frank. Submitted articles typically went through at least two working drafts of revisions. All articles and topics were decided upon by the students, and the layout and printing was approved by administration and completed by me.

The development of the Ntonda Times student newsletter benefited the student writers and editors greatly, as they began to show a greater understanding of and desire to learn the English language. Each week, they showed improvement in typing abilities and had less questions about how to navigate Microsoft Word. I also saw their creativity transform as quirky titles and news pieces began to flow freely from them the more frequently they came to writing sessions.

My counterpart and I discussed introducing a version of the newsletter in Chichewa, translated and completed by the students, to help in their grasp of switching between the country’s two primary languages. Even though I have left the community, I am confident that the students will push to maintain the presence of the Ntonda Times at the school and continue to grow and alter it as the years go on.”

Brianna LaFlash, Secondary School English Teacher, 2018-20

22,302

participants in DEAR Days activities to promote reading and literacy

10,273

students gained access to reading & resource materials through a school library

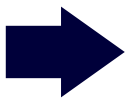
13,787

students who improved English proficiency based on class lessons or extracurricular activities

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION & FOOD SECURITY

Peace Corps Volunteers work with Malawi's Department of Forestry, Parks and Wildlife, and Agriculture Extension to increase awareness and understanding of environmental conservation, to reduce the impact that people have on protected areas, and to improve agricultural practices to address food security. Volunteer activities include developing tree nurseries, promoting the creation and use of fuel efficient cook stoves, initiating wildlife clubs in schools and communities, and encouraging the use of sustainable farming techniques.

2
0
2
0



30,344

trees planted

2,348

students taught
environmental
education

1,430

individuals involved in
environmental camps or
clubs

235

individuals who received
food security training





Story from the Field

“When we asked the group, ‘what is the biggest worry you have about our environment?’ the overwhelming answer was flooding. In our community in Northern Malawi, the Wovwe River flows out of the mountains of Nyika National Park and irrigates the vast rice fields of the area. This natural water source benefits many farmers and allows them to grow and harvest rice in this area. However, increased deforestation has led to high levels of erosion along the river bed as the water comes down the mountains. Per year, it is common to lose one meter or more in arable land along the river.

When I first arrived at my community, we formed a Natural Resources Committee (NRC) with the goal of educating local communities in climate smart agricultural practices. To address the group’s concern about flooding, we conducted field visits to the most vulnerable sites along the river and, together, devised a plan.

To begin, we demonstrated the environmental benefit of vegetation. In most areas of Malawi, yards are swept each day; however, this act also prevents the growth of vegetation which creates root systems that allow rainwater to seep into the earth and additionally sweeps away fertile top soil. To exhibit the contrast of this behavior, I allowed the grass to grow in my yard in rainy season. When my yard was covered in lush, green, native vegetation, the NRC members came to see it, and we examined the difference in terms of soil erosion.

We then began improving the conditions around the Wovwe river by first constructed two check dams to help in slowing the flow of the river before it enters the most erosion prone area. With less force from slower-moving water, less soil would naturally erode as it passed through. Next, we planted rows of vertiver hedge along the contours of the river bank. Vertiver helps as immediate action against the erosion, as the roots take hold within a season and prevent the soil from eroding further. Finally, in February, we planted a grove of bamboo (provided by USAID and the Agriculture Department of Malawi) in the remainder of the flood plain of the river in addition to the area along the waterline. Once the bamboo propagates and takes root, it will allow water from heavy rains to infiltrate the soil and soak into the ground, thereby preventing erosion of the river bank. “

Dakota Sparks, Natural Resource Management, 2018-20

188,432
trees planted

2,348
students taught
environmental education

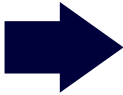
1,430
individuals involved in
environmental camps or
clubs

11,861
individuals who received
food security training

PEACE CORPS RESPONSE

Peace Corps Response is a high impact program that brings seasoned international development professionals and former Peace Corps Volunteers to Malawi to serve in targeted, short-term assignments ranging from six months to a year. Response Volunteers in Malawi partner with government ministries as well as non-governmental organizations whose missions align with Peace Corps Malawi's areas of focus. Volunteers contribute their professional skills and experiences to support the organizations' strategic goals and objectives.

2
0
2
0



257

Volunteers have served in
Peace Corps Response in
Malawi

Positions under Peace Corps
Response include:

Education Specialist
DREAMS Coordinator





Story from the Field

“In my role as an Education Specialist, I was assigned to the newly constructed Ntalala Community Day Secondary School. This school was constructed using funds from USAID with the goal of expanding access of education to rural communities, in particular to girls.

In order to monitor this goal, we look at how many female students are finishing their studies through Form 4 and also how many are showing up for school daily. In terms of female enrollment, the goal is being met. However, many of the girls attending Ntalala CDSS either live close to the school and far from family or else they travel far distances in route to school. Consequently, this distance puts them at risk of unwanted sexual attention, assault, early pregnancy, contracting HIV, and/or dropping out of school. The need for a female-centered educational program to teach the girls about protecting themselves from these risks was apparent.



After a couple of weeks of brainstorming approaches to improve conditions for female students with fellow faculty at the school, we decided to start a Go Girls! Club. Of the three female teachers at our school, they all agreed that each of them would participate in the facilitation of the 15 week program. Our initial plan was to host one lesson after school each week; however, student interest in the program was so high that we had to divide participants into two groups and facilitate an afterschool session every Tuesday and Thursday.

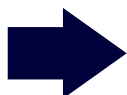
Our first Go Girls session was a monumental success. In that first week, 78 girls participated in the introductory lesson of the Go Girls program. Over the next several months, girls learned lessons about clear and direct communication, how to say “no,” the intricacies of HIV transmission and prevention, adolescents and puberty, maintaining positive and healthy friendships, and how to support each other as girls. In order to support and encourage attendees, the three sponsoring teachers not only planned and delivered the important and interactive Go Girls lessons, but also prepared mandasi for them so that the girls would have a snack during the lessons and be able to focus.”

Christian Holloway, Education Specialist, 2019-20

ADVANCING HEALTH PROFESSIONALS

Peace Corps implements the Advancing Health Professionals (AHP) Response program in Malawi. Peace Corps partners with Malawi's Ministry of Health as well as the Ministry of Education to place experienced healthcare professionals in academic institutions to bridge classroom theory into practice for nursing and medical students as well as other cadres of health workers. Volunteers in this sector strengthen health systems at the facility and community levels through education and training of health workers and supporting the improvement of the delivery and quality of health services. This program brought it's first Volunteers to Malawi in 2019.

2
0
2
0



981

students trained in
clinical skills

470

students passed required
courses and skills
assessments taught by a
Volunteer

32

clinic staff trained in
clinic protocols and
procedures





Story from the Field

“Lighthouse clinic values continuous professional development and as funding permits trainings are held usually on the weekends when the clinic is closed. However, this year the awarded funding was much less than anticipated. My counterpart, the Capacity Building Officer, and I brainstormed ideas for how we could continue to provide trainings and educational sessions for staff with minimal financial input.

We developed a biweekly academic Continuous Professional Development session for the clinic staff. This time is designed to address emerging gaps in education and any new guidelines. We were able to do a needs assessment before starting which allowed us to identify gaps while also integrating the clinic staff into the planning process. We facilitated the trainings at both Lighthouse and Martin Preuss Center HIV Clinics in the mornings for about 1.5 hours. This allowed time for lecture and discussion. We also wrote for a grant to purchase materials for the staff to use to take notes, create a shared resource for both soft and hard copies and teaching supplies like flip charts and markers. The materials were purchased and the lectures began in November.”

Sarah Swenson, HIV/AIDS & Clinic Management Nurse Specialist, 2019-20

SUSTAINABILITY

Malawi may soon be known around the world as one of the first countries in Africa to achieve control of the HIV/AIDS epidemic, and we know Peace Corps Malawi contributes to that vision.

Serving as Youth Health Advisors, Peace Corps Volunteers in the health sector in Malawi work with rural health centers on a variety of health activities that support children and youth. However, ALL of our Volunteers, regardless of sector, engage youth with HIV prevention and sexual and reproductive health programs such as Grassroot Soccer and GoGirls. These evidence-based programs are interactive and fun, and also provide a safe space in which youth can discuss ways to keep themselves healthy, to address harmful gender norms that perpetrate physical and sexual violence, and to gain the confidence to seek HIV tests and access other health services.

The global evacuation of Peace Corps Volunteers in March due to the COVID-19 pandemic threw us all for a loop, but HIV transmission doesn't hit the brakes with a pandemic, and nor do we. Malawi's love for football doesn't end when the game is over. Grassroot Soccer (GRS), which incorporates many aspects and analogies of football, is a crowd favorite among Volunteers, coaches, participants, and now, even our Peace Corps Malawi staff!

During the suspension of Volunteer activities, Peace Corps staff in Malawi brainstormed ways in which we could continue our impact and embolden sustainability. So we decided to lead a GRS intervention under COVID-19 safety protocol and also to reunite 15 GRS coaches who previously worked alongside our former Peace Corps Volunteers so they could share best practices in terms of conducting GRS programming during the pandemic.

"The training was a big success because we had chance to reflect on the accomplishments that Volunteers' counterparts have made since March," recounted Peace Corps Malawi's resident Master GRS Coach, Robin Namoto. "It was great to listen to the group presentations and to see how motivated the counterparts are to continue this important work, even in the absence of their Volunteer co-coaches. However, I most enjoyed when counterparts led us through teachbacks, presenting a lesson to the group while sharing lessons learned and adaptations in order for the program to be COVID safe. It was amazing to see how creative people have been when addressing the challenges to implementing this program in the field."

Participating coaches were also reinvigorated by the time spent together. Many expressed excitement to work with youth in particular to help them avoid the roadblocks that may prevent them from accomplishing their dreams. Others felt inspired by the opportunity to be an agent of change in their communities.

After the refresher workshop, Mr. Namoto led a training for interested staff at Peace Corps Malawi. For many, GRS was simply a program that Volunteers conducted and talked about as part of their service. But now, our staff can, too, be engaged with the program and even lead interventions!

"I loved the Grassroot Soccer training because I can relate to the topics that are covered. I'm excited to be a coach so that I can meet up with girls in the community and talk to them about these issues that all of us women in Malawi face, issues like Gender Based Violence, HIV, and malaria, but in a fun and engaging way," said our Procurement Officer, Edness Kenamu.

We look forward to seeing what these new and seasoned coaches achieve in the coming year as we continue along the path, together, to epidemic control of HIV/AIDS in Malawi.

18

local Counterparts
attended a refresher
workshop for Grassroot
Soccer



Thank you to our partners!



Story from the Field

"This morning, we found out that we have to leave Malawi. We don't know if we'll be able to come back." It was March 16th 2020, and I was devastated. Maxwell reassuring words followed, with a steady voice, "Do not worry. I will finish all of the programs we have started together. You should only worry that I will miss you." The idea of my departure wasn't fully real to me until I told Maxwell. After only nine months of my expected twenty-seven months of service in Malawi, we were being evacuated due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

My partner Will and I met Maxwell in mid-November 2019. We were frantically searching for counterparts to join us for an upcoming Grassroot Soccer training. I had asked everyone I knew in my community, "Do you know anyone who is young, energetic, responsible, comfortable talking about challenging topics like sexual health and gender norms, and speaks English?" Just as it was getting close to our deadline, my friend told me that she knew someone who might be perfect. From our very first meeting with Maxwell, he struck me as outgoing, kind, and incredibly intelligent. He told us that he loves working with people and learning new things, so he would be happy join us for the training and work with us afterward.

Maxwell thrived at the training. He brought energy, curiosity, and the humility to challenge his own beliefs. I was proud of him and hopeful for the future. We planned and implemented our first Grassroot Soccer intervention, meeting with a team of adolescents twice a week for six weeks to facilitate activities and discussions about making healthy choices. Before each lesson, Maxwell would spend hours reviewing the lesson with us, discussing key points and troubleshooting potential challenges. He was completely committed to being the best Grassroot Soccer coach he could be.

Wongani was a participant in our first Grassroot Soccer intervention. She showed up to every practice on time with positive energy, despite the hour walk from her home to get there. She always shared her ideas and was a true team player. After graduation, we began a new intervention in a different village. When Wongani heard that we would start a new group, she wanted to help. She came to the team's practices, helped facilitate activities and discussion questions, and was able to bring order to some of the rowdier moments of practice. As a role model to her peers, Wongani brought a local voice to issues surrounding HIV, gender norms, and contraceptives. Down a coach when we were evacuated, Wongani continued to support Maxwell throughout the remainder of the program.

Maxwell never missed a scheduled meeting, even after we left Malawi. He messaged us to update us on activities and to send photos of the training groups. A couple of weeks after our departure, right on schedule, Maxwell planned and held graduations for both Grassroots Soccer teams that he had continued coaching. He sent photos and videos of the groups all dressed up, proudly holding their certificates and enjoying refreshments.

I am proud of the youth who maintained their commitment to their fellow Grassroot Soccer teammates. I'm proud of the community leaders who worked through challenging conversations with a shared goal of bettering their community. And I am proud of Maxwell. His commitment to his work and his community never wavered, even as he was unexpectedly and suddenly left to complete the work on his own. Maxwell is the counterpart, tutor, and friend who every Peace Corps Volunteer dreams of. I count myself lucky to have shared so many memories with such a special person, and I look forward to many more years of friendship from afar as Maxwell continues his journey of finding ways to learn, grow, and serve his community.

-Will Fenner and Kelsey Kannenburg, 2019-20



**IF YOU WANT TO GO
FAST, GO ALONE.**

**IF YOU WANT TO GO
FAR, GO TOGETHER.**

African Proverb



PEACE CORPS MALAWI

4/70 MURRAY ROAD
PO BOX 208, LILONGWE, MALAWI
WWW.PEACECORPS.GOV/MALAWI/