

SCOPE SUCCESS STORY

MALAWI



Faith leaders at Mpunga Village.

USAID/World Relief: Photo by Patrick Kantwanje,
SCOPE Machinga Project Supervisor

NAME AND ROLE

Sheik Kapalamula, Mpiri Mosque,
and Pastor Banda, Mpiri Evangelical
Church

LOCATION

Mpunga Village, Nkoola Traditional
Authority, Machinga

SUMMARY

Through *Making Our Communities Better*, SCOPE is working to help faith leaders understand their power as agents of change in their communities.

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UNITY THROUGH FAITH: COMMUNITY FAITH LEADERS AS AGENTS OF CHANGE

Faith leaders have great influence in their communities, with the power to impact development in all aspects of life: economic, health, academic and spiritual. Almost 98% of people in Malawi are people of faith, and compared to other institutions in society, faith leaders often interact most with community members. Because of this, engaging faith leaders can help increase – and sometimes even decrease – engagement around health and development initiatives in their communities. SCOPE is using *Making Our Communities Better*, a curriculum designed to help faith leaders understand the critical role that they play in envisioning and mobilizing change in their communities, to help them understand this critical role.

FAITH NETWORKS REINVIGORATED TO SUPPORT THE NEEDS OF THE VILLAGE CLINIC

Nkoola Traditional Authority at Mpiri Zone is located in the southeastern zone of Machinga district. It has a population of 87,920, representing 23% of the total population in SCOPE's Machinga district catchment area. Nkoola Traditional Authority is located in a rural, hard-to-reach area of Machinga district. People depend on small-scale rice farming activities, and many men migrate to South Africa to search for better opportunities leaving their wives and children behind.

Community faith leaders in Nkoola Traditional Authority had been part of *Making Our Communities Better* training, but their activities had gone dormant due to inconsistent communications and coordination between faith networks and other community-level structures. However, after hearing outcries from Felita Kamowa, a community health worker in the Mpunga catchment area, which serves a population of about 6,396 people, faith leaders began to respond positively. Felita often found it hard to carry out

her duties at the Mpunga Village Clinic due to the lack of shelter in the clinic: during the summer the clinic would get incredibly hot, and during the rainy season, clients would get incredibly hot get soaked waiting. Because of this, she asked for assistance from faith leaders who mobilized themselves and resources to construct a shelter for Mpunga Village Clinic

THE POWER OF WORKING TOGETHER

Through the *Making Our Communities Better* training, community faith leaders in Mpunga Village learned how they could act as a bridge between the communities' most vulnerable and the services they need. As Sheik Kapalamula shared: "We were very ashamed to notice that we have the power and potential to take actions on solving the problems surrounding our communities...Why should we have to wait for others who are not affected by these challenges to bring solutions?" Sheik Kapalamula shared that challenges must be addressed together as a faith community: "We face common problems regardless of our religious differences. Machinga being a Muslim-dominated district with Christians in it. Hence both Christians and Muslims can work together in solving the problem at hand."

In addition to constructing a shelter for Mpunga Village Clinic, the faith leaders supported the establishment of sanitation structures at Nachuma and Mahuta Village Clinics. The facility health leadership and area development committee under Nkoola Traditional Authority

expressed gratitude for this gesture. Sheik Kapalamula shared that the faith network is also identifying several other village clinics facing similar shelter challenges.

FAITH LEADERS ENGAGING IN COMMUNITY HEALTH ISSUES

Faith communities play a key role in development projects when they see they can make a difference. SCOPE has worked with faith leaders at the national and community level to facilitate change in Malawi. Since starting in 2020, over 1,338 community leaders have been oriented in SCOPE Project and put in cluster working groups of 40. In Nkoola Traditional Authority alone, 200 community faith leaders serving 79 faith institutions were trained in *Making Our Communities Better*. Since this training, these leaders have been committed to conveying accurate and appropriate information and skills in their communities and congregations.

SCOPE will continue to engage faith leaders in systematic behavior change to improve health-seeking behavior in their communities. In Malawi, SCOPE has already surpassed its 2024 goal of reaching 6,114 community members through *Family Life Education* information and *Making Our Communities Better*.

This story is written by Patrick Kantwanje, SCOPE Machinga Project Supervisor, and Willy Kammera, Assistant MERL Manager.