



## THE QUEENS OF SANITATION, HYGIENE AND WATER

### GoTAS: Transparent Governance for Water, Sanitation and Health

#### Our Queens

The honorable Matilde Canhenga and Fatima Asseli are our Queens of sanitation, hygiene promotion and sustainable water supply, for Mbetazigone, Lichinga District, Niassa Province.

In the context of Niassa, for someone to be a queen, they must first play a leading role in society. According to Vene (2018), historically, the figure of a traditional Queen in Niassa, played a key role in maintaining the balance of power, through the skills to guide several traditional rites. These include the preparation of elixirs and medicines to fortify warriors, purify trading caravans bound for the Indian Ocean and for use in sacred rites to call the rains, as well as being advisors to the traditional leaders, Régulos.

Matilde and Fatima recognised that their community had long suffered from water-borne disease and decided to participate in a meeting for hygiene behaviour chan-

ge supported by the GoTAS programme. Due to their proactivity, they were chosen by the community as leading members of the sanitation group and this is when their leadership journey began.

Their mission was to convince other women and men in the community to adhere to good sanitation and hygiene practices. These women actively participated in community mobilization until the community achieved Open Defecation Free (ODF) Status.

Because of their leadership role in the community, Matilde and Fatima increased their self-esteem, gained popularity in the community and district, and managed to rally the community for the construction of 2 water boreholes. They continue to mobilize families to contribute to the operation and maintenance funds for the boreholes.

This is their story in their own words...

## The community's past

"We received this well 4 years ago, the way it works today is like it was built yesterday. Previously, our life was really complicated, we had to go to the river to fetch precious water. Life was not easy, we shared the same water source with wild animals, and in turn, diarrheal diseases were also inevitable. There was a time that cholera, diarrhoea, and malaria were common amongst the community. People of all ages, knew what was happening and what needed to be done to reduce the incidence of these diseases. We are very grateful for the initiative of the GoTAS programme, which opened our eyes, for having told us that the solution to these problems was in our hands, and that it was possible to overcome this problem together without having to spend a lot of money. "

## The change

"The first activity that the GoTAS programme encouraged us to undertake was to organise ourselves, so we appointed respected leaders to lead the process of change. Subsequently, the sanitation group was created, composed of 12 people, 6 women and 6 men.

Thus, we were able to work together until we ensured that each family from the community had access to a toilet. Initially we failed to achieve ODF status, however, the community did not stop there, it continued to work and the following year we managed to achieve ODF status. Through this process we gained strength and resilience and through our Local Council we strived to advocate until we obtained a water borehole.

Today, we have this source of water. Since our community is very large, we advocated to have a second source of water, once all the conditions were created, we received another water borehole. All residents of this village and beneficiaries of these two water sources in the community, recognize the effort of the community leadership in wanting to develop our com-



**A typical toilet and tippy-tap from a community supported by GoTAS.**

munity. Therefore, everyone is aware that these two boreholes in this community must not in stop working due to lack of funds, we must all contribute in order to continue to drink clean water.

So, with the funds collected, we have managed to repair our water sources. Last week the bushes on the pump failed, on the same day we travelled to the city to buy the parts, returned and managed to replace them. It was a beautifully smooth process thanks to the collaboration of the community together with our advisory board. Today, we have a clean community, people are healthy, children can study well, the distances to fetch water are reduced, and consequently we are happy in our homes... ..Long live Water, Long live GoTAS!"

## GOTAS contacts

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