



# A true African philanthropist

**SIMBI PHIRI**





## Khato Civils – A rising African giant in construction and design



**Khato Civils is a black-owned African values driven design and construction company committed to contributing towards infrastructure development in the African continent.**

**W**ith its headquarters in Johannesburg Khato Civils has extended its operations beyond the South African borders into countries including Malawi, Botswana, Zimbabwe, Ghana and Namibia. The company's long-term vision is to have 80% of its projects spread outside South Africa into the rest of the African Continent.

From small beginnings in 2006 with an estimated R100 million annual turnover Khato Civils has grown into a key role-player in the construction and design industry with an estimated over R3 billion annual turn-over.

Some of the key projects the company is involved in include the R5.5 billion Lake Malawi Water Supply Project – on its completion the project will supply 5 million litres of potable water drawn from Lake Malawi to the City of Lilongwe – changing the lives of the city's over 2-million residents. There is also the R3 billion Giyani Water and Sanitation Revitalisation Project in Limpopo – where Khato Civils is in a joint-venture with South Zambezi. The company is also involved in the M1-Double Decker Bridge Rehabilitation project in Johannesburg.

Khato Civils' phenomenal growth happened under the leadership of African entrepreneur par excellence and philanthropist Chairman Simbi Phiri.

Born in Malawi Mr Phiri is a naturalised South African who believes that to become a successful African businessman one must be steeped in the African values of Ubuntu and com-



mitment to the sustainable development in communities one operates. This – according to Phiri – is what differentiates him from the non-African foreign investors whose key mission has been to exploit the continent's resources without any commitment to developing the communities that are the historical owners of those resources.

“What we see in Africa today are the holes left by those whose mission was to exploit Africa for its natural resources. As a businessman I believe I had the choice of repeating what the exploiters did to the continent – but that would be contrary to my upbringing as an African child”, says Phiri.

It is this upbringing that drives Phiri to establishing sustainable relationships with the government officials as well members of the communities where his company operates.

“It is win-win situation wherein the government officials – who normally know the needs of the community – serve as a sounding board for us. This helps us to understand the needs of



*New classroom at the new school Simbi Phiri has built.*

the communities. The relationships we also establish with communities create an atmosphere of trust and security – something every business needs to run successfully in a given community.

“European investors invest in Africa and then take their profits out of the continent. As an African company Khato Civils invests money in Africa and ensures that the profits generated stay in the continent.”

Phiri also credits the financial success of the company to a business model he has adopted. Instead of depending on hiring equipment one of





Khato Civils business drive has been the acquisition of heavy plant equipment.

“Khato Civils buys and owns its heavy plant equipment – this has alleviated the costs of having to hire equipment and also enhanced our asset base – by having our own mechanics and workshop, we are also able to uphold our standards and timelines”, says Phiri.

Currently the company is estimated to own over R2 billion worth of heavy equipment.

Phiri says one of the advantage Khato Civils has over its competitors is its skilled personnel which delivers quality and efficient service to its clientele.

“We employ very skilled professionals and pay them salaries commensurate to their skills and performance. We also have an effective skills development programme that ensures we sustain our skills level.”

Khato Civils also has a bursary scheme and an internship programme for training engineers. The company spends up to R3 million per annum on bursaries.

“We are committed to developing skills among – especially the African youth – to create jobs and contribute towards sustainable development in the continent.”

Another feather in Khato Civils' cap is its corporate social investment programme – which has seen the company building roads, schools, clinics, community halls, houses and even police stations in different communities.

These include building a new R5 million-worth wing at the previously dilapidated Kwamendo Police Station in Mchinji Village – besides the new wing the company also donated furniture, five motorcycles and a Ford Ranger for the police officers. Also in Malawi Khato Civils has spent another R5 million renovating an old clinic and building houses for the medical staff. Another major project that the company has embarked on in Malawi involves rebuilding an old village where Phiri owns a farm. The project involved building new houses with electricity and running water for 50



*Classrooms with fitted with desks.*

families – and opening a borehole for the villagers have water for their agricultural activities.

“I rebuilt the village because it is inhuman to live on an island of wealth surrounded by a sea of poverty”, explains Phiri.

The Khato Civils' supremo says besides it being a legislative requirement – his company's corporate social investment programme is driven by the spirit of Ubuntu and a commitment to empowering communities wherein it operates.

“Growing up in a village in Malawi I have seen poverty but also learned about the value of sharing. I got to understand that communities share the little that they have to benefit everyone including the less fortunate. I now have the means to contribute to the development of communities by identifying what kind of resources are needed and provide those resources. I grew up in poverty and know what it means not to have things one needs to survive.”

Communities in South Africa have also benefited from Khato Civils' generosity including building houses for the indigent, equipment for schools, improving sporting facilities and supporting projects by community-based organisation.

Phiri points out that to ensure sustainability in some of its CSI projects his company has offered employment to some of the struggling beneficiaries.

One such beneficiary is 51 year-old



*A semidetached teachers house at the new school.*

Joyce Ditshego who is now employed as a cleaner at the company's headquarters in Midrand. Ditshego's father is the late former Umkhonto we Sizwe operative Johannes Ditshego – who used his home in Pitsane next to the Botswana border as conduit to smuggle young activities from Alexandra and then Kwandebele into Botswana for training as MK cadres.

As the breadwinner Ditshego's death left his family indigent. Phiri was then approached by the now Limpopo Premier Stan Mathabatha for assistance. A six-roomed house was built for the Ditshego family in Pitsane but upon realising that the family did not have any sustainable source of income – Phiri offered Joyce a job – so she can support her mother and her siblings.

The impact of this gesture can be read from Joyce's response. She only has praise for “Ntate Phiri.”

**“He has changed my life – because of him I can now take care of my family.”**



# Tycoon Simbi Phiri hands over K85mil Police building to Malawi govt: Kamwendo Police Unit in Mchinji

December 13, 2016 Sarah Munthali

**Government has commended Mchinji Businessman and Philanthropist Simbi Ashan Phiri for personally funding a newly constructed Kamwendo Police Unit in Mchinji at an estimated cost of K85 million.**

**S**peaking when he received the facility on behalf government on Monday, Minister of Home Affairs and Internal Security Grace Chiumia commended the South African based businessman for the donation, saying it would ease challenges faced by the police in the district.

"Simbi Phiri has shown that he has a giving heart hence the donation to the community, We appreciate the good relationship you have with the government, This is a good gesture, and patriotism at its best," She said.

Besides the Police unit, Phiri also donated furniture, a vehicle (a Ford ranger) and five motorcycles to ease mobility among police officers in their law enforcing duties.

Senior Chief Mkanda commended Phiri for his contribution to development projects in Mchinji.

"What you are doing for the people of Mchinji is of huge significance. Not long ago you also handed over Tembwe Health centre to the people of Mchinji. You are a real son of the land," said Mkanda in reference to the K200 Million health facility which Simbi renovated

Inspector General of Police Lexter Kachama said the new offices will enable police staff at Kamwendo have a decent place to operate from.

"What we have witnessed today is the best definition of a good working re-



*New Kamwendo Police Unit pic Sarah Munthali MANA*



*Simbi Phiri handing over the motor cycle to Inspector general Kachama*



*Minister Grace Chiumia greets Simbi Phiri at Kamwendo Unit pic Sarah Munthali*



*Vehicle donated by Simbi*

lationship between police and citizens. The battle against crime cannot be won by police alone, it requires community involvement. We at Malawi police Service do not take this gesture by Simbi Phiri for granted," He said.

Speaking in an interview after the handover ceremony Simbi Ashan Phiri who is also chairperson of Khato Holdings, a Civil Engineering Company based in South Africa said he funded

the construction of the police Unit after noting the poor state it was in.

Simbi Phiri also rejected rumours that he gives back to the community because he is eyeing a political seat.

"I do my businesses in South Africa and Botswana and I am successful there, I have heard the rumours that I want to join politics but this is not true," He said, adding he interacts with all political parties in the country and his donations are non-partisan.

Apart from the construction of the new office block which will be used as Victim support Unit, Phiri also renovated the old Kamwendo Police unit.

The prominent businessman also donated a borehole at Mchinji Police Station worth K6 Million.





# Government Hails Businessman Simbi Phiri For Constructing A Multimillion Police Unit In Mchinji

By Malawi Voice Reporter on December 12, 2016

Government of Malawi has commended Mchinji-based businessman, Simbi Ashani Phiri, of Khato Civils for personally funding key development projects in his district of origin thereby aiding government in service delivery to its citizens.

**D**uring an official handover of a newly-constructed police unit at Kamwendo, Minister of Internal Affairs and Home Security Grace Obama Chiumia said government finds Simbi's contribution to society as priceless.

"Government is very grateful for such a gesture. We appreciate the relationship you have with government and President Professor Arthur Peter Mutharika. This is patriotism at its best," said the minister.

Besides the police unit, Simbi also donated a vehicle and five motorcycles to ease mobility among police officers in their law enforcing duties.

In his address T/A Mkanda thanked Simbi for his timely and selfless intervention towards development of the area.

"What you do in this area is of huge significance to say the least. Not long ago you also handed over the new Tembwe Health Centre to people of his area. You are a real son of the land," said T/A Mkanda in reference to the K200 million health facility.

Taking his turn, Police Inspector General Leckson Kachama said police officers at Kamwendo have just had their work eased with the donation.

"What we have witnessed today is the best definition of a good working relationship between police and citizens. The battle against crime can't be won



*Simbi Cuts The Ribbon To Mark The Official Opening Of The Polic Unit*



*Inside The Police Unit*



*Kachama Commending Simbi For The New Police Unit*



*Simbi and Chiuma Interacting during the event*

by police only, it requires community involvement. We at Malawi Police Service do not take this gesture by Mr Simbi for granted," he said.

Kachama added that the new offices will enable police staff at Kamwendo have decent place to operate from.

People from the area interviewed randomly said Simbi has become a beacon of hope in the area because he is injecting his money into key projects that are improving livelihoods in many aspects.



*Simbi and Chiuma Interacting during the event*



# Minister Kumpalume hails Mchinji businessman Simbi for constructing hospital

November 17, 2016  
Sarah Munthali – Mana

**A Mchinji businessman Simbi Phiri on Wednesday handed over Tembwe Health Centre he renovated and constructed to the tune of K200 million to the Ministry of Health in Mchinji.**

Receiving the facility on behalf of government, Minister of Health Peter Kumpalume hailed the good gesture by the South African based businessman Phiri for funding the construction of the hospital.

“I am impressed with condition of this facility, it is a generous gift from Simbi Phiri I am grateful for the donation because it would have taken my ministry time to bring this facility to this state, he has spent a lot of money upgrading this facility and it is a big gift to the community here,” He said.

Kumpalume urged Malawians to emulate the good example set by Phiri to support communities who are in need, especially health services.

“Most of the time there are Malawians who have money, but they wouldn’t give a penny to anybody, we wait for people from Europe to give us aid, when we can give something to our neighbour, let us contribute to the society, we are not helping government but community,” He added.

Kumpalume then urged people of Tembwe to ensure the facility is properly taken care of and maintained.

He said his ministry is developing an infrastructure plan that would help district health and council officials to make a plan on what needs to be done in health facilities to ensure the facilities are maintained and availability of resources in different parts of the country.

In his speech, Simbi Phiri who is



*Kumpalume touring the facility with Simbi Phiri and other officials*



*Kumpalume (centre) with Simbi Phiri right at the health centre pic Sarah munthali MANA*

also the Executive Chairman of Khato Holdings, a civil engineering company in South Africa, said he decided to construct the health centre because of its pathetic state.

“As someone who comes from this area Tembwe in Traditional Authority Mlonjeni, I felt bad when I saw the facility, which was given to us by donors in a bad state, I thought I should contribute towards the community I come from and it has cost me Four Million Rands ,” He said.

The renovation of the facility includes



*One of the staff houses at Tembwe Health centre renovated by Simbi Phiri*

the out patient, maternity wings, offices, a new guardian shelter, water tanks and staff houses among other things.





## Simbi Phiri invests K1 billion in decent homes for ‘neighbours’ in Mchinji



Lumbe village in Mchinji transformed by Simbi Phiri

**February 12, 2018**  
**Nyasa Times Reporter**

**Malawian billionaire business tycoon, Simbi Phiri has undertaken another ‘humanitarian’ construction project in Mchinji**

**H**e has provided decent houses and accommodation for the people of Lumbe Village for free after constructing and furnishing a primary school, including building teachers’ houses in his home village of Chembe in Traditional Authority Mazengera in Lilongwe.

Lumbe Village in Traditional Authority Mlonyeni in Mchinji borders Simbi Farm.

The village is a typical Malawian village characterized by deep-rooted poverty where villagers live in grass

thatched huts and consume water from unprotected sources, including wells, streams and rivers. Electricity has also been a far-fetched dream.

However, the story is completely different today.

In a typical spirit of good neighbourliness, Simbi Phiri has coughed 20 million South African Rands (about 1 billion Malawi Kwacha) to face-lift Lumbe Village and comprehensively transform villagers’ livelihood.

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lion Malawi Kwacha) to face-lift Lumbe Village and comprehensively transform villagers’ livelihood.

A tour of the village by Nyasa Times recently, revealed an on-going massive construction project in Lumbe Village, where grass thatched huts and houses, built with raw wood and mud, are being demolished and replaced with modern dwelling houses.

Simbi Phiri has constructed over 50 houses built with modern materials including cement blocks, tiles, steel windows and door frames and iron roofing sheets

Out of over 50 houses, 25 are stand-alone houses. While about 10 blocks are containing three houses each.

According to Village Headman Lumbe, there are about 55 families in his village and that therefore each family will have their own modern dwelling house.

He said all houses are self-con-



Group village headman Lumbe so impressed with Simbi for the development



Simbi Phiri has constructed over 50 houses built with modern materials



Simbi has replaced grass thatched house with decent accomodation

tained, with a shower room and toilet, and a kitchen.

"I am lost for words. This is unprecedented and unbelievable; I am extremely excited," VH Lumbe told Nyasa Times in an interview, further explaining that the families have an average of seven (7) children each.

"Some houses are three bed-roomed while others have two rooms but all the houses have toilets and a shower room inside. We have our own Area 18 neighbourhood right here Mchinji," joked the seemingly excited village headman.

He added: "The houses are spacious enough to cater for our big families. We are all extremely grateful to Mr. Simbi Phiri and his entire family for the once-in-a-lifetime tranformation of my village."

The Village head therefore told Nyasa Times that Simbi Phiri acquired land in Lumbe village when he was still in his youthful days.

"When he came asking for a piece of land here some decades ago, i never thought he had such big plans for this area. Look at his farm, nobody would believe that it is in Lumbe village, this is where he stays when he is in Malawi. In the farm, there is a three storey mansion, and other dozens of houses for his children and siblings.

"Every time he is at his farm he

normally walks to my house and one day he told me that he does not like to see his farm surrounded by muddy huts and grass thatched houses. Months after we had this discussion, i saw government officials coming to conduct a survey for my village. It is when i realised that my friend Simbi has lived to his word. Construction is moving at a fast pace and we will be moving into the new houses in less than two months time," explained Lumbe.

Meanwhile, the project will also see the installation of solar electricity to cater for each house and piped water has already been provided.

Taonga Botolo, Media and Public Relations Manager for Khato Holdings and Spokesperson for Simbi Phiri, confirmed the initiative his boss has undertaken to help improve the people's livelihood especially considering that these families are his 'neighbours'.

"Mr. Phiri grew up in the village, he understands what people in the village go through. As such he was not happy at all to see his neighbours at his farm in Mchinji, living in abject poverty while he and his family lived in comfort next door, it really touched him. He therefore decided to assist each and every family in Lumbe village with a decent house. Consider this as his humble contribution to his neighbours," said Botolo in a brief email response, adding that Simbi



Clean water: One of the kiosks done by Simbi

Phiri thoroughly consulted with Malawi government, through the Social Welfare Department and the District Commissioner's office, among others, before embarking on the massive project.

Simbi Phiri owns one of Africa's leading construction and engineering companies, Khato Civils (Pty) Limited, which is headquartered in Samrand, Johannesburg, South Africa.

Khato is currently implementing a multibillion Kwacha Lake Malawi Water Supply Project, which on completion, will greatly improve water supply in, Salima, Dowa and Lilongwe, Malawi's capital.

The new houses will be ready for occupation and officially commissioned in two months time.