North Rwanda Field

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North Rwanda Field is a part of Rwanda Union Mission in the East-Central Africa Division of Seventh-day Adventists. It was organized 1956; reorganized 1960, 2011; renamed 2012; and reorganized 2014. Its headquarters is in Musanze, Rwanda.

Territory: Burera, Gakenke, Musanze, sectors of Nyabihu, and northern portion of Rulindo, Districts.

Statistics (June 30, 2021): Churches, 293; membership, 141,632; population, 961,500.1

History

In 1921 Henri Monnier and Alfred Matter from Switzerland opened the Rwankeri Mission Station. They had spent one year trying to establish a mission station at Kawangire, in the eastern part of the country, when the local authority requested them to move to the northern part of the Rwanda. At Rwankeri, Henri Monnier faced the challenge of lions killing people and their cattle. He protected the population from these wild animals by shooting the ferocious lions. This endeared people to him and they were inclined to accept his message.2

Unlike other missionaries, Monnier learned the local language and culture very quickly, and this helped him to attract many converts. He contributed a lot to the rapid spread of the gospel in the region. He published a popular grammar book of the Kinyarwanda language for English-speaking missionaries and translated some passages of the Bible, hymns, the baptismal manual, and Adventist doctrines into Kinyarwanda. The first baptism took place in 1924 with two candidates, Yohana Ruvugihomvu and Petero Rukangarajunga.3 Henri Monnier left Rwanda in 1944 after the inauguration of a very impressive church building at the mission station, the Gitwe local church. Seventy years later, in 2015, the church roofing was replaced.

Relocation of the Headquarters Due to Rampant Insecurity

Rwankeri Adventist Mission started in 1922. It was organized as the North Rwanda Field in 1956. The headquarters of the North Rwanda Field remained in Rwankeri until 1997, where the first local church had been organized by Henri Monnier.

The period following genocide against the Tutsis in Rwanda remained a difficult time for the work. Some of the church workers had been killed, while others had fled outside the country. The church had no leadership and
very few ministers had remained in the country. Worse than that, war broke out again in 1997-1998 between the newly-formed Rwandan government and the rebels who were trying to infiltrate from their exile, especially in the Northern Province, to restore their political regime of hatred.

On the morning of June 5, 1997, Rwankeri, the headquarters of the North Rwanda Mission, was attacked and ransacked, and several people were killed, including church workers and some of their family members. The headmaster of Rwankeri Secondary School, Stanislas Ruzibiza, lost four close family members. The Women’s Ministries director of the field, Pacy Ruzibiza, with her three children (a son and two daughters) were killed in their home. The controller of the field lost a daughter. The chief accountant of the field was tragically killed at a nearby tea plantation where he was hiding. The survivors fled towards the Western Province, and the field headquarters was then relocated to Gisenyi.

Two months later, on August 8, 1997, things got worse. As he was working on his regular duties, the field president, Pastor Ruterahagusha Theophas, was ambushed and killed on his way back to Gisenyi.

Pastor Obed Rwibasira was nominated to become the new field president. An action was taken to move the headquarters from Gisenyi to Musanze. For the sake of security, it seemed wise to move from near the border of Congo to a more secure place in the town of Musanze in the Northern Province.

**Rapid Church Growth**

Though moving the headquarters from Rwankeri to Musanze was due to insecurity, in the end it became a blessing, for the church began to grow tremendously. Before 1997 there was one local church in the town of Musanze. Now there are nine local churches, structured into three church districts. The concentration of the membership increased rapidly at a rate of one Adventist out of every four people in Musanze town, compared to one Adventist out of 11 people in the entire field.

**Restructuring of the Fields**

Owing to the rapid increase of membership and the vast territory covered by the field, the North Rwanda Field was split into two new fields in April 2011: North Rwanda Field and North West Rwanda Field. North Rwanda Field, with headquarters in Musanze city, covers the administrative districts of Burera, Gakenke, Musanze, and Rulindo, and a tiny part of the Nyabihu administrative district. North West Rwanda Field, with its headquarters in Rubavu city, covers Ngororero, a large part of Nyabihu, and the Rubavu and Rutsiro administrative districts.

**Conference Inauguration**
At the time of restructuring in April 2011, the North Rwanda Field had 64,648 church members dispersed in 211 local churches. Three years later, in 2014, North Rwanda Field had 228 churches with 80,441 members—an increase of 16,000 members in three years. A new head office of the North Rwanda Field was built close to the headquarters of the Northern Province and next to the Musanze District head office. The North Rwanda Field was organized into the North Rwanda Conference on September 10, 2014.

**Institutions**

North Rwanda Field has various institutions that serve the surrounding communities in terms of health and education. Rwankeri Health Center plays a key role in evangelism. Before 1997 the North Rwanda Field had one secondary school and seven primary schools. Today, six secondary schools impart Adventist education to the youth, namely: Rwankeri Secondary School, Groupe Scloraire Rwankeri, Groupe Scolaire Karinzi, Groupe Scolaire Maya, Groupe Scolaire Nyacyina, and Groupe Scolaire Runoga. In addition, the number of primary schools has doubled to include: Bwuzuri, Gakenke, Gatebe, Joma, Kabona, Kabyaza, Karinzi, Marangara, Maya, Mugamba, Nyacyina, Ruhimbi, Runoga, and Rwankeri.

**Presidents**


**SOURCES**


NOTES


10. A district is a local administrative entity under the province. The Northern Province comprises five districts, and the country comprises 30 districts dispatched into four provinces plus the capital city.

