

Katikamu SDA Secondary School

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Katikamu SDA Secondary School is a registered secondary school owned by the Seventh-day Adventist Church under the jurisdiction of North Buganda Field in Uganda.

Adventism Reaches the Katikamu Village

It is difficult for one to talk about Adventism at Katikamu Village without talking about Eriyasafu Mwanje. The village of Nnongo, Kaswa, near Katikamu, was practically a clan's settlement. E. Mwanje's relatives: parents, grandparents, in-laws, aunties lived in that village. It was a cluster of relatives.

One day, E. Mwanje's grandfather named Yonasani Kyabakola travelled to a location where he met Adventism. When he returned, he called his relatives, including E. Mwanje, and told them of his new religious discovery. The old man could not explain much as to why he had changed from Anglicanism to Adventism. However, he implored his siblings to allow him to invite a teacher from Kireka to come and teach the village about Adventism. Something they overwhelmingly accepted. Then Yonasani Kyabakola went to Kireka Mission and invited Toppenberg to come to his village and explain Adventism to his people, an invitation Toppenberg accepted with pleasure.

V. E. Toppenberg looked for young men in Uganda who could speak English and had a potential to be educated for further missionary service. He sought young people who accept the Adventist message and would be willing to stay on the front lines of the missionary both in the villages and small towns without the impediments of a language or culture. Little did V. E. Toppenberg know that this invitation would lead him to one young man who had the potential to fulfill his above plan.

When V. E. Toppenberg arrived to the village of Nnongo, Kaswa, E. Mwanje was in his bedroom suffering from an eye infection. He heard a stranger talking in English to his mother-in-law, Nakabiri. He came out to translate the English for his mother-in-law. V. E. Toppenberg was surprised that the village had a young man who could speak English well. By the end of the conversation, Toppenberg asked him whether he could be his translator as he presented his Bible series. Mwanje readily accepted. Toppenberg returned to this village several times, because a group was formed who had become interested in the Bible and Adventist faith. Toppenberg and the village group became such close friends that sometimes he slept in their houses to continue to shepherd the group.¹

The nucleus of the early converts included Yonasani Kyabakola, Eriyasafu Mwanje, Ssegirinya (E. Mwanje's brother), Elizabeth Nakabiri (Mother-in-Law of E. Mwanje), Meriseni Zaweede Mwanje (E. Mwanje's wife), Eresi Namuyinga, Suleman Ssentongo, Eresi Besimensi Naburyo, Vasiti Nakafu, and Baluku. These were the first converts in what would become the Nnongo, Kaswa Church near Katikamu. Toppenberg baptized them in the Lumansi River, in the Katikamu area. Katikamu would eventually become the fourth Adventist mission station in Uganda.²

Toppenberg had another important task to handle: the follow-up work to strengthen and expand the congregation. He asked Mwanje to oversee the newly founded village church on a voluntary basis. Mwanje did such a commendable job that Toppenberg asked him to move Mityana and expand the small Mityana congregation. Mwanje was reluctant to accept the offer because he had many acres of cotton and several other money generating projects in his village, which he could not abandon to go to Mityana. When Toppenberg read Isaiah 6:8 to him, Mwanje was touched by the Lord's desperate cry of "whom shall I send and who will go for us?" To Toppenberg's relief, Mwanje answered exactly as Isaiah did: "Here I am, Lord, send me." He packed his bags and went to Mityana. In so doing, Mwanje became officially a church worker in 1936.

Before Mwanje was appointed to go to Mityana, his village church had become vibrant and mission-minded. Due to lack of training, the church decided to preach to the people and communities around the small town of Wobulenzi through singing. People loved the way Adventists were singing the hymns and songs from the official hymn book. One day, they went on their usual singing practice in the small town of Wobulenzi. Sub-County Chief Tito Damulira Mutuluki happened to be in that small town. He enjoyed the singing very much. He invited the group to come to the Sub-County headquarters to sing for him and his staff, something the singing group gladly did. Almost everyone was impressed, including the Sub-County chief. He donated, by leasing for 99 years (until 2042),³ a whole hill of 39 acres of land at Katikamu to the Seventh-day Adventist Church to build a school. This hill became the Fourth Mission Station for Adventism in Uganda in 1943 under the leadership of R. L. Garber.

Although the lease was set to expire in 2042, after Tito Damulira Mutuluki I and his successor Mutuluki II died, Ronald Kyanja Mutuluki III informed the church that he planned to sell the land. If the church could not buy it, he would have to find another buyer.⁴ Central Uganda Conference loaned the money to Katikama school to purchase the land from Mutuluki I's family for 1.2 billion Uganda shillings in 2016.⁵

The Founding of the School

True to the Adventist mission, the Katikamu church started a primary school. In 1961 a Danish missionary by the name of Bucker was the Katikamu Station director. The first headmaster was Henry G. Ssekayita. At this time, a young man apparently over-qualified to teach primary school joined as a teacher just out of his love to work for the church. This was Darlington Ssenkumba. He had studied at Kyambogo Teacher Training College (now Kyambogo University). He trained as a secondary teacher though he began to teach at Katikamu when it was on

the level of Junior Secondary, as it was called in those days, with the intention of building it to a full Senior Secondary School because he loved to work for the Adventist church.⁶

The Katikamu Adventist community started a high school on their own and paid the salaries for the workers. The population in the Secondary Section at the beginning was 200 students; it had both boys' and girls' dormitories. Darlington Ssenkumba became a headmaster at the very beginning of the Secondary Section, in 1968. In that same year, contrary to the fear of the church that the Secondary Section and due to lack of qualified personnel that the government would not grant permission for its registration, the school was indeed registered to be a full senior secondary school. And it was allowed to have an examination center for Cambridge Certificate in 1972, and in this same year, the students sat for their "O" Level. The number of students reached 300.

The names of the earliest School Board that was overseeing both the primary and the starting of the secondary section have survived only with single names:⁷ Pastor Eriyasafu Mwanje (chairperson), Darlington Ssenkumba (secretary), Kaweesa (member), Kakumba (member), Pastor Ssemakula, and Wamala (member).

In 1981 came a civil war under the slogan of "liberating Uganda." The undeclared civil war became a guerrilla war. Ugandans endured five years (1981-1985) of chaos and death. The Katikamu school was at the very epicenter of the so-called "liberation war" in what was known at that time as the "Luweero Triangle." Some teachers left the school, including Darlington Ssenkumba, the founder of the Secondary Section. The school tried to recover after the war under the leadership of a former primary teacher and headmaster Sekayita G. Henry (1986-1987). The school would experience tremendous growth under the leadership of the next headmaster, Dalton Segawa, who led the school from 1988 to 2002.

Developments from 1988 to 2002

When Segawa took over the school, it had an inadequate infrastructure. There were no science laboratories. There were three small buildings that acted as classroom blocks. There were two dilapidated dormitories--one for boys and the other for girls. The capacity of these two dormitories was 65 students, and the ratio of the girls to boys was one to three. The campus was overgrown with grass. The student population including both boarding and day students was a total of 230. There were eight teachers, and none of them were qualified to teach Secondary School. Support staff numbered seven. The Secondary School had only an "O" Level section. There was a very small community church that served as a chapel. Segawa's administration started to improve infrastructure: trimmed the campus grounds, installed the modern gate that made the place look business-like, rehabilitated the buildings, constructed 20 new spacious classrooms, four laboratories, a library with 5,000 books, and a computer room with 160 computers. The boys' dormitory was extended, and a new two-storied girl's dormitory was built. In less than ten years, the school received a Main Hall that had the capacity to seat 2,800 people and a new spacious church building for the community. The school bought 16 acres of land to house the Primary Section.⁸

The school employed qualified staff to teach the students. By 1990, the student population had tripled to 680 students. In a span of less than ten years, the school had 145 teachers and a student population of 2,500. The good performance on government exams (UNEB) of both “O” and “A” levels demonstrated the school’s academic growth. The Katikamu Secondary School became synonymous with good performance in government exams. In 2000, Katikamu won an award in volleyball for the best high school volleyball team in Uganda. In 2001, Katikamu became the best performer in the UNEB exams in the entire country of Uganda.

In 2002, after almost 14 highly productive years at the helm, Dalton Segawa left Katikamu.

More Recent Developments

After Segawa’s departure, the Church officially oversaw the school. In 2016, the Church helped Katikamu to buy land on which it was built. The same year, the school became a full church school and assumed the new name of the Katikamu SDA Secondary School. The vision of the school is: “To be a model secondary school in Uganda and beyond.” And the Mission: “To provide quality holistic education that fosters spiritual growth, self-reliance, and selfless service to humanity.” Its philosophy is to foster “harmonious development of the physical, mental and spiritual faculties of man for the world now and the world to come.”⁹

The 2023-2028 Katikamu SDA Secondary School’s strategic plan says the school is “a Registered Secondary School owned by the Seventh-day Adventist Church under the jurisdiction of North Buganda Field. The school is governed by a Board on behalf of North Buganda Field of SDA Church. The Church and the Board are working together to see to it that it becomes a self-supporting institution of learning that contributes to the Mission of the Church to make disciples and prepare them for His soon return. The Board is also operating it on firm principles spelt out in the Adventist Philosophy of Education, which propagates providing Adventist Education that imparts more than academic knowledge but fosters a balanced development of the whole person—spiritually, intellectually, physically and socially.”¹⁰

The school leadership faces the same three major challenges that many other schools do: increase student enrollment, raise academic performance, and maintain the existing infrastructure and even build new modern buildings.

The Chronology of Headmasters¹¹

Darlington Senkumba (1968-1985); Henry G. Sekayita (1986-1987); Dalton Segawa (1988-2002); Samuel Kyewalyanga (2002-2009); Nyangoma Joseph (2009-2017); Matthew Mutabaazi (2018-2019); Julius Namansa (2019-2021); Paul Dayo (2022-present).

Katikamu SDA Secondary School archives.

Katikamu SDA Secondary School's Strategic Plan 2023-2028.

NOTES

1. Florence Mwanje, interviewed by the author, April 25, 2023; Molly Mwanje Rutagarama, interviewed by the author, May 8, 2023.
2. Ibid.
3. Ronald Kayanja Mutuluki III, the Grandson of Tito Ddamulira Mutuluki I, interviewed by the author, at Katikamu, Luweero District, May 15, 2023.
4. Ronald Kayanja Mutuluki III, interviewed by the author, on May 15, 2023, at Katikamu.
5. The Action No. KSSB/02/07/15.
6. An interview with Darlington Ssenkumba at his Namasuba home by the author on April 12, 2023.
7. Katikamu SDA Secondary School archives accessed by the author on August 2, 2023.
8. Interview with Dalton Segawa, conducted by the author on October 8, 2023, in his office at Entebbe. All information that is written about his administration is the result of this interview.
9. Katikamu SDA Secondary School's Strategic Plan 2023-2028, accessed by the author, May 15, 2023
10. The Chairperson's Message, Pastor David Simwogerere, as found in the Strategic Plan 2023-2028.
11. From the Katikamu SDA Secondary School archives accessed by the author, August 2, 2023.

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