



West Zambia Field office  
Photo courtesy of Southern Zambia Union Conference, Lusaka, Zambia.

## West Zambia Field

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Ndala Kayongo, M.A.PTh. (Adventist University Africa, Nairobi, Kenya) is an ordained Seventh-day Adventist minister who is currently serving as a district pastor in West Zambia Field. He was born on January 1, 1967, and served as a district pastor from 1992-2007, and as the departmental director for Personal Ministries, Youth Ministries, Stewardship & Church Development, Music, Sabbath School, and Family Ministries from 2008-2014, and, recently, as President of West Zambia Field from 2014-2018.

West Zambia Field is a part of the Southern Zambia Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. It is situated in the western part of the Republic of Zambia, called Western province. It was first established in 1946 as Barotseland Mission Field, and later reorganized on July 5, 1972,<sup>1</sup> to include North-Western province, as an attached field of the Zambia Union Mission. It was given full field status in April 1988.<sup>2</sup> In 1996, West Zambia Field was realigned to transfer the North-Western province to the Copperbelt Zambia Field. The headquarters office of West Zambia Field is in Mongu, the principal town of Western province.

West Zambia Field has 134 organized churches with a membership of 86,994<sup>3</sup> and Sabbath School membership of 106,371, against a population of 902,974.<sup>4</sup> The field is divided into 18 mission districts, under the pastoral leadership of 12 ordained ministers, five licensed pastors, and four volunteer leaders. The field territory has a total land area of 126,385 square kilometers, making Western province the largest administrative region in Zambia. There are several languages or dialects spoken in the province and some of these are Silozi as the principal language spoken in the Western province (Baroste land), Kwangwa, Luvala, Mashi, Mbukushu, Mbunda, Kaonde, Kwamulonga, Nkoya, Nyengo, Totela, and Kwamashi.

### The Origin of SDA Work in the Region

The Seventh-day Adventist work in the Western province of Zambia is generally believed to have started with the missionary activities of Samuel M. Konigsmacher, his wife, his son Arthur, and B. M. Heald.<sup>5</sup> They entered the region from Sesheke, a town bordering Caprivi strip in Namibia with 13 oarsmen on April 20, 1928, and arrived at Liumba

Hill on May 29, 1928. Liumba Hill is a hilly place about 16 kilometers (ten miles) west of Kalabo district in the northern part of Western province.<sup>6</sup>

There are at least three views on how the Seventh-day Adventist missionaries entered Barotseland proper, as it was then called. The first Adventist church missionaries entered Zambia in 1903 and settled at Rusangu in 1905. Rusangu became the base for the evangelization of the whole country. Regarding Adventism's entry into Barotseland, one view holds that Konigsmacher went into Barotseland after Robert Njekwa, a son-in-law of the Barotse Paramount King, Yeta III, came in contact with the Adventist message at Rusangu. It is said that Robert Njekwa had traveled to the Tongaland (Southern Zambia) in search of employment and ended up at Rusangu before 1922. Later he led a team of 11 silozi-speaking men to Rusangu, who had become impressed with his new faith and the miraculous healing of his sick brother after much prayer. King Yeta III was also impressed with Robert's faith and requested that a medical doctor be sent to his area. According to Matandiko, "This was how Barotseland became open to the Advent gospel."<sup>7</sup>

Zephaniah Imasiku Wamulume, the grandson of Robert Njekwa, having been born in 1935 at Sitoti Mission, added that his grandfather was working for an Indian shop owner in Lusaka as a store manager. Later he was transferred to Mazabuka in the Southern province to work in the same capacity. That is where he met Ishee Nyiwe Imasiku, a son-in-law to the king, who influenced Njekwa to take up teaching at Rusangu as he had already attained Standard VI. Imasiku was also the one who later influenced the royal family to invite the missionaries.<sup>8</sup> This view also suggests that the Sabbath truth was known in Barotseland before the arrival of Konigsmacher and his team in 1928.

The second view of the entry of the Adventist message into Barotseland is that Sesheke district was the launching pad. It is believed that a native worker, Gladstone Imasiku, had made contacts with missionaries at Kalimbeza Mission station in the Caprivi Strip (Namibia), near Sesheke, even before Konigsmacher went there. He established a group of Sabbath keepers in Sesheke. One of them, Davison Lisulo, a native who had made remarkable progress in Bible knowledge, also went to the missionaries at Kalimbeza.<sup>9</sup> Having been entrusted with the Kalimbeza Mission station, Lisulo later reported in 1926 that they were collecting poles to build a church, possibly at Silolo where the mission station in Sesheke was established. This too was before the arrival of Konigsmacher in Barotseland in 1928.

Wamulume also adds that it was Chief Chikamatondo of Caprivi Strip who asked missionaries to establish schools in his area. Konigsmacher, therefore, went to Caprivi in response to this request and only later did he proceed to Liumba Hill.<sup>10</sup> W. H. Branson, president of the African Division at that time, also held the view that Adventism entered Barotseland through Kalimbeza station near Sesheke.<sup>11</sup> This view also confirms that there were already native converts to Adventism in Barotseland before the missionaries reached Liumba Hill.

The third view states that the Adventist missionaries entered Barotseland in response to a "Macedonian call" for teachers in the region. B. M. Heald wrote, "The Macedonian cry 'Come and help us' is coming to our office from all over Northern Rhodesia. Our mission directors (at Rusangu) are beginning to reach some of these many calls for teachers. But the most important to date, is the call from the northwest corner of our field lying in Barotseland, representing 250,000 people."<sup>12</sup> Heald quotes Gladstone, a Barotseland explorer and companion of Konigsmacher who wrote to the mission leaders abroad saying, "The people are asking us to send them a teacher early this coming year, Please sir, delay not to answer this call."<sup>13</sup>

This call was sent because the only school in the Kalabo area, operated by the Parish Society Missions, had closed leaving the people without a school or a teacher. Konigsmacher records, "The Paris Society had a school in the Imilangu sub-district but had just moved it away. This left the field clear for us so we could truthfully say there were no out-schools of any other society in the district. Other places were suggested where many natives were to be found, but they did not seem to be as healthy as Liumba Hill."<sup>14</sup>

It seems plausible to conclude that the third view is most likely true. Liumba Hill (also known as Upper Zambezi Mission) was the birthplace of all Adventist missions in Barotseland, and it was from there that many pioneers of the mission work in Barotseland went to spread the Adventist message.

Liumba Hill Mission was established among the indigenous tribe called the Mbunda of Liumba or "Mawiko" (which means people from the west), as the missionaries called them. This section of Barotseland had a larger population living in "more than 230 villages."<sup>15</sup> G. S. Joseph describes what the Mbunda people were like when missionaries arrived there: "The Mawika people are a very primitive people and many of them have never yet heard the story of the love of Jesus. Witchcraft, in all of its branches, seems to flourish among these people to a greater extent than we have seen in any other part of Northern Rhodesia."<sup>16</sup> And yet this did not discourage the missionaries, for Joseph also wrote,

There is probably no other place in this field where there is a better opening for some good evangelists and teachers. As soon as funds are available we hope to conduct efforts and open schools. When this can be done, the prospects are good for a large harvest of souls and the development of a substantial work.<sup>17</sup>

As a demonstration of this potential, five days after the missionaries arrived, 275 people gathered to attend the first Sabbath worship on June 2, 1928.<sup>18</sup>

From Liumba Hill, teacher-evangelists were sent to open the following mission stations: (1) in Senanga District: Sitoti, Lui Wanyau, and Lui Mweemba; (2) in Mongu District: Mukukutu, Tapo, and Nasilimwe; (3) in Kalabo District: Nyengo and Siluwe; and (4) in the North-Western province, stations were opened in Kabompo, Chavuma, Mwinilunga, Solwezi, and Maninga districts. By 1944, C. A. Bradley would describe how far the work had spread in Barotseland,

saying, “Our work at present is along the Zambezi River from Katimo, Molilo [Katima Mulilo], to near Mongu, and from there up along the Loanginga [Lwanginga] River to the Angola border, covering an area about four hundred to five hundred miles long.”<sup>19</sup>

Although it is difficult to single out names of local leaders who joined hands with the missionary pioneers in spreading the work, a few names of lay workers stand out: Mr. Kabalanyana, Njekwa Wamulume, and the several pastors such as: J. M. Kalaluka, R. Mwakoi, E. H. B. Siamaunder, S. Shapa, P. Simakando, G. Sikongo, M. Tabakamulamu, Simangolwa, R. Ilukui, D. Samangoma, and many others. Some of these and others were recognized for their outstanding work during the 1990 West Zambia Field session by the Field Executive Director in his report: Pastors J. Malinki, J. M. Kalaluka, E. H. B. Siamaunder, A. M. Kawila, P. N. Silume, J. M. Sitwala, J. Katungu, G. Amatende, Mr. Mwambwa, I. N. Ikachana, and Mr. Muapela.<sup>20</sup>

When Pastor Siamaunder was director of the Sitoti Mission west of the Zambezi near Senanga, Sitoti Mission Church started a branch Sabbath School in Senanga town around 1972. The people who started the branch included Madam Inutu Wamulume, Simbuwa Musiwa, Ireen Sikweti, and a young man named Mundia Muyambango. Between 1974 and 1978 the branch grew through the influence of Senanga Secondary School students. Some of those students were Evans Muhau Sitibekiso, Mubita Nyamba, Webster Mukoma (who years later became Zambia Union Mission President), Patron Mukoma, Ireen Sikweti, Ilukena Monde, and Akakulubelwa. They used to worship in the United Church of Zambia building while the owners used it on Sundays, until later when Webster Moola Mukela, a Seventh-day Adventist and former headmaster of Sitoti Mission School, came to Senanga Secondary School as headmaster and accommodated the Adventist group at the secondary school. The branch continued to grow through the effort of the students who held evangelistic campaigns every school holiday, until 1985 when the group was organized into a church known today as Senanga Central Church. The number of organized churches in Senanga has since increased to 11.<sup>21</sup>

In Lukulu district the work was started in 1968 through the effort of Mulele’s family. Mulele was working as “Gun Tax” revenue collector. As a Seventh-day Adventist believer, wherever he went to do his civic duties, he conducted door-to-door witnessing visits in such places as the villages of Simukiya and Malunda. Using this approach, he obtained interests and converts such as Simate Sawatipa. Mulele started a branch Sabbath School in his home. The branch later moved to Lwancumwa village where it was organized into Lukulu Main Church. The church has not grown much. To date there are only three organized churches in Lukulu.<sup>22</sup>

To the east, in Kaoma District, the work started as a branch of Mongu Main Church, under the pastoral leadership of A. S. Mwinga. The families of Simon Vidonga from Zimbabwe and Ngandu from Southern province started worshipping at a place called Chilombo. Two pastors, S. Shapa and A. Mukoboto conducted the first evangelistic campaign in Kaoma. Pastor Mwinga went and conducted another campaign. Around 1978, Kaoma Secondary School students such as Mubita M. Ndunga, Evans Aongola, Monde Mulele, and others helped to strengthen the work and establish the church.

The students were supported by elderly people like Muchala Situtu, Mubita Imasiku (a District Education officer), and Kalumba Liato, the secondary school boarding master. The branch was relocated to the secondary school and all Adventist families in Kaoma worshipped there with the pupils. Evangelistic campaigns that were conducted in other places outside the township, such as Namilangi and Munkuye, started new congregations that were later organized into churches. The Adventist work in Kaoma grew until P. N. Silume was sent there to serve as their first pastor. The branch became organized as Kaoma Main Church in 1980. Today Kaoma district has 26 organized churches.<sup>23</sup>

In the North-Western province, the Adventist message spread through the work of Benjamin Joshua Lihonde and his wife Doreen Lihonde who lived in Zambezi district. They had been members of Christian Missions to Many Lands (CMML) when Pastors A. Mukoboto, S. Shapa, and others went there to conduct an evangelistic campaign in April 1973. Lihonde offered to interpret for them into the local Luvale language. Then both he and his wife converted to Adventism. They became the pioneers of the Adventist church there. Doreen Lihonde was interviewed in 2018. From Zambezi district the work spread to Kabompo, Mwinilunga, Maninga, Chavuma, and many other places within the Northwestern province.<sup>24</sup>

## Organizational History of West Zambia Field

In 1946, 18 years from the arrival of Adventist missionaries at Liumba Hill, Barotseland Mission Field was organized. It was composed of two European-directed mission stations: Northern Barotseland Mission with headquarters at Liumba Hill, and Southern Barotseland Mission with headquarters at Sitoti. These two missions were merged into one, and Delmar T. Burke was chosen as president of the field. The new field headquarters office was placed in the central town of Mongu, where it is still located.<sup>25</sup> But since there was no house for the president in Mongu, the administration of Barotseland Mission Field was done from the Zambesi Union Mission headquarters in Bulawayo, Southern Rhodesia.<sup>26</sup> The construction of the president’s house in Mongu was expected to be completed around April 1951. That same year, the construction of the first church building in Barotseland Field was completed at Liumba Hill Mission, and the dedication ceremony took place on October 13, 1951.<sup>27</sup>

E. A. Trumper, who was serving as president of the Barotseland Mission Field in 1951, gave a detailed description of the state of the work in the field.<sup>28</sup> The working staff was small, consisting of four European families and three single workers. Another single worker was overseas on furlough and a doctor and his family had been appointed to join the work force. There were two ordained African ministers, of which one was serving as a district director, while the other one was both a field evangelist and a departmental secretary. The field had 20 schools, which were making good



progress.

The challenges in Barotseland Field were great, and the field was critically understaffed. Yet the cooperative spirit was good and conscientious industry among the workers was compared to that found recorded in the *Acts of the Apostles*. The building program was always difficult because of transportation challenges, but the improved relationship with the paramount chief and the government Department of African Education were something to be thankful for. A small program of mass literacy greatly aided the preparation of converts for baptism and church membership.

Another anticipated addition to the Barotseland Mission Field was the establishment of the Barotseland Medical Mission at Yuka near Kalabo. It had been noted that the region had all “the diseases that [were] so prevalent in every part of Africa.”<sup>29</sup> It was also considered to be “one of the largest concentrations of lepers anywhere in the world.”<sup>30</sup> Both the chief of the area and the government of Northern Rhodesia were favorable to the idea of establishing the hospital and were giving assistance. The task of building the hospital fell on F. G. Thomas, the director of Liumba Hill Mission.<sup>31</sup> The importance of the establishment of the Barotseland Medical Mission at Yuka was that it would bring the number of European-directed mission stations in Barotseland Mission Field to four. The headquarters mission station in Mongu would help them to reach areas that were neither accessible from Sitoti station in the south, nor from Liumba Hill in the north, and the hospital at Yuka would open up a completely new phase of work.<sup>32</sup>

Between 1958 and 1972, Barotseland Mission Field ceased to exist, and its mission stations became part of the Northern Rhodesia Field with headquarters at Chisekesi in Southern province. Then, in 1972, the Barotseland region became the West Zambia Field, attached to the newly organized Zambia Union Mission. A committee was appointed that supervised the work from the union headquarters in Lusaka. The field’s territory consisted of the Western and North-Western provinces. Pastors or teacher-evangelists were appointed to manage the work in the two provinces.

At the time of its organization in 1972, West Zambia Field had a membership of 1,231 in nine organized churches. Then in 1978, a move to advance the organization of the work in the field was taken. The West Zambia Field Committee met to pass a recommendation to appoint J. M. Sitwala as president for West Zambia Field. The recommendation was approved by a vote of the Zambia Union executive committee held at Mongu Central Church on September 18, 1978. Those present at this meeting were H. E. Marais, A. S. Muunyu, A. Kawila, D. L. Thomas, S. Shapa, J. M. Sitwala and A. E. Harms.<sup>33</sup> The departmental directors of the field were to be those of the Zambia Union. The full field status was granted ten years later in April 1988, when A. S. Mwinga and Colin M. Imakando were elected as president and secretary/treasurer respectively.

Beginning in 1978, when J. M. Sitwala was appointed as president of the West Zambia Field, there have been ten presidents who led the field. However, Pastor Sitwala is recognized as the pioneering leader and organizer of the present West Zambia Field. He had served the church in many capacities before becoming the president of the field. His greatest passion as a leader was in youth ministries for which he will always be fondly remembered. Furthermore, one of the greatest achievements of the West Zambia Field, and Pastor Sitwala in particular, was the baptism of the Paramount King of Barotseland, *Litunga* Ilute Yeta IV in 1980.<sup>34</sup> It was done against the royal custom that did not permit a commoner to touch the King, let alone to baptize him. After Sitwala, W. S. Simatele follows as the longest serving president of the field, whose eight-year tenure ran from 1999 to 2007. During this period, a concerted effort towards conference status project (CSP) started. This targeted membership growth, financial growth, infrastructure development, and employee empowerment in terms of transport loans. There were remarkable achievements in each targeted area so that the field managed to apply for conference status.<sup>35</sup>

## Evangelism and the Field’s Future Outlook

Evangelism in the West Zambia Field is challenging due to several reasons such as the vastness of the area, the presence of wide plains with sandy places that are not easily passable, and under-development, a factor which negatively impacts the church’s capacity to be self-supporting. In view of these challenges, field leaders identified lay involvement and empowerment as the most effective evangelistic method to yield successful results. All the members, who including the youth, Adventist Men, Dorcas Society, Women’s Ministries, and Literature Evangelists, are challenged to evangelize the areas near them with a person-to-person approach.

Recently a term, “Land Running Method,” whereby evangelistic campaigns are done in small groups without many resources, has motivated everyone and produced many baptisms. Through this and other methods, more than 8,000 baptisms were achieved in 2016, and more than 11,000 souls were baptized by September 2017. The field’s mission statement reads as follows: “The Mission of West Zambia Field is to call all people to become disciples of Jesus Christ.”

West Zambia Field’s evangelistic work is felt everywhere through its institutions such as Sitoti Basic School and Clinic, Liumba Basic School and Clinic, Lui-Mweemba Basic School, Nyengo Primary and Secondary School, Nasilimwe Basic School, Njonjolo Clinic, and Nangalata School. Yuka Hospital in Kalabo, a medical institution of the Southern Zambia Union Conference, has done a lot to evangelize the communities around Kalabo district and beyond through the provision of healthcare services. In 2018, West Zambia Field membership stood at 86,994, with 134 churches. The field’s growth rate averages 3,479 baptisms per year, the highest in 45 years since it was organized in 1972. The year 2018 also marks the ninetieth anniversary of the establishment of Liumba Hill Mission in 1928.

## Barotseland Mission Field Presidents:

D. T. Burke (1946-1949); E. A. Trumper (1951-1953); F. G. Thomas (1954-1956); G. S. Glass (1957-1958).

## West Zambia Field Presidents:

J. M. Sitwala (1978-1983); M. Katungu (1983-1986); A. S. Mwinga (1986-1990); R. S. Mulemwa (1991-1993); W. M. Mukoma (1993-1995); H. S. Akombwa (1995-1999);

W. S. Simatele (1999-2006); M. Muvwimi (2006-2010); M. P. Muyunda (2010-2014);

N. Kayongo (2014 - 2018); M. Situmbaeto (2019-present).

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