



Yuka Adventist Hospital

Photo courtesy of Liwakala Muyoba.

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## LIWAKALA MUYOBA

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Yuka Adventist Mission Hospital is owned and operated by the Southern Zambia Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.

## Developments that Led to the Establishment of the Hospital

The history of Christian mission in the western part of Zambia, formerly known as Barotseland, should be understood in the light of collaboration between the indigenous peoples and European or American missionaries. In 1902, Litunga<sup>1</sup> Lubosi Lewanika of Barotseland visited England to attend the coronation of King Edward VII. On his return, he invited more missionaries to enter his territory and teach his people. At the time, the Paris Evangelical missionaries were already established in his territory. W.H. Anderson, a Seventh-day Adventist missionary based at Solusi Mission in Zimbabwe (then known as Southern Rhodesia) accepted the invitation. The result was the establishment of Rusangu Mission in 1905, in the present Southern Province of Zambia.<sup>2</sup>

The Adventist missionaries could not be allowed entry into Barotseland proper because of the presence of the Paris Evangelical Missionaries. Despite the mission at Rusangu recording successes, the missionaries were still determined to expand their presence as far as Barotseland.<sup>3</sup> Their first station in the region was at Kalimbeza, in the present Zambezi region of Namibia. From Kalimbeza, a medical missionary, Elder Samuel M. Koningmacher, of German origin, persisted until, through the influence of Pastor Gladstone, a son-in-law of the Barotse king, he was allowed to establish a mission at Liumba (Liumbu) Hill in the present Kalabo district of Western Province of Zambia. <sup>4</sup> Liumba Hill Mission, near Chief Mwene Mundu's palace, was established in 1928.

During the period before Zambia's independence from colonial rule in 1964, Liumba Hill Mission developed into a mission station of significance, with a boarding school, a dispensary, and a church. It became the center from which various mission schools were coordinated.<sup>5</sup> Yuka Mission Hospital started as an out-station of Liumba Hill mission dispensary. The missionaries determined to set up a health institution,<sup>6</sup> in response to the request of the Barotse king and the people of the area.<sup>7</sup>

## Founding of the Institution

Yuka Adventist Mission Hospital is a 120-bed hospital located in Yuka village along the Kalabo-Sikongo road in Kalabo district, about eight kilometers west of the Kalabo administrative and commercial center. Yuka (Dzuka) is a Mbunda word that means "tired," and hence in need of "rest."

Plans to establish a hospital at Yuka began in the early 1950s. The earliest medical works at Yuka were done by visiting missionaries from Liumba, with the help of David Makasa Mukoboto. Mukoboto was a native of the Yuka area who was educated at Liumba Hill mission. He was trained in basic medical services by the missionaries at Liumba Hill dispensary, and was tasked to attend to patients at Yuka on certain days of the week. He also taught practical hygiene to people living in the surrounding villages. Mukoboto's work was reinforced by missionaries from Liumba as they conducted their mobile clinics. The medical significance of Liumba's outpost at Yuka could not be ignored by both the missionaries and the local people. At the time, there was no hospital in Kalabo, so

Liumba was the only medical center of significance apart from the dispensary at the Boma.

Around 1951, the missionaries at Liumba began to lay plans to establish a hospital at Yuka. Yuka was chosen as the site because of the great need for the service at the mobile clinics, and because of its nearness to Kalabo Boma, the district headquarters. Missionaries, Elder Fred G. Thomas, director of Liumba Hill Mission, and Elder Tarr promoted the proposal of establishing a hospital, and the people supported the idea. With the support of the worldwide Seventh-day Adventist Church through prayers and offerings, resources were mobilized for the project. The local people participated in the construction of the facility, including working as bricklayers and carpenters. Building sand was collected from Kanchumwa, a few kilometers west of Yuka village.

## History of the Institution

Yuka Mission Hospital opened its doors to the public in 1953, with an Out Patients Department. Funding for building the hospital came from the 13<sup>th</sup> Sabbath offering overflow of the third quarter of 1953.<sup>8</sup> As buildings were being completed, children's and women's maternity wards were added, and later, the male and female wards, and an isolation ward for tuberculosis patients.<sup>9</sup> In 1955 the facility started operation as a full-fledged hospital. The first medical director was Dr. J. C. Birkenstock, assisted by Nurse Helen Furber, who was in charge of clinical services. The hospital was run and has continued to be run by a board of management. The first chairperson of the Board was Pastor F. G. Thomas, and the secretary to the Board was Dr. J.C. Birkenstock.<sup>10</sup> Yuka became the first hospital in the vast district of Kalabo. In 1957, the leper village which was at Liumba was also transferred to Yuka.<sup>11</sup>

The primary goal of Yuka Seventh-day Adventist mission hospital is evangelism.<sup>12</sup> Adventist health program evangelistic efforts carry on the work of Christ in reducing physical suffering. As the people receive medical attention, their hearts are opened to the Adventist message. In Adventist health institutions, the sick are taught to commit their cases to the Great Physician, who co-operates with their earnest efforts to regain health, and brings to them the healing of soul as well as of body.<sup>13</sup>

Spiritual nurture was an integral part of the mission work from the establishment of the hospital. The first chaplains after the establishment of the hospital were Pastor Mukoboto and R. M. Shamwembwa, who began their work at the mission in 1972.<sup>14</sup> When no official chaplain served the hospital, ordained elders of the local church continued the chaplaincy ministry. Some of those who acted as chaplains include Elders Mutapila, Siyanga, Kumuyaya, Kalenga Biemba, and Wauna Wauna.<sup>15</sup> In 1989, we find the first mention of the position of the hospital administrator, filled by O. L. Cheatham.<sup>16</sup>

In 1986, the Board and Management of Yuka mission took an action to close the hospital, citing financial challenges and political interference in its operations. This decision by the church was not accepted by the government, which urged the church to find lasting solutions. President of Zambia Dr. Kenneth Kaunda sent

Nalumino Mundia, a minister in the government, to inform the hospital that it would not close. Instead, government support increased for the hospital.<sup>17</sup>

## Historical Role of the Institution

Yuka Mission Hospital has played a significant role in the advancement of the Adventist faith in the area around Kalabo district and beyond. People who came to the hospital for treatment were taught to trust in Jesus, the great physician. A number of people point to Yuka as the place where they met Christ. The hospital improved the health care services available to the people through the introduction of conventional medicine, countering certain health myths prevalent among the people. The mission's approach was not to condemn society's habits, but to offer something better. In addition to medical treatment, the health care services package included lessons on health and nutrition. Through such services, many souls opened their hearts to the Adventist message. The hospital provided treatment for many tropical diseases, including malaria, tuberculosis, leprosy, and abdominal disorders. Yuka hospital served not only the local people of Kalabo, but also those who traveled from distant places because of its renowned, excellent medical service delivery. In 1993, the Zambian government finally recognized Yuka as a 77-bed hospital, although over the past decade it has had around a hundred patients in admission.

The mission has also provided one-year training of medical orderlies. They were trained so that they could join the staff at the hospital, but some found themselves sent to run government health posts outside Yuka mission. The orderlies played a significant role in the improvement of health services among the people. Some of those who underwent the training include Sikwela Nyambe, Sitali Nasilele, George Kameya, and Peter Sandala. A good number of those who underwent the medical orderly training upgraded themselves into full health practitioners in positions such as nurses and clinical officers.<sup>18</sup>

Over the years the population has grown around the hospital, necessitating the establishment of schools and shops near the mission. The many employment opportunities for Zambians at the hospital have encouraged people to seek further education. The government has established schools such as Kancumwa, Lilengo, and Yuka in response to the ever-growing need of education around the Yuka Mission community. Furthermore, the mission helped in the development of practical skills among the local people. The mission has trained people in bricklaying and carpentry. These skills improved the welfare of the people among the mission and beyond.

Yuka Adventist mission hospital has remained a place for the "tired," and indeed they find "rest" physically and spiritually. It is a beacon of hope for many people of Zambia in general and Western Province in particular.

## List of Medical Directors

J. C. Birkenstock (1855-1960); R. M. Burcley (1961-1964); C. Wical (1965-1967); G. L. Marsa (1968); C. Wical (1969-1971); J. Werner (1972); B. W. Nelson (1973-1974); \_\_\_\_ (1975); R. H. Lukens (1976-1977); L. W. Ramey (1978); \_\_\_\_ (1979); J. R. Mathdor (1980-1981); F. D. Solivio (1982-1986); A. R. Llaguno (1987-1988); M. N. Fabriga (1989); C. Wical (1990-1991); I. Zulu (1992); A. R. Llaguno (1993-1996); M. Bellosilo (1997-2006); H. Mangold (2007-2009); E. Velanciano (2010-2012); P. Maypa (2013-2016); I. Manuel (2017- 2018); \_\_\_\_ (2019); Blaise K. Kalenga (2020- ).

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White, Ellen G. *Testimonies for the Church*, Vol. 9. Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1948.

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## NOTES

1. "Litunga" is the title of the Barotse kings.

2. M. Ellsworth Olsen. *A History of the Origin and Progress of the Seventh-day Adventists*. 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition (Washington D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1926), 499-500.

3. Muwina S. Mungandi, "The Yuka Story as told by Pastor Shaudi Mungandi Muwina-Mungandi at the 'Yuka Convocation' on the Sabbath 26<sup>th</sup> May 2018." Unpublished Presentation accessed from the owner, 2018, 1.

4. Editorial, "An Interest in Barotseland," *ARH*, June 9, 1926, 13.
5. E. M. Cadwallader, "Native Education in Barotseland," *Southern African Division Outlook*, November 1, 1936, 3.
6. Mungandi, "The Yuka Story," 1.
7. E. C. Boger, "Answering a Long-Delayed Call," *ARH*, March 14, 1935, 17.
8. Cornelius M. Matandiko, *Seventh-day Adventism in Zambia*, Lusaka: Zambia Adventist Press, 2001, 134.
9. Edward A. Trumper, "Progress," *Southern African Division Outlook*, March 1, 1951, 1.
10. General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventists, *The Story of our Church* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1960), 551; *Yearbook of the Seventh-day Adventist Denomination* (Washington D.C.: Review and Herald, 1956), 268.
11. Peter Sandala and Shaudi Mungandi, interview by the author, Yuka, Kalabo, January 2, 2020.
12. Leamon, "A Mandate for Church-Based Health ministries."
13. Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, Vol. 9 (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1948), 167, 168.
14. *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1972), 398.
15. Information obtained from the hospital list of chaplains.
16. *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1989), 490.
17. Harrington Simui Akombwa, telephone interview by the author, February 7, 2021; Robert Sombelo Nawa, interview by the author, February 24, 2021.
18. Peter Sandala, interview by the author, Yuka, Kalabo, May 26, 2018 and January 3, 2020; and Shaudi Mungandi, January 3, 2020.

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