

Voice of Prophecy in Tanzania

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The Voice of Prophecy (VOP) correspondence lessons reached Tanzania as early as 1950¹ when those who were able to read English received the lessons brought from Cape Town, South Africa, by Adventist missionaries. Later, a branch of VOP Bible Correspondence School was opened in Nairobi, Kenya, by Robert J. Wieland.

Humble Beginnings

When the Tanganyika Mission Field² was organized into the Tanganyika Union Mission in 1960, there were 371 VOP students in the entire union under the leadership of a German missionary R. H. Henning working with Elder Ellingworth's family. Abihudi Mburuja translated the lessons into Kiswahili, the Tanzanian national language.³ It soon became necessary to print the lessons in the country. So, with a small second-hand offset press that was bought from Nairobi, Kenya, the printing work was launched in Henning's home. He was then president of the Tanzania General Field headquartered at Misufini in Morogoro. The press was operated by Paul Horton in North America, Anyawile Mwalubandu, who was a machine operator, and Abrahamu Lukinga, assistant operator.⁴ Later on, George Moses and Agustino Gakuba joined the team. This was a significant move for the Bible correspondence school in Tanzania. The printing of the VOP lessons became the precursor of the church publishing house.⁵

Steady Growth

Between 1967 and 1971, the school recorded an enrollment of 11,227 students in Tanzania, 200 of which were baptized. The church in Tanzania used the VOP lessons as an entering wedge for evangelism in new areas. Wherever evangelistic campaigns were scheduled, VOP lessons were distributed. In 1971, the printing press was moved to the Voice of Prophecy building in the same Misufini mission station in Morogoro—a major step towards having its own home.⁶

Management

Oversight of the VOP Bible Correspondence School has been assigned to departmental secretaries who often carried additional responsibilities. One of the most productive directors was George Mwasumbi, an Adventist educator by profession, who held the Bible school for Tanzania without additional assignments from 1994 until 1999 when he retired.⁷

In 1999, the executive committee of the Tanzania Union Mission voted to merge the VOP program with the Adventist World Radio studio to form the VOP/TAMC institution. In April 2008, VOP/TAMC was placed under the direct leadership of the union communication director. Before then, VOP/TAMC was under the leadership of a director who was directly accountable to the union president and the executive committee.⁸ Currently, Tanzania is divided into two unions.

Impact

The Voice of Prophecy (VOP) has been instrumental in the evangelism endeavors of the Adventist church in Tanzania. Many people have joined the Church through the VOP lessons. Apart from those who join the church, many people have come to learn the Bible and appreciate the Adventist Church as a result of these lessons. For example, the Voice of Prophecy Bible Correspondence School graduated 4,000 students in Mwanza, Tanzania on June 15, 2001.⁹ In 2018, the Southern Tanzania Union Mission recorded an enrollment of 11,000 students.¹⁰ In 2019, the East Central Tanzania Conference alone enrolled 16,400 people in the correspondence program and baptized 177 people.¹¹

SOURCES

Okeyo, E. A. *Kanisa Safarini Tanzania*. Morogoro, Tanzania: Tanzania Adventist Press, 2014.

TAMC History Document, 2018. South Tanzania Union Mission archives, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania.

TAMC Report, December 5, 2018. South Tanzania Union Mission archives, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania.

“Tanzania Adventist Press.” *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia*. 2nd rev. ed. Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1996.

NOTES

1. E. A. Okeyo, *Kanisa Safarini Tanzania* (Morogoro, Tanzania: Tanzania Adventist Press, 2014), 191.

2. Then the entirety of the Tanzanian mainland.

3. Okeyo, 192.

4. Abraham Lukinga, telephone interview by the author, February 16, 2020.
5. *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia*, 2nd rev. ed. (1996), s.v. "Tanzania Adventist Press."
6. Toffy Kinkoro, telephone interview by the author, February 16, 2020.
7. George Mwasumbi, telephone interview by the author, February 16, 2020.
8. TAMC History Document, 2018, South Tanzania Union Mission archives, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania.
9. Azaria.S.Sanga, Voice of Prophecy School director, interview by the author, February 20, 2020, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania.
10. TAMC Report, December 5, 2018, South Tanzania Union Mission archives, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania.
11. Sara Karay, interview by the author, February 19, 2020, Morogoro, Tanzania.

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