

Temeke SDA Dispensary, Tanzania

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Temeke Adventist Dispensary is a Seventh-day Adventist Church medical institution owned by South-East Tanzania Conference in the Southern Tanzania Union Mission. It is strategically located in a neighborhood with police stations, schools, and community centers, and easily accessed from the main road. The dispensary is popular in the local community for its treatment of malaria, diarrhea, worms, respiratory infections, and other tropical diseases. Since its inception, it has kept the name of Temeke which is the name of the area in which the facility is located. Nevertheless, the residents prefer to call it “*Sabato*” (the Sabbath) to distinguish it from other dispensaries around. Its daily outpatient number ranges from 150-200.¹ There was a notable influx of patients between 1973 and the 1990s. From the time it was founded, it has been under the management of the Tanzania General Field (1973-1982); East Tanzania Field (1982-2005); Eastern Tanzania Conference (2005-2015); and South-East Tanzania Conference (2015-present).²

The History of the Establishment of the Dispensary

The Adventist missionary work in the Temeke area in Dar es Salaam started in 1969 in the Development Corporation (DDC) Keko music hall. In 1970 the first believers shifted to Xavier School which is now known as Kibasila Secondary School. The relocation came after a great chaos ensued at the DDC Keko music hall caused by conflict between worship hours and the time for music concerts and dancing, which were accompanied by the selling of alcohol.

In 1971 the administration of Chang’ombe Teachers College (the current Dar es Salaam University College of Education-DUCE) permitted the church to conduct its worship services on their premises. Between 1971 and 1972, the government permitted churches to use public facilities for worship services.³ When this permission was rescinded in 1973, the church went back to the DDC Keko music hall for worship services. In the same year the church members commissioned Tumaini Enock, a civil servant on the Temeke Council, to find a plot for a permanent church building. Upon the acquisition of a piece of land, the union leadership with its headquarters at Busegwe, Musoma, joined Mr. Tumaini and Pastor David Dobias to survey the plot.⁴ Construction began with the dispensary, but upon completion the building was also used for Sabbath worship services.

The idea of spreading the mission of the church in Tanzania through health ministry was promoted by the union mission leadership between 1969 and 1975, including Pastor Leonard Robinson, president; Pastor H. Salzmann, secretary/treasurer; and Pastor Dea Otieno, administrative officer.⁵ From 1970 to 1973 during the leadership of Pastor David Dobias, the president of the Tanzania General Field, and Pastor Egdi Mavanza, the secretary/treasurer, the concept gained momentum and the field officers became its champions. They provided the necessary supervision and solicited financial support in addition to what the field provided for constructing the facility which was completed in 1973.⁶

The Dispensary Becomes a Local Field Entity

On April 7, 1988, the union leadership in Arusha under Pastor Leonard Taylor, president, took an action to decentralize the medical institutions in the Tanzania Union. On May 3, 1988, the executive committee of the East Tanzania Field, under the leadership of Pastor Jocktan Kuyenga, president, and Pastor Mangi Manento, secretary/treasurer, adopted the union action and took over the management of the dispensary.⁷ With the leadership of Dr. Mujjugu as Health Ministries director, the dispensary added to its facilities a minor theater and a mother and child health clinic.

The Dispensary's Standing in the Community

In 1997 the facility was officially certified as a dispensary under the registration name of Temeke SDA Dispensary. With this registration, the government has permitted it to provide other services including reproductive and child healthcare and as a treatment center for the Human Immunodeficiency Viruses (HIV). Due to the patients who patronize the dispensary, including some notable personalities, there is pressure to upgrade the facility from a dispensary to a higher level of medical care. This is because the government restricts dispensaries to performing limited medical services due to lack of infrastructure and registration status. Insufficient funding is a major constraint to Temeke Dispensary's expansion. Nevertheless, due to the good reputation the dispensary has in the community, it has been able to compete and survive among competitors who are better equipped, such as Temeke Regional Hospital and the Catholic Medical Center, due to its committed physicians and the Christ-like care patients receive.

The Dispensary's Historical Role

For a long time the dispensary served as a central drug storage facility for the drugs from the government medical store. From there drugs were distributed to all Adventist health facilities in Tanzania, using vehicles acquired through the efforts of Dr. Ellison Mujungu, a physician who served as the union Health Ministries director. He played a significant role in the provision of health services in Tanzania.⁸

The Mission Outlook of Temeke Dispensary

The mission of Temeke Dispensary is rooted in Ellen White's counsel:

Medical missionary work is the right hand of the gospel. It is necessary to the advancement of the cause of God. As through it men and women are led to see the importance of right habits of living, the saving power of the truth will be made known. Every city is to be entered by workers trained to do medical work. As the hand of the third angel's message, God's methods of treating disease will open doors for the entrance of present truth.⁹

Indeed, there are many who have known and accepted Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior through Temeke Dispensary.

The Leaders of Temeke Dispensary

The dispensary has been led by different medical directors from 1973 until now. They include: Jerome Kayumba (1973-1974), Enock Mwakalindile (1975-1977), Isamil Mazunda (1978-1979), Daniel Kilela (1979-1980), Ellison Mujungu (1980-1986), Hassani Temihanga Mwilawa (1986-1987) James Nason (1987-1988), Ellison Mujungu (1988-1990), Morris Nanjombi (1990-1992), Vedastus (1992-1994), Geoffrey Mabuba (1994-2003), Shida Biseko (2003-2013), Peter Omwanza (2013-2018), and Nyangibona Katole (2018-present).

On June 22, 1988, Pastor Elias Essaba was serving as health and temperance associate director of the East Tanzania Field.¹⁰ Until the 1990s, the notable medical directors and physicians recorded are Jerome Kayumba, a Rwandese (1973-1974), Enock Mwakalindile (1975-1977), Mazunde, a Malawian (1978-1979), Kiwela (1980), succeeded by Ellison Mujungu (1981-1986, 1989-1990), Temihanga (1986-1987), and James Nasson (1987-1988). Janeth Mhina and Fanuel Magesa in the 1980s were physicians at Temeke dispensary. And the longest record of service by non-physician staff is Chombo Jonathan from 1983-1996, and who then returned from 2002 to date.¹¹

SOURCES

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NOTES

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2. Watson Mwaibasa, phone interview by author, March 19, 2019.
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4. Temeke SDA Church Minutes, 1973, Temeke SDA Church Archives.
5. M. Manento phone interview by author, March 12, 2019.
6. E. Mujungu, phone interview by author, March 18, 2019.
7. "East Tanzania Field minutes," Action No. 111, May 3, 1988, East Tanzania Field.
8. E. Mujungu, phone interview by author, March 18, 2019.
9. Ellen G. White, *Testimonies to the Church*, Vol. 7, 59, accessed March 23, 2019, <https://m.egwwritings.org/en/book/117/info>
10. "East Tanzania Field minutes," Action no. 125, June 22, 1988, East Tanzania Field.
11. J. Chombo, phone interview by author, March 17, 2019.

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