

South-West Burundi Field

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Ndikumana Candide is the treasurer of South-West Burundi Field.

Formerly part of the retired West Burundi Field, South-West Burundi Field (SWBF) was organized in 2018. It is a part of the Burundi Union Mission in the West-Central Africa Division of Seventh-day Adventists. Its headquarters is in Bugumbura, Burundi.

Territory: Bujumbura, Bujumbura City, Bururi, Muramvya, and Rumonge.

Statistics (June 30, 2021): churches, 61; membership, 21,922; population, 3,107,989.

The SWBF staff include three administrators, three directors of departments, a cashier, an accountant, an auditor of the local churches, two watchmen, and 16 evangelical district leaders. There are also the volunteers called pioneers who greatly help the field in evangelization. Among them, six pioneers are supported by the higher level of church organization from the General Conference through the Global Mission program. Eight others are supported by the field, and finally four pioneers are supported by members of local churches. All these pioneers get rent money and a little stipend to ensure their survival.¹

Organizational History of South-West Burundi Field

When Burundi Union Mission got reorganized in 2012, it had three sub entities; namely, the East Burundi Field (EBF), the North Burundi Field (NBF), and the West Burundi Field (WBF). The EBF covers an area of six administrative territories: Cankuzo, Gitega, Makamba, Mwaro, Rutana, and Ruyigi. The NBF extends to the northern part of the country covering the provinces of Karuzi, Kayanza, Kirundo, Ngozi, and Muyinga. The WBF (now North-West and South-West Burundi Fields) comprised the provinces of Bubanza, Bujumbura Mairie, Bujumbura Rural, Bururi, Cibitoke, Muramvya, and Rumonge.²

SWBF was organized from the West Burundi Field, which was the largest and the strongest among its other two sister fields. The size of its territory extended to seven political provinces out of a total of 18 provinces in the country. At the end of 2015, it included 37 evangelical districts out of 72 districts of the entire union, which meant slightly more than a half of the evangelical districts within the country.

At the end of the 3rd quarter in 2015, the West Burundi Field had 214 organized churches out of a total of 409 churches in the Burundi Union Mission and 172 companies among a total of 398 companies of the whole union. In other words, 52 percent of the organized churches and 43 percent of the companies of the entire union were

managed by West Burundi Field.³ Referring to the same report cited above, the Western Burundi Field had a membership of 77,691 out of a total membership of 116,639 of the whole union. This means that 66 percent of a total of Adventist members of the union were found in that mission. To accommodate the church growth, the church leader discussed the reorganization of the West Burundi Field.

Following the Burundi Union Executive Committee meeting on April 13, 2013, two important recommendations were made. By action BUM, 13 EXECOM No 40, all members gathered agreed to set up a survey to explore ways to split the West Burundi Field into two administrative entities.⁴ Further, by the action of BUM, 13 EXECOM No 41, the Executive Committee members set up a survey commission⁵ chaired by Pastor Lambert Ntiguma, and Pastor Lameck Barishinga was the survey commission secretary.⁶

These actions taken at the union level prompted West Burundi Field Executive Committee to launch a mission station located in Bujumbura.⁷ The mission station was expected to foresee the work within the provinces of Bujumbura Mairie, Bujumbura Rural, Bururi, and Muramvya. Rumonge as an administrative territory was realigned later due to the split of Bururi Province.

The setup of a mission station in the city of Bujumbura became a basis upon which further plans were made. In December 2015, during the BUM session held at Nairobi, Kenya, the survey commission reported that all members gathered agreed to temporary split West Burundi Field into two units with different headquarters, one located in Buganda and another in Bujumbura. That action made it possible for Bujumbura station to become temporarily Bujumbura Mission.⁸

Subsequent to that, the following action of BUM, 15 EXECOM No 062 gave official names to those two entities. The new administrative unit was called South-West Burundi Field (SWBF), whereas the remaining part of the former West Burundi Field was called North-West Burundi Field (NWBF), with only two provinces: Cibitoke and Bubanza. Later, on November 13, 2017, the recommendations were approved by the Division without any amendment and to the split of the West Burundi Field into two administrative units.⁹ It was hoped that this realignment would boost the mission work in the Southern part of the Western zone of the country.

The Impact of the 2019 to 2020 Leadership Crisis

The South-West Burundi Field like the rest of the church in Burundi was affected in early development by the leadership crisis that occurred at the union level. The crisis lasted almost two years (2019 to 2020) and shook the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Burundi. It severely affected the SWBM and challenged it to the core. The crisis impacted the personnel of the SWBM. Three workers supported the dissident insurrectionary movement: one departmental director and two evangelical district leaders. On the side of the local church membership, some have been struck off because of dissidence. On a financial level, a great amount of funds that were held in bank accounts were stolen. At the time of writing this article, the SWBM has a problem of the exorbitant debts contracted by the dissident workers.

The leadership crisis lasted two years. Since 2020, the church in Burundi has resumed its activities and continues to guide and care for members who still need help to recover from the blow caused by the insurrectional movement. The church members and leaders work together to remain firm and faithful in their commitment to God and preaching of the gospel until the return of Jesus Christ.

Administration: Lambert Ntiguma, president; Martin Nsengiyumva, secretary; Candide Ndikumana, treasurer.

SOURCES

Records of Burundi Union Mission Archives, Kiriri, Bugumbura, Burundi.

Records of South-West Burundi Field, Bugumbura, Burundi.

Records of West-Central Africa Division Archives, Lot, Abidjan, Ivory Coast.

Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook (2022), <https://www.adventistyearbook.org/entity?EntityID=54403>.

NOTES

1. Personal knowledge of the author as treasurer of the South-West Burundi Field.
2. "South-West Burundi Field," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (2022), <https://www.adventistyearbook.org/entity?EntityID=54403>.
3. Burundi Union Mission (BUM), Statistical Report of the BUM executive secretary, 3rd quarter, September 2015.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.
6. Burundi Union Mission Archives, Membre de la Commission de Scissiparite de la MOB BUM, 13 EXECOM no 41, April 1, 2013.
7. West Burundi Field Archives, Creation d'une Station à Bujumbura 14 MOB.COM.EXEC. No 140, Annual End Year Meeting, December 2014.
8. Burundi Union Mission Archives, Scission de la Mission de l'Ouest en deux Missions, BUM, 15 EXECOM No 061, Concile de l'Union du Burundi, Nairobi, 15-16 Decembre 2015.
9. Burundi Union Mission Archives, Nouvelle appellation des Missions, BUM, 15 EXECOM No 062, Concile de l'Union du Burundi, Nairobi, 15-16 Decembre 2015

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