

# Rusangu Secondary School, Zambia

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## VIVIAN MUNACHANDE KANONDO

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Rusangu Secondary School is a Seventh-day Adventist boarding school under the South Zambia Conference. The school is recognized by the government of Zambia.

## Development that Led to Establishment of Rusangu Secondary School

One of the most effective ways the Seventh-day Adventist Church used to spread the gospel message was through the establishment of schools which were also intended to educate the natives. Rusangu Secondary School was established as a mission station by W. H. Anderson and a group of missionaries in July 1905. At that time the school was called Rusangu Mission Station. The school has been a major component of the Rusangu Mission Station<sup>1</sup> in the training of church workers and in the expansion of Adventism in Northern Rhodesia (Zambia). The school was moved to a new site and officially opened in 1970 under its present name Rusangu Secondary School.

When he was searching for a site to establish a new mission station in Northern Rhodesia, Anderson sought permission from King Lewanika of Barotseland on his return from England where he had attended the coronation of King Edward VII in 1902.<sup>2</sup> The Barotse king met Anderson in Bulawayo, Southern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe). Anderson crossed the Zambezi River near Victoria Falls in 1903 and traveled about 100 miles north of Kalomo. "Anderson looked for a place with a good spring, land with fertile soil, a dense surrounding population, and where he would judge the railway would be routed. Eventually he reached chief Monze's kraal and was directed to a possible site. This met all the requirements, plus an ever-bubbling spring. The quest was ended and thus Rusangu was chosen."<sup>3</sup>

After identifying the 5,436-acre piece of land, his next step was to go back to Kalomo to file a claim, return home to Solusi Mission in Southern Rhodesia, and finally go to the United States on furlough. It took two years before Anderson returned to open the new mission station in 1905. This time he left Solusi Mission with his wife, his small daughter Naomi, and some of the teachers from Solusi.

## Founding of the Rusangu Mission Training School

When they arrived at the farm in July 1905, the Andersons at once commenced building a house.<sup>4</sup> The poles were cut and the frame was put up in one week. However, before they could even offload their belongings, the first student arrived. Anderson was not yet ready to welcome a student as nothing was ready. The language of the Batonga people of Chief Monze was not yet put into written form. As the school started, "lessons were taught phonetically and the missionary had to prepare his own readers, keeping one jump ahead of the students."<sup>5</sup> By the time 40 boys were boarding, providing meals became a real problem as there was no financial appropriation. The South African Conference in Cape Town had reluctantly given consent for the opening of this project.

When taking this step of faith, Anderson was not alone, however, as the Rokeby Park Help Band in Cape Town had "decided at the beginning of the year [1903] that the proceeds of [their] work for the quarter be donated to the Barotse [Rusangu] Mission."<sup>6</sup> Hence even before the new station was opened, the group's secretary wrote, "We now forward with much pleasure the amount of £4 10s, praying that God's blessing may rest on the work in Barotse and other missions."<sup>7</sup> To realize his dreams for his work, Anderson relied on prayer, faith, and hard work. During the initial stage of the construction work, he was already "planning to build a wagon shed, grain shed, tool house, twelve huts, a church and a school house, all of which were to be built of pole and roofed with grass."<sup>8</sup>

Since Anderson was given permission to open a mission station north of the Zambezi River by King Lewanika, from its beginning the new mission station at Rusangu was known as "Barotse Mission."<sup>9</sup> Between 1914 and 1916, a second name came into concurrent usage, that of "Pemba Mission."<sup>10</sup> When it was later realized that "Barotse Mission" was not in Barotse, then it was voted in 1918 that the name of the mission be changed to "Rusangu."<sup>11</sup>

Rusangu Mission site was the desired location of the Jesuits priests because they had arrived there in 1902 with the full permission of Chief Monze. Adventist missionaries came to the site in 1903 and obtained permission to stay on the land from the chief and from the administrators' office in Kalomo. The Catholic priests lost their location because after locating the land they did not file claim. In 1905 the Adventist missionaries arrived at Rusangu two days earlier than the Catholic priests. The Jesuit priests had to look for another site where they established Chikuni Mission.

Despite the tension between them because of the sites of their missions, Anderson lent his wagon to assist the Jesuit priests in getting their belongings to their mission site. However, the tension between them lasted for some time. In 1906 Anderson wrote to the South African Union Conference headquarters in Cape Town saying, "We are having some opposition to meet from the Jesuits. They are doing all they can to draw our boys away from us. They are offering bribes and doing all they can to get them away."<sup>12</sup> It was a great relief to discover that no matter what the students were offered, they preferred to stay at Rusangu.

Rusangu Mission Training School was being built while it was already running. Five years later, in 1910, the school was reported to be “progressing nicely.”<sup>13</sup> The enrollment had reached 72 at the main campus. The seven outlying schools, outside the main campus, had an enrollment of 70. Enrollment often fluctuated as some of the boys left school to get married. The missionaries’ only hope was that the boys would return to school after they married.

Students from Rusangu became instrumental in evangelizing their people in the nearby villages and far beyond Southern province.<sup>14</sup> For example, one time W. W. Walker encouraged the boys to go home during the school holiday and spend time in visiting from village to village sharing the gospel. Walker says, “Four boys formed a company and visited fifty-one villages. They held meetings in each village. Two other young men visited forty-two villages, sowing the seed of the kingdom.”<sup>15</sup> What made these boys do such an extraordinary work? They had experienced a transformation of their lives. F. R. Stockil noted, “The contrast between these boys, even after only a short time here, and the boys at the native villages is quite noticeable.”<sup>16</sup>

Another rare occurrence took place at Rusangu Mission when, on July 8, 1916, “Brother [W. G.] and Sister Webster came from their farm in Kalmo [Kalomo] and were both baptized with four of our native converts.”<sup>17</sup> This was believed to be the first instance of Europeans who were not connected with Adventist missions being baptized on a mission station. Another awe-striking event at Rusangu Mission was the baptism of Headman Chikonga on the second Sabbath of February 1927.<sup>18</sup> He had been a warrior and a slave trader and had been in touch with Rusangu Mission work for many years before he decided to be baptized. These experiences made the missionaries feel that they were accomplishing something, and they longed for many more of the natives to be converted.

With regard to farming, the mealie harvest was good although the crops were not as large as they had hoped for. As soon as the harvest was over they wanted to prepare the soil for planting fruit trees. Teachers and students were busy out of school hours plowing. They had as much as 175 acres under cultivation. The goal for each school was to become self-supporting. Outlying schools were supposed to make themselves self-supporting enough to pay their teachers and to supply the school children with food and clothing. They were also to divide the surplus among the more unfortunate stations.<sup>19</sup>

In order to have an idea of how outlying schools were organized, here is one example:

There is a collection of huts, one of which is occupied by the head teacher, one is used as a school room and also to hold the Sabbath services in, one is kept for the use of the missionary when he visits the out-station, which in this part of the country by the requirement of the government must be once each month, another for the assistant, and one to hold the mealies which are raised by the native workers on the station for the feeding of the family there, and to help in making the work self-supporting.<sup>20</sup>

To give a better understanding of the role of the outlying schools, Silsbee wrote,

These out-schools act as feeders to the home station, making it a complete system of expansion or enlargement. When the boys get too far advanced for the native teachers, they come into the home-station and are trained for a time as teachers. The out-schools bring in more boys to make more teachers, to start more out-schools, etc., etc., expanding and ever enlarging until [we] will, we hope, reach the utmost parts of Africa and of the world, that the message may be preached in all the world, then the Lord will come and take us home.<sup>21</sup>

## History of the School with Emphasis on Important Events and Periods

Although mission schools developed on the basis of self-support through their agricultural production, the continued demand for more schools and more teachers increased the demand for their support. The world economic depression of the 1930s affected every organization everywhere. The colonial government's decision to give grants in aid for the support of native education was gladly welcomed by the missionaries. For example, C. E. Wheeler, director of Liumba Hill Mission, welcomed the announced plan for provision of government grants that was to begin in 1937.<sup>22</sup> These grants in aid were meant to pay salaries of certified teachers and a supervisor.

For many years it was difficult to have girls attend school like the boys did. There existed prejudice among the parents of native girls with regard to allowing girls to attend school. However, by 1919, a report from Rusangu Mission indicated that there were nine girl students, out of the almost 90 students enrolled.<sup>23</sup> The importance of having girls attend school was highlighted as follows, "Without girl students, prospective out school teachers would find it difficult to get suitable wives who have been to school and have had some domestic training."<sup>24</sup> By the mid-1950s the situation would change tremendously for the better. Ethel Wood wrote in 1955, that Rusangu Mission had 95 girls in the dormitory, the largest number in the history of the school.<sup>25</sup> Each succeeding year they were able to increase the number of girls admitted to the school. During the previous year, for the first time they were able to enroll a full class of 35 girls in Standards V and VI. The prospects for giving girls advanced training was now open.

Great developmental advances took place at Rusangu Mission in the 1940s and 1950s. The school was reported to be operating on a high plane. The government was cooperative and it appreciated especially the work being done for girls and women.<sup>26</sup> The women and girls no longer wore skins for apparel, nor were they still hiding their faces in fear. They became "bright-eyed, well-dressed, intelligent looking girls and women. The gospel had found them and borne its fruits."<sup>27</sup> The girls were now being trained "to become Christian young women, ready to fill their places in Christian homes and in God's work for their own people."<sup>28</sup>

During the 1950s some challenges arose in connection with receiving government grants in aid for assisting the running of mission schools. Under the Unified African Teaching Service introduced in 1953, the Colonial Government began to exercise greater control in the running of mission schools in such areas as the transfer of

teachers. As the missions feared the loss of the control of their schools, they felt that it was time to relinquish the government grants.<sup>29</sup> A request sent to the General Conference by the Southern African Division received approval and a grant of a \$100,000 increase in appropriations was approved for use in mission schools so they could relinquish their government grants.

In 1959, F. G. Reid, the president of the Zambesi Union reported, "At the end of the 1955 school year we relinquished 56 primary schools in Northern Rhodesia, and some months later 14 primary schools were relinquished in Barotseland."<sup>30</sup> The Standard IV schools at Rusangu, Musofu and Chimpempe were however retained on an unaided basis. The loss of these out-schools in Northern Rhodesia became a bitter blow to Adventist members. Although some of the teachers remained faithful church members, others no longer paid their tithe and some even left the church altogether.<sup>31</sup>

For about 50 years, Rusangu Mission School trained pupils up to primary certificate level (Standard VI). These trained pupils filled various positions in the church as pastors, teachers, and evangelists. After Zambia gained independence from its colonial master Britain in 1964, the new government began to urge for a nationalization of personnel in leadership positions. Unfortunately, most local people lacked the necessary qualifications. Hence the need arose for more educated Zambians to fill the vacant positions left by missionaries. W. R. Zork was tasked by church leadership to build a junior secondary school at Rusangu Mission. Construction of the school started in 1959 and it became operational in 1960.<sup>32</sup> The school building, which housed the administrative offices and the classroom block, is today used as offices for the South Zambia Conference at Rusangu Mission.

## Development of the School at the New Location (1966-Present)

Between 1961-1966, K. E. Thomas, director of Chimpempe Mission, negotiated with the government to build a secondary school for Rusangu Mission at a new site. The agreement reached was that the government was to give a grant of 75 percent of total cost of constructing a Grade II school, while the church would pay the remaining 25 percent. The mission engaged Roberts Construction to build the school. At the height of construction, the contractor employed a total of 250 workers. By the end of 1965, steady progress had been made in the construction work which enabled the school to open in 1966.

Although it would be officially opened in 1970, the school began offering classes at the new campus in 1966. Dr. C. F. Clarke became the principal of the school. The school opened with two classes of Form I (Grade 8) and one class of Form II (Grade 9).<sup>33</sup> Meanwhile the church failed to meet its financial obligation of 25 percent towards the construction cost. However, Mr. Roberts, the owner of Roberts Construction, being a member of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, made a proposal to the church leadership that he would complete building all school structures using government funds, while the church would meet its 25 percent share by providing labor, especially for plumbing and electrical work.

In 1968 two classes of Form III (Grade 10) were opened. In the years that followed, more classes at junior and senior levels were added. By 1970, Rusangu Secondary School offered classes from Form I (Grade 8) to Form V (Grade 12). The school was officially opened by the President of the General Conference, Robert H. Pierson, in 1970. The buildings were not yet fully completed, including the library, the agriculture classroom block, the gymnasium, and the assembly hall.

The church building was the first to be completed in 1976, at a total cost of K38,000 (US\$3,800). The construction of the library and two agriculture science classrooms were completed in 1979, under the administration of John E. Marter. Still to be constructed were the assembly hall and the gymnasium. Nevertheless, someone pointed out that, "None of those who started Rusangu Mission could have dreamed that within 60 years we would have a modern, completely new school plant on a new site about two miles from the original mission and to the west of it."<sup>34</sup> In 1972 Rusangu Secondary School was the largest Adventist boarding secondary school in the world field, with a staff of 25 teachers and an enrollment of over 560.<sup>35</sup>

During the 1980s and 1990s, Rusangu Secondary School became the flagship educational institution of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Zambia. Students from all provinces in Zambia went to Rusangu to obtain an Adventist education. Over the course of time, more indigenous Zambian teachers began to fill the vacancies left by the missionaries. In 1985, Zambia Union Mission handed over the operation of Rusangu Secondary School to the South Zambia Field in whose territory the school was situated. Although the school infrastructure deteriorated during the late 1980s and throughout the 1990s due to lack of maintenance, the school continued to spearhead the mission of the church. In 2005 it hosted the centenary celebration of Adventism in Zambia, which was graced by the Zambian Republican President, His Excellence, Mr. Levy Patrick Mwanawansa. Dr Kenneth D. Kaunda, the first president of Zambia, also attended the celebration.

As of July 2017, the statistics of the school were as follows: The teaching staff were 48, as compared with 20 in 1970. All current teachers are native Zambians. The school enrollment stood at 961, as compared with 560 in 1970.<sup>36</sup> The school is contributing to reducing illiteracy levels, not only in Monze District but throughout the nation. The school runs a special unit for blind pupils. Currently, it has nine vision-impaired learners (six boys and three girls). In addition, the school has an open learning section. Under this section, the current enrollment stands at 360 pupils.<sup>11</sup> This section helps pupils from financially depressed families.

Originally the Rusangu Mission land was made up of 5,436 acres (2,200ha). In the 1980s, a portion of it was sold to members of the church to raise needed funds. Apart from the secondary school, Rusangu Mission land is home to the South Zambia Conference, Rusangu University, Rusangu Basic School, and Rusangu Rural Health Center. Although the medical work is the right arm of the message in many places, missionaries found that Rusangu Mission did not have as many sick people as was the case at other mission stations, so medical work did not become the leading ministry at Rusangu Mission.<sup>37</sup>

Regardless of the number of institutions on Rusangu Mission land, there is still plenty of space for various agricultural activities. For the Rusangu Secondary School farm, there are two main objectives: (1) To raise food crops in order to feed the school pupils. The excess produce is sold to the community to raise funds to supplement the school budget; (2) To give hands-on training experience to pupils studying agriculture science:<sup>38</sup> Through this practical experience the school has produced many prosperous farmers around the country:<sup>39</sup> Although the farm operations declined after the missionaries left, the current indigenous farm manager seems to have a good grip on the agricultural activities. It is a good day for Rusangu Farm.

Rusangu Mission Dam was constructed in 1986 under the Rusangu Secondary School administration of C. C. Moonga. Funds for the dam construction were sourced by E. Spaulding (the predecessor to Mr. Moonga) from a donor abroad. The dam was intended to belong to Rusangu Secondary School to supply water to the school and its farm.

The tender for dam construction was awarded to the government's Rural Development Agency, the forerunner of Zambia National Service. According to Mr. Moonga there are two reasons for building the dam. The first was that the school's water supply from Tinti Springs was inadequate and erratic as the school embarked on an irrigation scheme at the school garden. However, the Tinti water scheme built by C. F. Clarke in 1968 had withstood the test of time as it is still functional (2018).

The second reason was that the school wanted to develop fish ponds for a fish farming project in order to augment its operating budget. The fish pond project worked intermittently until 1995 when the dam dried up due to a severe drought.

#### *Rusangu Secondary School's Lasting Legacy*

To fulfill the mission of the school, the administration has to pursue and closely adhere to the benchmarks it has set for itself as follows:

Aim: To train the hand, the heart, and the mind.

Mission statement: To harmoniously develop the physical, mental, social, and spiritual powers of pupils for the joy and service of this world and for the higher joy in the world to come in conformity to the values and teaching of the SDA church.

Philosophy: Pupils are trained to be thinkers and not mere reflectors of other people's thoughts so they can attain academic, moral, and spiritual excellence.

The greatest legacy of the school is its many students. The school won two notable awards in the category of Junior Engineer's Technician at the national level in the 1980s. The two awards represented Zambia in the United Kingdom and South Africa. Some of the school's students later have become pastors and church leaders who serve in local churches, fields, conferences, unions, and the division. Others have become teachers, nurses, accountants, and medical doctors and are contributing to the social welfare of the nation.

Name Changes: Barotseland Mission or Muchelemba School (1905-1919); Rusangu Mission Station or Rusangu Mission Training School (1926-1965); Rusangu Secondary School (1966-present).

*List of Rusangu Secondary School Directors/Principals*

W. H. Anderson (1905-1917); F. R. Stockil (1918-1920); J. V. Wilson (1921); W. W. Walker (1922-1925); F. M. Robinson (1926-1927); D. E. Robinson (1928); G. S. Joseph (1929); J. G. Siepman (1930-1932); C. E. Wheeler (1933); R. M. Mote (1934-1941); I. B. Burton (1942); A. Bristow (1943-1947); W. A. Hurlow (1948-1955); B. Searle (1956-1958); R. A. Burns (1959-1960); W. R. Zork (1961-1962); \_\_\_\_ (1963-1965); C. F. Clarke (1966-1970); R. G. Pierson (1971-1972); V. M. Robeson (1973-1975); J. E. Marter (1976-1982); E. Spaulding (1982-1983); C. C. Moonga (1984-1988); J. M. Mweemba (1989-1991); F. Simate (1991-1996); Mrs. A. K. Kanondo (1997-2004); W. Namwaambwa (2004-2011); A. Paradza (2012-present).

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1. The article about South Zambia Conference provides more information on Rusangu Mission Station and other church administrative units mentioned in this article.
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31. *Ibid.*, 40.
32. V. M. Kanondo, *The Story of Rusangu Mission* (Rusangu, Monze: Zambia Adventist Press, 2005), 35.
33. *Ibid.*, 36.
34. Editorial, "A Pictorial Visit to Rusangu Secondary School, Zambia (Zambezi Union)," *Trans-Africa Division Outlook*, May 15, 1971, 2.
35. Desmond B. Hills, "Division Committee Members Delayed by Hijackers," *Trans-Africa Division Outlook*, July 15, 1972, 1.
36. Rusangu Secondary School Head Teacher's Report June, 2017.
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