

Bwasi Secondary School

ALEXANDER MWITA

Alexander Mwita

Bwasi Secondary School is an Adventist educational institution located by Lake Victoria in Musoma Rural Council, Musoma, Tanzania. German missionaries first started it in 1909.

Establishment of Learning Center

When Seventh-day Adventist missionaries came to Tanzania in 1903, they began setting up learning centers to teach the indigenous people how to read the Word of God for themselves.¹ Among the schools that they established was Bwasi Mission Center which underwent different statuses and lastly became a secondary school in 1987. It is located at Majita, Musoma, along the shore of Lake Victoria, a site chosen because of its easy accessibility² and the friendliness of Chief Kusaga, a leader of Majita who demonstrated an openness to Adventist missionaries. Elder Nikanor Maseko, who joined the school in 1960, said that the center opened in 1910 under B. Ohme as a spiritual leader and F. Winter as a teacher.³ He said "*Wazungu hawa walikuwa wanazunguka kuanzisha mission wakiwa wawili au watatu,*" meaning, "These missionaries were moving as a pair or in threes in several places opening missions."

At one time, the center could only accommodate 160 students, but 600 boys and 175 girls applied.⁴ Along with reading and writing, the center also included religious instruction, leading to the baptism of two students December 2, 1911. The first African converts at Majita were Yohana Mtarimbo a Jita and Filipo Kayanda, a Sukuma working in that region.⁵

Upgraded to middle school level in the 1950s, it began admitting students to class eight. It enabled Bwasi to accept students from different government schools who came to continue with their middle school studies, because it was the only educational institution with that status in Majita. However, the government confiscated the school immediately after Tanzania's independence.⁶

The Founding of Bwasi Secondary School

When Bwasi was a middle school under the government, the community in Bwasi and Majita wanted a secondary school. They consulted Member of Parliament (MP) Mr. Magoti and inquired if the Seventh-day Adventist Church could start a secondary school in Bwasi. The church agreed with the request and mobilized all

the community, both church members and non-churched, to build a primary school. After transferring students from Bwasi Middle School to the newly constructed primary school, Bwasi Secondary officially opened in 1987 with Elias Kasika as the first headmaster. Its school's motto states "Fear God and Work Hard" and the school vision declares that it seeks "To be an Adventist School that exists for Spiritual, Intellectual, Social, and Physical Excellent Service."⁷

The first teachers were:

Elias Kasika, headmaster, biology, and chemistry; Mr. M. Kiondo, biology and chemistry; Mrs. Meli, biology and chemistry; Mr. P. Meli, business and accounting; Mr. N. J. Mbogora, history, English, and Siasa; Mrs. E. Bitu, history, English, and Siasa; Miss P. M. Mkama, business and accounting; Mr. R. Mkama, history, geography, and English; Mr. J. M. Manji, physics, biology, and chemistry; Mr. J. Muyengi, physics and mathematics.⁸

Since the school had no dormitories when it started, it first targeted those who lived in nearby villages who could be day students. Although enrollment was limited at the beginning, it kept increasing. On August 30, 1988, when the school had two classes each of Form One and Two, it introduced double sessions in each class, and the number of students jumped to 121 boys and 44 girls.⁹

The institution registered as a private school under the National Education Law No. 25 of 1978 with registration number S. 346 for ordinary level from Form One to Form Four in 1989. The registration permitted the school to accept 320 students with two streams in each class. The Mara Kagera Conference owned and managed the school.¹⁰ It operated in the original buildings constructed by the missionaries and continued in them until 1997 when the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) added three new buildings. Accredited by the Adventist Accrediting Association, the institution underwent its current accreditation in 2018.¹¹

History of the School

The first year of operation (1987) the enrollment was low.¹² Parents supported their children through the donation of food crops (Cassava), and most students stayed in the homes of the school staff. In 1989 the situation changed drastically, because of a shortage of food in the entire Majita region. Most parents could no longer support their children. The headmaster, Elias Kasika, organized a meeting with parents to discuss the situation. It agreed to reduce the school fees, which also affected workers' salaries. In October 1990 Kasika received a call to be the executive secretary of the Mara Kagera Conference and David Chimwejo assumed his position.¹³

Although it had started as a day school, Bwasi soon began building dormitories, first constructing two small ones for boys. In 2013 Nimrod Mkono, the MP of the Musoma rural constituency, donated one big dormitory for boys that accommodated 150 students.¹⁴ At this time the institution had no electricity, and staff and students used portable lamps at night. Alphaxad Musa Chacha, the headmaster during 2013-2014, consulted the Hon.

Sospeter Muhongo, the MP of the Musoma rural constituency and Minister of Energy and Minerals, to solicit electrical service. In August 2014 the Tanzania Electric Supply Company Limited (Tanesco) officially installed electricity, reducing the operating costs of the school.

Challenges

Through the years the school has struggled with small enrollments and outdated infrastructure. Enrollment has continued to drop since 2008. The capacity of the school according to its official registration is 320, but since it has been less than that, it has forced staff to go some months without salary. Moreover, most buildings are still those left by the original missionaries. They need renovation as well as the construction of new ones.

Contributions

The school has produced many alumni who serve the church and the government in different sectors. Among them are Professor Laurence Musero, director of Muhimbili National Hospital; Selestine Olambo, an investor in the mineral sector and director of Adamson Publisher Tanzania Limited. Church employees include Benjamin Daudi, publishing director of the Mara Conference, and Eliya Nurueli, a district pastor of Mara Conference.¹⁵ Additionally, the neighboring community has benefited from the school health center.

School Outlook

As an Adventist institution, its mission is rooted in the church's spiritual, intellectual, social, and physical dimensions. Its staff are committed to the school's mission. Accordingly, the school is excelling in spiritual programs that have led to baptisms among both students and people in the community.¹⁶

School Leaders from 1987 to 2018

Elias Kasika (1987-1990); David Chimwejo (1991-1997); Thomas Bwire (1997-2000); Joseph Kasika (2000-2002); Lydia C. Meli (2002-2005); John Owino (2005-2006); Nashon Robhi (2006-2008); Hamisi Msikira (2008-2010); Danford Oyuke (2010-2012); Arphaxad Musa (2013- June 2017); Eliya Wadea (July 2017-December 2017); Ibrahim Chacha (Jan 2018-)

SOURCES

Bwasi Secondary School Statistical Report, 2018.

Enns, A. C. "Our work in East Africa." *ARH*, September 14, 1911.

Enns, A. C. "Victoria Nyanza Mission." *ARH*, June 16, 1910.

Hoschele, S. *Christian Remnant-African Folk Church: Seventh-day Adventists in Tanzania* Netherlands: Koninklijke Brill NV, Leiden, 2007.

NOTES

1. A. C. Enns, "Our work in East Africa," *ARH*, September 14, 1911, 12.
2. S. Hoschele, *Christian Remnant-African Folk Church: Seventh-day Adventists in Tanzania* (Netherlands: Koninklijke Brill NV, Leiden, 2007), 81.
3. Nikanor Maseko Bwasi, interview by author, August 22, 2018. Elder Maseko is the son of Gershon Maseko Kikilo who had direct contact with the missionaries. He studied in this learning center when it was called Bwasi Extended School in 1960. Maseko also worked at the school from 1978 until his retirement. He was 74 years old at the time of the interview.
4. A. C. Enns, "Victoria Nyanza Mission," *ARH*, June 16, 1910, 40, 41.
5. Nimrod Masoma Lugoe interview by author, Musoma, August 20, 2018.
6. Elias Kasika, first headmaster of Bwasi Secondary School, phone interview by author, August 21, 2018.
7. The author observed that every office of the school has a mission statement poster when he visited the school on August 22, 2018.
8. Statistical report, Bwasi Secondary School, August 30, 1988.
9. Ibid.
10. Bwasi Secondary School archives.
11. Accreditation Certificate in the headmaster's Office at the school.
12. Ibid.
13. Elias Kasika, first headmaster of Bwasi Secondary School, 1987-1990, phone interview by author, August 21, 2018.
14. Alphaxad Chacha, headmaster of Bwasi Secondary School, 2013-2016, phone interview by author, August 24, 2018.
15. Ibid.
16. Bwasi Secondary School Statistical Report 2018.

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