



Lusaka Eye Hospital

Photo courtesy of Southern Zambia Union Conference, Lusaka, Zambia.

# Lusaka Eye Hospital

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## ALWYN MWINGA

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Lusaka Eye Hospital is a subsidiary medical institution of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Zambia.

## Overview

Lusaka Eye Hospital is a 40-bed medical institution in the capital city of Lusaka, Zambia, where it provides eye care services. It is one of the medical institutions run by the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Zambia. The hospital is jointly governed by the Southern Zambia Union Conference and the Northern Zambia Union Conference. However, between 2006 and 31 March 2019, the hospital was managed by Adventist Health International, whose head office is situated at Loma Linda Hospital and Medical Center in California, U.S.A.<sup>1</sup>

## Developments That Led To the Establishment of the Institution

The Lusaka Eye Hospital has its origins in the Blindness Prevention Program that was initially established with financial support from Christofell Blinden Mission (CBM) of Germany and Operation Eyesight Universal (OEU) of Canada at Yuka and Mwami Adventist Hospitals in the Western and Eastern Provinces of Zambia, respectively.

Between 1981 and 1985, the Zambia Union Mission of Seventh-day Adventists comprised three mission fields with a total church membership of 63,408. Due to the high rates of poor eye conditions in the Yuka Hospital area, with eye diseases being among the top ten reasons for patient admissions, the union executive committee adopted a resolution to expand the medical services offered to include ophthalmological services.<sup>2</sup>

The first ophthalmologist initially stationed at Yuka Hospital, from January to April 1985, was Dr. Boateng Wiafe from Ghana, who was later relocated to Mwami Mission Hospital in the eastern part of the country.<sup>3</sup>

With funding from Christofell Blinden Mission and Operation Eyesight Universal (OEU) of Canada, eye care services were established as a separate unit within the buildings that were previously used as the Mwami Mission Hospital Leprosarium. The eye work consisted of hospital-based as well as outreach services covering other parts of the Eastern Province of Zambia and further afield, including the Western Province.

An increasing demand for the services of the Eye Care Team based at Mwami Adventist Hospital, in the capital city of Lusaka, led to the establishment of an eye department at the Lusaka Adventist Clinic in December 1999. This was done to provide eye services at a more central location of the capital city of Lusaka. The mobile eye clinic services that catered under-served rural areas used the Lusaka Adventist Clinic as their base. The increase in the number of clinic patients outstripped the available space available at the Lusaka Adventist Clinic. This led to the decision to establish an Eye Hospital with in-patient facilities in Lusaka<sup>4</sup>. The Zambia Union Mission Executive Committee voted to name the hospital the Boateng Wiafe Adventist Eye Hospital in appreciation of his contribution to the medical work in Zambia.<sup>5</sup> However, Dr. Wiafe declined to have the hospital named after him.

Christofell Blinden Mission and Operation Eyesight Universal indicated their intention to wind up their support of the eye program in Zambia, but wished that the program would continue. The Lusaka location was therefore considered ideal for the program's continued sustainability. Supervision of the program was opened to any willing denomination, while the Seventh-day Adventist Church, which already facilitated the program at Yuka and Mwami Hospitals, was given first preference. Zambia Union Mission administrators, Passmore Hachalinga

and Goodwell Nthani, who were serving as president and secretary-treasurer, respectively, affirmed the Adventist Church's willingness to provide administrative oversight for the establishment of the eye hospital in Lusaka.<sup>6</sup>

## Establishment of the Institution

The Zambia Union Mission's contribution to the eye hospital was the provision of a 2.022-hectare piece of land on the outskirts of the Chawama residential area in south Lusaka. With one residential house existing on it, the land belonged to the then Eastern African Division of Seventh-day Adventists, whose headquarters were situated in Harare, Zimbabwe, who sold it to the union mission at the cost of K18,000,000 (eighteen million Zambian Kwacha).<sup>7</sup> The construction of the hospital was funded by CBM in partnership with the Lions Club of Bavaria, while the hospital equipment was funded by Operation Eyesight Universal.

Construction began in 2001 and was completed by mid-2002, when the hospital became fully operational. Zambia Union Mission provided project construction oversight by holding weekly supervisory committee meetings comprising the engineers, architects, project managers, and senior construction personnel. Dr. Boateng Wiafe, and Michael Muchula represented the Zambia Union Mission.<sup>8</sup> These review meetings focused on the tasks completed and those still to be done, with an analysis of time spent and the cost and quality of construction phase completed.

The Lusaka Eye Hospital officially opened on November 20, 2002. Invited dignitaries included the Eastern Africa Division president (who couldn't attend), the Zambia Union represented by its president, Pastor Passmore Hachalinga, the executive secretary, Pastor Harrington Akombwa, and the treasurer, Rashford P Musonda, the High Commissioner of Canada and The Ambassador of Germany, representatives of Christofel Binden Mission and Operation Eye Sight Universal, The Minister of Health for Zambia, Hon Brian Chituwo, and the Permanent Secretary, Dr. Garvin Silwamba, the Provincial Minister for Lusaka Province, Hon. Patrick Ngoma, representatives from the Christian Medical Association of Zambia, the director for ADRA Zambia, field presidents, and heads of Zambia Union Mission institutions.<sup>9</sup>

Lusaka Eye Hospital has an Outpatient Department and two Inpatient Ward facilities (with low cost and high cost sections), making a total of 40 beds for both adults and children. There is also a theatre complex for surgical operations, a chapel for spiritual support, and a kitchen for providing meals to admitted patients. The hospital's inpatient beds are primarily used to house patients referred there for care from the mobile eye camps, and those patients whose eye conditions that require admission.

In 2001, the Zambia Union Mission recommended to the Churches Medical Association of Zambia (CMAZ) that the Lusaka Adventist Eye Hospital be registered and admitted to membership of CMAZ under the umbrella of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.<sup>10</sup>

In the decade from 2010 – 2019, the hospital attended to a total of 206,997 outpatients and conducted 18,592 surgeries.<sup>11</sup> The mission of the hospital is “to reflect the character of Jesus Christ through restoration of spiritual, emotional, and physical sight to everybody.”

## Historical Role and Outreach Services

In addition to providing hospital-based ophthalmology services, a hallmark of the Lusaka Eye Hospital has been its outreach services. The mobile services target areas of the country with limited access to ophthalmology services and with high rates of eye disease, such as Gwembe and Sinazongwe districts in the Southern Province of Zambia. The mobile services include cataract surgical services, trachoma control activities, and refractive error services. The outreach services are provided in conjunction with the support of local church congregations, providing an opportunity for spiritual ministry in the targeted communities. The church provides music, distributes literature, and preaches sermons to the clients waiting for medical services.

The Lusaka Eye Hospital has also partnered with various Seventh-day Adventist congregations in the city of Lusaka to provide eye services through health expositions. At the time of writing, the ophthalmology services provided by the LEH include cataract extraction, glaucoma care and management, refraction, and pediatric eye services. Corneal transplants were provided during the tenure of Dr. Jani Yoo as medical director. The hospital provides both fee-paying and non-fee-paying services and thus is able to meet the needs of everyone in need of eye services in the country.<sup>12</sup>

When the hospital became operational in 2002, the Lusaka Eye Hospital was the first privately run standalone eye hospital in Zambia and complemented the services provided by the government through the main referral hospital in Lusaka, the University Teaching Hospital.

The combination of hospital-based and outreach services enables Lusaka Eye Hospital to fulfill its mission of being an institution that reflects the character of Jesus Christ through the restoration of spiritual, emotional, and physical sight to everyone in need. The combination of medical outreach and spiritual ministry has resulted in the establishment of church congregations in faraway areas such as Shangombo and Lukulu districts in the Western Province of Zambia.<sup>13</sup>

## Future Outlook

The Lusaka Eye Hospital, though one of the first private eye hospitals to be established in Lusaka, is currently competing with many other such institutions in Lusaka in the delivery of ophthalmology services. The outreach services to underserved areas, the affordable cost of accessing its medical services for the surrounding communities, and the daily morning worship services, which include prayers for patients awaiting surgery, sets this hospital apart from competing institutions.

Lusaka Eye Hospital needs to maintain high-quality, patient-friendly services through its caring staff, modern equipment, and efficient work in an environment where there are many other eye-care service providers. This will enable the institution to maintain its preferred eye-care service provider position. These factors must combine with a focus on the hospital's primary mission of restoring emotional, physical, and spiritual sight for all. This should enable the Lusaka Eye Hospital to achieve its desired goal of offering excellent service with self-sufficiency.

## List of Administrators

Medical Director: Dr. Boateng Wiafe (2001–2005); Dr. Eustace Penniecook (2005–2009); Dr. Janie Yoo (2011–2017).

Hospital Administrators: Willard B. Musale (2002–2003); Patience Matandiko (2004–2010); Edward Martin (2010–2011); Sandafur Travis (2012–2017); W. Mukabila (2018–to date).

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