

West Katanga Field

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The West Katanga Field is part of the East-Central Africa Division of Seventh-day Adventists. Its headquarters is located in Kolwezi in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Territory: Southwestern Katanga Province, Lwalaba District, Dilolo, Kasaji, Kolwezi, Mutshatsha Kapanga, and Sandoa.

Statistics (June 30, 2020): Churches, 25; membership, 13,020; population, 1,347,591.¹

Founding

At the 2001 year-end committee meetings of the East Congo Union, Paul Saotra Ratsara, then executive secretary of the Africa Indian Ocean Division based in Abidjan, observed that the Union should be split into two sectors: South and North. The southern part only remained with two associations, and the Songa Mission a health institution. Ratsara then advised the delegates to split the South Katanga Association into two. Kolwezi had been the seat of a station organized in 1985. This site was targeted to receive the headquarters of the new administrative entity. Heber Mascarhenas, then president of the Union; Mukole Ngoie Marcel, the executive secretary; and Wogu Okezie, the treasurer, all came in January 2002 to introduce Mutombe Ngili Muloko as president of the new Field in the presence of Dr. Nawej, the mayor of the city, the local chief communities, all the Adventist pastors and 600 members of the city of Kolwezi.² Nevertheless, it still remained an administrative unit until it was organized as a Field in 2014.

The territory of this association had not been evangelized by the missionaries. However, some areas were reached by Adventist Church members who moved to the present province of Lualaba as their faith directed them.

Lubudi. In 1940, missionaries entered Lubudi. This city is on the railway from Elisabethville to Kamina. Other denominations, including Roman Catholics, Methodists, and Jehovah Witnesses's, already were there when Adventists arrived with their message. The first family to accept the Adventist message was John Shimbala's. He accepted the message with his wife and five children. When evangelization continued, the total number of

baptized reached 45 people. The first worship services were observed in the parcel of land belonging to a member on the side of the city of Katoma. The missionaries sought from the cadaster services a plot of 200 meters by 150 meters where a small church of 8 meters by 4 would be built. Karl Ambs stated in his annual report that the first construction of Lubudi was the work of lay people. Sessman had previously built a straw church that had been burned by the enemies of the truth. This did not discourage him as he rebuilt another to replace the one that was destroyed.³

Kolwezi. A very old report by the president of the Congo Union, Karl Ambs, commends the exploits of Wilson, an African who traveled on his own and organized a group of believers in Kolwezi. After their conversion, however, nothing was reported about these converts.⁴

Dilolo. Around 1958, Adventist evangelist Konde Samahamuma left Angola for Congo. He reached Divuma and found other Adventists from Angola, but there was no Adventist church. Because they liked the way the Garengaze worshiped, they started attending church with them. Later, though, the Garenganze church elders accused them of being criminals who wanted to destroy their church. They were arrested, but they defended themselves by explaining that they were Adventists who had decided to worship their God on the day of their choice. Mister Rew authorized them in court to worship their God as they pleased and especially on the day of their choice. These people erected their own chapel around 1959.

Mende Tshanapolo also left Angola and found Konde Samahuma with Masenya in the center of Dilolo where they started a group in 1966 when Brown Pwele was the district pastor. In 1965, Mende was with two other Adventists, Mwamwengo-Bwana and Hayalume Makonde-Bwana. The small chapel in Kondelwela was built in 1967. A year later, a large church was built. It was organized by the field president from Kamina. The first families to be reached were those of Kachambile and Shakalangwa, Sonyi's father, in 1969. In 1970, the missionaries came with André Kaunda and Belson Tundula for the members' seminars. Jonas Ruzirakuvuga conducted the first campaign.⁵

Divuma. Before receiving their independence, Mwevu August returned from Songa to Divuma. He attracted many people to the truth with Voice of Prophecy lessons. Beginning in Mahungo where they erected a small church, they moved with the church to Divuma where the notables granted them a land concession. In 1961, the South-Congo Association sent Brown Mukhuta Pwele to head this new district. A school was attached to it for the training of children and young people⁶.

However, J. T. Knopper, says Mwevu Augustin had been directed by a Garengaze missionary to follow the lessons of the VOP in Paris. At the end of the training, the Paris School connected him to that of Elisabethville (Lubumbashi). With his friends, they made a local congregation in Mahungo that eventually moved to Divuma. A preacher was sent there. In three years, Divuma counted 117 baptized members, with 182 in baptismal classes in 10 groups⁷.

Manika and Kasulo in Kolwezi. In 1964, J. T. Knopper, secretary of publications of the Congo Union, visited Kolwezi. The appointment of a literature evangelist was to take place at the end of 1964 to begin the literature work. This program resulted in the purchase of a house and the grouping of former Adventists who came with their faith from Songa, Bigobo, or the Katanga Mission. Gaston Ndala reported that after Daniel Mubanda, Adonia Kazyege had attracted many citizens from the Bigobo station, he came to live in the Caroline district (currently Kasulo) near the year 1968. He reached these families first: Tshiswela Kazond Moses, Sela Duane, Tshiwape David, and Kamboy Mwaku Raphael. These people continued to grow in their faith. Mubanda Daniel came from Lubumbashi and baptized them in 1971. The first campaign was led by Daniel Mubanda on the Sengofor Road where a plot was found and the church was built in 1975 when Adonija Kazyege was district chief. In 1976, the parcel of land containing the Kasulo Church was obtained, and the number of members increased⁸.

Fungurume. In 1976, Monga Mutombo began worshipping with his wife by singing Adventist hymns in Swahili. Meanwhile, Rosalie wa Mbwela was also worshipping with a group of believers in another part of the city of Fungurume. When they heard about the presence of Monga Mutombo, they visited him, and together they merged the two small groups. In 1978, Tenke Fungurume Mining, where Monga Mutombo was working after he stopped serving as a pastor, closed down, but he continued to worship with his group. One day, Monga Mutombo's wife bought cassava from Wahenga's wife in their field. From the songs she was singing, Wahenga's wife knew they were Adventists, and the two families connected with the new group since they were all Adventists from Divuma. This group was first annexed to the Lubudi District. Later on, the Fungurume District was formed with Mutombeo Monga Vincent as the pioneer district leader. He was later replaced by Lubangi wa Lukaka. In 1988, Gasana Munyakazi, the Kolwezi Station director, died and was replaced by Kayombo Mushinda at the Kolwezi Station from 1988 to 1990. When Kayombo became the Stewardship Department director at the South Katanga Field, Monga Mutombo took his place in Kolwezi from 1991-2001. When the Station became an administrative entity of West Katanga, the author worked as the pioneer administrator⁹.

In 2006, Sangwa Luhunga came to serve as the superintendent and worked there for five years. Many buildings were added to the value of the Western Katanga Mission. In 2012, Ilunga Wazenga became the superintendent and bought additional plots that were added to the property. In 2014, the East-Central Africa Division officers came to announce the change of status of the Mission into an Association. Ilunga Wazenga became the first president. He was later replaced by Kabwit Mbal in 2016.

The creation of this entity was received with great joy by its members. At that time, the city of Kolwezi had only two churches and three companies. Also, the condition of the office buildings did not meet city standards. No church school or health centers existed in the city of Kolwezi. The global mission project and external support played a positive role in upgrading the facilities. The purchase of the land formerly belonging to the Kakwat and Marie Mbomb family enabled construction and even the creation of a clinic that attracts all sections of the local

population. The administration became close to the local citizens, and recent visits by representatives of the General Conference also had a positive impact on the members as well as the general public as a whole.

Leaders

Station Managers: R. Gasana (1925-1988), Kayombo Mushinda (1988-1990), Mutombo Monga (1990-2001).

Superintendents: Mutombe Ngili Muloko (2002-2005), Sangwa Luhunga (2006-2010), Ilunga Wazenga, Katampa (2012-2016); Raphael (2017-2019), Balowayi Ntumba (2019-).

SOURCES

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NOTES

1. "West Katanga Field," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (2021), <https://www.adventistyearbook.org/entity?EntityID=42589>.
2. N'gili Muloko Mutombe, *L'adventisme du septième jour: Histoire et batailles d'expansion de l'évangélisation de la RD Congo* (Seventh-day Adventism: History and Fights for Evangelism Expansion in DRC) (Lubumbashi, 2019), 79.
3. Karl Ambs, "Report of the Congo Union Mission," *Southern African Division Outlook*, February 15, 1954, 6-7.
4. Ibid.
5. Mutombe, 64, 65.
6. Ibid.
7. J. P. Knopper, "New Work Growing Rapidly in the Congo Union," *Southern African Division Outlook*, January 15, 1965, 8.
8. Gaston Ndala, telephone interview by the author, 2019.

9. Vincent Monga Mutombo, interview by the author, Lubumbashi, January 17, 2019.

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