

# Central Kasai field

---

MUKEBA BAKANSHIYA JEAN PAUL

Mukeba Bakanshiya Jean Paul

---

Central Kasai Field is a part of the East-Central Africa Division. It was organized in 1981 and reorganized in 1993. Its headquarters is in Kananga, Kasai Central, Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Territory: West Kasai Province

Statistics (June 30, 2021): churches, 379; membership, 166,772; population, 3,687,070

## The Origin of Adventist Work in the Territory

The Seventh-day Adventist church began its work of evangelization in the Western Kasai Province in April 1948. The first mission was opened in Lulengele in the Kazumba territory in the Mbulungu sector about 80 km from Kananga, the capital of the province. Pastor David Elie Delhove, a Belgian missionary, and Pastor Wendell, an American missionary from South Africa, opened the mission. They planned to evangelize the two Kasai provinces, Eastern and Western Kasai.<sup>2</sup>

The work of evangelization began in the sector of Mbulungu, territory of Kazumba, and expanded into other territories of Kazumba. The colonial administration allowed the Adventist missionaries to evangelize only in the territory of Kazumba, because the city of Luluabourg (now Kananga) was occupied by Roman Catholics and Presbyterians.<sup>3</sup>

The first religious services in Lulengele station were held in the open.<sup>4</sup> It was a difficult task for missionaries to gain an understanding of the local language. They had to use the help of interpreters or learn the local language. The work progressed steadily in Kasai. Adventists embarked on evangelizing of other lands among which were Luebo, Luiza, Ndumba Kakese, Idiofa, Katanda, Luputa, Dekese, Ngandajika, and Kikwit.<sup>5</sup>

In 1952 the missionaries opened a small dispensary and maternity center to serve the needs of the people from the surrounding villages—Nkongolo Moshi, Bakua Lonji of Lukengu, and the Batetela of Kadjundula. In 1956 an elementary school and a three-year high school called Adventist Seminary were opened.<sup>6</sup> The teachers included Paul Muema Nyembwe, Simon Sangwa Kithule Muhune, and Nyembwe Kilongozi, from Kamina and Bigobo. Among the first students were Levi Tshiya Tshisuyi, Kayembe Manoah, and Katambayi Kangudia who became the first native pastors. But with the advent of Congo's independence on June 30, 1960, foreign missionaries withdrew to the United States because of the insecure political climate, and local workers only remained. A

Congolese pastor by the name of Lévi Tshiya Tshisyui assumed the direction of the Adventist mission for 10 years, from 1960 to 1970. Pastor Tshiya Tshisyui was called to Tanzania in 1969 to continue his pastoral studies.<sup>7</sup>

In 1970 the Ruandese missionaries from the Zaïre Union Mission (ZUM) based in Lubumbashi arrived in Lulengele and Tshikapa. Ruterahagusha Ruzabahizi was one of them and was appointed as representative director of Adventist churches in Kasai. He preferred to stay in Luluabourg (today Kananga), capital of the province of Western Kasai where all the authorities of the province lived. The other church workers such as Pastors Nzabamwita, Ruteraghavugha, Ansiele Ntwari, and Sebatunzi remained in Lulengele. During Pastor Ruterahagusha's leadership, there was a gradual recovery in the mission and progress in the work in many regions, such as Ilebo, Mweka, and Muena Ditu. He was assisted by several evangelists and pastors, among whom were Dimukayi Tshipamba, Tshitala Mulumba, and Ntumba Kanyunyu.

In 1972, after the independence of the Congo, the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists leaders made a decision to take charge of Kasai to help it flourish. They sent Pastor Albert M. Long to lead the Kasai mission. Long was joined by other expatriate missionaries such as Pastor Dan Beetle, director of orientation, lay Pastor Habiti, district head of Lulengele, Pastor Rubasira, head of the translation department, Pastor Sabatunzi, evangelist of the mission, Pastor Mackey, director of the mission, and Mr. Gray Gordon, treasurer.<sup>8</sup>

In 1973, the Adventist mission work in Kasai rapidly advanced, thanks to the evangelization plan undertaken by Pastor Long. In 1974 a college for pastoral training opened its doors and was later transferred to Lukanga in North Kivu (North Union Mission). It was led first by Pastor Albert Long, then later by Pastor Dan Beetle. Plans were made to evangelize all the villages that were around the mission.<sup>9</sup> The most striking result was the massive conversion of the members of the Church of Saint Emmanuel, commonly known as "Vuanda," once led by Pastor Emmanuel Mamba Mputu Kubi in 1978.<sup>10</sup>

Pastor Albert Long was called back to the United States in 1977 to continue his ministerial work there. He left the Adventist mission work in Kasai in full activity. When he left, there was at least one church building in each zone of Kasai, especially in the large centers. During Pastor Long's time, Adventist membership grew from 891 to 11,205. Pastor Ellstrom, another American missionary, replaced Pastor Long for only one year, from 1977 to 1978. It was then that Pastor Roy Perrin took charge.

In 1981 the Central Zaïre Field was organized. It included three provinces: Bandundu, Western, and Eastern Kasai. Central Zaïre Field was headed by Pastor Roy Perrin. In 1984 Pastor Perrin left Lulengele and moved to Lukanga in North Kivu. He was replaced as head of Central Zaïre Field by Pastor Muhune Sangwa Simon, sent by the Zaïre Union Mission administration. Pastor Simon's term of office was the longest, i.e., 7 years (1984-1991). In 1991 before he retired, several projects and plans were carried out, in particular the establishment of missionary stations in Dibatayi, Kananga, Mueka, Tshikapa, Tshimbulu, Diboko, and Mbuji-Mayi. The missionary stations helped the Central Zaïre Field grow in membership and tithes.<sup>11</sup>

During Pastor Simon's tenure Pastor Dinga Mbote was secretary, and later Pastor Mabudi Bodi, while Jimmy Gay was the treasurer. In December 1986 the Province of Bandundu was attached to the West Zaire field (currently the West Congo Field in Kinshasa).

In December 1990 after the session of Zaire Union Mission, Pastor Simon retired and was replaced by Pastor Placide Tshimanga Mbuebue, who worked with Mabudi Bodi as secretary and Omasumbu Disashi as treasurer. They led the mission until December 1992. To better accommodate the rapidly growing membership and evangelize new regions in the Central Zaire Field, plans were made to split the Central Zaire Field into two fields. The reorganization officially happened in the meeting of the Zaire Union Mission (ZUM) committee on July 21, 1992. ZUM voted to recommend the initiative to the Africa Indian Division (AID), headquartered in Abidjan, Ivory Coast, for endorsement.<sup>12</sup>

The AID committee accepted ZUM's request in December 1992, by vote N° 92-162. The actual split of Central Zaire Field into two fields took place while following the geopolitical and administrative limits of two Kasai provinces: Western and Eastern. The text of this vote of the executive committee of the union from December 9 to 12, 1992, read as follows:

VOTE 92-162 Central Zaire Field, the split:

CZF/Western Kasai comprised:

- a. Western Kasai Field with headquarter in Kananga;
- b. Eastern Kasai Field with headquarters in Mbuji-Mayi;
- c. An important representation of the laity was to be placed on the executive committee of the mission;
- d. The heads of departments were to be chosen to represent all layers of the church;
- e. Great efforts were to be made to ensure the status of self-sufficiency in Western Kasai Field in the next future.<sup>13</sup>

Thus divided, the field of the Province of Western Kasai called Western Kasai Field (WKF) was given administration over 268 churches, 197 companies, and 78,932 members in 64 districts grouped together in 10 missionary stations. There were 79 workers including 33 consecrated pastors (ordained) and two authorized missionaries. The officials of two fields were appointed: For Western Kasai, Pastor Nshimba Napita was president ; Pastor Kabeya Nsaka, secretary ; and Brother Tshika Kanda Kanda treasurer. The Seventh-day Adventist Church has undergone exceptional expansion marked by expanded evangelism in Kasai. The headquarters of the field was transferred from Lulengele to Kananga, seat of the administrative capital of institutions of the Province of Western Kasai. Many evangelistic programs contributed to the growth of

membership:

1000 Harvest Days (1989 to 1990), a three-year program that ended with a great historic baptism at Songa Mission where all our fields in the Congo were represented. This program has significantly grown the church in Kasai.

Harvest 90, a program where all pastors and lay preachers were deployed throughout the fields in the Eastern and Western Kasai according to the objectives assigned to them.

In April 1998 another evangelical event was held by Madam Priscille Metonou, director of Women's Ministries at AID. She held the campaign for a month in Kananga City, and pastors baptized 420 people.

In August 2014 all administrators of the Western Congo Union, as well as the directors of departments, went down to Kananga in order to hold a great evangelization campaign in the various sites of the city, the result of which was commendable.

The 2018 Total Member Involvement (TMI) campaign produced 2,172 new members;

Impact 2020, a major evangelistic campaign run by the general secretary of the East-Central Africa Division (ECD), Alain Coralie, and followed on radio and television channels, which ended with a baptism of 1,803 souls.

Today the Central Kasai Field has 74 districts; 9 health centers; 1 hospital, 156 primary schools, 86 secondary schools, a medical institution, and a university.<sup>14</sup>

#### Presidents

President: Roy Perin (1982-1984), Sangwa Kithule Muhune (1995-1990), Mbuebue Tshimanga (1991-1992), Nshimba Napita (1993-1994), Mamba Mputu Kubi (1995-1996), Muamba Ngalumulume (1997-1998), Kabeya Nsaka (1999-2000), Kalala Lubombo (2001-2006), Malumalu M. Luendu (2007-2008), Emmanuel Kudikolesa (2009-2013), Zacharie Milolo Tuashile (2013-2014 Acting), Zacharie Milolo Tuashile (2014-February 2015), Georges M. Ntumba (March 2015-2018), Jean Paul Mukeba (2019-Present).

---

#### SOURCES

Central Zaire Field Executive Committee minutes, December 1992 and 1993. West Congo Union Mission Archives, Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Kalala, B. "Adventist Missionaries Works in Kasai 1948 till Now." Unpublished paper in History, ISP Kananga, Kananga, Democratic Republic of the Congo, 1982.

Kanda Kanda, Tshika. "Analysis of financial technics of the SDA Church in West Kasai." Unpublished paper, ESGEA, 1995.

Nicole, J. M. *Are the Seventh-day Adventists Right*. Paris: EMMAUS édition, Paris, 1971.

Record of Lulengele Adventist Mission, Department of Church Development and Ministerial Orientation. West Congo Union Mission Archives, Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Semuswa, H. "History of Seventh-day Adventist Church and its impact in Lubumbashi town." Unpublished paper, Lubumbashi University, 1990.

Shamunga, K. T. "The development of Seventh-day Adventist Church in Western Kasai (1948-2001)." Unpublished paper, ISP Kananga, Kananga, Democratic Republic of the Congo, 2004.

"West Kasai Field." *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (2021), <https://www.adventistyearbook.org/entity?EntityID=30185>.

Western Kasai Field General Secretary's Report. West Congo Union Mission Archives, Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of the Congo.

---

## NOTES

1. "West Kasai Field," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (2021), <https://www.adventistyearbook.org/entity?EntityID=30185>.
2. B. Kalala, "Adventist Missionaries Works in Kasai 1948 till Now," unpublished paper in History, ISP Kananga, Kananga, Democratic Republic of the Congo, 1982, 8-10.
3. N. Paul, "House of God," *Sign of the Times*, March 1961, 39.
4. H. Semuswa, "History of Seventh-day Adventist Church and its impact in Lubumbashi town," unpublished paper, Lubumbashi University, 1990, 37.
5. A.M.A.L. L: File N°42/6727/A.11/6 in December 1952 (West Congo Union Mission Archives, Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of the Congo).
6. J. M. Nicole, *Are the Seventh-day Adventists Right?* (Paris : EMMAUS édition, Paris, 1971), 12.
7. Tshiya Tshisuyi Kananga, interview by author, Kananga, Democratic Republic of the Congo, March 13, 2004.
8. Western Kasai Field General Secretary's Report, 1972.
9. Record of Lulengele Adventist Mission, Department of Church Development and Ministerial Orientation, 10 (West Congo Union Mission Archives, Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of the Congo).
10. K. T. Shamunga, "The development of Seventh-day Adventist Church in Western Kasai (1948-2001)," unpublished paper, ISP Kananga, Kananga, Democratic Republic of the Congo, 2004, 43.

11. Central Zaire Field Executive Committee minutes, December 1993.
  12. Central Zaire Field Executive Committee minutes, vote N ° 92-27, action 92-89, December 1992.
  13. Tshika Kanda Kanda, "Analysis of financial technics of the SDA Church in West Kasai," unpublished paper, ESGEA, Kananga, Democratic Republic of the Congo, 1995, 65.
  14. Central Kasai Field archives, Kananga, Democratic Republic of the Congo.
- 

encyclopedia.adventist.org is an official website of the [Seventh-day Adventist World Church](#)

© 2020 General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists 12501 Old Columbia Pike Silver Spring , MD 20904 USA 301-680-6000