

Kaigat Dispensary

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The Kaigat Dispensary is the first Adventist health facility that was established in Western Kenya.

Background

Soon after the Kaigat Adventist Church was established in northern Nandi in 1931, a plan to build a medical facility was introduced. Kaigat was the first Adventist church in Western Kenya and was situated in a region far removed from any medical facility. While on a visit to Kaigat, Pastor Spencer G. Maxwell, the president of the East African Union, saw the clear need for a medical facility in the area. To him, this would be an important step to help push the mission of the Adventists furthest west. In May 1933, Maxwell had the East African Union Committee vote to send the first Nandi Adventist medical worker, James Kibiwott, to be trained at Kendu Mission Hospital with a view to return and open a medical facility at Kaigat. The vote included some Sh. 250 to be allocated from the Kendu Mission Hospital African Maternity Ward Furniture Account for Kibiwott's training. He was to undertake one year of training as a "dresser" and thereafter take charge of the medical work at Kaigat. He was to be trained under the supervision of Dr. G. A. S. Madgwick, who was in charge of Kendu Mission Hospital.¹ However, as soon as Kibiwott had qualified, severe opposition to the work of the Adventists in Nandi arose. As a result, they had to close the Kaigat church and school for a while, and the plans to open the medical facility had to be put on hold.

It was not until the pressure against the Adventists subsided in 1956 that the idea was brought up again. This time, the government allocated some land for the facility.² However, many issues arose, and the project did not take off.

Establishing Kaigat Dispensary

The idea to build the Kaigat Dispensary was not revisited until 1965. Pastor Enoch Keino had just returned home to Kaigat from pastoring the Kebeneti District in Kericho, where he had helped establish the Kebeneti Dispensary.³ He presented the idea of a Kaigat Dispensary to Pastor Jackson Kiplel Maiyo, who was the Kaigat Mission Station director, then based at Kaigat in Nandi. There was no Adventist medical facility within the geographical reach of the Kaigat Mission, which included the administrative districts of Nandi, Uasin Gishu, West

Pokot, Elgeyo Marakwet, and Trans-Nzoia.

Pastor Maiyo agreed and immediately laid out the plans. He invited the district pastors to mobilize resources for the dispensary. The first of the district pastors to raise money was Pastor Kiliopa arap Masai, who brought in Sh. 50 (equivalent to US\$7 at the exchange rate of 1965). Masai brought the money all the way from Samitui at the southernmost tip of Nandi. Some more money was brought by Pastor Caleb Busienei. More funds were mobilized through 13 churches under the Kaigat Mission area. An appeal was sent through the churches in the area. Members sold their animals and farm produce to raise money for the facility. As soon as sufficient funds were secured, construction began, and at the end of 1966, a fine building had been put up. The dispensary was officially opened in 1967.⁴

The first nurse at Kaigat Dispensary was Jackson Masinde, assisted by his wife, Priscilla, both of whom came from Kendu Mission Hospital. Masinde was very committed to his calling and worked tirelessly to get the facility running despite the challenges of the early work. Masinde came from the Bukusu community neighboring the Nandi to the north. He learned to speak the Nandi language, making it easier to handle his patients who did not speak Kiswahili or English. His friendly attitude endeared him to the community, and they began to refer to the dispensary as “Kapmasinde” after him. In 1972, construction began for a maternity wing, and a major fundraiser was held by the area member of Parliament, Hon. Gerald Kalya, and the Kuria member of Parliament, Hon. Maisori Itumbo. These efforts raised Sh. 11,000. In 1976, the facility was opened, and an Asian businessman donated beds and mattresses through Pastor Jackson Maiyo. The facility was then upgraded to a health center.

Masinde worked at Kaigat until 1983.⁵ The facility was upgraded and came under the administration of the East African Union. Barnabas Cheren came in to replace Masinde, and he ran the facility until 1987, when he left for Itibo Dispensary in Bobasi, Kisii.⁶ In his place came Kagabo Rugwiza, a Rwandese national who ran the dispensary until 1994, when Isaac Melly took over.⁷ Melly was the first Nandi to run the facility, taking the place Kibiwott was meant to fill some 60 years earlier. In the year 2000, the facility was handed back to the Western Kenya Field, and it was taken over by the Greater Rift Valley Conference when that body was formed in 2015.

SOURCES

A writeup by John Kemboi of the Greater Rift Valley Conference, May 2019. Greater Rift Valley Conference archives, Eldoret, Kenya.

Minutes of the East Africa Union Committee held at Kamagambo May 28–31, 1933 (Session no. 139), Greater Rift Valley Conference archives, Eldoret, Kenya.

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NOTES

1. Minutes of the East Africa Union Committee held at Kamagambo May 28–31, 1933 (Session no. 139), Greater Rift Valley Conference archives, Eldoret, Kenya.
2. From a writeup by John Kemboi of the Greater Rift Valley Conference, May 2019, Greater Rift Valley Conference archives, Eldoret, Kenya.
3. Godfrey K. Sang and Hosea K. Kili, *On the Wings of a Sparrow: How the Seventh-day Adventist Church Came to Western Kenya* (Nairobi, Kenya: Gapman Publications, 2017).
4. From a writeup by Obadiah Kiboit of the Greater Rift Valley Conference, May 2019, Greater Rift Valley Conference archives, Eldoret, Kenya.
5. "Kaigat Dispensary," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Washington, D.C.: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1983), 514.
6. "Kaigat Dispensary," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Washington, D.C.: Office of Archives and Statistics, 1987), 522.
7. "Kaigat Dispensary," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Silver Spring, Md.: Office of Archives and Statistics, 1994), 494.

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