



Mwami Adventist Hospital, Zambia
Photo courtesy of Moses M. Banda.

Mwami Adventist Hospital

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Mwami Adventist Hospital is a medical institution of the Southern Zambia Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.

Developments that Led to the Establishment of the Institution

As early as 1913, C. Robinson yearned to secure a foothold in north-east Rhodesia; somewhere near Fort Jameson (now Chipata).¹ On October 2, 1925, G. A. Ellingworth of Malamulo Mission acquired a farm of 3,035 acres, on which Mwami Mission station was established.² Between 1925 and 1927, Samuel Moyo served as the mission station director. He was respected and regarded as one of God's gentlemen. In 1927, the final transaction for the tract of the farmland situated between Fort Manning and Fort Jameson was concluded. The farm had three streams, good soil, and pastureland that could support a small herd. It had previously been a tobacco farm, with many old brick buildings. The unusable buildings were still valuable in that they contained 200,000 good bricks, needed for mission buildings.³

Mwami Adventist Hospital was established as an extension of medical missionary work conducted at Malamulo Mission in Malawi.⁴ Mwami is 480 kilometers from Malamulo, and 30 kilometers southeast of Chipata, the provincial capital city of the Eastern Province of Zambia, in the Luangeni constituency along Vubwi Road⁵

The mission was named after the Mwami stream, which flows through the mission farm⁶ The Mwami stream originates from the eastern side of *Mkwabe* mountain, then deviates northwards through the Mwami Dam until it crosses Vubwi Road near Lufazi Village. The spring near the *Mkwabe* mountain has been a source of water for the hospital for a long time.

Two other streams flow through the land. One is called *Manjobvu*. The *Manjobvu* stream crosses through the center of the mission land by the old boys' dormitories beside the Eye Clinic. The third stream is on the southwestern side, beyond the other mountain whose name is not known, behind the old doctors' houses. It is called *Mkanda* stream.

Founding of the Institution

Dr. George E. Marcus was the pioneering medical missionary and founder of Mwami Adventist Hospital. He arrived at Mwami station in 1927, two years after the land was purchased, to begin medical missionary work. The medical work had a humble beginning as the first surgical operation was conducted under a mosquito net in the open air under a fig tree on a mountainside.⁷

The first eye cataract operation was conducted on a blind man named Packin⁸ This successful surgery gave confidence to the people who at first were sceptical of the presence of the white missionary in the Ngoni area. The Ngoni people were brought into eastern Zambia by one of the Zulu Chiefs, Zwangendaba, under whom they fought their way running away from King Shaka's wars in Natal, South Africa. They crossed the Luangwa River moving eastward into the Eastern Province of Zambia.

The Mwami Hospital project benefited from the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists' mission extension funds worth £300.00 for constructing the hospital administration building⁹ Besides his rapidly growing medical work, Dr. Marcus started a church and conducted village outreach work, while also carrying on a large building project. In April 1928, Dr. Marcus accompanied Elder N. C. Wilson, Superintendent of the South East African Union Mission, to conduct an evangelistic effort near Dedza in Malawi,¹⁰ where Tete Mission was later opened and an African minister, Pastor James N., was placed under Dr. Marcus' supervision.¹¹ In 1928 a company of believers at Mwami Mission was organized into what became the first church to be organized in eastern Zambia.¹²

Dr. Marcus was also receiving calls for schools from a number of villages surrounding Mwami. Chief Mpezeni and his village headmen were most favorable toward the mission work, and were anxious for the Adventist message to be preached in their villages.¹³ To meet the need for more trained staff at the hospital, E. B. Jewell was sent to teach a two-year, and later the three-year medical assistant's training course at Mwami Mission.

Leprosy was a major disease at that time, and because of the growing number of lepers, a leper colony was established at Mwami. Initially the patients were housed in small huts before A. V. Bumbury constructed permanent brick huts that accommodated 400 patients.¹⁴ In 1952 the main hospital building was completed under the supervision of Dr. O. B. Beardsley.

From 1977 to 1986, Mwami Adventist Hospital experienced a period of growth and stability under the directorship of Dr. John B. "Jack" and Deanne Hoehn. With them were Dr. John and Sue Rogers, who initiated a monthly "Senior Staff Dinner" that became a regular practice, developing positive social interaction and friendship among Zambian and expatriate hospital staff.

In 1979 a pediatric wing was added to the hospital, and a School of Nursing building was completed, comprising two nursing hostel buildings. Later three new physicians' homes were also constructed. The former Leprosy Hospital was remodelled to become an extended care facility, and the mission church was fully renovated. Donor organizations such as the EZE and Christoffel Blinden Mission (CBM) supported these developments. Zambian hospital employees, expatriate missionaries, and volunteers (such as Art Morgan, with two of Dr. Hoehn's uncles, Herbert Goertzen and Malcolm Fisher, and their spouses) gave support to these physical facilities improvements.

In 1983 the arrival of a team of registered nurses led by Matron Erida Mbangukira, RN, from Rwanda (the first African to serve as Matron at Mwami Hospital) eased the issue of staffing shortages. Physicians such as Dr. Alan Shepherd (surgeon) and Drs. Don and Shirley Ashley (pediatricians) brought the numbers of doctors to five. In 1985, Dr. Boateng Wiafe (ophthalmologist) opened an eye hospital wing at Mwami, which later moved to Lusaka, the capital of Zambia, where a 40-bed hospital opened in 2002.

Regarding these seeming "golden years," Dr. Hoehn noted, "The blood bank refrigerator worked, and the washing machines were working, all hospital beds had plastic mattress covers. New linens for the operating room were obtained. The Diagnostic Ultra-sound machine was functioning, a first for Zambia's Eastern Province. A new Toyota ambulance expanded outpatient care with mobile eye clinics.

"In 1985 the Mwami Hospital staff list had 142 names on it. This small, hard-working staff cared for 60,000 outpatient visits per year, 6,115 admissions to hospital, 950 births, 345 major and 760 minor operations done that year. All for an operating budget of ZK86,640 (at that time US\$1=ZK 2.39 or US \$37,000 a year, not including church-provided budgets for expatriate workers, Zambian government staffing grants and medicines, and services offered by volunteers and donor organizations). All care was provided with no fees required from patients. It still seems like a

miracle and likely was."¹⁵

At the hospital board meeting of 1978, Dr. Hoehn introduced changes that the hospital board approved. These included changing the name "Mwami Mission Hospital" to "Mwami Adventist Hospital," making distinct the contribution of the Seventh-day Adventist Church and the evangelistic goals of the hospital. Changes were also made to improve the diet offered to nursing students, to become a quality vegetarian diet in accordance with Adventist health teachings. Mrs. Hoehn was in charge of the first vegetarian banquet held for the graduating student nurses and special care was made to ensure that it was really good.

1978 – Mwami's 50th Anniversary Celebration Year

Dr. Scot and Mrs. Julie Dean Hoiland, who were Deanne's family, visited Mwami in January 1978. Dr. Hoiland was a noted organist, and he repaired the old Storey and Clark pump organ that had been at Mwami for many years, but no longer functioned. The organ was used in worship in the Mwami SDA Church for many years.

That February the Hoehns left Mwami for a five-month tropical medicine training course in London, England. They returned in August for the fiftieth anniversary celebration of Mwami Mission. The whole hospital facility was repainted in anticipation of this event. Pastors Lymond Njoloma, D. J. Nyambosi, and Ezra Banda welcomed them back, as the construction of the medical director's house was almost complete and the Hoehns finally moved into "their house" later that year.

Mwami Adventist Hospital founder, Dr G. E. Marcus, returned to Mwami to celebrate its fiftieth anniversary. He arrived August 7, 1978, and was the guest of honor. Others who attended the ceremony were the Zambia Union Mission President, Pastor Henri Marais, and a former union mission President, Pastor Albert Bristow, who flew from Lusaka to Mwami on a new mission plane piloted by Pastor Duane Brenneman.

Dr. Marcus recalled how at times he travelled on foot to Fort Jameson (Chipata) and back in one day, covering 20 miles each way. There were lions at Mwami then, and one jumped a 13-foot-high fence to get a donkey, then hauled it out over the fence. Dr. Marcus told of shooting leopards and of killing a rampaging buffalo at Malamulo Hospital in Malawi. He had come to Mwami with no knowledge of the Nyanja language, with no interpreter, and communicated using sign language till he gradually learned the language. It took a while for the people to believe he was a doctor, different from the witch doctors. He had no food supplies and only ate the food people gave him.

In 1977 Percival Katumbi was the medical assistant in charge of the leprosarium, and the blind pastor, Ezra Banda, was the chaplain. The leper colony and Hospital had previously been an important part of the mission, but in-patient leprosy care was being replaced by outpatient management which had better services than available. Eventually the leprosy hospital became the extended care facility, and years later it became the Eye Hospital, with assistance from the German-based Christoffel Blinden Mission (CBM) and other donor organizations.

Christoffel Blinden Mission became involved with the hospital developmental needs following the visit of Dr. Joseph Taylor in October 1977. Through the contact of CBM, the larger German EZE organization became a major donor for building the new School of Nursing, Dining Hall, and Ladies Dormitory. The small development started through Dr. Taylor's visit led to a major development of Mwami Hospital and School of Nursing.

The Indian community of Chipata was always supportive of the hospital. The Patel and Adams families were particularly friendly, as well as the Jassat family.¹⁶

1997, Mwami Adventist Hospital's 70th Anniversary Celebration

In 1997 Mwami Adventist Hospital celebrated its seventieth anniversary. Dr. Karl Seligman, one of the former medical missionaries, was the guest of honor, and his wife, Sonita Seligman, was also in attendance, along with several distinguished delegates and guests.¹⁷

Baptism of Paramount Chief Mpezeni of the Ngoni Speaking People

In October 2002, Dr Ronald Franzke, an ENT-Otolaryngology specialist from Loma Linda University School of Medicine, came to Mwami with a medical missionary team from Oregon. The team included general practitioners, surgeons, nurses, health workers, engineers, musicians, and missionary volunteers. The team conducted surgeries and medical clinics at the hospital during the day, while the engineers and builders constructed a 1 x 3 classroom block at Mwami Basic School. Construction was completed in 10 days and became a brand-new facility to the school.

During the evenings, the team conducted evangelistic meetings at Feni Sub-Centre, about 5 kilometers from the hospital. Hundreds of people attended every night, and at the end of the evangelistic meetings about 21 people were baptized in Mwami Church's baptismal pool, among whom was the Paramount Chief Mpezeni.¹⁸ His wife was at this time already an active Seventh-day Adventist member and Dorcas worker up until she died in 2009.

Another evangelistic campaign was conducted at Feni Sub-Centre in 2009, which garnered many more converts. Another medical missionary team, “The Legacy of Healing” from Kettering Medical Center, Ohio, visited Mwami with specialists in plastic surgery, orthopaedic and general surgeons, anaesthesiologists, medical practitioners, nurses, engineers, and a pastor-evangelist and musicians.

Chipata Adventist Clinic

The idea for an Adventist clinic in Chipata city was developed by Mwami Adventist Hospital in 2002. The president of the East Zambia Field, Pastor Fred N. Muloongo, was encouraged to support the project. The registration of the clinic was completed by the end of 2002. Through assistance from Mwami Adventist Hospital, Chipata Adventist Clinic started operating in 2003 with the Mwami Hospital’s Eye Department offering weekly eye screening services at the facility.¹⁹

The sole purpose of the existence of this clinic was evangelism. It was hoped that through the provision of medical services, the Adventist presence would have a great impact in reaching many people for Christ. It was envisioned that the raised financial resources would be used to support other pioneered projects and Chisitu Adventist Primary School, including many other evangelistic activities in the East Zambia Field²⁰

In January 2003 the clinic opened its doors to the public in the central business district of Chipata city. Kayiwale Chirambo was the clinical officer, supported by Judith Chirwa Banda as nurse. Edward Zulu was the cashier, while Mary Njobvu and Genesis Mwale helped keep the facility clean.

In 2006, the clinic relocated to Kalongwezi at Mwatero Ngoma’s house along Kalindawaro Road. It experienced a high staff turnover, and the objective of the clinic to support evangelistic projects was not realised. Income was not enough to sustain the project and fund evangelistic activities. In 2008 the director proposed that if there was no recapitalization from East Zambia Field, the clinic should be closed.²¹ At the end of 2008, East Zambia Field decided to temporarily close the clinic. The final decision to close the clinic was made in January 2009²²

2017 – Mwami Adventist Hospital’s 90th Anniversary Cerebration

In 2017 Mwami celebrated its ninetieth anniversary, with the theme, “90 Years in the Master’s Footsteps.” Adventist Health International (AHI) President Dr. Richard Hart graced the cerebration.²³ In August 2017 the Adventist Health Team from Southern California Region came to Mwami and conducted a medical mission for five days. Many patients from different areas of Zambia benefitted from their services and community projects.

In 2018 the Walla Walla Adventist University Team, coordinated by Pastor Troy Fitzgerald, rendered community services, including dental services by Dr. Arnold from Lusaka Dental Clinic. From September 29–October 3, 2019, a second medical mission team from Adventist Health White Memorial, Glendale, Simi Valley, and Bakersfield, California, provided service to a total of 3,698 patients. Cataract surgeries – 29; major surgeries, OB-GYN and general surgeries - 51, dental services - 135 patients, and community outreach with medical consultation - 3,443. The team brought with them several equipment, surgical and medical supplies, and freebies for the community.

Hospital Administration

Mwami Adventist Hospital used to be administered by a Mission director, followed by chief of medical staff (medical director as the preferred title) and business manager up to 1988, when East Zambia Field was organized. After the organization of the field, the office of hospital administrator was introduced. Harrison Chaya was the first hospital administrator from 1992 to 1995. During his administration a fee-paying wing was introduced, which is today is called the Fast Lane in order to accommodate people from Chipata town, including the Asian community, which preferred Mwami Adventist Hospital to other medical facilities. The Fast Lane provides a quicker service but at a fee.²⁴

Providing excellent medical service has always been a top priority for Mwami Adventist Hospital. Such service requires a good source of funds. While such services have been provided for, Mwami Adventist Hospital has sometimes run out of supplies due to financial constraints. The Friends of Mwami, comprising various teams from the United States of America, like Loma Linda University, Walla Walla College, the Hoehn family, and many others have provided support to the hospital.

The government of Zambia has provided operating grants and salaries support for most professionals and support staff. In addition to these, Mwami Adventist Hospital has received funding for programs from the Churches Health Association of Zambia (CHAZ), of which it is a member. The Seventh-day Adventist Church, through the Southern Zambia Union Conference, has also provided appropriations and denominational employees’ salary support.

Above all, the hospital is running some fund generating projects. Mr. Peduche is currently the farm manager and overseeing a number of projects. His wife, Verna Lynn Ong Peduche, is an Obstetrician-Gynecologist/General Practitioner. They came to Zambia in August 2006. The hospital farm and garden produce maize and vegetables for feeding patients, with the surplus sold. The hospital also runs a Tuckshop selling general groceries to the community. Other funds come from the Guest House and Student Hostels for students coming from other institutions on practicum attachment.

The hospital has a 210-bed capacity. The current staffing structure includes 12 denominational employees, mainly administrative (Administrator, Chief of Medical Staff, Nursing Officer, Chaplain, Accountant, etc.); three medical doctors, 26 paramedical staff, 45 nurses, 45 general support staff, and 145 volunteers who are supported by the Churches Health Association of Zambia (CHAZ).²⁵

Mwami Adventist Hospital currently serves the Luangeni political constituency in Chipata district. The constituency consists of four Ngoni chiefdoms (Mpezeni, Maguya, Sairi, and Nzamane). It is estimated that the hospital serves a population of about 85,000 people from within and outside the constituency. Other constituencies surrounding Luangeni include Kasenengwa Constituency on the western side and Chipata Central Constituency on the northern side. On the eastern side is the Republic of Malawi, while on the southern part are Vubwi and Chadiza districts of the Chewa people.

The institution has seen an expansion of student dormitories. Student fees and other donations are making the infrastructure developmental project possible. The Student Library has been supported by the Government of the Republic of Zambia. Some housing units were sponsored by the Beit Trust. The hospital facility however, is still in critical shortage of staff housing units, to the extent that some staff members are sharing houses, while others are renting outside the hospital community at Feni Sub-Centre about 5 kilometers away.

Operational departments at Mwami Adventist Hospital include Admission Wards, Pediatrics, Maternity, Female Ward, Male Ward, Eye Ward, Leprosy Ward, and High Cost (Fast Lane). Other departments include the Out Patient Department (OPD), Pharmacy, Laboratory, Dental, Radiology, Physiotherapy, and Clinical. Support Services include Kitchen, Bulk Stores, Laundry, Maintenance and Transport, Farm, Housekeeping, Administration and Finance; School of Nursing.

Mwami Annex Clinic

In November 2009 Mwami Adventist Hospital applied to East Zambia Field to resume offering medical services using Chipata Adventist Clinic registration certificate.²⁶ Later it was decided to use Mwami Adventist Hospital registration certificate as an extension of the Mwami Annex Clinic. Mwami Annex Clinic is one of the departments at Mwami Adventist Hospital. The clinic currently operates from the SOS Village, at Dam View, Chipata, along the Great East Road off the Mwami Border Road.

The clinic offers fee-paying services to clients from Chipata and surrounding areas. It is an income-generating venture to help fund the operations of Mwami Adventist Hospital. Out-patient services provided include medical, surgical, obstetrics and gynecology, pediatric, eye care, and preventive and healthy lifestyle promotional programs. Other services offered are pharmacy, ultrasound, ECG, anaesthesia, medical laboratory, and ophthalmic laboratory.²⁷

Mwami Annex Clinic has since acquired a 2-acre piece of land at Lot 5, near Lutembwe Dam 1 in Chipata, across the Lutembwe bridge south of the SOS village. The clinic plans to construct a modern medical infrastructure and equip the facility with state of art equipment.

Future Outlook

Mwami plans to be upgraded from a Level 1 hospital to Level 2. It wants to upgrade the Nursing College to university level to offer degree programs. The hospital also plans to increase housing for medical and affiliated workers. In collaboration with East Zambia Field, the hospital wishes to establish a boarding secondary school to take care of the children of the hospital staff as well as the outside community.²⁸

List of Hospital Administrators

Harrison Chaya (1992-1995),²⁹ Allen Fowler (1995-1998),³⁰ Enock Chitakwa (1998-2019)³¹, Peter Tembo (2019-).

List of Medical Directors

E. G. Marcus (1927-1930); J. Janzen (1931-1934); None (1934-1948); O. B. Beardsley (1948-1954); P. G. Peach (1954-1957); K. Seligmann (1958-1966); R. D. Harris (1967-1969); H. D. Frank (1970-1971); B. Nelson (Acting, 1972); D. Sargeant (Acting, 1973-1975); Nicola S. Ashton (1976); L. J. Ramages (1977); John B. Hoehn (1978-1986), A. E. Shepherd (1987-1988); Donald K. Ashley (Acting, 1989); _____ (1990-1991); Isagani Manuel (1992-1993); Abelardo Osorio (1994-2001); Ronilo Ang (2002 to present).

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