

Rapedhi Dispensary

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Rapedhi Dispensary is overseen by Lake Victoria Field of Seventh-day Adventists.

Missionary to Rapedhi

Rapedhi is located in the Ndhiwa sub county, Homa Bay County, some 40 miles (66km) from Gendia, in the Nyanza province, the traditional birthplace of Adventism in Kenya. After missionary Arthur A. Carscallen opened the first British East Africa Mission station in Kenya at Gendia in 1906, the Adventist work spread. Mission stations were opened in Wire Hill by J. J. Baker (1909), Gem by H. H. Brooks (1910), Karungu by E. B. Philipps (1911), Rusinga by A. Watson (1912), and Kamagambo by A. A. Carscallen (1913). The mission station in Kanyadoto (Rapedhi) was opened by Alfred Matter in 1913.¹

In 1911, work began in Kanyadoto when J. H. Sparks, a South African trader, camped under a large tree and began to preach to the people. Sparks was a trader in hides and skins and shot game, which was plentiful in the area. He then shared the meat with the locals before gathering them each Sabbath for prayer. In 1913 Carscallen sent Alfred Matter as the first missionary to Kanyadoto. Matter built on the work of Sparks, who had already constructed a church and school. Both of them grew rapidly, thanks to the hunger for mission education. The outbreak of the First World War in 1914 seriously disrupted the work of the missionaries. Kanyadoto was closed, and Alfred Matter was interned to Kaimosi in Western Kenya because he was German-born. After the war, Kanyadoto returned, and the first church in the area was known as Rapedhi.

Medical Work

In 1921, Dr. George Alfred Sheridan Madgwick (1892-1954) was sent to Kanyadoto to start medical work. Dr. Madgwick was born in Antigua in the West Indies, and after his early education took a medical course in England. Together with his wife Vera McLean, he left for Gendia and, spending only a few days there, they left for Kanyadoto, where he established the first Adventist medical work in Kenya. There were simply no facilities available at Kanyadoto. Madgwick was forced to work in very difficult circumstances, performing operations on a kitchen table inside a mud hut without proper lighting. He had to sterilize his instruments by boiling them on kerosene tins on an open fire. All seemed hopeless at Kanyadoto, and the climate did not quite help. The missionaries found it particularly difficult working at Kanyadoto, and the average stay was between two and

three years at most.²

In 1924 it was decided to move the medical work to Kendu Bay. They settled on a site about three kilometers from the Gendia Mission.³ Madgwick remained in Kendu Bay for the next 15 years, building what became a premier medical institution in East Africa at that time. Unfortunately, this also meant that the medical work at Kanyadoto ceased. Patients from the area had to travel to Kendu Mission Hospital, 30 miles away. The decision to close the medical facility did not go down well with the residents of Kanyadoto. According to Elder Josiah Agawo, one of the older members of Rapedhi, there was a perpetual out-cry to return the lost dispensary.⁴

The Dispensary Struggles

After a number of years, Kanyadoto Mission was altogether shut down, and the work moved to Ranen. The old mission grounds are now part of Rapedhi church and school. The church community sent their request to Ranen Mission Field through Pastor Henry Obat to re-open the dispensary.⁵ Fact-finding missions ensued, and on February 1, 1990, Felix Omollo, a qualified clinician, was posted to Rapedhi to re-open the medical facility, some 66 years after it first closed.

The church community was overjoyed, and many benefited from both physical and spiritual healing. But then again, in 1994 the medical facility collapsed and closed its doors because of administrative and financial issues. A little while later, Ranen Field would briefly reinstate clinical services, but in 2000 it shut down again. It would be another 15 years before the dispensary would be re-established.⁶

The clinic was revived in 2015 under Pastor Mourice Onyango.⁷ The church took an active role in its administration and development strategies. During this time, Pastor Samson Okwach spearheaded the project before the Lake Victoria Conference. They were assisted by the Ranen Conference health ministry department, which donated six tables and six staff chairs for the dispensary. Rapedhi Dispensary falls under the newly founded Lake Victoria Field.

The Church Board under the chairmanship of Pastor Samwel Ruto appointed an eleven-member team to harness the activities of the center on day to day basis and to model long term plans. The team managed to solicit \$260 towards the renovation of the old building.

It is hoped that within the framework of the administrative structure of the church, the dream of a fully-fledged medical institution will be realized, with the help of Lake Victoria Field and supporters.

SOURCES

Robinson, Virgil. *Third Angel over Africa*. Unpublished manuscript.

Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook <https://www.adventistyearbook.org/>.



NOTES

1. *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* 1911, 1912, 1913, and 1914.
2. Virgil Robinson, *Third Angel over Africa*, unpublished manuscript.
3. Ibid.
4. Josiah Agawo, an ordained serving elder at Rapedhi Seventh-day Adventist Church, interview by the author, March 14, 2019.
5. Joseph Odero, an ordained elder at Rapedhi Seventh-day Adventist Church, interview by the author, March 14, 2019.
6. Josiah Agawo, an ordained serving elder at Rapedhi Seventh-day Adventist Church, interview by the author, March 14, 2019.
7. Elder Moses Odede, an ordained minister, interview by the author, March 17, 2019.

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