

By Steven Nzamaza;

When British missionaries came to central Rwanda they choose to settle at Shyogwe in the present day Muhanga District, the first thing that they built was a school. The school which opened in 1946 became so popular that most Protestant believers from across the country and beyond came to seek knowledge from here.

The first initiative at Shyogwe laid a foundation for the development of education, the school developed quickly into a centre for training teachers and future workers of the Church, including Protestants from Rwanda and DR Congo.

The Bishop of Shyogwe Rt. Reverend Dr. Jéréd Kalimba observes that education was the first thing that was implemented here and school at Shyogwe become legendary. Students came from all parts of the country and eastern Congo to study at Shyogwe.



The Bishop of Shyogwe Rt. Reverend Dr. Jéréd Kalimba

“Shyogwe Diocese became a centre of education excellence and the first thing that came to people’s minds whenever Shyogwe was mentioned was education which has remained the case to the present day,” Bishop Kalimba underlines.

Based on three fundamental pillars, evangelism, education and health, Shyogwe Diocese started with a school shortly followed with the building the church to strengthen people spiritually and a cathedral was completed in 1992.

Shyogwe Diocese oversees 34 parishes of the Anglican Church of Rwanda in four districts of the southern parts of the country which are Muhanga, Kamonyi, Ruhango and Nyanza. The diocese was established with a mission to preach the word of God in order build the spiritual strength as well as the social economic development of Rwandans.

When the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi struck, Shyogwe as a diocese was very young which affected everything from the life of the church, infrastructure, Christians and staff members as many were killed while others went into exile.

Bishop Kalimba joined Shyogwe Diocese in the aftermath of the genocide to pick up the pieces. Passionate about education he sought to restore the former glory where many looked up to Shyogwe’s education excellence as well as rebuilding churches

and health facilities.

Today, churches have been built in all the 34 parishes, nine nursery schools established, 25 primary schools, 15 secondary schools, an integrated polytechnic and a university under construction. Health centres have been restored and constructed new ones like Shyogwe, Hanika, Gikomero and Ndiza. Supplementary health posts have also been constructed at Muhanga town, Mugina, Shaki and Mbayaya.

To build sustainable communities the diocese conducts community outreach where people are taught about their spiritual growth, social and economic aspects of life to grow holistically, improve living conditions, social behaviours, peace and harmony within communities.

Shyogwe Diocese is a strategic development partner to Muhanga District where it is also headquartered. The diocese has mainly invested in education by building schools, constructing health facilities, protecting the environment, support communities in income generating activities and support neighbouring communities access basic services like water.



Shyogwe Diocese owns different development activities like this carpentry workshop in Muhanga

According to Bishop Kalimba, in Muhanga alone they have built 15 schools across the district. At Shyogwe there is a secondary school which is very famous, it has a boarding section with about 1,000 students, and there is a Teacher Training College (TTC). The diocese also has a private school in Shyogwe as well as a technical school and 9-Year Basic education with more than 2000 students.

In partnership with the Germans they are building a TVET school from A1-A7 level, and a University next to the Cathedral. Equipment and machines required to undertake this technical school have been obtained and some already installed.

The university to be based at Shyogwe will focus on providing technical skills and have branches at Hanika (Nyanza) and Kanyinya (Kigali).

The diocese also supports students in secondary schools and at the university by paying their school fees.

Health as the third pillar of Shyogwe Diocese has received massive investments towards building health centres in Shyogwe, Hanika, Gikomero and Ndiza. Shyogwe health centre has been upgraded to a favourable level at which the facility can qualify as a polyclinic and possibly a hospital in the near future.

Health posts built by the diocese have also been equipped with advanced medical services like Muhanga health post frequented by many residents.

The diocese uses the medical facilities to teach and sensitize the public about healthy living, preventive measures, nutrition, hygiene and sanitation.

To improve the wellbeing of the communities the diocese helped establish a fruit processing plant to resolve severe poverty and poor nutrition. The production of pineapples by local farmers provides adequate nutrition and generates financial income and therefore helps in combating issues of poverty and poor nutrition. Currently the plant works with six associations of pineapple growers with 135 members.

Neighbouring communities of the Cathedral at Shyogwe have benefited to get certain services like access to water supply and power that were extended to them through investments made by the diocese.

Bishop Kalimba has also helped the community to teach them to start income generating activities, savings schemes and forming or joining cooperatives. To show support and a good example, the Bishop himself has joined some of those groups.

Climate change effects as another pressing issue to mostly the poor communities, Shyogwe Diocese have thought of initiatives to mitigate and adopt the effects. They have established innovative projects to protect environment through finding of alternatives to firewood as the source of fuel, simple water purification innovation and using solar as alternative energy.

“We have distributed efficient stoves that uses less energy popularly known as ‘Cyanarumwe’, the stove uses only one wood to cook everything,” explains Bishop Kalimba.

Another environmental friendly project makes water filters from clay, this innovation is made in a natural way and limits wastage. Recycling is another initiative the diocese is undertaking with partners from German, recycling will be

done from different types of waste to produce energy efficient products.

Owing to the low electricity generation in Rwanda, Bishop Kalimba has found a way to power Shyogwe using solar. Part of the Cathedral and activities at the technical school like the carpentry workshop are already using solar energy.

He observes that the country needs electricity to develop and alternative energy sources like solar will help to accelerate progress towards Rwanda's vision.

The Bishop of Shyogwe Diocese emphasizes that a combination of all these activities will support communities to develop sustainably and the diocese is ready to continue its part in the development.