

Portrait of Bienvenu BAGALWA

Bienvenu BAGALWA is Congolese from the DRC, his beloved country where he was born in Watsa territory, Haut-Uele province. He is currently based in Kinshasa where he has been working as Human Resources Assistant for nearly three years within the Posts Managing Unit, a job which involves assisting the staff in careers management and providing administrative support. This is what Bagalwa told us about his job: ***“My work consists in handling local and international staff***



members' reassignments and producing mapping thereof in the Umoja management system; I also occasionally request extension of contracts for staff members and produce reports on the staffing table. Besides, due to my previous experience acquired from the Client Support Unit, I am from time to time called upon to assist in providing responses to some of the staff members' concerns if necessary; and as a Local Processor Expert in Travel management, I assist staff in resolving the problems faced while processing their requests in Umoja”. Those are currently his assignments with MONUSCO.

It should be noted, however, that Bienvenu joined the UN Mission in 2005 as an interpreter, a job which requires more mental flexibility and stamina. He has, however, successfully lived up to the challenge in that job for several years. ***“I began my career with the United Nations in 2009, first as an interpreter for the Uruguayan contingent, which, incidentally, allowed me to improve my Spanish. Subsequently, I worked as an interpreter within the Bangladeshi Formed Police Unit. During that period, I was selected to provide interpretation services at***

SRSG's meetings with Ambassadors of Member States of the UN Security Council. I also occasionally assisted Assistant Secretary-Generals for Human Rights and other VIPs by facilitating communication while they interacted with Congolese authorities. That experience led to my being selected, for the second time, as member of the Interpreters' recruitment panel."



His smiling face and unusual courtesy characterizing the people from Eastern DRC hides a tremendous strength of character that helps him to remain calm in the face of most challenging tasks. I know this for having approached him on one or two occasions. It will be recalled that two years ago, the UN administrative litigation Court held some hearings at MONUSCO Utex Africa on reportedly unjustified cases of dismissal. Bienvenu and myself were teamed with other interpreters to serve during those hearings. Well, despite the intricacies of the legal language, our colleague did a great job thanks to his accumulated capacities to deal with stressful situations. On the other hand, all those, like myself, who had the opportunity to have Bienvenu as their instructor during the training on the use of the Umoja system can undoubtedly testify that he has a tremendous passion for his work and a high sense of human relations, of listening, of communication, of understanding and of flexibility. Needless to point out, Bienvenu is meticulous about his dressing, which leaves no one indifferent; in fact, he always reminds me of the neat way of dressing of our college teachers of old. My impression is proven right when I hear him recount

his educational background and professional career. ***" I have a degree in the Applied Education Science, with major in English and specialization in Applied Linguistics, obtained in 2003 at the Université Pédagogique Nationale of Kinshasa. After completing my education, I was hired as English teacher in different schools across the city of Kinshasa. So, I taught English to young children, preschoolers and kindergarten children, and then to pupils in elementary and secondary schools. Eventually I set up and ran an English Learning Center"***.

When I ask him if working for the United Nations was a choice or just a happy coincidence, he responds: ***"It is rather a great opportunity for I can interact with people from different races, cultures, religions...which greatly impact my way of seeing the world and of working. I am also appreciative of the UN high level standard of technology and respect for rules"***. Regarding his working relationships with his colleagues, he says: ***"Since I spend most of my day time with colleagues at the office, I consider them to be my close collaborators without whom, my work cannot be done as expected."*** This is confirmed by his colleague Willy Changachanga in these terms: ***"Bienvenu Bagalwa likes well done work. His background as a teacher leads him to take time to the client even the smallest details of the service he is rendering to him or her. He is aware of his limitations, likes to learn and appreciates when his colleagues make progress."***

I have managed to snatch his view on the overall situation in the DR Congo. His is a generally optimistic view which he expressed using this metaphor: ***"[DRC] is a lion that will soon awake and start roaring. All the savannah will be frightened"***. Explaining this in detail, he says: ***"I strongly believe that DRC will rise up one day and will become a model for the whole Africa. DRC is a big country with huge potentials. Should all the Congolese people rise and do what they must do; if they would stop pointing an accusing finger to each other, then they would achieve amazing things. This may take some time, but they need to start somewhere. It takes a real national conscience to achieve it!"***

I then ask him if he thinks the UN is doing well or little in DRC. ***"I believe UN has done great things in DRC, yet there are weaknesses inherent in every human activities; it should be clearly said that MONUSCO is not here to replace the Congolese people or government. MONUSCO is rather here to help the Congolese to take their destiny into their own hands after 58 years of independence..."***. Speaking about his activities outside of his work, Bienvenu reveals: ***" At the church I serve in the department of married couples and families. We deal with distressed families and couples"***.



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Knowing that UN attaches special importance to gender balance, I ask Bienvenu if he pays attention to this issue in his daily activities. **"Yes, of course!"** he says, and explains: **"I strongly believe God was not mistaken when creating men and women. Women, though different from man in many respects, have equal skills with man. If they understand each other's role and combine efforts, they can make efficient teams"**. My next question is "what chores do you like to do at home? He says: **"I like to do gardening work and other little jobs at home."** What about the musical overheating in DRC, are you sensitive to this? **Music in DRC is a real cultural wealth, however, beyond the melody enjoyed and the recurrent theme of love of a woman or a man, love, Congolese music artists, I believe, must realize their role in educating the mass, especially during these delicate and critical times facing the country"**.

Bienvenu Bagalwa is married and have four children. With these words, he wrapped up our conversation: **"I urge everyone to love their work and continue to improve it until they are satisfied they have made enough progress"**.

Original in French, translated by Yulu KABAMBA

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