

Portrait of Sylvie Kavanaght Lituka

With a smile on her face, nice words and caring attitude, Sylvie usually welcomes patients who visit MONUSCO's health clinic, at Utex II, in the city of Kinshasa. I wonder what your impression of her is, but as far as I am concerned, whenever I think of her the first image of her that crosses my mind is that of a guardian angel; someone who is ready to go the extra mile for someone to find a solution to a health problem.



Let us now listen to what she has to say about herself: ***"I am a nurse, I graduated from "Institut Technique Médical de Kisangani" in 1994; I have been working for the health clinic of MONUC, later on renamed MONUSCO since July 2001. Before joining the Mission, I had worked for different health clinics, from 1994 to 1996; inter alia, a private health clinic named Mapendo. In aggregate, I have served for twenty one years in the medical area. As a nurse, I feel myself under a solemn obligation to provide the very best services to the patients visiting our health clinic, to respect them and always keep professional. I learnt this from my late father, Doctor Georges Higgins Kavanaght that nursering is a noble profession; I love it so much and I will spend all my lifetime serving in this area."***

This ***"excellent nurse"***, as depicted by her supervisor, Doctor Guy Bandu, ***"is full of energy, she is always in a good mood, patient, endowed with the necessary natural leadership and charisma, as well as an outstanding professionalism to make her an ideal collaborator."*** Many staff would love to be portrayed by their supervisors like her but this must be deserved. Doctor Bandu confided to me that only once he saw Sylvie upset, she was right, he was telling all this in an

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evocative gesture, looking across the door of her office, as if he was afraid she would appear: ***“by no means I would have wished to place myself in the shoes of the person who vexed her...”*** “Phew, Sylvie has a problem conditioned by her long serving status with the Mission’s doctors; she takes her job very seriously. All this is reflected in her skilled gestures, her reassuring voice, her caring look full of humanity. It is common place to face human distress in her area. During such ordeals, once again Doctor Bandu confides, ***“she shows lots of compassion for others.”***

Loving one’s job does not mean one would not face difficulties. The risks, she highlighted, ***“are often due to the fact that the majority of the people received are sick. They cannot wait and insist to see the doctor, even if the latter is attending a meeting or having rest. Other risks relate to contamination by contaminated objects when providing medical care to injured patients.”*** On top of that, what depresses her the most is the ungrateful attitude of some staff who leave the clinic without saying good bye in spite of all the medical care and attention received.

One of her colleagues Fyfy Kikata gave this testimony about her: ***“Sylvie is among the first nurses recruited by the UN Mission in the DRC. I am greatly inspired by her: she is very active, always cheerful and smiling, very friendly, sensitive, ready to serve and caring woman for those sharing the same environment with her. She is brave and daring. She shares the little she has with everyone. When you visit her at home, you would find that she is a caring motherly who is very nice to her children.”***

With four children: three girls and one boy, Sylvie is always busy at home. She must help the children do their homework, especially in mathematics and she likes to discuss with her elder daughter who is studying medical science at the university. Well, dogs would never turn to cats. This Congolese woman, from the Eastern Province, newly renamed Tshopo, is ***“an excellent cook.”*** In a burst of laughter, she disclosed the following about her husband ***“I do not like to talk about him, I love him so much; he gave me super intelligent kids.”*** Hum...Sylvie, unless otherwise proven, we are the ones that give birth and bring children to life – we play the greatest part in childbearing ...do you understand what I mean! Let us take all this easy. What more do you have to say about this man who won your heart? ***“He loves what I cook and do not like to eat outdoors”*** Please don’t have to joke with such precious creatures, a catholic Christian who prays at Notre Dame de Fatima, if you don’t want to be in trouble with her spiritual leader Priest, Michel Ekonzo.

My dear Sylvie, men would be surprised by what I have said, though you are reconciling them with the fair sex. Would you all heed this: Sylvie “loves” soccer! Strange enough, strange indeed...By any chance, do you happen to watch soccer game at the stadium? **“Yes, of course. My favorite team in Kinshasa is DCMP¹, Malekesa in Kisangani, and Barça in Europe, with incredible players like the trio MESSI, SOAREZ and NEEMAR.”** I have high regard for you my dear Sylvie, there is a lot more far better than just watching gentlemen running behind a ball, isn't it? What about horse riding! I would not get mad at you for that; to each their own delusions.

Taking a look at the overall situation in her country the DRC, she believes: **“MONUSCO must remain for now and help the DRC enhance security and stabilize, especially in the territories that are hard hit by violence; the country is not ready yet to stand on its own feet regarding security.”** She urges the Government to increase its effort in improving the social situation. She says **“sanitation and hospital infrastructures are inadequate. In the 21st century, people should not die because they did not find a suitable place for treatment or just because they do not have money.”**



Sylvie, I am amazed by your kindness, your contagious good mood and the beauty of your gestures, I am fascinated by your natural charm and the serenity coming out of you makes me believe that there are still few angels on the earth. Though modest and often adopting low profile, they can still be found doing brilliant job. Such is your case.

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¹ Daring Club Motema Pembe