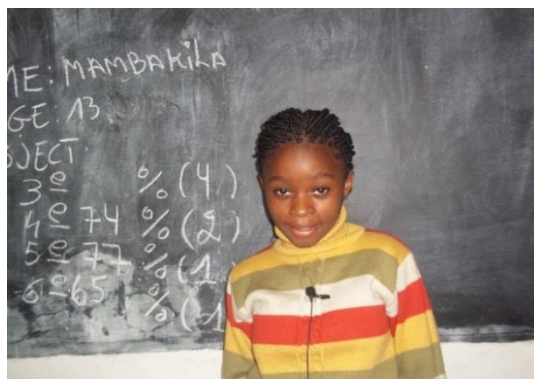


Excellence in the Congo: More than 160 BEBUC Scholars

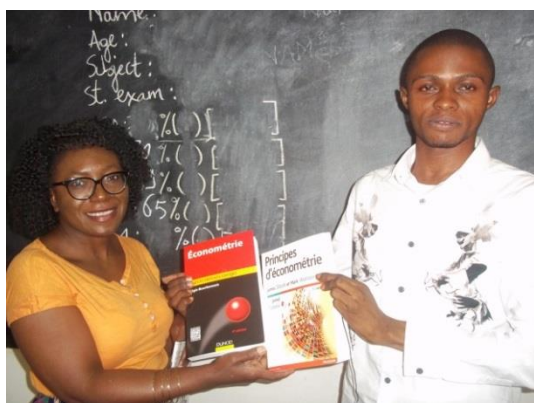
To give to the Congo a new generation of young professors: That is the aim of the Excellence Scholarship Program BEBUC. Now, again, scholars and new candidates were examined by the international selection committee in the capital Kinshasa. As a result, BEBUC presently supports 165 scholars.



The student of political science Arnold Musao was the first candidate to be evaluated by the Evaluation Committee. The microphone served for the contact with the president in Würzburg. (Photo: H. Mavoko)



Accomplished! The 13-year-old scholar Belinda Mambakila, pupil at Vabatu Ngoma, has again proven herself in front of the Committee; the school was built up by the NGO Mbonda Lokito e.V. of Würzburg. (Photo: H. Mavoko)



After the successful prolongation: Vice-speaker Guysnove Lutumba (right), student of economics, receives two books for the BEBUC library from Karine Ndjoko. (Photo: H. Mavoko)

It all began seven years ago with the University of Kinshasa in the capital of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Since 2014, 16 Congolese universities have been taking part in the scholarship program. All of them are affiliated with the University of Würzburg by partnership agreements. Among them there are also two institutions from Brazzaville, the capital of the Republic of the Congo, at the other side of the Congo River. Moreover, six high schools and two primary schools are involved.

This time candidates from the West of the country were examined: scholars who are already being supported and new candidates from Kinshasa, Kikwit and Mbanza Ngungu. Besides excellent pupils, mainly young academics of all subjects are promoted during their bachelor studies in the Congo, during their master and doctoral studies abroad, and when returning to the Congo.

Members of the Committee

Members of the permanent evaluation committee are the professors Gerhard Bringmann, holder of the chair of Organic Chemistry at the University of Würzburg, and Virima Mudogo, former Vice-President of the University of Kinshasa and alumnus of the University of Würzburg. Together they founded the scholarship program in 2008. Already in 2009 the team was reinforced by Dr. Karine Ndjoko Ioset from Lausanne, who is today the Program Deputy and Manager of BEBUC, and shortly after by Hypolite Mavoko, tutor within the scholarship system. These four are being supported by the tutors Vivi Maketa and Damien Tshibangu.

Evaluation and Mentoring

The best candidates are selected according to a well-established two-step procedure: firstly according to their previous study results and then, mainly, on the basis of their personal presentation at the blackboard, with talk and discussion, also about their future plans. Further important selection criteria are their ethical competences and language skills. During the annual prolongation evaluations, the direct contact to each of the scholars plays an important role, too. Together with the intense mentoring it is a trademark of BEBUC.

Due to health problems the chairman of the evaluation committee, Gerhard Bringmann, could, for the first time, not attend the evaluation on site, but took an active part by video conference. For the same reason, the evaluation took place only now, in June and July, and not, as usual, in March, and also, on a



Participated from Würzburg in all of the evaluations and the certificate ceremony by video conference: Gerhard Bringmann. (Photo: J. Habel)



Good humor during a break at the Women's Debate, organized by Karine Ndjoko (second from the right): some of the female BEBUC scholars. (Photo: F. Bangelesa)



Great enthusiasm among the pupils: The BEBUC scholar Ruth Diavita talks in a well understandable manner about current scientific topics and presents the scholarship program at the Kinshasa Science Event. (Photo: C. Musasa)



In front of the German Embassy in Kinshasa (from the left): Pascal Mupepele and the members of the evaluation committee Karine Ndjoko, Hypolite Mavoko, and Virima Mudogo, as well as the Cultural Attaché Christian Becker. (Photo: private)

trial basis, only in the West. After this successful test run, the BEBUC evaluation in the Center (Mbuji Mayi), in the South (Lubumbashi), in the East (Butembo, Goma und Bukavu), and in the North (Kisangani) of the country shall be done in the same way as soon as possible.

Empowerment of Women

A special concern of BEBUC is the empowerment of women. About one third of the presently supported young Congolese are female. "This percentage of women is already quite good, considering the fact that the scholarships shall ultimately lead to professorships, but we are determined to increase it substantially", says Bringmann. "That is why we also have included schools into our program: to recognize and support excellent girls early – before their parents take them out of school."

But BEBUC also strives to stimulate indeed existing, but not yet supported, reserves of excellent female students at the universities, and to encourage them to apply for a BEBUC scholarship. For this purpose, and to strengthen the already supported scholars, an entire day was reserved during the evaluation for a Women's Debate, initiated and chaired by Karine Ndjoko.

Kinshasa Science Event

BEBUC presents its work regularly to a general public and seeks support. An example of good public-relations work by the scholars themselves is the participation in the Science Event in the course of the "Week of Science and Technology" at the Institut de la Gombe in Kinshasa right before the evaluation. Encouraged by Karine Ndjoko, committed bachelor scholars of the Université de Kikwit, the Université de Kinshasa, and the Université Protestante au Congo gave manifold information on BEBUC and on current scientific and medically relevant topics, and presented scientific experiments.

Further Activities

As also during earlier evaluation trips to Kinshasa, the examination team visited the German Embassy, which has been strongly supporting the BEBUC activities for a long time (like recently with the dispatch of scientific books from Würzburg to Goma). The Cultural Attaché of the Embassy, Dr. Christian Becker, was impressed by BEBUC. He emphasized his wish to participate in the evaluations in the East the next time and then also to get to know CERPI (see below) and its founders in Goma.

Just as every year, the team visited, this time together with the re-entry scholar Dr. Pascal Mupepele, also the Ministry of Education and Research. The Minister, Prof. Théophile Mbemba Fundu, was highly impressed by the BEBUC activities and promised to support the program.

Also reinforced was the cooperation with the Fédération des Entreprises du Congo (FEC), the Congolese association of enterprises, especially in the field of joint seminar sessions and internships.



Hearty welcome in the Ministry (from the left): Pascal Mupepele, Karine Ndjoko, the Minister Prof. Théophile Mbemba Fundu, Virima Mudogo, and the Ministerial Advisor Etienne Busha-Bu-Kuete Budik. (Photo: J. M. Tshilenge)



Visit to the language center CALI (from the left): Virima Mudogo, the director of CALI Edith Bawn Ndumbi, Karine Ndjoko, Hypolite Mavoko, and the English teacher Kyungu Lwamba. (Photo: B. Muderhwa)



Solemn handover of the scholarship certificate to the student of civil engineering Décennie Welangila (from the left): Karine Ndjoko, Hypolite Mavoko, Virima Mudogo, and Décennie Welangila. (Photo: H. Mavoko)



Proud and relieved about their certificates: the new and the prolonged BEBUC scholars from Kinshasa, Kikwit, and Mbanza Ngungu. (Photo: H. Mavoko)

For the first time contacts were established with the Congo-American Language Institute (CALI), which cooperates closely with the Fulbright scholarship program. The BEBUC delegates emphasized the crucial importance of the English language within their scholarship program and agreed to collaborate more closely.

Solemn Handover of the Scholarships

Highlight and closing of the evaluation was this time again the solemn handover of the scholarship certificates to the newly-selected or prolonged scholars. With the recent evaluation the number of scholars has increased to 165 in the entire Congo. The festive character of the ceremony was highlighted by the presence of the leaders of the involved teaching institutions and of the representative of the Ministry of Research and Higher Education, Prof. Nadège Ngombe. Likewise present were friends and families of the scholars.

This time, as already partly in the past, the BEBUC scholars in the East, in the Center, and in the South, sent democratically elected delegates, who contributed to the ceremony by giving a personal greeting. At the same time they reported about the BEBUC activities at their home institutions and emphasized the importance of the increasing integration within the BEBUC family in spite of the huge distances in the Congo.

During the ceremony, again BEBUC Awards were given to the best and most committed among the scholars. This time, Dav Ebengo, student of agronomy, and Théodore Jordy Dinga, student of chemistry, were honored. Both had distinguished themselves by excellent exam results over several years and by their great commitment for BEBUC. The ceremony was rounded off by a video greeting by Gerhard Bringmann.

Visit to Lubumbashi

To mentor the scholars and to establish new important contacts, Karine Ndjoko took the opportunity for a trip to Lubumbashi, where joint seminars were held with the scholars of the University of Lubumbashi and of the girls' high-school Tuendelee. Karine Ndjoko talked about BEBUC and ethics of sciences and gave practical advice about study issues. The scholars for their part reported on the progress of their work.

Future Plans

"The Excellence Scholarship Program BEBUC has developed brilliantly during the past years and we are on schedule with our time plans: That from 2018 on every excellent Congolese student shall have the opportunity to apply for a BEBUC scholarship. Therefore we will continue to extend our infrastructure – with additional seminar rooms, but also by hiring new tutors, who help the scholars with subject-related problems and everyday questions", emphasizes Bringmann.

"It is highly important for us to continue accompanying the scholars in a focused and specific manner on their way to their professorship, and to advise them on Congo-relevant topics that complement each other, thus creating crystallization points for



Came from far away and conveyed a welcome address of their home universities: The three delegates (from the left) Alix Ntambua (medicine) from Mbuji Mayi, Sylvie Imani (health and municipal development) from Goma, and Stanis Kabayo (chemistry) from Lubumbashi. (Photo: H. Mavoko)



Honored with this year's BEBUC Award (from the left): Dav Ebengo (agronomy) and Théodore Dinga (chemistry). (Photo: H. Mavoko)

future research centers in the Congo", said the professor from Würzburg. A first such center, which was recently founded upon the initiative of young BEBUC professors, is the Center for Research on Poverty and Inequalities (CERPI) in Goma.

"The extension of the scholarship program to the entire Congo is a breathtaking task", states Bringmann. "But we find ourselves well-equipped because of the strong support mainly by the foundation Else-Kröner-Fresenius-Stiftung, but also by the foundation Holger-Pöhlmann-Stiftung, and due to the personal sponsorships and generous donations."

Contact

Prof. Dr. Dr. h.c. mult. Gerhard Bringmann
Institut für Organische Chemie der Universität Würzburg,
T +49 931 31-85323,
bringman@chemie.uni-wuerzburg.de

Prof. Dr. Dr. h.c. Virima Mudogo
Université de Kinshasa, Faculté des Sciences,
T +243 99 99 30 963,
mudogov@gmail.com

Dr. Karine Ndjoko Ioset
Institut für Organische Chemie der Universität Würzburg,
T +41 787 044 725,
karine.ndjoko@uni-wuerzburg.de

On the Scholarship Program BEBUC and the NGO Förderverein Uni Kinshasa e.V.:
www.foerdereverein-uni-kinshasa.de