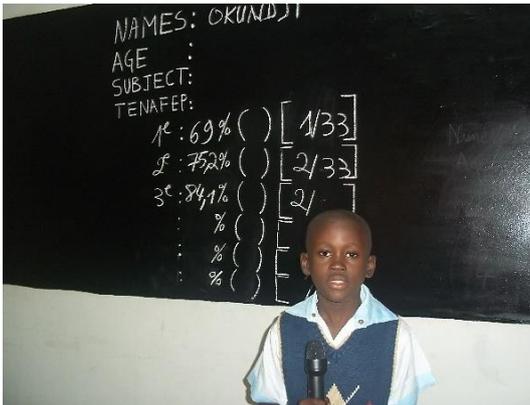


BEBUC: Further Extension of the Scholarship Program in the Congo

It is the aim of the Excellence Scholarship Program BEBUC to help rebuild the academic staff in the Congo, thus giving the universities a new impetus. Just recently, new evaluations have taken place in the capital of Kinshasa. As a result, 178 scholars are now being supported at 25 Congolese schools and universities.



The first candidate to present himself to the committee: Enock Tshiamala from the primary school Vabatu Ngoma. (Photo: H. Mavoko)



The scholar Arienne Seundi reports about her studies of the past year. (Photo: H. Mavoko)



First personal meeting: Deborah Kalamabayi (left) came from the US to take part in the evaluations – both, as an external BEBUC scholar and as the personal sponsor of the pupil Monica Obendus. (Photo: H. Mavoko)

This time, the evaluations of the current scholars and the new applicants for an excellence scholarship in the west of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) have taken about two weeks.

In total, 75 pupils and students from six partner institutions of the University of Würzburg had applied – i.a. from the Université de Kinshasa (where eight years ago the Scholarship Program BEBUC was launched), the Université Protestante au Congo (likewise in Kinshasa), the Université de Kikwit (in Kikwit), and the Université Kongo (in Mbanza Ngungu), and from two schools. After the pre-selection process, which was based on the submitted documents and was conducted by the local team in Kinshasa, 18 candidates remained, of which eventually ten were awarded the prestigious and highly coveted scholarship.

Out of the already supported 81 scholars in the west, 74 were awarded an extension in the course of the annual interviews. Together with the scholars who had been evaluated at the end of 2015 in the center (Mbuji-Mayi), the south (Lubumbashi), the east (Bukavu, Goma, and Butembo), and in the north of the country (Kisangani), and those who are presently studying abroad, BEBUC is thus now supporting 178 talented young Congolese.

BEBUC as a Driving Force for the Reconstruction of the Country

BEBUC supports the best candidates from basically all subjects and gives advice and cares for them during their academic career. When selecting the applicants, special attention is paid not only to outstanding study results, but also to the applicants' ability for well-organized, target-oriented studies, and their linguistic, social, and ethical competency.

After their bachelor studies (in the Congo) and their master and PhD studies (usually abroad), accompanied by an intensive mentoring and annual interviews, the future professors are also supported by a 're-entry scholarship' when returning to the Congo.

This shall help revive academic excellence at Congolese universities, which were once truly brilliant – thus, also helping reconstruct the country, which is devastated due to civil war and economic hardship: the Scholarship Program BEBUC as a driving force for prosperity and peace in a difficult country.



Grady Mukubwa, student of pharmacy, again convinces the Evaluation Panel of his capacities. (Photo: H. Mavoko)



The 'BEBUC candidate' Sarah Onyembe gives her presentation. (Photo: H. Mavoko)



Two new scholars from the Université Kongo: Demiguel Maketama and Lydie Bambi. (Photo : H. Mavoko)



Evaluation in Würzburg, too: Chairman Gerhard Bringmann and Dieudonné Tshitenge, BEBUC scholar and PhD student of pharmacy. (Photo: Ch. Froschgeiser)

Scholars in All Study Phases – and the First 'BEBUC Professors'

Most of the scholars, presently 102 all over the Congo, are still in their bachelor studies, 23 are in their master studies, and 15 are doing their PhD studies. At this point in time, the first six BEBUC professors have already been appointed. They have acquired a good reputation among professional experts, are invited to conferences abroad, gain international grants and prizes, and have even founded research centers themselves.

"All of them are enthusiastic professors, who are not only committed to research and teaching, but also to the support of BEBUC; they help us with the evaluations and give advice to the scholars," says the professor of chemistry Gerhard Bringmann. Together with Prof. Virima Mudogo (former Vice President of the University of Kinshasa and alumnus of the University of Würzburg), he has initiated the Scholarship Program BEBUC.

The fact that BEBUC supports also 38 pupils at nine Congolese schools is particularly important for the specific promotion of girls, which aims at the increase of female scholars and, eventually, of female professors.

The BEBUC Evaluation Committee

Part of the evaluation committee were, besides G. Bringmann and V. Mudogo, as always Dr. Karine Ndjoko (University of Würzburg and visiting professor at the University of Lubumbashi), and Hypolite Mavoko (doctor of tropical medicine and PhD student in Kinshasa and Antwerp). The committee was further supported by the doctor of tropical medicine Vivi Maketa and the chemist Damien Tshibangu, who are both permanent members of the local team and tutors in BEBUC. As G. Bringmann could still not travel to the Congo for health reasons, he chaired the interviews by video conference, as already last year.

Evaluations – also in Würzburg!

During the evaluations, some of the BEBUC scholars were not in the Congo but at their place of study abroad, e.g. in Europe. For this reason, they were, as usual, evaluated during the annual Members' Assembly of the NGO *Förderverein Uni Kinshasa e.V.* (fUNIKIN), which organizes the scholarship program. In Würzburg alone, there are presently four BEBUC PhD students in chemistry, pharmacy, and law, and one master student in pharmacy.

During the assembly, two new fUNIKIN board members were elected: the BEBUC scholar and PhD student of international private law, Justin Monsenepwo, as the Scholar Deputy, and the responsible person for the Congolese BEBUC office, Coco Mvumina, as the Secretary. "With four Congolese, one Swiss-Congolese, and two Germans, the board has now, to my delight, become more Congolese, younger, and more female," says G. Bringmann, President of the NGO.

Participants of the assembly were, amongst others, the Mayor of Würzburg, Dr. Adolf Bauer, the President of the University of



The delegates Felly Nzengu (left) from Mbuji-Mayi and Dieudonné Muhesi from Butembo giving their welcome address. (Photo: F. Bangelesa)



Ruth Diavita, student of medicine, has been honored for her outstanding performance with this year's BEBUC award. (Photo: F. Bangelesa)



The rectors and leaders of the involved institutions, the representative of the ministry, and Prof. Mudogo: BEBUC brings them together. (Photo: F. Bangelesa)



During the evaluation: Visit to the Fédération des Entreprises du Congo (from the left) Bertin Muderhwa, Virima Mudogo, Hypolite Mavoko, Vivi Maketa, and Sam Amisi. (Photo: A. Matongo)

Würzburg, Prof. Alfred Forchel, and Thomas Honzen of the managing board of the German foundation Else-Kröner-Fresenius-Stiftung (EKFS), which has been substantially supporting the scholarship program since 2010. Further financial support comes from membership fees, personal sponsorships, and donations, and from the foundation Holger-Pöhlmann-Stiftung.

Solemn Scholarship Ceremony: With Delegates and Awards

The scholarship certificates were granted during a great ceremony in the assembly hall of the University of Kinshasa – in the presence of the leaders of the involved universities and schools, dignitaries from politics, art, and society. The delegates of the BEBUC scholars from the other BEBUC institutions from the east, north, south, and center of the country gave personal welcome addresses, too. They had been elected by the BEBUC scholars from their regions and even received financial support from them. That way, the BEBUC scholars keep in touch with each other and share their experiences in this huge country, which is six to seven times larger than Germany – BEBUC as a big family.

Likewise during the ceremony, one scholar was granted the BEBUC Award. This year's laureate was Ruth Diavita, student of medicine at the Université Protestante au Congo (UPC), who had not only distinguished herself by excellent study results, but also by the responsibility she took as a Vice Speaker of the scholars in Kinshasa.

Further Development

With meanwhile almost 180 scholars, BEBUC has nearly reached its final size: a plateau of about 200 scholars. "Our goal is to achieve a dynamic state that allows a number of new candidates being accepted and, simultaneously, the same number of graduates becoming 'BEBUC professors'. This allows us to maintain our intensive individual mentoring, which is characteristic for BEBUC, with an optimal equilibrium between quality and quantity," says Bringmann. "At the same time, we are further increasing the already excellent level of our scholars."

Contact

Prof. Dr. Dr. h.c. mult. Gerhard Bringmann
Institute of Organic Chemistry at the University of Würzburg,
T +49 931 31-85323,
bringman@chemie.uni-wuerzburg.d

On the Scholarship Program BEBUC and the NGO *Förderverein Uni Kinshasa e.V.*:

www.foerderverein-uni-kinshasa.de



*Virima Mudogo (second row), surrounded by the happy BEBUC scholars.
(Photo: F. Bangelesa)*



*Annual assembly in Würzburg: With members of the Panel (from the left) Docteur Hypolite Mavoko, Prof. Virima Mudogo, and Christine Wolf, and with prominent persons (in the second row from the left) the President of the University of Würzburg Prof. Alfred Forchel, Mayor Dr. Adolf Bauer, and a member of the Managing Board of EKFS, Thomas Honzen.
(Photo: Ch. Froschgeiser)*