

Portrait of Lillian Luyinda Mutesasira



Those who regularly use UN flights know what **MOVCON** means. Other people believe it is a department responsible for transporting staff members, UN partners and the cargoes dispatched to the sectors or the cargoes coming from the sectors to Kinshasa. The exact title is: **MovCon Traffic & Shipping**. They facilitate our trips on board UN flight with our luggage and other stuff! Moreover, it is worth noting that the first person met by a newly arriving staff member when joining the mission is a MOVCON staff; this shows the critical role played by MOVCON staff for the Mission's personnel. Lillian does work in this unit. She is based neither in the sectors nor in Kinshasa; she works in Entebbe, Uganda, at MONUSCO's logistic base.

After being selected by her supervisor to feature in the **"Portrait of the month"**, I met her at the office which she shares with two colleagues. Sitting behind her screen, she confides herself to me with a beautiful smile which makes me forget the many hours and kilometers spent on board the aircraft to get to her office. When did the United Nations start

employing the under aged, I wondered; she looks very young indeed! Come on Lillian, tell me everything: **"I work as Assistant for the department that deals with all Inbound and Transit commercial cargo transportation to/via Entebbe."** Is that all? Let me now ask you some questions...

United Nations - was it by sheer luck or a personal choice? **"It is a personal choice; I joined the United Nations on 1st April 2010. I am happy to work for the UN, I feel honored. After completing my education, I started my professional career with SkyNet Worldwide Express, a courier company as an Operations supervisor for three years; then I was promoted to an Operations manager position. My roles included tracking all National and International deliveries to/from Uganda, including the supervision of up to 33 staff. After spending 5 years with SKYNET, I joined MONUSCO. Ever since, every morning, I am keen to get to my office on time; bearing in mind that I would meet my colleagues with whom I feel comfortable."** Did she get her high school certificate at 12? One would be tented to ask. We would look into that after, but for now, let us wee with colleagues if they **"feel comfortable with her as well."**

Let us first hear from her supervisor Marc Daniel **"Lilian has been (and continues to be) a major player in the MONUSCO ESB Movement Control creativity arena. She possesses tons of ideas in the traffic and**

shipping unit and has helped inspire with her teaching, speaking and writings. Our MovCon Section, the Entebbe Support Base in general, remain grateful for her professionalism! Well, the standard is set high. Who else has more to say about her? Yes, Joseph Ogwang, one her male colleagues: "Liliane is a woman who puts priority on her work. She always arrives in time for duty and strives to make work enjoyable by her colleagues. She is knowledgeable and has excellent attributes best suited to the core values of the United Nations. She has very strong consideration for women in quest for equal opportunities and privileges. She openly discusses topics like the emancipation of women and the education of the girl child for the optimum development of the nation. Her choice of the portrait of the month isn't by sheer luck, but will be tremendous and encouraging for her fellow women colleagues working in MONUSCO, Uganda to stand out in excellence."

Be blessed Félix, on that note you take me right to my next question. Are you a feminist, my dear Lillian? Some people might think it as a normal thing for a woman to be a feminist. Unfortunately, not all women are feminists in their approaches and actions on a daily basis. Should we take the example of children's education! Stereotypes are repeated time and again by their mothers. They let boys go and play soccer outdoors and girls assigned to household work as if their fate was sealed in household work." ***I don't think so; I know many women who work in the United Nations. Lillian, Sorry, I am being a bit too talkative. Go on please, I am all ears "Yes, I am a feminist because I believe in equal rights to all genders and I am totally against certain Men's flawed perceptions towards women. I am totally against gender-based discrimination, objectification, oppression and stereotyping of women. I don't need to make women strong - we already are - But we must change how the world perceives our strength. I urge all my fellow women out there to strive and excel in their careers, hold their own and keep their heads high."*** I have to confess, at first, I thought she was shy. Here is yet another stereotype I need to depart from. A woman, when invited to talk, is not necessarily shy. They are so humble. Well, we must drop this one too. Put modesty aside, well, let us rather use the "me, I", in the best sense of the word (and forthwith, I need to justify, ha women...)

One last testimonial on Lillian from Michael Blamo, another MovCon colleague (I confess there were so many to make a comment about this special woman): ***"Lillian is jovial and friendly colleague. She understands ambiguity and change and how these critical concepts impact the section and the mission as a whole especially when dealing with commercial transporters. She is able to reconcile differences quickly with our contractors without creating resentment. One of her strongest personalities is how she is able to solve problems that arise in the vagaries of our day to day work rather than the symptoms - rather handles crisis with composure. I have had the pleasure of working with her. She is indeed a go-getter."***

Well, you understand that Lillian is Ugandan. She proudly says: ***"I was born and raised in the central region of Uganda;"*** Lillian, trust me, there is every reason for you to be proud of your country. Every time

PROTECT

STABILIZE

CONSOLIDATE PEACE

I have the opportunity to travel to your country, I am amazed to see the wonderful nature and preserved wildlife. Whenever I have the opportunity for sightseeing, I go to Murchison waterfalls. I am excited when seeing the sea while others take pleasure in alcoholic beverage, for me, it is rather the sea. Let us now get back to Ms Luyinda, what is your educational background? ***"I have a bachelor degree in Air Transportation and Logistics from Istanbul University in Turkey. I also have a diploma in the Turkish language. I attended many cultural galas during the 6 years I spent in Istanbul, Turkey where we had to promote cultural awareness and my personal contribution in making the Ugandan culture known was to cook some of our local foods and I also dress culturally whenever the opportunity avails itself.*** Yes of course Lillian you are right to do so! Not forgetting one's root help to thrive and move ahead.

Do you have other activities other than your job, which ones? Please don't talk about cooking, cleaning and polishing... ***"I play volley ball in my free time and I also sing in my church's choir."*** Well, I came close to missing the target! ***"I also love to tend to my family, I have two beautiful daughters with my husband Luyinda Moses, a handsome man..."*** she said, laughing. Hold on, do you mean, we have to start selecting the most handsome. They need beautiful and smart women, we also need handsome and smart men... Well, both if it is possible, otherwise, handsome more preferably, If he does not open the mouth, one would not know about the other quality. To avoid being seen as having bad faith, let each man, whether handsome or not, make their own choice of their "lovely soul" since those ones will find them ever handsome against all odds.

Lillian, let us not forget that we work for MONUSCO, and the Mission is there for the Democratic Republic of Congo; what is your view of the overall situation in this country? ***"DRC breaks my heart, given the true potential that exists in the country relative to the turmoil it has suffered. However, where there is life there is hope, the country is recovering from a series of conflicts that broke out in the 1990s and I believe peace and security is now becoming a clear element."*** Do you think UN is performing well, below average...in DRC? ***"I think UN has done very well so far in protecting civilians, stabilizing the country and supporting and promoting Peace and Security."***

Sooner or later, when peace is definitely restored, and the Mission is over, we should leave and go elsewhere for other assignments. What memories would you keep in mind about the work you do with MONUSCO to keep the peace in DRC? ***"It is humbling that so many contribute, each in a small way, towards peace and stability in the DRC. The best memory I have is the fact that I can meet more than 10 different nationalities in a single day. This makes me feel international myself and of course I have learnt a lot especially about respect for diversity. I can realize that the UN core values are an open secret to you Lillian; you understand them perfectly well and have made them your creed.*** All is said! I would leave it there.

By Aïssatou Laba Toure
Translated by Alphonse Yulu Kabamba