Books and Laboratory Equipment for the Congo

A large container with more than 10 tons of reference literature and glass equipment has started a long journey from Würzburg. Its destination is Goma in the East of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The delivery is designed for a partner university of the University of Würzburg, the Free University of the Countries of the Great Lakes.

Since 2012, the University of Würzburg has been linked by a partnership agreement to the Université Libre des Pays des Grands Lacs (ULPGL) in the DR Congo. In the same year, the Rector of ULPGL, Prof. Léopold Kambale Karafuli, paid a visit to the University of Würzburg, together with his Science Manager, Prof. Peter Merten.

The background for the partnership relation is the Excellence Scholarship Program BEBUC, which was founded in 2008 by the professor of chemistry, Gerhard Bringmann, from Würzburg, and his Congolese partner Prof. Virima Mudogo from the University of Kinshasa. Since 2012, the ULPGL has also been taking part in the scholarship program.

Symbolic Donation Ceremony in Mid-September

The next evaluation of BEBUC scholars and of new candidates for scholarships is planned to be carried out in Goma and other places in the Congo in the middle of September 2014. During the scholarship certificate ceremony, the book donation will be celebrated, too: G. Bringmann will symbolically hand over some books to the Rector of ULPGL.

These reference books, mostly from the fields of chemistry and biosciences, as well as the glass and laboratory equipment fit with the plans of the ULPGL to found a new faculty soon: Besides the existing six faculties, a faculty of medicine is planned to be established.

The books and laboratory hardware were collected by Bringmann himself, who is always advertising for the Congo project. A major part of the books originally comes from the section library of the Biozentrum of the University of Würzburg and has been complemented by many smaller and larger book donations.

Numerous Sponsors Helped

In order to realize the difficult transport to Goma – by ship to Dar-es-Salaam in Tanzania and then by truck 3,000 kilometers into the heartland of the continent – considerable means and support were required.
"Without the help of our University President, Prof. Alfred Forchel, and Prof. Merten from ULPGL and without the donations and contributions from the Catholic Diocese of Würzburg, the Protestant-Lutheran Deanery, the company Boehringer-Ingelheim, the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), the ULPGL and, last but not least, from the University President himself, the transport could not have been realized", Bringmann explains.

The Situation of the City of Goma
The city of Goma is located at Lake Kivu. The climate there is pleasant due to the altitude of 1,462 meters above sea level. But the idyllic appearance is deceptive: The province of Kivu in the East of the Congo has consistently drawn our attention through news about violence. It is a focus point of conflicts but also of natural catastrophes like volcanic eruptions. Almost two years ago, the city with its 500,000 citizens was temporarily captured by rebels. "It is all the more important that the education does not go down", Bringmann says, "because without education, there will be no welfare and peace."

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