

Interview with PHILIPPE BELANGER BISHINGA, from l'AMIE, Canada

Q: How have you found the Centre, in terms of activities, mentoring youth and children?

A: Centre Marembo lives up to its name - in the centre there are always things going on, and the door is open - if one is young one feels a welcome. Young people are well motivated; everyone has duties and rights. There is an atmosphere of positivity, development and thinking about the future.

Q: What made the biggest impact on you at Centre Marembo?

A: The feeling of love and family reign at CM.

Q: What do you want to achieve as an outcome of your project “*Youth, love, maintain and protect our environment*”?

A: We hope the project will increase awareness and education of Rwandan Youth and Canadians on the environment, we also hope that this project will enhance the exchange between young Canadians and young Rwandans.

Q: What are the similarities and differences between young people from Canada and Rwanda?

A: We feel for Rwandan youth there is a sense of brother and sisterhood and a more developed interest in sharing and improving the environment.

Q: How do the students feel in host families that Centre Marembo has selected?

A: All students feel at home, every young person feels like his family.

Q: Do you think this project will have an impact among young people?

A: Of course, a young person is a constrictive force in the country. The environment is composed of all elements of the natural and human environment. There are human activities, biodiversity, chemicals, soil, sub-soil, air, water, landscape, elements harmful waste...Everyone must have some knowledge about the environment and sustainable development to build tomorrow's world, a better world for youth.

Q. What type of activities you are expecting to be doing?

A. Providing some training and information to children from the Umugongo House and people in their community about recycling, planting trees at the Umugongo house and at a nearby hospital and local community garden. Creating a vegetable garden at the Umugongo House, Rugando primary school and the gardens of two families in the neighbourhood who have been specially chosen. They will also design a vegetable garden at Laico Umubano hotel to further builds links with the hotel and say “thank you” to them for allowing young people from Centre Marembo to have a trading stall in their hotel.

Q. What are the challenges for Centre Marembo?

A. It's difficult for them to manage the activities for all the young people, and funding is always a challenge.

Q: What are the high points of the Centre

A: Good leadership and confidence.

Although both parties hope the project will work well, they do face a challenge - Rwanda is currently in its twice-yearly dry season, which could make it harder to produce vegetables. However, we hope that the lessons learnt together will help to achieve some sustainable improvements to the centre and the community.