

“LET ME TELL YOU ABOUT MY JOB”

Posted on 1 May 2019



International Workers’ Day is an opportunity to recognize people all over the world who work hard so that they can live in dignity despite difficult conditions. ATD Fourth World profiles individuals and their work to show not only their difficulties but also their strength and intelligence.

Mamma* Louise was born in Bukuvu, a city in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). She is an ATD Fourth World [activist](#). She also works as a porter. This is a demanding job but it allows her to feed her family and support other people she knows.

A porter’s work requires scouring the markets in search of customers who need a load transported, sometimes a great distance. Mamma Louise carries these heavy loads on her back—sacks of cassava, bananas, or other items. Even though her job is exhausting, Mamma Louise is proud of her work.

“I am a porter”, she says. “I work in a market near Lake Kivu. My job is difficult, but I stay strong. The founder of ATD Fourth World, Joseph Wresinski, told us never to give up.”



Mamma Louise

Having a job let's you help other people

In her work, Mamma Louise sees the opportunity to help people who do not have enough to live on. She feels it is her duty to support many people in need:

"I share my work with people I meet. Maybe there is a 40 kg bag to carry. I let another person carry part of the bag because I don't feel right eating if my neighbour has an empty stomach."

Being part of ATD Fourth World helped Mamma Louise talk openly and not be intimidated. As a member of the ATD coordination team in DRC, she says:

"I am one of the people in this team who cannot read or write. But people give me the same consideration they give others. We are all equal. Father Joseph [Wresinski] didn't put people who had a lot of education above those who didn't. He wanted educated people and people who never went to school to work together for the same cause.

Sometimes I am responsible for moderating a meeting. I do it my way.

"It means a lot to me that I have the opportunity to speak. Outside of ATD, I've never experienced this."

Families Supporting Each Other

Mamma Louise is also a member of a group called "Families Supporting Each Other". These families live in poverty but have decided to work as a group to improve their lives. Everyone contributes their own thoughts and experiences. In this small group, Mamma Louise is the treasurer. The group organises a number of "solidarity projects". For example, in their neighborhood there was a lot of trash. So last 17 October (World Day for Overcoming Poverty) they decided to pick up all the plastic bags lying around.



Mamma Louise explains that the group often visits very isolated families who live in even greater poverty than they do. The group wants to make sure these families do not feel cut off and alone in their suffering:

"Before I was in ATD I had never done that. With ATD we learn to treat everyone with dignity, love, and support."

Mamma Louise illustrates how important a job can be to a person and the community. As a member of ATD Fourth World, she is an activist for her own rights but also the rights

of other people in similar situations. While she teaches things to people she knows, she is also learning from others.

“With ATD”, Mamma Louise says proudly, “you learn that you have to share what you know with others. I told you that I couldn’t read nor write. However, a member of our coordination team has been kind enough to tutor me. Thanks to Bob, I know how to write my name and ATD.”

A video interview of Mamma Louise in French :

<http://www.atd-quartmonde.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/VIDEO-Maman-Louise.mp4>

* “Mamma” is a term of respect in DRC.

[← Previous](#)

[Next →](#)
