

Article

Badjina MOUNGUENGUI Léonie: Social Worker dedicated to rescuing Trafficked Children

Social work is often seen as a thankless task, requiring genuine passion to pursue. It's this very passion that fuels Badjina Léonie, who has dedicated herself to the profession for 12 years.

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It all began at the tender age of 8 when she watched the TV series "Les enfants en détresse" (Children in Need), featuring actress Véronique Jeannot. This series chronicled Jeannot's efforts to aid young people in distress, leaving a lasting impression on Badjina Léonie's youth. Years later, fueled by this inspiration, she emerged as a dedicated social worker deeply passionate about her calling.

Badjina Léonie's commitment shines through her 12-year tenure with the Arc en ciel association, a center supported by UNICEF Gabon, where she has played a pivotal role in rescuing countless children from the clutches of cross-border human trafficking. As a social worker, she extends a compassionate ear to child victims of trafficking, navigating through administrative procedures with the juvenile court, liaising with foreign affairs and embassies, and facilitating family reintegration efforts. Additionally, she provides support to children who have endured sexual abuse or find themselves living on the streets.

Her impact extends beyond borders; in 2022, she facilitated the repatriation of 12 children to their home countries with the aid of the United Nations Trust Funds for Human Security and the IOM. Social work, albeit often unheralded, demands selfless dedication, a trait Léonie embodies as she remains ever-available and attuned to her clients' needs.

"For me, this profession isn't just about providing assistance; it's about guiding individuals out of their darkest moments. It requires keen discernment to truly grasp the complexity of each situation," she explains.

UNICEF's support for child transit centers encompasses a comprehensive approach, offering psychosocial support, legal aid in court, assistance with social and familial reintegration, and capacity-building initiatives for social workers and specialized educators. By 2023, UNICEF aims to have assisted at least 120 children facing social challenges, providing long-term support as they await family reunification.

