

Justice Bossa's husband credits Uganda's education for wife's success

By Taddeo Bwambale

For a judge who has had all her formal education in Uganda, the election of Justice Solomy Balungi Bossa to the International Criminal Court (ICC) is a celebration of Uganda's education system, her husband of 36 years, Joseph Bossa asserts.

Justice Bossa beat off stiff competition to become one of the six new judges of the ICC, the world's highest criminal court, set up to try people for crimes against humanity, war crimes and genocide.

With a bachelor of laws degree from Makerere University and a diploma in legal practice from Law Development Centre, she competed against some of the most decorated legal minds in her ilk to secure a seat on the 18-member bench.

Yet her reputation and experience preceded her chances of being one of the six new judges selected after multiple rounds of voting at the 16th session of the Assembly of States Parties at the UN head offices in New York on Tuesday.

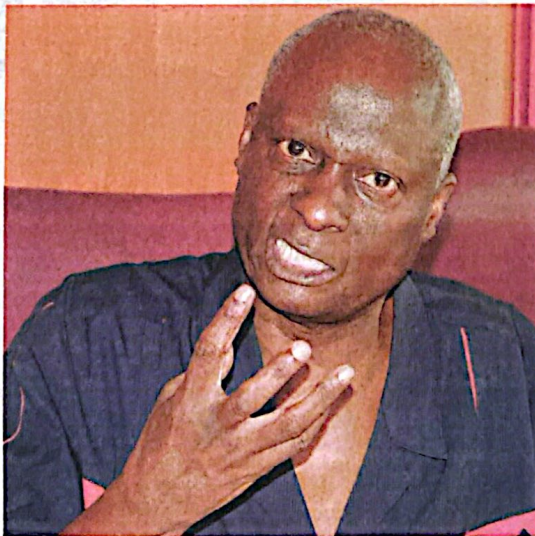
Her husband, waiting with bated breath back home in Uganda with family and friends, described the announcement of her selection to the bench as a 'tense, but proud moment.'

"My family and I feel proud that our own has ascended to the high judicial office," said Joseph Bossa, a lawyer, politician and disputed president of the Uganda People's Congress (UPC) political party.

According to him, her election to the ICC bench says a lot about the potency of Uganda's education system to produce world leaders, although it may have some shortcomings.

"Justice Bossa has one degree, but she competed against people with masters and doctorates from prestigious institutions. If I was in the Government, I would encourage our engineers, lawyers and doctors to go out there and compete at the international level," Bossa said.

Born on April 14, 1956, Justice Bossa went to Ndejje Secondary School for her O'level and completed her A'level at Makerere College School, before



Joseph Bossa described his wife as intelligent and hardworking

joining Makerere University.

Hardworking woman

Beyond her academic exploits, Joseph Bossa describes the judge as an intelligent and hardworking person whose recognition at the global stage was only a matter of time.

"It took her many years to build her profile in the legal field and other areas. She is focused, not easily excitable and hardworking," says her husband, with whom they have seven children.

"I cannot recall how many times she wakes up in the middle of the night to prepare for cases or write judgments. Her schedule is unbelievable."

Joseph Bossa also gave credit to the Government for its intense lobbying at the ICC for votes in favour of the judge during the highly competitive elections.

President Yoweri Museveni sent a delegation, led by the Attorney General, William Byaruhanga, to New York to drum up support for Bossa's



Justice Bossa

candidature.

The other members of the team include: Uganda's permanent representative to the UN, Adonia Ayebare; Uganda's ambassador to Brussels, Mirjam Blaak Sow; John Bosco Suuza from the Attorney General's chambers, and Ambassador

Duncan Muhumuza Laki, a member of the UN Sixth Committee.

Glowing tributes

Bossa's election to the ICC bench drew applause from the Government, the legal fraternity at home and overseas and key personalities.

The Director of Public Prosecutions, Mike Chibita, yesterday congratulated Bossa upon her election and promised that the directorate would continue to work closely with the ICC.

"The election of one of our judges to the ICC bench elevates Uganda's status in international law and serves as recognition for our judges and legal practitioners," Chibita said in an interview with *New Vision*.

US Ambassador to Uganda, Deborah Malac saluted Bossa's achievement in a tweet, stating: "Congratulations to Justice Solomy Bossa on election as ICC judge!"

The President of the Uganda Law Society, Francis Gimara, stated: "Received good news of the election of Lady Justice Solomy Balungi Bossa to the ICC. She is well qualified for this job and will make all of us proud. Congratulations to her and, indeed, to Uganda."

Work at the ICC

Justice Bossa joins the ICC at a time when the court is looking into 25 high-profile cases. She will be required to take up residence at The Hague for the new task.

It was not immediately established in which division she will be deployed, but judges are assigned to divisions according to their qualifications and experience.

All the 18 judges are organised into three divisions: the pre-trial division, trial division and appeals division. Decisions of the pre-trial and trial divisions may be appealed to the appeals division, which comprises the President and four other judges.

ICC has so far issued 31 arrest warrants, held eight people at its detention centre and still pursues 15 high profile suspects who remain at large.

Justice Bossa becomes the second female Ugandan judge to serve at

Other Ugandan judges on International fora

■ **Julia Sebutinde:** Judge at the International Court of Justice

■ **David Ntanda Nsereko:** Member of the advisory committee on nominations of judges of the International Criminal Court and former Judge of the International Criminal Court from Uganda

■ **Duncan Gaswaga:** Judge of the Supreme Court of Seychelles

■ **Egonda Ntende:** Former Chief Justice of Seychelles and now Judge at the Court of Appeal

In September, Justice Susan Okalany of the High Court was recognised as 'Prosecutor of the Year' by the International Association of Prosecutors, in honour of her distinguished role in the prosecution of the 2010 Kampala bombing suspects.

OTHER JUDGES

a world court in recent years, after Justice Julia Sebutinde, who is a judge at the International Court of Justice.

Bossa will be wading into familiar territory. For nine years between 2003 and 2013, she served as Judge of the United Nations International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda.

She also currently serves as a Judge of the United Nations Mechanism for International Criminal Tribunals and at the African Court of Human and People's Rights.