

Ayité Ayivi from Togo:

I am very proud of the National Team of Togo, and its qualification to participate at the World Cup 2006.

Unfortunately I couldn't receive any tickets for the match against Korea what I regret a little, since me and my family would really have enjoyed to watch. Anyway, nevertheless I keep my fingers crossed for my Togo Team and hope they will manage to reach far towards the front.

I have been living in Germany since 1982. My wife, Inge, whose contract as a development worker terminated and me decided to move to Germany when the birth of our daughter Simone approached. Inge's family lives in the Rhein-Main area, exactly in Erlensee nearby Hanau. In the year of 1982 there were just a few Africans in that area, these mostly living in Frankfurt. In Erlensee there was no single African and in Hanau was one from Cameroon.

Nonetheless I was not as foreign to the people of the Rhein-Main area as I thought in the beginning. In the American Armee stationed both in Frankfurt and in Hanau there were many dark-skinned Americans.

By the family of my wife I was welcomed very warmly. They supported me energetically to feel good in my new homeland.

I'm a musician. I have been to Germany once earlier; by then I played as an begleitmusiker at a concert in Bonn of the band of Bella Bellow, which was well



known in Africa and France. Bella Bellow unfortunately died soon after in a car accident.

Music is my life. After the death of Bella Bellow I established an own band in Togo. It was impossible to find artist in Germany who were able to play modern African music with its various and considering local music very difficult rhythms over here. In February 1983 I founded my band Susu Bilibi here in Germany which still performs. The musicians for my band I brought over from Togo. In those days it was still a big issue, to receive entry permits for musicians from Africa.

It is very interesting to experience, how times are changing since my arrival 23 years ago for Africans in the Rhein-Main area. Little by little more and more Africans came over which is very joyful on one hand, but form which on the

other many problems were arising for my life.

Among the newly arrived Africans there were many, which had left their country for not having had a chance to find employment in any African country. They traveled illegally or as asylum seekers into Germany and tried to establish a living, no matter how. There was nothing to loose for them.

After a TV show concerning drug traffic at the Frankfurt train station – supposedly by Senegalese people – people with a darker skin colour were controlled more. Most people over here consider Africa as being one country. The linguistic and cultural significant differences of all countries and people are mostly not known to the people.

Only by this I can explain to myself, why the police checked me and my musicians increasingly when problems with African groups in the Rhein-Main area got public. Everywhere and all the time I was checked. Clearly this happened because of my skin colour.

I find this unfair. It's as if the mafia from Russia would plot something in Togo and thereafter all Germans, French and other Europeans were suspicious and checked, only because they had dark skin as well.

But this are fortunately only episodes that pass by quickly. The advantage of the move in of Africans to the Rhein-Main area is that African companies built up. There are African shops and restaurants in the meanwhile. Whereas it was quite a problem shortly after my arrival to cook my habitual Togolese food, I can now buy almost everything here and don't have to surrender anything. Additionally there are several cultural clubs which help to develop a cultural exchange.

I like to live in the Rhein-Main area. Through the metropolis Frankfurt and the airport and the immigration of people from Africa and other parts of the world the region became culturally very multi-farious. To get along over here very well I think it's very important to speak the German language.

With my music I was able to make many friends in the Rhein-Main area and beyond. The performing with my band Susu Bilibi always helped me over hard times, to maintain contacts and obtain acceptance.

With music it is similar as with sports, especially with Football. Music and sports are international, in these fields people understand each other all around the world and it enables diverse cultural circles to get closer.

TIPS:

Ayité enjoys shopping in the African-Bazaar Düsseldorf Straße 22, 60329 Frankfurt, opposite of the Frankfurt main train station.

Ayité cooks best on his own and does not visit restaurants. Nevertheless he knows that the Kenney House, Gutleutstraße 145, 60327 Frankfurt is a popular meeting point of West Africans.