

# Steven Sogo Biography

'Every Murundi is a musician at heart,' wrote the anthropologist J. B. Ntahokaja back in 1949. 'His soul is a taut string which vibrates at the slightest breeze.' A Murundi is an inhabitant of the modern nation of Burundi, a beautiful landlocked country of red earth roads and lush green hills high up on the Central Africa plateau. Poverty, corruption, coup attempts, genocidal ethnic wars between Hutus and Tutsis, democratic elections crisis have characterized the country since its independence from Belgium in 1962.

It's not surprising then that Steven Irambona, aka SOGO, likes to sing about life, love and peace, or that he has named his band 'Hope Street'. The most promising young singer to have emerged from Burundi in years, Sogo first picked up the guitar in 1997, when the civil war was still raging. He was only 14 years old, but playing a musical instrument expressed an ardent desire to live a normal life with music at his heart. Steven Sogo was born on April 1<sup>st</sup> 1983 and grew up in Kamenge, one of the mainly Swahili speaking suburbs of the Burundian capital Bujumbura. After taking up the guitar and then the bass guitar, he firstly adhered Don Bosco orchestra of Buterere neighborhood before joining the Kamenge Youth Center into another band called Happy World. Steven Sogo found his own band "Hope Street" at the Kamenge Youth Center in 2005 where he was very much implicated in music education. At the Lycée du Saint Esprit where he did high school, he became a leader of the school music club and a mainstay of the Saint Ignace de Loyola choir. Choral music is an important influence on Sogo, and its atmosphere imbues his unique mix of traditional Burundian music, jazz, blues and pop. During the holidays he would take trips into the heart of the countryside and soak up the varied Burundi's many cultures. Later he also mastered traditional Burundian instruments like the *Ikembe*, *umuduri*, *Inanga*, *indonongo*, etc

Sogo's early recordings in the first album "UBUZIMA" (life), like the song 'Makurata', which was a big hit on Burundian TV, are swathed in an electro pop sound. As he has matured as an artist, his style has grown subtler, and more acoustic, allowing Sogo to keep the African flavors in his music authentic and strong. The big break came with the release of the song 'IL EST BEAU MON PAYS' (my country is beautiful), a yearning hymn to the essential beauty and vast human wealth of his ravaged country. It was a national and then an international hit of huge proportions. Even the second album released in 2008 took its title.

In 2009 Sogo won Talent Show AKABIRYA over live music, received a Pearl Of African Music Award (PAM Award) for best male singer both in Burundi and a SICA (Stars de l'Integration Culturelle Africaine) in Benin. He was also selected to be Burundi's music ambassador for an anti-corruption campaign organized by the World Bank Institute and Jeunesse Musicale Internationale.

In 2011, NDAJE (here I am) third album was released. Sogo in his statements wrote: "After my two albums I felt a kind of artistical emptiness. I did not really know where to go, what to do. And then I felt new inspiration coming and I made a decision: I decided to do music. Music is my life. So this is

my dedication to music! And now I am coming, this album is full of this spirit and a lot of energy. You will see me, I am coming to you, to your countries, to your cities, villages to sing about everyday life of everyday people like me and you.”

Thus, Sogo has already participated into some festivals and tours over some African countries like Benin, Cameroon, Rwanda, Uganda, Tanzania, Zanzibar, Kenya, Ethiopia, and Egypt and in some countries in Europe like UK, Italy, Germany, Belgium and Russia. He also toured the USA with the Nile project in 2015 over twenty States, doing concerts and workshops in Universities.

Since 2015, he was on process of releasing his fourth album with a Swahili title “MBALI SANA” which means “very far”. Its brief main story is: “I am coming from so far, and where I am going is very far too”

Sogo sings in Kirundi, Swahili, French and English, but the emotion in his music speaks volumes to anyone willing to listen. “My music comes from the depths of my heart,” says Sogo. “I say to the youth, never forget the identity of your music. It’s your only wealth.”

Today Steven is considered as one of the best African bass player and the most original artist of his country. He lives in the US in exile due to 2015 Burundi post-election crisis.

Watch Steven Sogo’s videos on YouTube and follow him on:

<http://www.twitter.com/sogotolo>

<https://www.facebook.com/steven.sogo>

[www.soundcloud.com/steven-sogo](http://www.soundcloud.com/steven-sogo)

<https://myspace.com/stevensogo>