



Dominic Lomongin Aballa (centre) is a national UN Volunteer Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) Officer with the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) in Mbarara, Uganda. Here he interacts with community members during a field visit in Isingiro District, in March 2022.

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## Facilitating access to sustainable water and sanitation for better health in Uganda

Creating a healthy environment starts with a healthy human being. We all have the ability and responsibility to contribute to the safety and cleanliness of our surroundings. Dominic Lomongin Aballa is a national UN Volunteer Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) Officer with the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) in Mbarara, Uganda. Read more about how he is making progress for our health and planet.

Contamination of the environment with faecal matter directly affects the quality of the air, water and food that we consume. Furthermore, open defecation and poor hygiene practices are the leading causes of child mortality, morbidity, malnutrition and stunting, conditions that can have irreversible negative effects on the cognitive development of a child.

According to the [State of the World's Sanitation](#), 673 million people in the world still practice open defecation, and an estimated 367 million children attend schools with no sanitation facilities. The elimination of open

defecation, therefore, is paramount in improving the health, nutrition and productivity of a developing country like Uganda.

Dominic supports UNICEF's commitment to work with governments and partners to achieve sustainable water and sanitation services, focusing on reducing inequality, especially for the most vulnerable children.

"Strengthening local government systems to plan, monitor and coordinate WASH service delivery is key to achieving these ambitious goals," he says.

Dominic works with local government partners to help communities analyze their sanitation and hygiene practices, find solutions to eliminate open defecation and move towards improved sanitation. This is done through the community-led total sanitation approach, which triggers community-wide behavior change, following a facilitated self-analysis of prevalent sanitation and hygiene practices.

“ I believe that every child, no matter where, deserves to live in a safe and healthy environment, free from faecal contamination. We all have the responsibility to create this safe and healthy environment. Universal access to WASH is a key gateway to realizing this fundamental right. --Dominic Lomongin Aballa, WASH Officer, UNICEF Uganda

Working with established local government structures enables Dominic and the team to reach the very last person. While they work with health assistants at the sub-county level, community-based volunteers in village health teams support the day-to-day monitoring of WASH services at the village level. They are supported by another group of volunteers, the 'natural leaders', who take the lead in following up on agreed community actions toward ending open defecation.

So far, 144 communities in the Western Districts of Isingiro, Kamwenge and Kikuube were certified open defecation free in 2021. More than 15,000 people gained access to basic sanitation services in the same year, while a further 56,880 and 155,673 people were reached with sufficient water and critical WASH supplies, respectively.

Additionally, Dominic engages with local government and heads of institutions – schools and healthcare facilities – to ensure proper operation and maintenance of the WASH facilities.



In working with communities, Dominic explains that sustainability is the key. "That is why the government takes the lead, and there is a strong emphasis on community ownership," he explains. The use of local government structures also helps Dominic and the team scale up rapidly and leave no one behind.

“ Serving as a volunteer made me realize that even one person’s contribution can make a big difference to the health and wellbeing of children and women. I am motivated each passing day to make a difference. The world needs more inspiration. --  
Dominic Aballa

 West and Central Africa

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Sustainable Development Goal: **SDG 3: Good health and well-being** **SDG 17: Partnerships for the goals**