Raising awareness of water, sanitation and hygiene issues

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My name is Muhammad Afrianto Kurniawan, and my friends call me Afrianto. I am from Indonesia and this is my first assignment as a UN Volunteer. I have been working for UNICEF Timor-Leste as a UN Volunteer Water Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) Engineer since the end of January, 2010.

My responsibilities with the UNICEF WASH project include overseeing planning, coordination, monitoring and capacity building of our counterparts such as the Department of Environmental Health in the Ministry of Health, the School Health Focal Point in the Ministry of Education, and the Department of Sanitation National Director for Water and Sanitation in the Ministry infrastructure. I also work closely with other partners in the field to assist with implementation of the overall programming. In order to provide direct technical assistance to our partners, I have to visit the project sites frequently. Field visits to the villages are very challenging because of the poor road conditions, but there is also beautiful nature, and the Timorese are very welcoming to everyone.

In the villages, I meet and discuss with community members about their water, sanitation and hygiene situation and how we can find solutions together. Sometimes we also need to walk more than an hour to survey the water sources in order to help assess their needs. In terms of volunteerism, I’m also working with Family Health Promoters (Promosau Saude Familia - PSF). They do health promotion and support Integrated Community Health Service
(Servico Integrado da Sauda Communitaria - SISCA). Local community members serve as volunteers as an integral part of the SISCA programming in each aldeia (village). Our paths often cross during my WASH field work. I do my best to involve them in promoting good hygiene practices such as hand washing with soap and informing communities about the “stop open defecation” campaign that is supported by the Ministry of Health.

For me, working as a UN Volunteer with UNICEF in Timor-Leste allows me a great opportunity to help many children who need access to clean water and basic sanitation facilities which will improve their basic standard of living and provide them with the means to be healthy and happy in the future.

Sustainable Development Goal: