



2009 AWARD Fellow
Esther Wamono

Position:	Nutrition officer
Institution:	The United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF)
Country:	Uganda
MSc:	Human nutrition
Mentored by:	Dr. Joyce Kikafunda Associate Professor, Food and Nutrition Sciences Makerere University, Uganda

“I will help eliminate malnutrition among women of reproductive age and children under five years of age in Uganda.”

When I won the AWARD Fellowship in 2009, I was volunteering as a research assistant at the Department of Food Science and Technology, Makerere University and was a Human Nutrition master’s student with limited expectations for my career. At the AWARD orientation workshop in October 2009, I discovered the potential I had as an African woman scientist to fight poverty, hunger, and malnutrition on the continent if I enhanced vital skills through training, mentoring, and dedication to work holistically with other professionals.

Since I was already a practical and determined type of person, I started working on my confidence with the help of my mentor, Professor Joyce Kikafunda, and the workshop facilitators by drawing my roadmap to help me achieve my life purpose: eliminate malnutrition among children under five years of age, and women of reproductive age.



By the time I returned to Uganda I was confident enough to do an interview with Action Against Hunger (ACF) for the position of surveillance officer in the Karamoja region, a dangerous, instable area of the country. In November 2009 I reported to my duty station.

Being an AWARD Fellow gave me a great opportunity to be in a mentoring relationship with one of the few women professors in Uganda, who was recognized and honored on Women's Day in March 2010. The success story about Professor Kikafunda's nutrition career that appeared in the New Vision newspaper inspired me so much that I decided to work harder to move to the next step on my roadmap. Consequently, I got the position of nutrition officer with UNICEF in the Karamoja region in June 2010. The partnerships with ACF and UNICEF, with the government, and with other NGOs have further enhanced my networks, as have the stories published by AWARD and ACF about my work.

Supervision by Professor John Muyonga and Dr. Archileo Kaaya during my MSc research and by Edward Kutondo in ACF, as well as training by AWARD and ACF, have all helped to improve my scientific writing, presentation, team leadership, and conflict and time management skills. For example, I have written successful abstracts for science conferences around the world, including the 2010 Nutrition Congress in Durban, South Africa (courtesy of AWARD). AWARD is also helping me to apply for membership with the U.K. Nutrition Society.

As a surveillance officer in ACF, I successfully trained and supervised teams on data collection, analysis, and report writing. My trainees and I were able to convince mothers and other community members, who had already been approached several times by various partners, to cooperate and provide us with all the necessary information. Together with the ACF team, I completed my activities on time, prepared and presented results in technical workshops with various partners, and wrote timely reports. These reports are now providing reliable information that is being used to plan and implement life-saving activities in the Karamoja region. In fact, the ACF Surveillance Project that was to end in May 2010 has been renewed because of the NGO's success. Additionally, I demonstrated good conflict management skills during the stressful field work in the Kaabong district that led to cooperation among the trained enumerators throughout the surveillance exercise. In just a short period of working with UNICEF, my new colleagues describe me as a good communicator, a determined, confident, and sociable person. No wonder the 2009 post-BSc. AWARD Fellows unanimously approved me when I assertively volunteered to be their first president.

In the short-term, I intend to mentor girls and women in the Karamoja region, which is the most disadvantaged sub-region in Uganda with poor socio-economic conditions, poor infrastructure, and high levels of illiteracy and malnutrition. I want to help them understand the potential they have to solve their problems. In the long term, I dream of becoming an international specialist for maternal, young child, and emergency nutrition who will be on the frontline in the fight against malnutrition and poverty. To all AWARD staff members and funders, thank you for everything you are doing to strengthen the voice of this African woman.

Wamono is one of 180 African woman scientists who have won an AWARD Fellowship. AWARD is a professional development program that strengthens the research and leadership skills of African women in agricultural science, empowering them to contribute more effectively to poverty alleviation and food security in sub-Saharan Africa. For more information, please visit www.awardfellowships.org