

# Frames in Focus

Photovoice Stories on Sanitation and Hygiene in Ugandan Schools



Implemented by:

**IRC**

Supporting water sanitation  
and hygiene services for life

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## About the project

In 2023, the Sanitation and Hygiene Fund (SHF) invested \$5 million supplemented by \$1.6 million from the Ugandan government in a three-year initiative (April 2023 – December 2025) aimed at accelerating access to improved sanitation and hygiene services using market-based approaches. Interventions by partners are focused on scaling up household sanitation, providing safe sanitation designs and infrastructure in schools, improving WASH and menstrual health and hygiene (MHH) services in schools and healthcare facilities, and fostering innovation for safely managed sanitation in the districts of Buikwe, Buyende, Kabarole, Kamuli, Kayunga, Luuka, and Kole.

## Acknowledgement

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Coordination, Compilation and Editing: **Naomi Wabyona Kabarungi, IRC Uganda**

Training and production: **Gerald Walulya, PhD. Makerere University**

Design & Layout: **Elvis Lubanga**

# Preface

The SHF project conducted an in-depth assessment of the gender and social inclusion dynamics in sanitation promotion across its 7 districts of operation. One of the objectives was to assess the differential impacts of WASH interventions on various groups, including women, men, girls, boys, and marginalized populations. This photobook provides the voices of some of the categories' outlined in telling their story using photography.

Photography is a powerful language—one that needs no interpreter. It cuts across boundaries of age, language, and culture, capturing nuances that words sometimes fail to convey. In Uganda, a country rich in diversity with more than 60 languages spoken, the power of photography is even more critical, especially to children who are sometimes denied a voice on matters affecting them. For many children in rural schools, especially girls, speaking up about their experiences with water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) is a challenge. Cultural taboos around menstrual hygiene deepen the silence, leaving their needs unspoken and therefore unmet. This photobook is a response to that silence.

Through a participatory initiative known as photovoice, children have turned the camera lens on their daily realities to document, express, challenge, and advocate. These images taken in 30 selected schools in seven districts across the country tell stories of hardship, resilience, victories in everyday struggles and innovative local solutions to WASH challenges. The photographs carry hopes for a future where access to safe water, dignified sanitation, and menstrual health services is a right fulfilled for every child.

These photographs are calls to action. Each frame captures a lived experience that urges us to listen, to understand, and to act. Let these voices—captured in light and framed with purpose inspire our next course of action.

The Sanitation and Hygiene Fund project is working to unlock market potential for sanitation and hygiene and create sustainable sanitation economies and menstrual hygiene markets. To achieve this, a very good understanding of the context is critical and the photobook with stories and experiences as well as aspirations of the target groups is a gold mine especially for interventions in schools. They are also applicable to communities since the learners carry the same sentiments back home in the environment where they live.

For the lovers of sanitation and hygiene in schools, this document is not only an enjoyable read but can also be a great resource in advocating for change as well as for mobilizing resources and in identifying and developing investable propositions to drive local and national sanitation and hygiene targets. It is my hope that this resource will contribute to unlocking resources and in guiding efforts to catalyze the building of ecosystems that can support sustainable sanitation economies and menstrual hygiene markets that support both schools and communities.

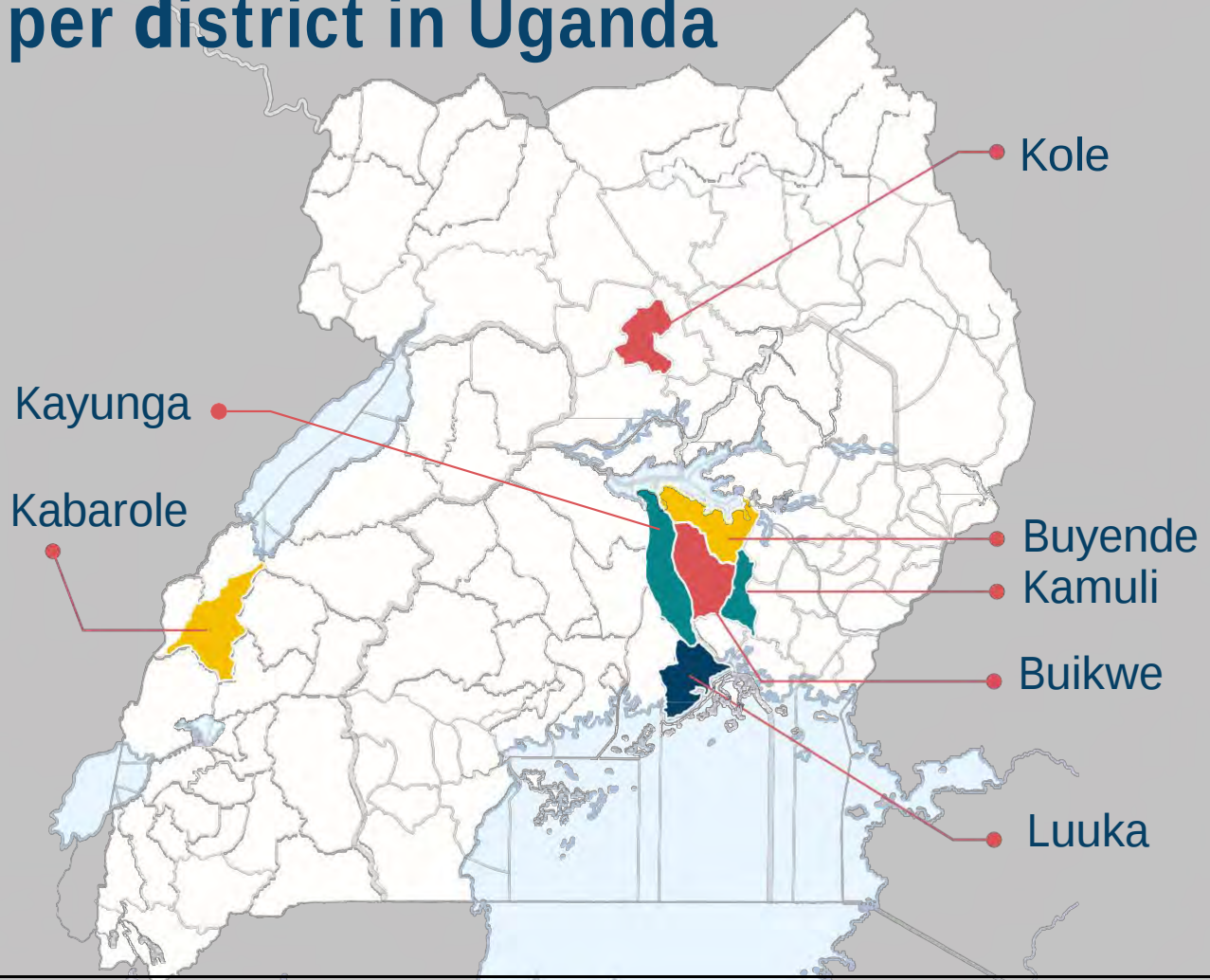


**JANE NABUNNYA MULUMBA**

COUNTRY DIRECTOR

IRC INTERNATIONAL WATER AND SANITATION CENTRE, UGANDA

# Schools covered by the project, per district in Uganda



| Kole District    | Kamuli District      | Luuka District     | Kabarole District           |
|------------------|----------------------|--------------------|-----------------------------|
| Ayer P/S         | Matuumu Catholic P/S | Budhana P/S        | Kabende P/S                 |
| Ayer P/S         | Bulemezi P/S         | Bunafu P/S         | Kiburara P/S                |
| Wigwa P/S        | Kidiki P/S           | Nabitaama P/S      | Kaboyo P/S                  |
| Abim P/S         | Luzinga CoU P/S      | Kyanvuma P/S       | Mahyoro P/S                 |
| Buyende District | Buikwe District      | Kayunga District   | Abbreviations:              |
| Ngole P/S        | Busagazi P/S         | Kawolokota P/S     | 1. P/S:<br>Primary School   |
| Kakoge P/S       | Kiduusu P/S          | Nkokonjeru CoU P/S | 2. SS:<br>Secondary School  |
| Mirengeizo P/S   | Bubiro P/S           | Misanga CoU        | 3. C.U:<br>Church of Uganda |
| Iringa P/S       | Victoria SS          | Busungire R/C P/S  | 4. R.C:<br>Roman Catholic   |
|                  | Nyenga C/U           |                    |                             |



# Menstrual Health Management

## Hope's first period experience

My name is Nansubuga Hope. I'm in P.6 at Bubiro C.U. Primary School. I'll never forget the day I got my first period—it happened in class, and I wasn't ready. I was in P.5, during an English lesson, when I felt a sharp pain in my stomach. I tried to ignore it. When I shifted in my seat, I felt something sticky. Then I saw it—a stain on my skirt. I was filled with panic and shame. I didn't know what to do. I just wanted to disappear. I quickly tied my sweater around my waist, hoping no one would notice. But Teacher Joy saw my face and knew something was wrong. She kindly sent the other students out for break and kept me behind. When we were alone, she told me something that changed everything: "Periods are normal. You don't have to be ashamed." She led me to the storeroom, gave me a pad, and taught me how to use it. I don't like remembering that day. I wish we had washrooms and water then. But now I feel ready. I know what to do. I will never feel ashamed again.





Menstruation rooms like the one I took in this photo are important to girls during their menstruation days

**Faridah Nalwoga,**  
Nyenga C/U Primary School



When we pad ourselves well during menstruation, we can do all activities including playing.

**Kansiime Margret,**  
Kabende Primary school



When periods are painful or uncomfortable in class, girls can sometimes lose concentration.

**Nakazzi Prisca,**  
Bubiro C/U Primary School



Our new latrine fitted with a modern bathroom has saved us from using makeshift shelters like this one.

**Kampi Gorreti,**  
Bulemezi Primary School

My friends, Monica and Desire squatting at the sign post that says menstruation is normal.

**Poni Deborah,**  
Kawolokota R.C Primary School



Proper menstruation hygiene builds our confidence in public.

**Nassazi Annet,** Victoria Senior Secondary School





An incinerator is now part of our new girls' toilet. It helps us to properly dispose of used pads.

**Apolo Vivian,**  
Wigua Primary School

---

Good menstruation hygiene is important in our school.

**Nassazi Annet,** Bubi C.U Primary School





## No more shame - Mariam's story

**Mariam Nassanga**

Victoria Secondary School

We had the emptiable toilet, but it wasn't great for period. When workers came to empty the toilets, they would pull out our used pads and throw them in the open pit. Imagine how that felt, knowing the boys could see them.

Everything is different now. We have a modern girls' toilet with a washroom, water taps inside, and an incinerator where we can dispose of our pads privately. No more shame, no more hiding. Now, no one has to know you're in your period—unless you want them to.

I love this facility because it makes my work easier as a Sanitary Prefect and it keeps us healthy. The incinerator doesn't produce much smoke, so it's also good for the environment.



## Why it matters - A boy's perspective on periods

**Kyazze Mustafa**

Busagazi Primary School

It's a girls' thing, right? But when our school got a new toilet block with an incinerator, I saw how important it was. Before, pads would end up in the rubbish pit, and we could all see them.

The toilets would get full fast because people dumped pads inside. Now, with the incinerator, our environment stays clean! I think every school should have one. Girls shouldn't feel embarrassed about periods. It's part of life.



Photostory by: **Mutesi Irene,**  
Luzinga C.U Primary School



**Hygiene and  
environmental  
cleanliness**

# A hygienic environment ensures regular school attendance

My name is Buwembo John. I go to Kawolota Primary School. In the past, we used to live in a dirty environment with so much rubbish and bushes around our school. This made us to fall sick with flu, cough, diarrhea and sometimes malaria and missed school for several days. When we were taught about the importance of a clean environment, we started to clean our environment, especially our classrooms, compound and toilets. We now live in a clean and safe environment. When pupils and teachers live in a clean and hygienic environment it reduces their chances of missing school due to diseases related to poor sanitation. A clean school environment reduces the spread of germs and bacteria leading to few or no cases of illness among learners and other people in the school community. Clean classrooms and surrounding environment help us to concentrate in class and perform well in our exams.



This photo shows primary seven pupils smartly dressed in their school uniform. I wanted to show a clean environment helps us to stay clean while at school.

**Nakyeyune Mariam, Busagazi P/S**



Pupils washing their food containers to make sure they are clean before getting food.

**Biira Brunet,**  
Mahyoro Primary School



A pupil at Mutuuma Primary School drying plates after washing them.

**Mwajuma Kayaga,**  
Matuuma Primary School



A pupil at Kabende Primary School, Kabarole district, washes hands after using the toilet.

**Komujuni Phionah,**  
Kabende Primary school



Even when some of our classrooms don't have a roof, we keep our compound clean. This keeps diseases away.

**Kyakuwaire Nasimu,**  
NgolePrimary School



We strive to keep our hands clean. This ensures a clean mind and smart grades.

**Nangobi G. Alikibona,**  
Budhaana Primary School



Our school compound is clean and nice. We clean it by picking rubbish everyday.

**Namwanje Juliet Rihana,**  
Nkokonjeru C.U Primary School



When children play in wet places like this one, they can contract diseases caused by worms.

**Kisanye Namubya,**  
Busungire R.C Primary School



Children of Ngole primary school cleaning their hands using 'wash a lot' facility.

**Mwagale Rebecca,**  
Kiburara Primary School

# How to prepare safe drinking water

1

Use a clean container to store water. Always keep it covered to prevent dust and germs.

2

Boil water for at least 5 minutes to kill germs. You can also use water purifiers or chlorine tablets.

3

Wash hands before handling water to keep it clean. Always clean cups and bottles before using them.

4

Never drink directly from the storage container—always use a clean cup.

5

By following these steps, you can keep your water safe and stay healthy!





Photostory by: [Achola Rehema](#),  
Kiduuu UMEA Primary School



# Sustainable sanitation and access to water

# We're period-ready!

## Experiences on menstrual hygiene management in schools

Toilets and washrooms are just as important as books and pens at school. For some, they mean dignity. For others, they are an assurance of confidence, privacy, and health. Importantly, it means that everyone can study. Girls do not have to worry that they will miss school because it is that time of month.

For students like Mariam, Hope, and Nadia it's not just about having a toilet, it's about feeling safe, supported, and ready for whatever comes next.



I will soon be using the new girl's toilet and it has water which helps us wash dirt that causes diseases and bring germs. [Naigaga Bushira](#), Luzinga CU Primary School



This boys' latrine has holes through which people outside can see someone using the latrine.

**Basutaine Joel,**  
Bunafu Primary School



This is our makeshift shelter that girls use when they are in their period. We shall soon have a good latrine.

**Namusobya Gloria,**  
Nabitaama P/S



This is our girl's toilet. It has no doors. We request the school administration to fix doors on our toilet.

**Bafumba Mercy,**  
Bunafu Primary School



When we lack a good toilet, we go easing ourselves anywhere and this can easily get us infected with diseases.

**Omoit Derrick,**  
Kyanvuma Primary School

A group of children are gathered around a wooden structure, likely a borehole. One child is drinking water from a yellow jerrycan. Other children are smiling and looking on. The background shows a brick building and trees.

I have taken a picture of a girl drinking water from the borehole. This is where we get clean water from at school.

**Kabona Racheal,**  
Budhaana Primary School

A child in an orange shirt is standing in a muddy, shallow body of water, likely a dam. The child is holding a white container and appears to be fetching water. A yellow jerrycan is visible in the foreground. The water is murky and brown.

This child is fetching water from the same dam that the cows drink from. This is very dangerous to the health of people.

**Dabuson Mwesigwa,**  
Misanga C.U P/S



My photo shows a boy cleaning the teachers toilet. We clean toilets everyday.

**Kiden Mercy,**  
Kawolokota P/S

“

Whether the latrine is new or old, they all need to be kept clean to avoid diseases.



I took a photo of a girl washing hands after using a toilet. This practice reduces the spread of germs.

**Apio Priscilla,**  
Abim Primary School



Our school Head Teacher showing how to use the hand washing facility after visiting the latrine.

**Mwagale Rebecca,**  
Kiburara Primary School.



This photo shows the difference between the old and new latrine at our school. The new toilet looks good.

**taken by,**  
Mahyoro Primary School



This toilet section is for pupils with disability. Our new toilet is very inclusive.

**Adyang Rogers,**  
Ayer primary school



The health club members having a photo moment in front of their newly constructed toilet.

**Kiden Mercy**  
Kawolokota R.C P/S



## The boy who built a handwashing station – Abraham's Story

### Arinaitwe Abraham

Kaboyo Primary School

My name is Arinaitwe Abraham, and I go to Kaboyo Primary School in Kabarole. People say I am shy, but I prefer making things with my hands instead of talking too much.

I was excited to hold a camera and take photographs for the first time in my life. I ran straight to photograph the thing that is special to me because I built it with my own hands – it's called a tippy tap—a simple handwashing station near our toilets. It works by stepping on a stick, which tilts the jerrycan to release water without holding the jerrycan. So, the jerrycan stays clean and your hands remain clean after washing.



## 'We can't move back!' Parents to maintain WASH facilities

### Margaret Nakabwama

Parent, Bubiro Primary School

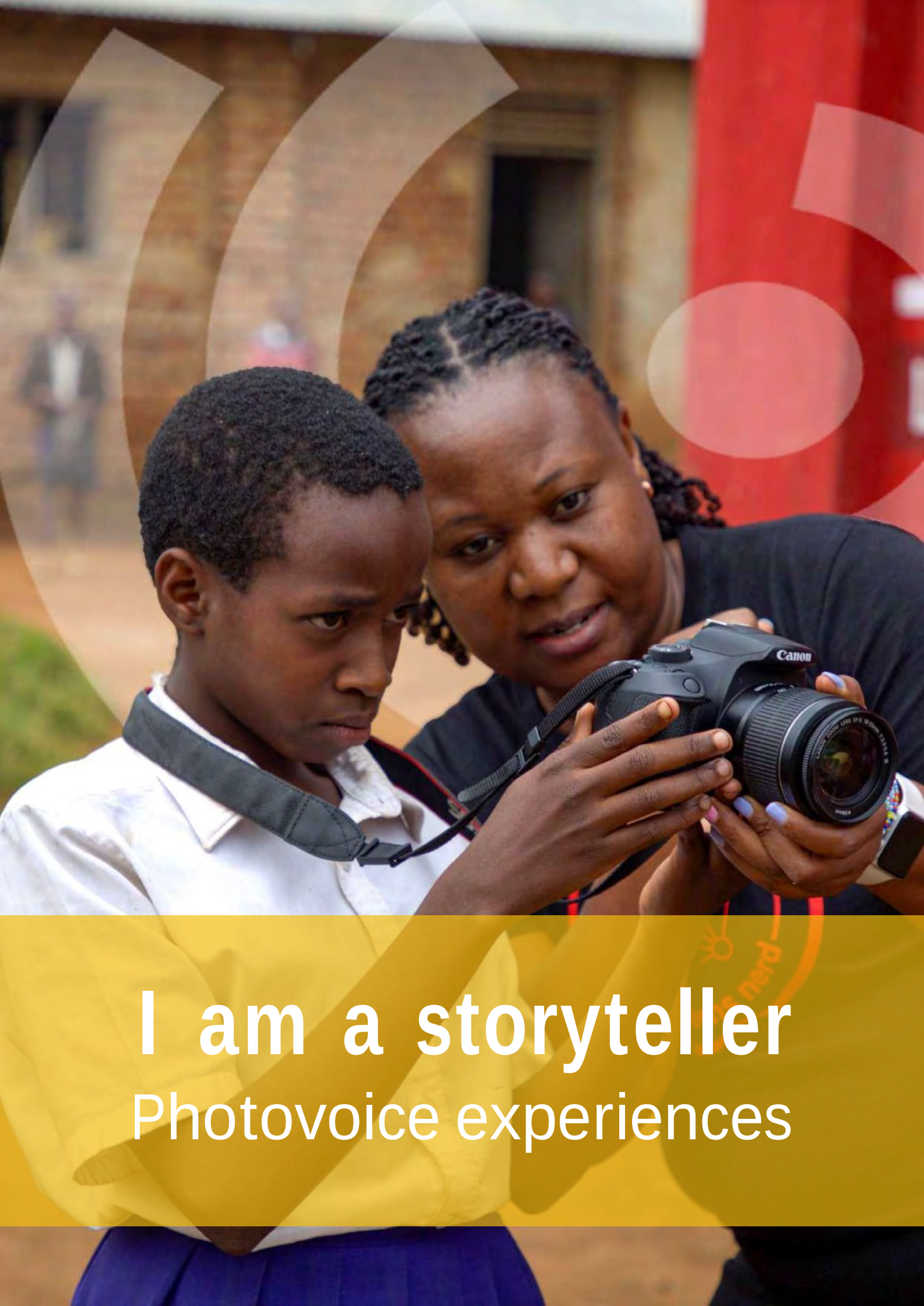
This project has put us at a different standard as Bubiro C.U. Primary School. Our children will not feel out of place when they go to urban places where these facilities are the norm. Children have had the chance to use these high standard facilities. As parents we have received training in operation and maintenance of the new WASH facilities. We have agreed as the Parents-Teachers Committee to open an account for sanitation and hygiene where every parent will be contributing a minimal amount regularly to maintain these facilities.



“

Pupils of Kaboyo primary school demonstrating how to set up a tip tap using locally available materials.





**I am a storyteller**  
Photovoice experiences

# Photos that speak: The power of photo storytelling

Photography is a powerful way to tell stories. It breaks barriers of language, age, and culture. In Uganda, where over 60 languages are spoken, many children in rural schools struggle to make their voice heard on matters of access to water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) services that meet required standards. Cultural taboos make it even harder to talk about issues like menstrual hygiene, limiting awareness and access to WASH rights. The use of photographs, therefore, bridges linguistic barriers to communicate people's lived experiences and aspirations.

Through photovoice initiative, children documented their perspectives – the struggles, victories and hopes for better WASH services. The photos are more than just images, they are powerful advocacy tools, amplifying their voices and urging decision-makers to take action. Each picture and story remind us that storytelling is not just about documenting change; it is about driving it.



## My Story... ■ ■ ■



**Gorret Nasande:** This was my first time to hold a camera. I felt very happy to carry a camera and be able to use it to take photos. I saw that my fellow pupils were admiring me because i was holding a camera. I wish we had a camera at our school that we can use everyday to take photos.



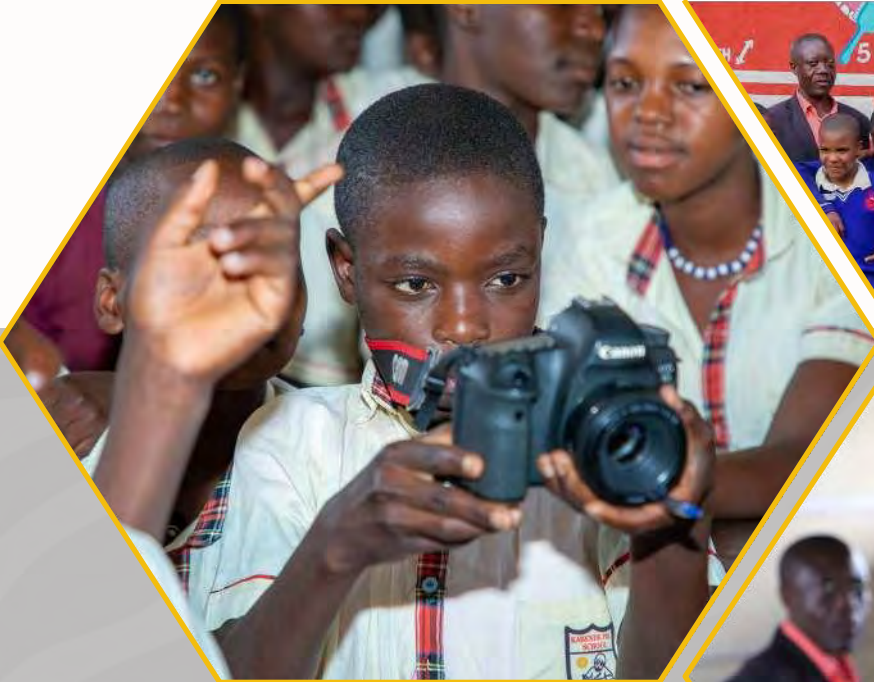
**Benifansio Balikuno:** I have always wanted to talk about certain things that take place around our environment, but i sometimes fail to express myself using words. Today i got a chance to learn how use a camera to take photos that tell stories about our life at school. I felt happy that i have learnt another way of telling stories.



**Gorret Kampi:** I have previously used my father's phone to take pictures, but i did not know how to take photos using a camera. When i learnt how to take photos using a camera i today, i saw that the camera photos look better than the photos that i take using my father's phone camera.



**Livingstone Sseruwu:** During Christmas, I always see a cameraman taking our photos at home. Today I also got a chance to learn how to use a camera and to tell stories using photographs. When I grow up i want to become a photo story teller so that I can bring change to my community.



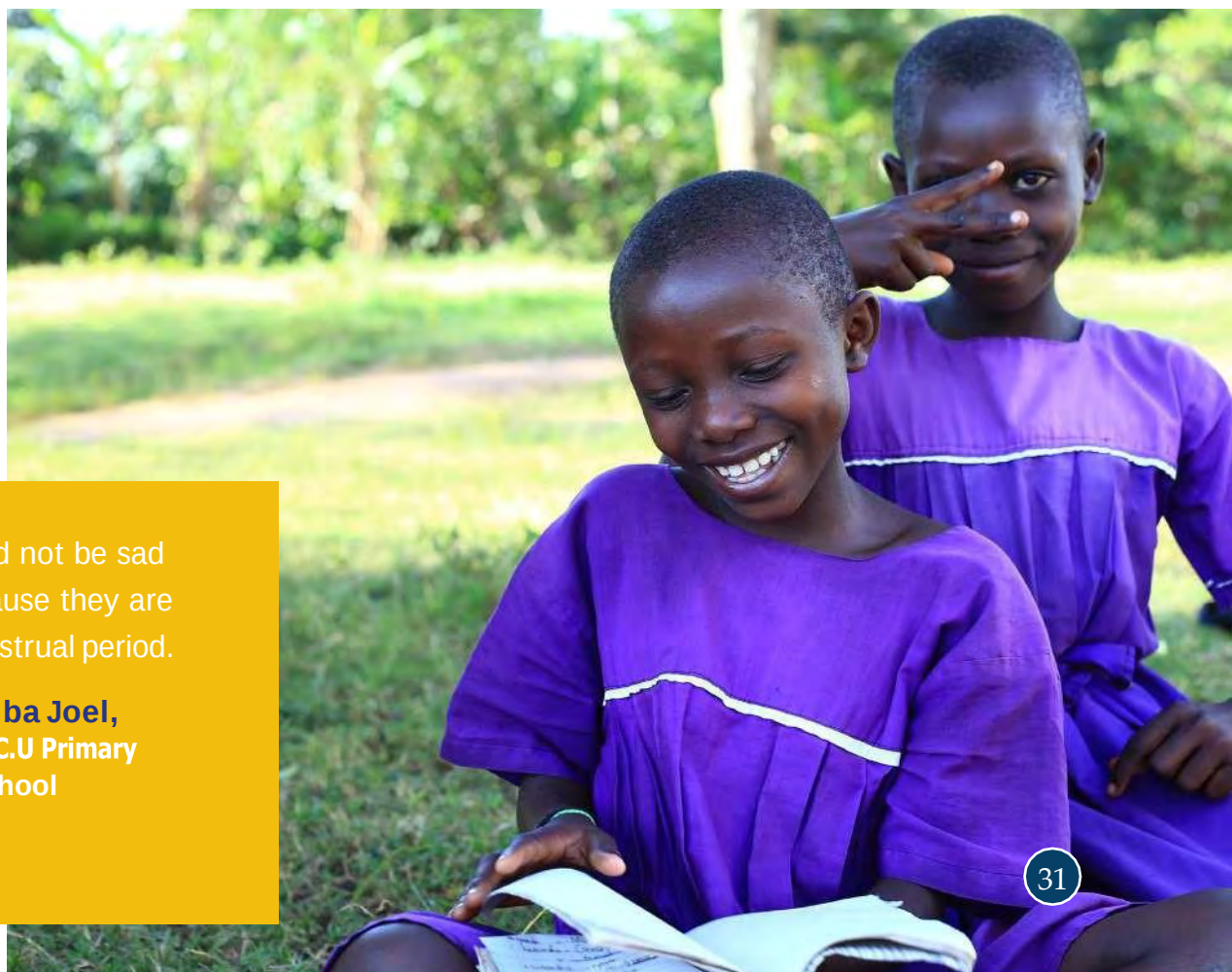
“  
Our **Future**  
**Story**tellers





It is always a joy to work and play in a clean and hygienic environment.

**Ssenabulya James,**  
Bubiro C.U. Primary School



Girls should not be sad simply because they are in their menstrual period.

**Kayemba Joel,**  
Misanga C.U Primary  
School



I have taken a picture of the girl's toilets it has no doors.

**Mugisa Douglas,**  
Kaboyo Primary School



When girls are not worried about their menstrual health they participate in sports, which boosts their confidence.

**Nangyozi Rihana,**  
Busagazi Primary School



My fellow pupils are very happy because they promote proper sanitation through washing hands.

**Given Tumwebaze**, Kiburara Primary School



Children weaving papyrus mats where we dry utensils like cups, plates and saucepans.

This activity is always done during our free time.

**Ssenabulya James**, Bubiyo C.U Primary School

# My first time to hold a Camera...

I took photos of a toilet, a water source, and a girl washing her hands. I felt so happy to take photos with a camera, something I had never handled before.



**Peter**

I felt good holding the camera in my hands, something I never thought I would ever get the chance to do. While holding it, I took photos of a toilet, the kitchen, and our cook. I took a photo of the toilet because it is new and looks nice.



**Shamina**

I took a photo of one of our teacher because she teaches us hygiene and good behavior. I was very happy while taking her photo.



**Cyrus**

I took a photo of the tap because it is where we get water for cooking, drinking, and washing our hands. I was very happy while taking that photo.



**Racheal**

I took photos of the boys' toilet, which is in a bad state, and the water tap where we wash our hands after using the toilet.

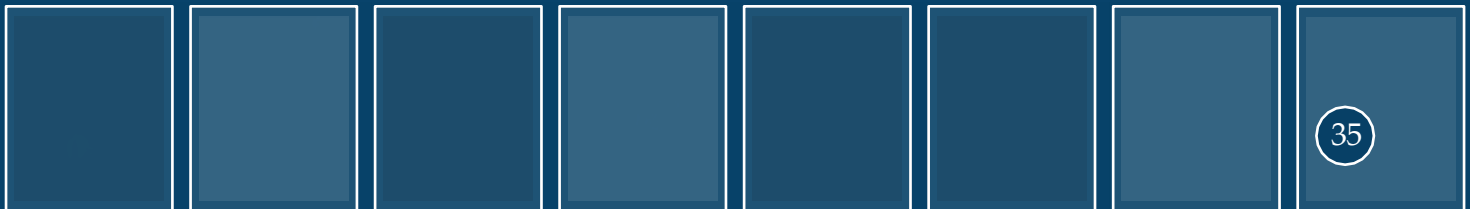
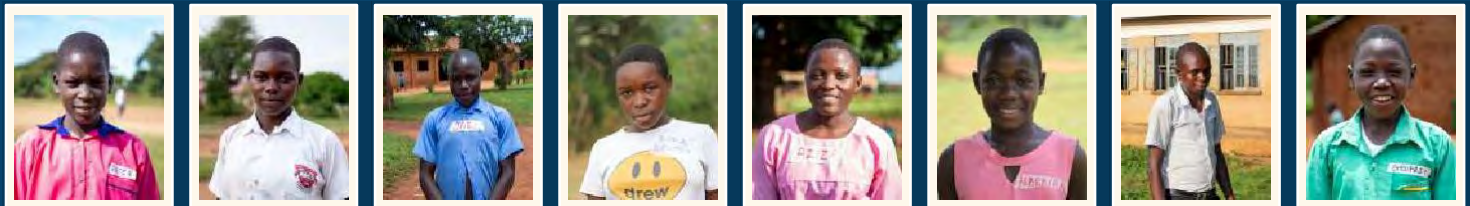
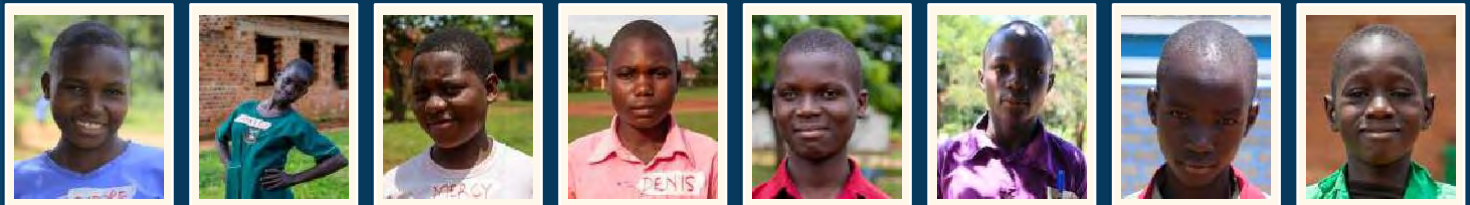
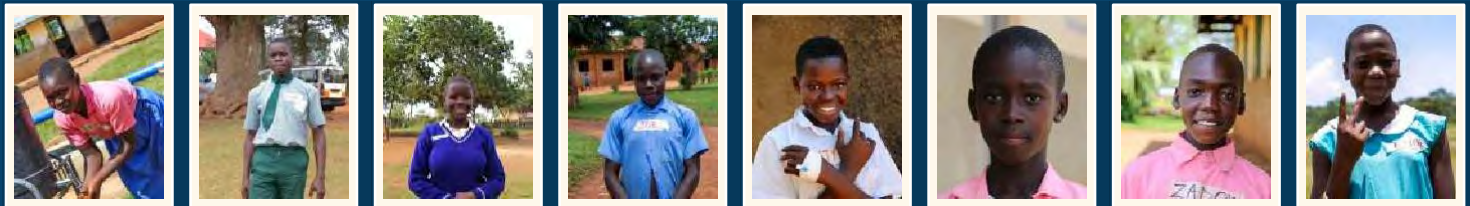
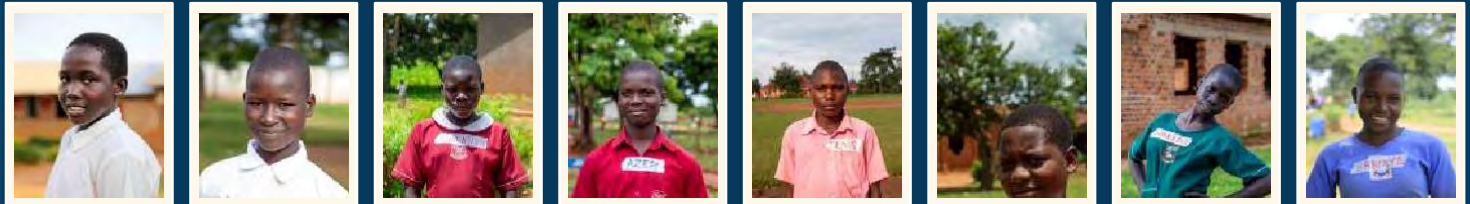
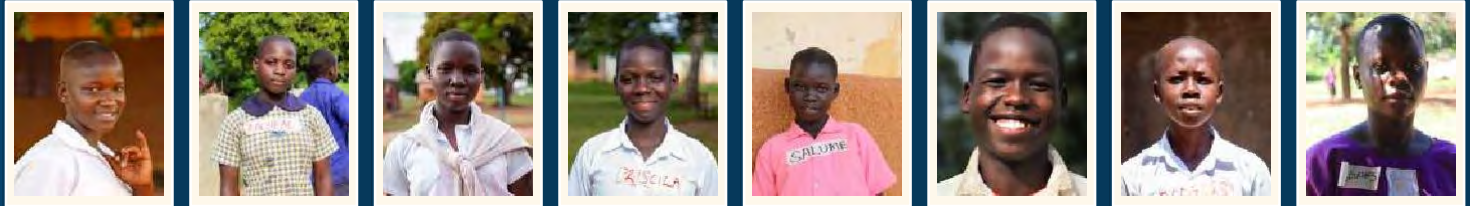
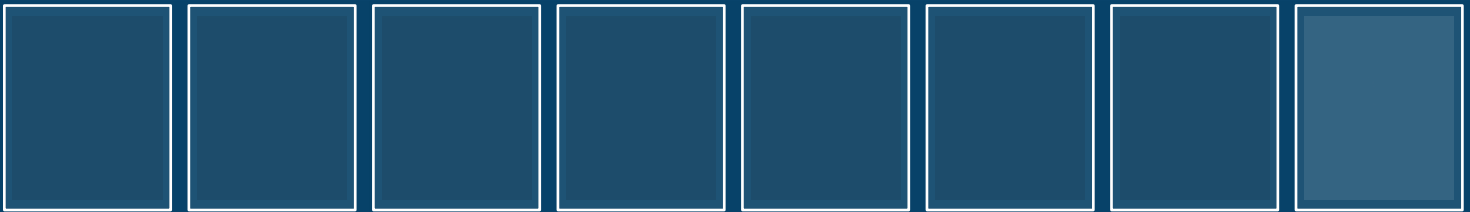


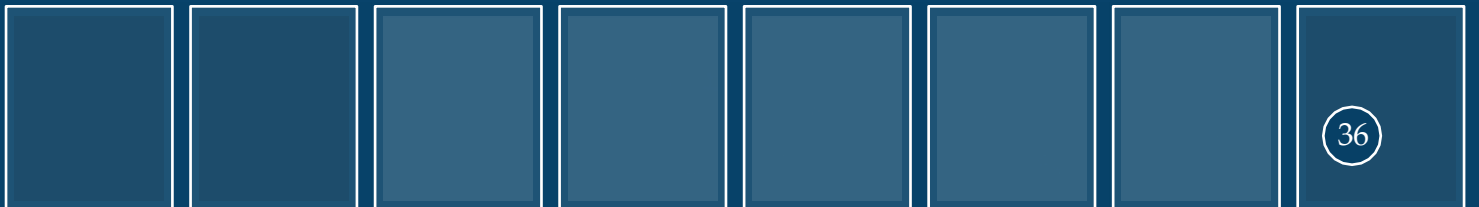
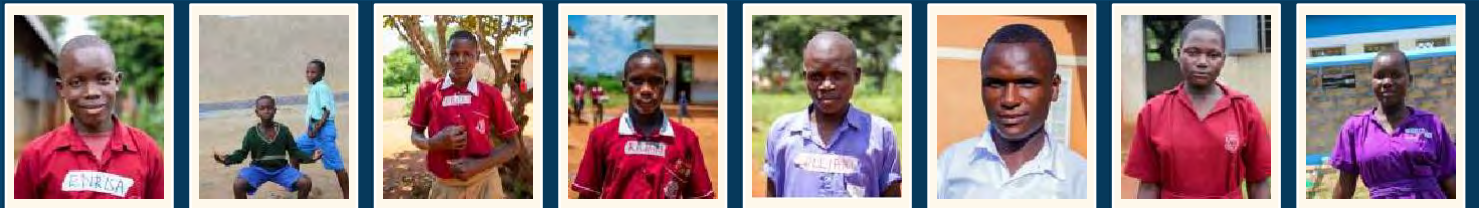
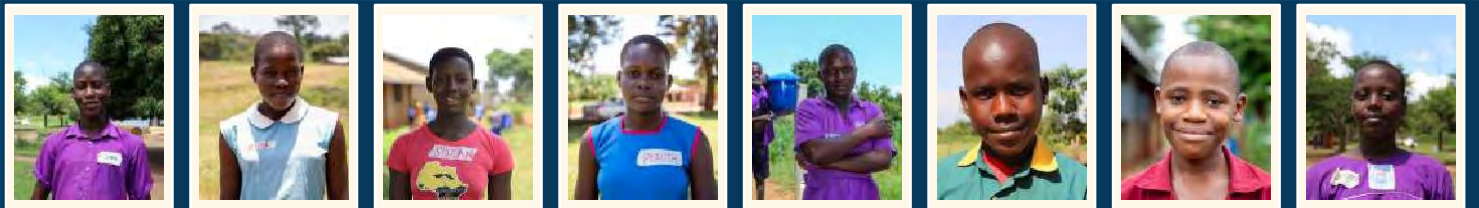
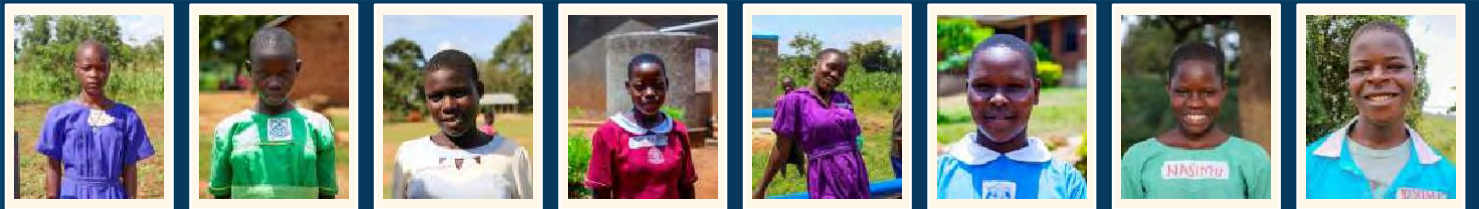
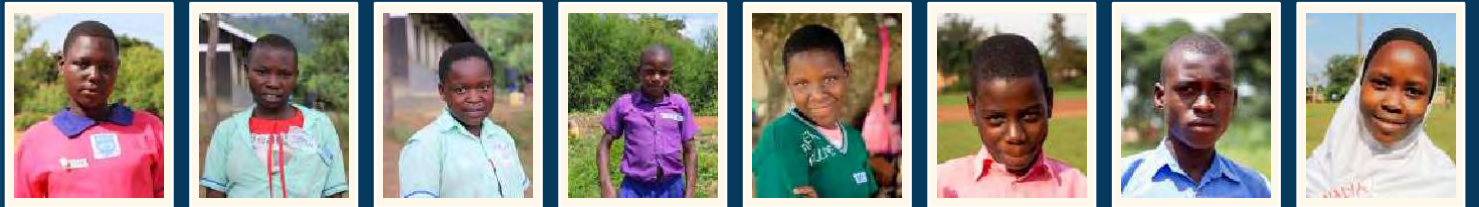
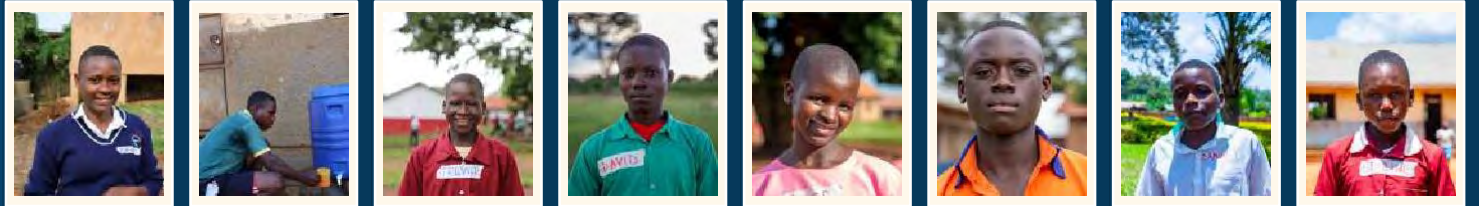
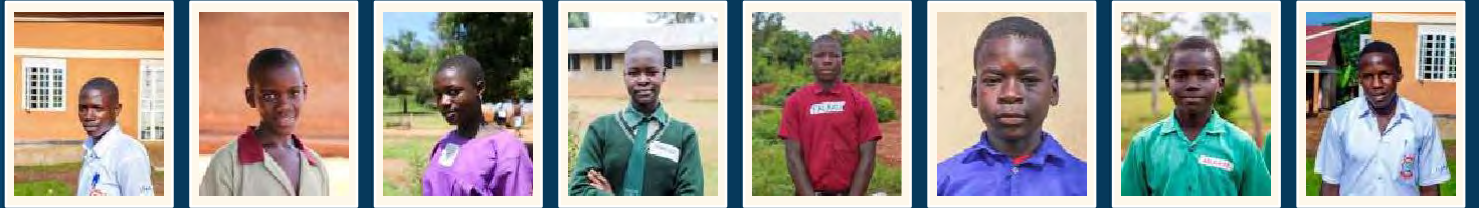
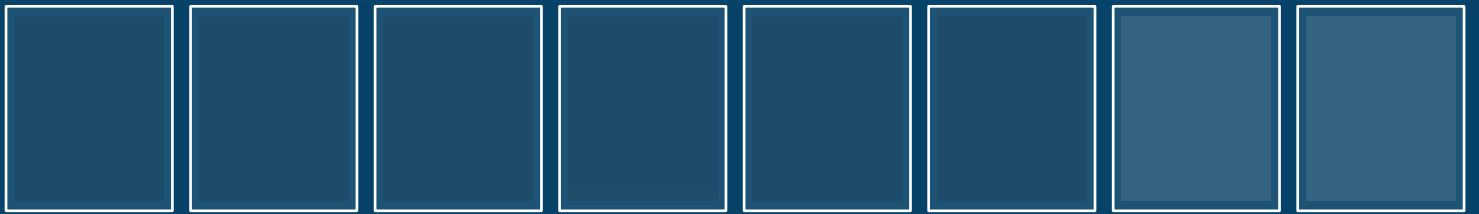
**Catherine**

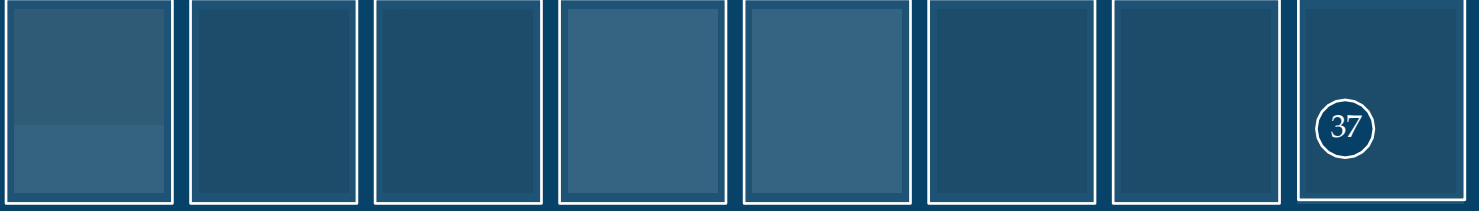
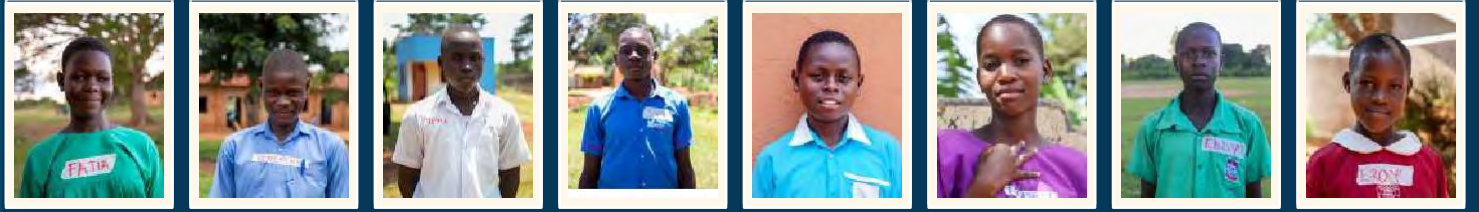
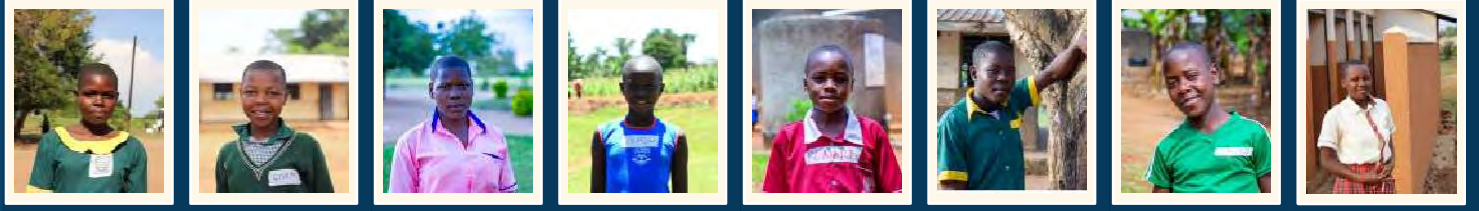
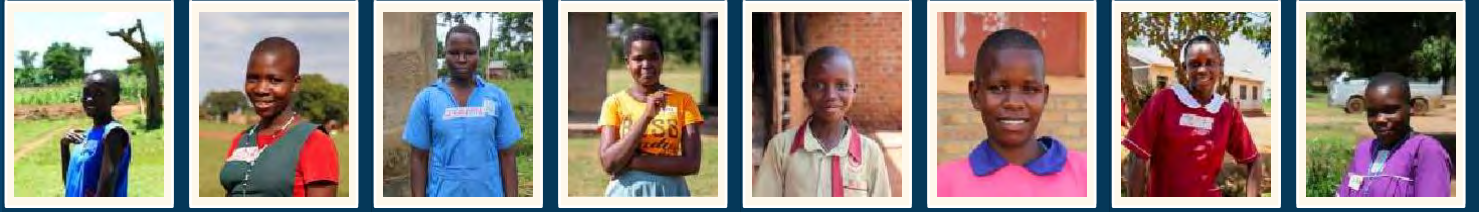
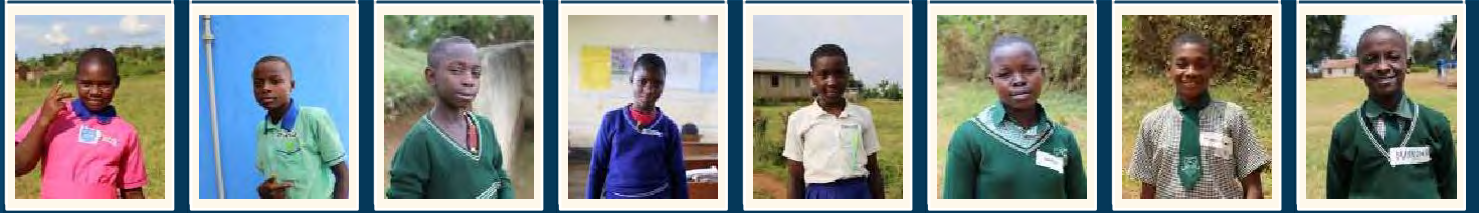
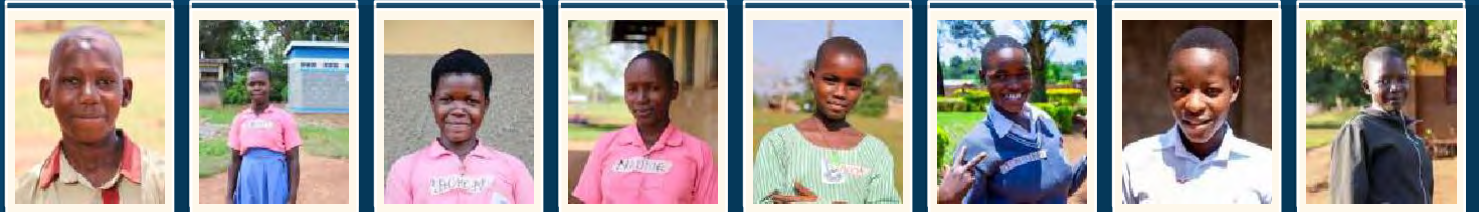
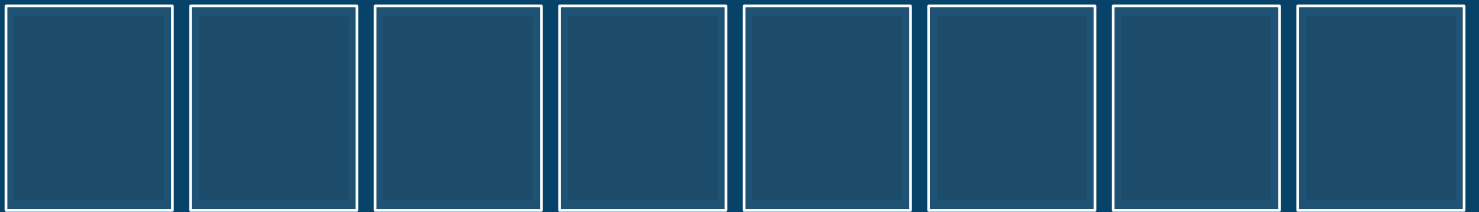
I took a photo of the kitchen with plates, and I felt happy holding a camera in my hands. I wish you could leave the camera with us so we could walk around, chill and brag about it.

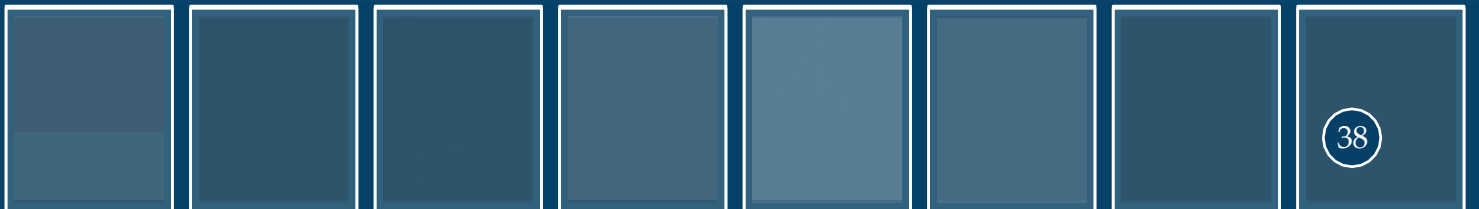
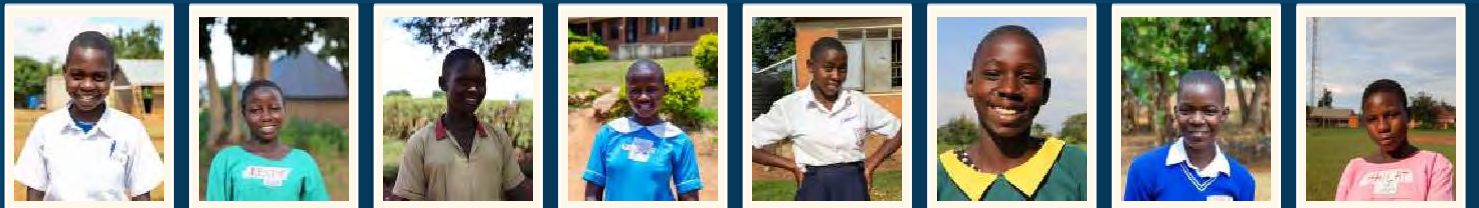
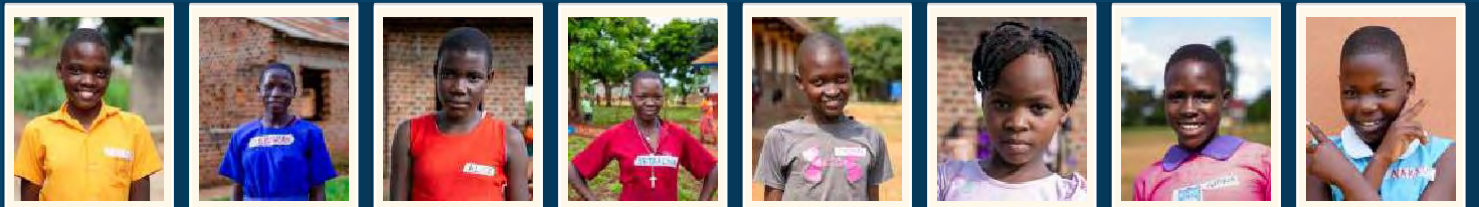
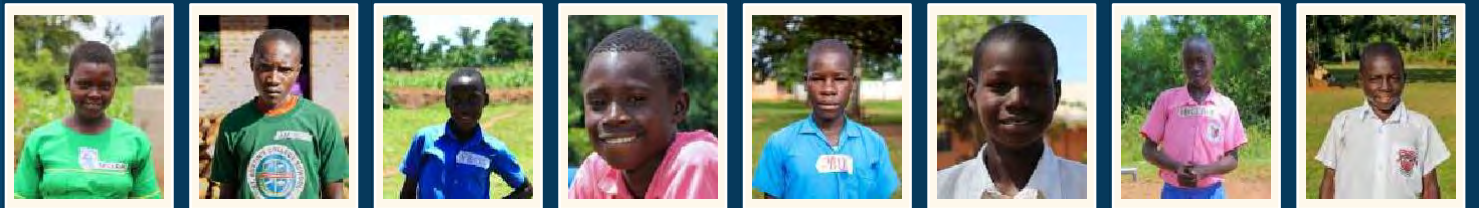
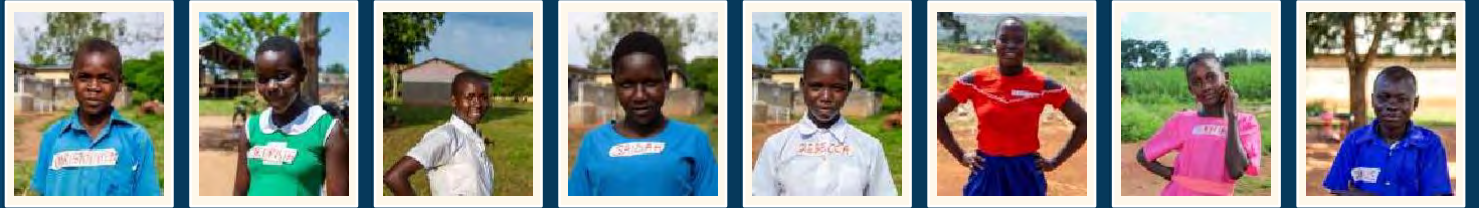
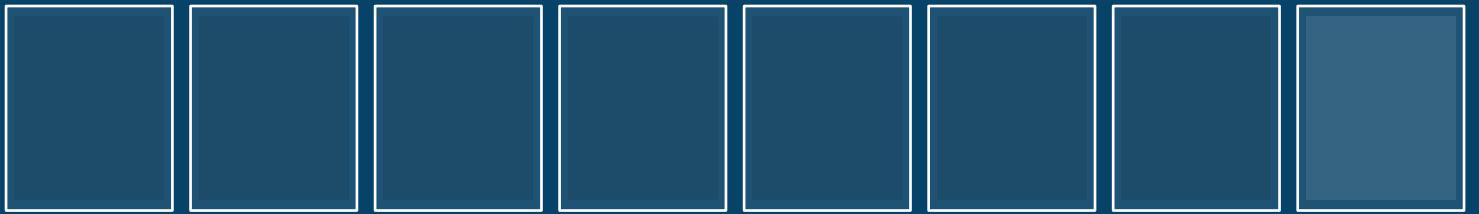


**Enock**











## The Sanitation and Hygiene Fund project in Uganda is delivered by partners

