



*In Uganda's southwest corner Musa and Kakama no longer have to walk hours each day to collect water. With their youngest brother Twine and grandmother Ziporo, they are now the proud owners of a water tank. Fresh water on tap has transformed their lives. The Centre for Community Solidarity is making sure families caring for HIV and AIDS orphans have water and support to improve their livelihoods. Since 2008, they have built 695 tanks with local communities. CWS is committed to providing matching funding so they can build 420 more.*

## **OUR STORY IS OF WATER**

When their parents died from HIV and AIDS, Musa, Kakama and Twine were left to fend for themselves. The oldest Musa looked after the others, but they had no money for school or even food. The brothers knew they were finished. They lived with the shame of having to steal in order to feed themselves. Worse, when the middle brother Kakama was caught in the act, he was beaten and left for dead.

Word of what happened reached their grandmother who took the boys home with her. She did not have much food and the boys had to spend long periods of the day collecting water. The land on top of the hill where they live is fertile and good for growing bananas that are their staple food and a source of cash. Climbing down the very steep and stoney hillsides in bare feet is not easy. The older boys navigated the narrow paths that go around the rice, maize and millet grown on the terraced slopes to collect water and firewood for the family's daily needs. There was no time for school.

Poor quality water meant poor health. They picked up malaria, and because there was not enough food for them all, often went to bed hungry. There seemed no way out of their misery until grandmother Zipora joined her local association for caregivers set up by the Centre for Community Solidarity (CCS) on the recommendation of one of its

volunteers. Joining the local association gave her access to support, education and the opportunity of clean water through the low interest credit scheme it runs.

Your donations to CWS gave her the matching funds needed to construct a rainwater tank. CCS organised the materials and provided the expertise. Association members all helped to build the tank. Now the family has safe water and the boys are back in school.

Musa (14 years) the eldest is in his second year of high school and wants to be a doctor. Kakama (aged 12) wants to be a teacher and after seeing an airplane fly over their village, the youngest Twine (9) wants to be a pilot. They have a six year old sister Kobugabe who lives nearby.

According to Charles Rwabambari of CCS, there are literally thousands of young people affected by HIV and AIDS in Isingiro District where they live.

“Musa and his brothers are among the lucky ones. So many of these children are affected by the lack of access to safe water coupled with HIV. Others live with the punishing legacy of poverty: pervasive and generational poverty, poor health, inadequate infrastructure and too few opportunities to go to school. These girls and boys are eager to learn. But for so many of them, circumstances far beyond their control have robbed them of the opportunity to build brighter futures.

“More support to construct more rainwater tanks will assist so many more children like Musa and his brothers overcome seemingly insurmountable odds,” he adds.

**Donations to the Christmas Appeal will train local people and give them the resources they need to improve their livelihoods and become more resilient.**



*Kakuma (left) studies hard now he can go to school.*

## BACKGROUND ON UGANDA

Uganda has a population of around 40 million people. 19.7% of Ugandans live below the national poverty line: 6.7 million in “absolute poverty” and a further 14.7 million remain vulnerable. Uganda is host to over 1 million refugees from South Sudan alone.

Primary school enrolment has increased from 3.1 million pupils in 1996 to 8.4 million in 2013 thanks to a massive investment in education associated with debt relief packages and other international funding. 8% or 660,000 children are not enrolled in primary school. Only 25% of children complete the final year. 20% go on to secondary school. Poor families may not be able to afford school materials, clothing, lunch, sanitary pads for girls, or contribute to school costs, so children dropout. According to government statistics, there is one latrine for every 71 students in schools. A shortage of trained and motivated teachers also contributes to the fall in attendance —teachers are among the lowest paid public servants in Uganda.



In Isingiro District where CCS works, close to 98% of people rely on agriculture for their livelihoods. In Uganda’s southwest corner, the climate is getting warmer and drought more severe. The farmers are coping with changing weather patterns. Many small farmers have one acre (.4 hectare) of their two to five acre plots planted in bananas, a staple for many Ugandans. Safe drinking water is very scarce and the little water available contains unacceptably high levels of mineral salts.

In 2016, UNAIDS estimated 1.4 million people in Uganda were living with HIV of whom 130,000 were under 15 years old. 970,000 children under the age of 18 were orphaned by AIDS. The legacy of war and poverty, HIV continues to dampen the local economy.

## CENTRE FOR COMMUNITY SOLIDARITY

With two staff funded by CWS and 12 talented and passionate volunteers, CCS is making life better for people caring for orphans and vulnerable children affected by HIV and AIDS. CCS has organised them into 25 local associations. The first phase of the programme from 2008-2012 funded 495 rainwater tanks for 530 caregivers and 1742



children. In the second phase beginning in 2013, 300 new tanks have been built so far. Another 420 tanks are needed for members caring for 2321 children.

The local associations at the centre of the programme meet monthly to share their problems and learn new skills. CCS visits regularly to teach farming techniques to cope with changing weather patterns, train on improved hygiene and sanitation, and educate on HIV and AIDS. In addition, they supervise the revolving credit fund and rainwater harvesting tank construction. CWS matches half the cost of a basic tank—the caregiver pays for the rest. The associations decide who will get the next tank by ballot. Some contribute additional funds to build larger tanks. With water on tap families have expanded production and started new businesses to improve household income.

Rainwater tanks are freeing up time and resources so children can attend primary school. Caregivers cannot afford secondary education so their children are often exploited for cheap labour. In collaboration with caregivers, CCS has begun a new initiative to give young people new opportunities and respect.



*The outskirts of the community where the family lives. Bananas are the major crop grown in the region.*

## **BUILDING TANKS**

CCS supplies the materials and expertise to make each tank. The first step is to lay a hardcore base into which a double-layered mesh cylinder is cemented. On the next day, the women wrap the cylinder with papyrus mats before packing a mix of fine sand and cement between the layers of mesh to form the tank. After two days the inside

cylinder is set and a sand-cement coating is put on the outside. A final coat of cement is applied to the inside of the cylinder to make a smooth finish.

On the fifth day, a top cover is made in a similar fashion with a metal lid for easy access. The lower part of the tank is finished in roughcast and a label made including the name of the association, CWS New Zealand, CCS and the date. A nylon sieve is fitted at the entrance to the tank to block foreign materials. At the base an outlet for easy cleaning and the removal of sediment and a padlocked metal door—to stop children wasting water—are inserted. Within seven days the tank is ready to receive water from newly installed gutters.

The beneficiary is involved in construction so she learns maintenance and how to make simple repairs. After each dry season, tank owners are advised to disconnect the gutters from the tank and use the first rain to flush dust and bird droppings from the system.

CCS sells low cost water filters made from local clay mixed with sawdust. The filters are coated inside with silver nitrate to remove pathogens. The filter is placed in a plastic bucket with a tap on and filled with water. The quality of water is regularly tested and has government approval.



*"Thanks to so many generous people, we are able to make an extraordinary difference in the lives of suffering and forgotten children," says Zipora*

**Working together with people from the communities, we can make the joy of Christmas our story.**