



SUMMER STORY

By Gillian Southey, CWS communications coordinator.

Rainwater tanks provide HIV and AIDS orphans and their caregivers with the water they need. CCS



GIVE A LIFELINE

In her bright red jacket Jacenta is eager to describe her life in southwest Uganda, on the border with Tanzania.

“I am Jacenta Matu – fourteen years old. We were born four children in our family. I was the eldest. First, we lost our father and life started to change as our mother had no helper.”

Jacenta’s mother worked hard to keep the family alive but in the end HIV took its toll. “I saw her health decline and her beautiful skin replaced with pimples and rashes. One evening she sadly told us that what had killed our father would also claim her life.”

She was admitted to the nearest Health Centre and eventually died. Jacenta and two younger brothers were given to her grandmother in Kyabishaho village. The oldest brother went to live with his mother’s relatives in Mbarara. AIDS is ruthless and creates poverty says Jacenta.

CAPTURING THE RAIN

Changing weather patterns in Isingiro District are making a hard life even more difficult. Rain is less frequent and unreliable.

Like many other children Jacenta had to trek six kilometres to get water from the polluted Kagera River or carry heavily mineralised water from the well. Food cooked in well water becomes brittle and unpalatable. Soap does not lather and clothes ‘get old very fast’.

When she first moved in with her grandmother Jacenta thought they were the only family who had suffered so much. It was not until she went to the monthly meeting for caregivers of orphans and vulnerable children with her grandmother that she discovered there were many other children like her. The groups are supported by the Centre



The orphans raise piglets given to each family to help with expenses (left). Jacenta (right) stands in front of the new tank with her grandmother and youngest brother. CCS



for Community Solidarity specialising in rainwater tank construction and community development.

When a group has saved enough to pay half the construction costs, they choose slips of paper to decide who will get the tank. Jacenta’s grandmother was overjoyed when she chose the one with the picture of the water tank at their meeting last year. On July 15 under the guidance of CCS and with help from her group, a new 6cm³ long lasting rough cast tank was installed.

With water on tap their lives of drudgery were turned around. Jacenta is very proud and has new hope for the future. She and her little brother are studying hard at the local primary school – the youngest stays with grandmother.

In this second phase of the programme, CCS is working with 25 groups made up of 720 members. New water tanks are a visible sign of their achievements but so are fast growing piglets and proud families. Capturing the rain means families are healthier and have the time and water to grow food crops to eat and for market.



A young mother reports on group priorities at a training workshop.

Half the costs of tank construction are met by the group and half from the Christian World Service grant. Last year CCS and the communities built 45 more tanks – leaving 575 families of orphans and vulnerable children waiting their turn.

Under CCS's guidance the groups established a revolving credit fund. They learn about AIDS prevention and ways to cope as well as how to construct and maintain tanks. Last year 240 families including Jacenta's received a piglet. With money earned, they can pay for uniforms, soap, school books and health care.

Life was hard but now Jacenta is no longer afraid. "May God bless and reward the generous hands that have supported our growth," she says.

ESCAPING THE WAR ZONE

Fleeing from their ruined homeland, Syrian refugees have faced more than their share of challenges. In Jordan and Lebanon they have found much needed support and the Department of Service to Palestinian Refugees, a partner of CWS since 1948. DSPR trains and supports women to be leaders of a matrix of self-help groups. Like the caregivers groups in Uganda, the women share their concerns and learn from each other. Without husbands at hand, women have taken on the responsibility of an extended family in an unfamiliar environment.

When International Programmes Coordinator Trish Murray visited last year, she was told how the layers of conflict in the region were affecting the refugees. Some had fled Palestine 60 years ago and carried the longing for the right of return. Others with chronic health conditions had survived thanks to free medical days organised by DSPR. The women were anxious about money and eager to attend training programmes. Children delighted in forums and education programmes.

None wanted to stay a refugee. "DSPR staff told me many times CWS grants were a lifeline," she says. ■

SHARE THE HOPE



CWS is looking for 100 people willing to do something extra for Syrian refugees. The challenge is to live on the equivalent of a refugee food parcel from June 16-20. We supply food and you sign up friends and family as sponsors. Money raised will go to the Department of Service to Palestinian Refugees to assist refugees with food, healthcare, education and support. Find out more at: cws.org.nz or contact David at david.lawson@cws.org.nz

SHARE YOUR TAX REFUND

CWS sends a receipt for all donations over \$5 – and can send duplicates if needed. You can claim a tax refund by downloading an IR526 form from Inland Revenue. If you would like to give CWS some or all of your refund, our partners will make sure many more people get the lifeline they need.

SHARE THE STORY

You can watch the 70th anniversary messages from CCS and DSPR on Youtube: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCBeMbwGKpPQGMsa-aldZjig> or search for: CWS NZ

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