



Facing the Climate Challenge with Christ



Climate change is adding to the many challenges Caleb and his grandmother face in the Isingiro District in southwest Uganda. Bananas are the main source of income as they keep and can be sold to local middlemen. HIV and AIDS has had a devastating effect on people's lives and the economy. Although rates [have](#) fallen significantly – an estimated 1.4 million people are living with HIV. Almost 800,000 children (0-17 years) are orphans. Over 3,600 people [have lost](#) their lives to Covid and only around half the population has been vaccinated. In recent years Isingiro has become hotter and drier with climate change. The people have to work hard for everything they have and they worry about the future.

Every night Caleb and his grandmother pray for a rainwater tank for their home. Like too many children, Caleb spends a good part of his day fetching water for the household. During the rainy season he walks two kilometres to a rock dam, but once the short season is over, he walks four kilometres to a spring and when that dries up, it is six kilometres to the river. Carrying a full 20 litre can is no easy matter, especially when he is hungry or sick with another water-borne disease like the typhoid that took his sister's life.

The water in the region is heavily mineralised and often brown. Without this water, there would be nothing to drink. Collecting wood for cooking and the water for drinking and washing is his job. If he gets back to the home he shares with his grandmother in time, he can go to school. It's hard to go to school when there is not enough water to clean himself. Caleb misses so many days that he is always behind.

Caleb was only five years old when his father died from AIDS. It took his mother two years later, so he and an older sister moved in with his grandmother while his other three siblings moved in with an aunt. Now 13 years old, he has already lost his sister to typhoid from the dangerous water. Sometimes his neighbours will share water with the family or they can catch it in plastic containers when it rains.

His grandmother is getting older and finds it harder to care for Caleb and his three younger cousins who live with them. Like many in the region they grow bananas to provide a little cash income. The bananas grow well in the dry region and can survive the rain that hits the hard ground, uprooting smaller crops. Every year the weather gets drier, the ground gets harder and the rains if they come, are more hazardous.

The family has faced so many challenges, but they hold on to the hope of safe, clean water. For nine years his grandmother has been saving a few coins at the monthly meeting of her caregivers' association so she can pay for half the cost. At the group meetings, members discuss local concerns and learn about better healthcare and ways to improve their livelihoods.

"Our grandmother taught us how to wash our hands thoroughly and regularly because she learnt in her group," says Caleb.

Thanks to the Centre for Community Solidarity the family has the support of the local association members and access to information. Best of all Caleb knows their turn will come. With their own water tank, they will be healthier, and he can go to school.

Centre for Community Solidarity

The Centre for Community Solidarity supports 25 local associations of HIV and AIDS affected families. Members work together to improve their lives and livelihoods. With a staff of two and a team of 12 volunteers skilled in aspects of development, CCS:

- Supports the associations of caregivers to make their own action plans for shared benefits

- Trains local members on and organises the building of rainwater tanks
- Educates about protection from Covid, HIV and AIDS and waterborne diseases
- Runs hygiene, sanitation, agricultural and financial training for the associations
- Supports local credit schemes, agricultural enterprises and people starting small businesses, including mentoring young people into work
- Distributes affordable water filters, plants and livestock. Pigs and goats are passed on through a scheme made possible by a seeding grant from CWS
- Mobilises support from local government, through media and participation in local events.



A family affected by HIV and AID is delighted to have water in their new tank. Soon it will be Caleb's turn.

Images and story: Thanks to Caleb, his grandmother and the Centre for Community Solidarity.