

Malia's story

It was a good Christmas for Malia.

Malia lives in Rwanda high up in the dry hills. Her family choose to live there because there are rebel fighters in Rwanda and it is safer to live in more remote areas. But it is also harder. It is harder because the wind dries out the crops on the hillside more quickly. It is harder because the children have to walk to a village further down the hillside to go to school. It is harder because the people have to carry everything that they need up the hill to their own village. And that includes water. When it rains, the people can collect a little water in their bowls and buckets, but it doesn't rain often and so the children, and especially the girls like Malia, are sent with a bucket down the hill three or four times each week to collect water from the river. It's the girls who are sent because the elders in the village think it's more important for boys to have education. The water is very heavy. Often it's not even clean because animals have been walking in the river. And it's scary getting the water because you never know when the rebels might come and kidnap one of the water carriers.

But this Christmas Malia's village got a special present that means the girls will not have to go down the hill and carry water ever again. The special present is a water tank. It's really big and it has a tap at the base. The rain water fills it up, and then when Malia's mum needs water to boil the cassava root or Malia needs a refreshing drink, all they need to do is go to the tank. It is the best present ever. No more heavy buckets! No more looking out for rebel soldiers! And as well, Malia can go to school with her brother. It's a fantastic, lifechanging present.

"Who gave us this present?" asked Malia. "Well", said the men who came to install the tank, "the money for this tank came from New Zealand."

"Where's that?" asked Malia. "A very long way from here", replied the men, "on the other side of the world."

"How did they know we needed tanks?" asked Malia.

"Some people came to their church and told them about you, and the children decided to raise enough money for a water tank", the men said.

"It was kids who gave us our water tank", said Malia. "Kids don't have money for water tanks. How did they get this money?"

"Well, they asked the people in their church to help, and people gave them things to sell, a blanket, some baking, some lemon honey, some toys, some embroidery – lots of stuff – and they made enough money to buy your water tank."

"Why do these children care about us kids in Rwandai?" asked Malia.

"They care because they are Christians and they try to live as Jesus showed them, loving other people as much as God loves them," the men replied.

“Well, I hope those kids in New Zealand know this is the best present ever, and I hope that some day I will be able to help someone in a way that changes their life the way this water tank has changed mine,” said Malia. “Thank you very much!”

Why do we help?

Because Jesus coming at Christmas is God’s gift of love to us and we respond to God’s gift by trying to love other people as much as God loves us.