

Biru's Story

India

**Primary (3-6)
Case Study and
Activites**



BIRU'S STORY

INDIA



Biru lives in a rural village in eastern India. He lost mobility in one of his legs after contracting polio as a child, which makes it difficult for him to walk. He managed to complete his education until grade six but was always dependent on his parents to get him to school because he was unable to walk so far on his own.

Biru started to work as a shepherd from a young age, looking after other people's cattle. He continued this work after he married his wife, Budhni and had four daughters, but it was a challenging job, especially for someone living with a disability.

Like the many millions of people in India living with a disability, Biru also faced poverty. He wondered how he would look after his family.

What other job could he do?

Although he had taught himself to repair bicycles, by watching other people, Biru never dreamed of using his skills to start his own business.

Then in 2016, Caritas India's staff saw Biru struggling to walk along with the cattle and invited him to join a program called Gram Nirman, supported by Caritas Australia. The program helps people from tribal communities and vulnerable groups to develop small businesses, improve farming and money management skills, and access government assistance.

Biru is seen working at his bicycle repair shop outside his home in his village in the state of Jharkhand, India. Photo: Sameer Bara

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Biru became involved in one of the program's community support groups which encourages members to draw on their resources to improve their incomes and quality of life.

As he participated, Biru's courage and confidence grew and his life began to turn around. Not only did he discover skills he didn't know he had, but, with Caritas' help, he also applied for government disability and housing schemes which he had not known were available.

"I was motivated by the team, my life started changing after I entered the program," Biru says. "I didn't know that I had the skills to manage a shop, but after receiving the support, I started with cycle repairing, then I realised I can manage other skills too, like repairing motorcycles."

Everyone loved Biru's new bicycle repair business. People started coming from kilometres away to get their bicycles fixed. They would also offer to travel to nearby towns to access bicycle parts for him!

Before, Biru had felt like a burden. Now, he is able to provide a good life for his family and an essential service to his community.

"Now members of my community have started listening to my opinion. I am getting appreciation and recognition," Biru says.

Around 100,000 people have benefitted from the Gram Nirman program so far, including over 15,000 families who have increased their incomes by between 40 and 50 percent.

Biru has discovered a sense of pride, confidence and hope which has inspired others living with a disability and paved the way for all future generations.





Read and/or watch [Biru's Story \(India\)](#).

TASK 1: Discussion

- Describe one thing in Biru's story that surprised you. Why was it surprising?
- Why was Biru's job looking after cattle so difficult?
- How did Biru learn how to repair bicycles?
- Why do you think "Biru never dreamed of using his skills to start his own business"?
- What made it possible for Biru to start his own bicycle repair business?
- How did Caritas Australia help?
- How do people in Biru's community treat him?
- Imagine you are visiting Biru in his village. What could you learn from him?

Curriculum links: English, HASS

TASK 2: Bicycle Repair Shop

Consider doing this task on or in the week leading up to [National Ride2School Day](#). Make Biru's Story a part of your whole school's National Ride to School program.

a. Bicycle Anatomy Lesson

Bring a bicycle into the classroom and position it in a central spot, so that everyone has a good view of it. Have students draw a picture of the bicycle and label each part as best they can. For example: saddle, brakes, gears, handlebars, chain, front wheel, rear wheel, forks, frame, tyres, bottom, bracket, stand.

b. Pedal Power

Did you know India is one of the top five producers of bicycles in the world?! Check out this link to see how many bicycles are being produced right now: <https://www.worldometers.info/bicycles/>

As a class, explore the internet to discover as many different kinds of cycles as you can. See if you can find a picture of:

- a bicycle
- a tricycle
- a cycle rickshaw
- a bicycle or motorcycle carrying a passenger
- a bicycle or motorcycle transporting lots of cargo

Discuss why people use bicycles, thinking particularly of people and communities experiencing poverty.

Now try building your own bike out of icy-pole sticks and recycled cardboard! Follow the simple instructions [here](#). For Years 5 and 6 students, try the version [here](#).



(continued)

c. Bike Check

Print a few copies of this [Bicycle Network 'M Check' infographic](#). Consider inviting a small group of parents/guardians who are skilled at bike maintenance to help you run this hands-on activity.

Arrange for several students to bring their bicycles into school, or source 2 or 3 bikes that students can practice their maintenance and repair skills on. Find a suitable location on the school grounds to set them up. Divide students into small groups and make sure each group has a bike to check over. Have students decide if the bike is safe to ride by doing an '[ABC TIGHT Bike Safety Check](#)', where A is for AIR, B is for BRAKES, C is for CHAIN and TIGHT is a reminder to make sure everything else is straight, secure and ready to ride! If you have time, do the [Bicycle Network 'M Check'](#) too.

Make this activity count towards your Caritas fundraising efforts by inviting students from across the school to bring their bikes into your Bicycle Repair Shop for a check up, for the cost of a gold coin donation.

Curriculum links: HASS, English, Mathematics, Health and Physical Education

TASK 3: Same But Different

Learn more about people living with different disabilities in Australia by watching one or more of these short documentary films in the ABC series called [Same But Different](#) (approx. 6-9 mins).

Curriculum links: English, Health and Physical Education

TASK 4: Fearfully and Wonderfully Made

Read [Psalm 139:13-14](#). Have students name one of their own strengths. If they have trouble naming something, ask others in the class to make suggestions for that person. Collate these strengths into a list. Think about Biru: walking is difficult for him but he has many other strengths. What special strengths, skills, experience, knowledge or wisdom do you think Biru shows? Are any of these strengths similar to ones already on your list? Look at the strengths list together and discuss any similarities and differences. Remind students that we are all different and all "fearfully and wonderfully made". Wrap up the conversation with this quote from Pope Francis: "Every human being has the right to live with dignity and to develop integrally... [and] People have this right even if they are unproductive, or were born with or developed limitations... [because] This does not detract from their great dignity as human persons, a dignity based not on circumstances but on the intrinsic worth of their being" (*Fratelli Tutti*, n 107).

TASK 5: A Day in the Life

Watch [Biru's 'A Day in the Life' film](#).

Make a list of all the things you did on the weekend. Which things were easy to do? Which things were hard? Why?

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TASK 5: A Day in the Life (continued)

Think about Biru's story, his skills, interests and abilities. Now, imagine Biru and his family are visiting you. Make a list of some activities that everyone could do together. What kinds of things might you consider when you are making plans? (e.g.: the accessibility of venues, their facilities and programs; transport options; distance between places; physicality of activities; etc.) Now think about people in your class and school community? How might you better include each other?

Curriculum links: English, Health and Physical Education, HASS, Mathematics

TASK 6: CST Link

Think about the [CST principle of Dignity of the Human Person](#). Ask students:

- How is dignity reflected in Biru's story?
- How can including people of all abilities make the world a better place?

TASK 7: RE Link

Biru showed great courage when he chose to follow his dream of opening his very own bike repair business. He had to let go of the work that was familiar to him and trust in his own strengths and the support of his family, community and organisations like Caritas Australia.

Read [Luke 12:6-7](#). In this little story of the five sparrows, Jesus reminds us to take courage from the fact that God cares for us and all people greatly. And so, even when we are facing new changes or challenges, we needn't be afraid. Finish your reflection with this prayer:

Loving God,
you made us and celebrate us all.
Help us to see each other for who we are:
fearfully and wonderfully made,
in all our similarities, differences and dignity.
We pray for Biru, his family and community.
May they and we continue to thrive
in "courage for whatever comes in life,"*
for all future generations.
Amen.

*St Teresa of Avila

THANK YOU

PHOTO CREDITS

Biru's Story (India) – Sameer Bara

PRIMARY STUDENTS

Learning about people not having what they need to live a healthy and safe life can be hard. If you are feeling worried or upset about anything you have learnt about through this resource, make sure you talk to your teacher or a trusted adult. They can share your concerns via our [website](#).

Do you have an idea for how Caritas Australia can improve our school resources? We would love to hear it! Please email education@caritas.org.au

TEACHERS

For more school resources, please visit: caritas.org.au/resources/school-resources/

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