

Meet Sakun, India.



Sakun sitting next to her tricycle and store.

Watch the [film](#).

Who inspires you most? Can you think of someone who has achieved great things in life even though they have faced significant challenges?

This is a story about Sakun, a 32-year-old Gond indigenous woman living in a village in central east India. She has a thriving small business and is actively involved in leadership and decision-making within her community. But this has not always been the case.

Sakun developed polio as a child and now finds it difficult to walk. She lives with her sister in a rural area of Chhattisgarh, which is the poorest state in India. They belong to the Gond tribal community – a group who have long been disrespected and disregarded by the broader population. Being unmarried, poor, belonging to a tribal group and having a disability – Sakun has had to face more obstacles than most people..To say that life has been difficult is an understatement.

“Being physically challenged, I was incapable of doing any kind of work. I felt disregarded in my community,” Sakun said. Unable to work, Sakun depended on her sister to care for her and meet her basic needs. Unable to walk, Sakun was extremely isolated – limited to the places she could walk to on crutches. Having a disability is difficult wherever you live, but it is extra hard if you live in a poor community.

In 2018, Sakun joined a Caritas Australia-funded program, which is being run by Caritas India and its

local partner, Samarthan. This program aims to support the poorest and most vulnerable members of the community, especially women and people living with a disability. One of the ways it does this is by training people in skills so that they can start a small business and begin to earn an income of their own.

The program first helped Sakun to get a special custom-made tricycle. This has made a huge difference in Sakun’s life, enabling her to move around more freely and feel much less isolated. The program also trained Sakun in how to run a small business. They gave her a small amount of money to get started and Sakun set up a kiosk, selling food near the local school.

Sometimes in India people don’t know what kind of help they are entitled to receive from the government. This Caritas-supported program has also tried to help strengthen the local village-level government, so they can in turn support the people in their community. Sakun’s confidence has increased so much that she now participates in local village governance meetings, speaking up and sharing her opinions as an equal.

Sakun is a role model and an inspiration within her community, especially motivating others who are living with a disability. Many are following her lead and seizing their own opportunities to make a living and take hold of their basic rights. Now that Sakun can move freely around her village, she says, “it has given me the opportunity to keep in contact with other people living with disabilities which enabled me to express solidarity with them. Today I am given due respect in the village and community.”

Sakun’s kiosk is always busy, as she sells to around 900 students. Sometimes she even has to ask her cousin to help out. Sakun is feeling extremely proud of her achievements and has hopes and plans for the future.

👉 For the future, I am planning to extend the shop and to establish a permanent shop so that I don’t need to carry all the items from my house. I feel happy and my social life and network has improved. 🗨️
Sakun

When you support Caritas Australia you are helping sisters and brothers around the world work towards their dreams!

Meet Sakun, India.

1. Read and discuss:

- What challenges did Sakun face?
- What did she do that changed her life?
- How did Caritas Australia and their partner in India help?
- How is Sakun now earning an income?
- How has Sakun's involvement in the Caritas Australia program helped the rest of her community?
- What are Sakun's dreams for the future?
- Why was it important that Sakun felt included in her community?

Curriculum: English Year 3: ACELY1680, Year 4: ACELY1692.

2. Make Dahl

Lentils are a staple food in India. Sakun would typically eat dahl for a meal.

Investigate why lentils are a staple food in India. Find out the nutritional value of the ingredients.

The photo below shows Sakun's cooking environment. Note the firewood. Think about how someone in Sakun's family would need to collect firewood daily. How long do you think that would take?



As a class, cook the Dahl recipe provided and time how long it takes. Share the Dahl and Sakun's story with your family. Think about how people like Sakun would need to do this process every day, for their basic nutrition.

Dahl

1 cup yellow split pea dahl

One small onion

One clove garlic

One tomato

1 teaspoon turmeric

Salt to taste

Wash and clean dahl several times until the water runs clear

Boil the dahl in three cups of water with the turmeric, Salt, tomato

Boil until dahl is soft

In a separate pan, fry the onions and garlic in some oil and when fragrant, add the whole mixture including the oil into the dahl and mix.

Eat with roti or rice.

Curriculum: Health and Physical Education year 5 & 6: ACPPS060, ACPPS058

3. RE LINK: Loving our neighbours

Write a poem encouraging people to support indigenous people like Sakun through Caritas Australia.