



Sakun next to her hand pedalled tricycle, and kiosk.

[Watch Sakun's film](#)

Sakun, 32, is a Gond indigenous woman living in a village in central east India. She developed polio as a child and has difficulty walking. Until now, she has been isolated in her community, unable to earn a living and with no knowledge of support schemes that could help her.

With Caritas Australia's help, she learnt how to access the disability support she's entitled to and has set up her own thriving business. Her income is growing, along with her confidence. Sakun now participates in village decision-making, her progress motivating other community members to reach for their goals.

Sakun lives with her sister in a rural area of Chhattisgarh, India's poorest state. Home to 26 million people, where 10 million experience poverty*.

Sakun belongs to the Gond tribal community, a historically disadvantaged group who experience higher poverty rates than the wider population of India. She had polio as a child and relies on crutches to move around. An estimated 80 million people in India are living with a disability, around 69% of them in rural areas**. Low literacy, few jobs and widespread social stigma mean they are among the most excluded people in India.

As an unmarried Gond woman with a disability, Sakun knew she had to find a way to look after herself.

"Being physically challenged, I was incapable of doing any kind of work. I felt disregarded in my community," Sakun said. "As well as this, I feel that discrimination, inequality and negligence of vulnerable people by the upper castes of society is the biggest challenge in India."

In 2018, Sakun joined a Caritas Australia-funded program, which is implemented by Caritas India and its local partner, Samarthan. The program aims to improve the incomes of vulnerable farmers and the most marginalised people in the community, including women and people living with disabilities. It also focuses on strengthening traditional village governance, to improve access to government entitlements.

Caritas India and Samarthan helped Sakun to access a custom-made tricycle, which has helped her get around so she is less isolated. She also undertook training in micro-business development. With a small grant, she set up a kiosk, selling food near the local school.

Now Sakun can move around more freely. She earns her own income and makes a small profit, which goes towards her family's basic needs. Sakun is also a vocal participant in village governance meetings, sharing her opinions as an equal.

"I can move around my village, visit community members and talk to them, I feel happy and my social life and network has improved," said Sakun. "It has also 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."

Community members have been inspired by Sakun's progress. They're seizing their own opportunities to build sustainable livelihoods and access their basic rights.

Rajesh Kumar Sahu, Program Manager of Caritas partner, Samarthan NGO says that Sakun is a great example for motivating others who are living with a disability.


"Before the program she was not recognised in the village," said Rajesh. "She did not have any identity in the community. She used to live an isolated life. Now she is self-reliant and not dependent on her family members."

Nearly 35,000 people have benefited from the program so far. Agricultural innovations, such as collective farming techniques and growing nutritional gardens are helping farmers to adapt to climate change and improving the overall health of the community. Many have increased their incomes by 15-20%.

Sakun's kiosk is always busy, as she sells to around 900 students. Sometimes she even has to recruit her cousin to help out.

"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," she said.

Sakun is proud of her newfound presence and voice in the village.

Getting this livelihood opportunity is a proud moment for me. I am grateful to all those who sacrifice and support the vulnerable and poor people like me. 
Sakun.

Your support of Project Compassion will help us continue to uplift the most marginalised and vulnerable members of society in India.

Sources: * [World Bank](#). ** [World Bank](#)



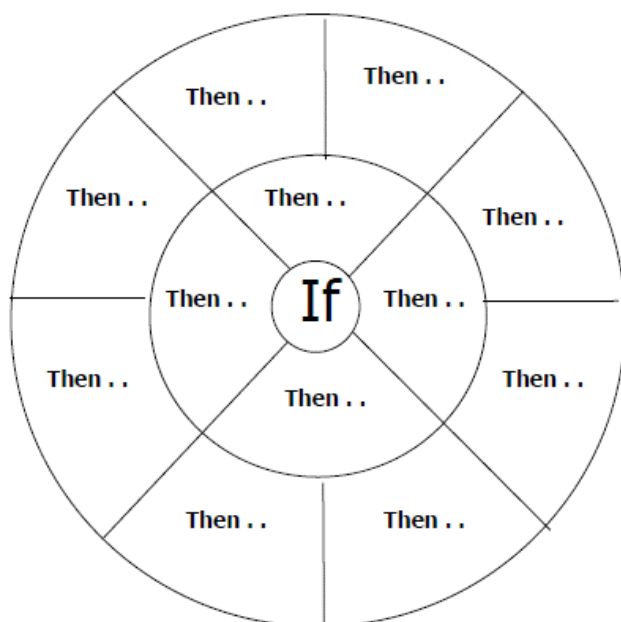
Sakun, India

1. Read and discuss/write your responses:
 - a) Identify three of the challenges Sakun faced. How are these challenges related?
 - b) How did the challenges Sakun faced, impact her sense of dignity?
 - c) What made the biggest difference towards improving Sakun's life?
 - d) How did Caritas Australia and their partner in India contribute?
 - e) What are Sakun's dreams for the future?
 - f) Sakun said, *"It has also given me the opportunity to keep in contact with other people living with disabilities which enabled me to express solidarity with them."* Why do you think this is important?
 - g) What are two facts you learnt about poverty and injustice in India from Sakun's story?
2. Complete [Disability Inclusive Development Kahoot](#) with at least three other students.
3. **Disability Inclusive Development.** Think about accessibility in a rural town in India. Before Sakun was issued with the hand pedaled tricycle by the government, she would not have been able to participate so successfully in the Caritas Australia supported program. Why is it important for development programs to have a special focus on including people who live with disabilities? This is called Disability Inclusive Development. Summarise the elements of Sakun's story and write a tweet to argue for an increase in the Australian Aid budget, towards programs that support people living with a disability. Write a tweet (280 characters) that you could send to @DFAT [Read more about the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade \(DFAT\)'s approach.](#)
4. **How is Disability Inclusion prioritized in the Global Goals?** Read the information on the [United Nations webpage about disability.](#) Summarise how each goal works towards inclusive development. Create a poster promoting inclusive development. Make links to Catholic Social Teaching principles.
Curriculum: Geography: Year 7ACHGK044, Year 10 ACHGK078, ACHEK051.
5. **Research and summarise the impacts of polio.** What goals were set to eradicate this disease? What progress has been made?
<https://www.who.int/features/factfiles/polio/en/>
<https://www.globalcitizen.org/en/content/india-five-years-polio-free/>
6. **TV Reporter.** Work with a partner. One of you is a reporter who interviews the other student acting as a Caritas Australia program coordinator. Use the information you have learned from Sakun's story and include why the Church is committed to justice for Indigenous Peoples. Include any other information you decide is important to communicate this story to others. Read Sakun's story, as well as this information on Caritas Australia's focus on Indigenous Peoples.

Sakun, India

7. **Empowerment of women.** Sakun faced poverty and marginalisation due to her gender, marital status and physical ability. Complete the consequences web, using a statement about empowering women. Use the information about [Global Goal 5: 'Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls'](#) to further understand the impact that empowering women has on the wider community.

Curriculum: Health & PE Year 7-8 ACPPS079



7. **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. Consider that someone in Sakun's family would need to collect firewood daily. How long do you think that would take?



Cook the dahl recipe below and time how long it takes. Share the dahl and Sakun's story with your family. Consider that 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 dal 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.

Sakun, India

Engage with the information on the [Country Study Thinglink](#), and do your own research to help you learn about three Indigenous tribes, the Manide People, Gond Tribe and Barry's or your local First Australian peoples.

	Manide	Gond	Barry/local First Australian Peoples
Predict life expectancy in India and Australia. Find out the correct answer. Does this surprise you?			
What is the population of tribe and non-indigenous population?			
What is the poverty rate of the tribe and non-indigenous population?			
Summarise how Caritas Australia and their partners reduce poverty and improve wellbeing.			
Select a relevant Sustainable Development Goal and explain your choice			
Summarise one or two unique aspects of this indigenous group.			
Identify one key challenge faced by this indigenous group.			
Where is the indigenous group based? Include their location in relation to the capital city.			

Sakun, India

 **We have all known the long loneliness, and we have found that the answer is community.** 

Dorothy Day

Reflection questions:

- What are the advantages of community?
- How can/does community alleviate loneliness?
- How does this quote relate to Sakun's community?
- How does this quote relate to your own life?

ACT

How might you raise awareness in response to what you read and thought about in Sakun's story?

What are you compelled to do? It might be a personal, group or community action. Write your thoughts and plan below.

Sakun, India

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION THEMES

Year 7 and 8: Initiation and Belonging: What do you think were/are the factors that allow an individual or group to discriminate against others? How does knowing the factors inform your responses to the issue?

Year 9 and 10: Catholic Social Teachings/ Human Dignity: Watch '[CST in 3 minutes](#)' animation

How does your support of **Caritas** demonstrate preferential option for the poor? Who do you express solidarity with on a daily basis? Why do you think this is the case?

PRAY

Complete this prayer in your own words:

God, you have given us each precious dignity.

TAKE AWAY AND SHARE

One thing that surprised/challenged or stood out for me in this story, that I will share with others: