

Shirley, Philippines



Shirley with members of her Manide community outside their Tribal Hall in Camarines Norte, Philippines.

[Watch Shirley's film](#)

Shirley, 36, is a Manide indigenous woman living in the remote Camarines Norte province in the Philippines. She is the mother of four and the family's sole breadwinner, as her husband is sick. But Shirley was struggling to support the whole family and keep her children in school.

Indigenous minorities in the Philippines face regular discrimination and disadvantage, limiting their access to education, employment and healthcare. But thanks to Caritas Australia's supporters, as a newly trained indigenous health worker, Shirley's life has been transformed. She is now leading her community to take a stand against discrimination, improve health and education, and pave the way for a better future.

Shirley lives with her husband, who has tuberculosis, and her four children, aged 6 to 17. Needing to support the family, she collected materials in the forests to make slippers out of dried banana bark that the community would then sell.

She received little education growing up. A member of the traditionally-nomadic Manide tribe, her parents moved around, finding occasional work cultivating rice and other crops. Shirley went to school when she could, but eventually left early in high school.

Despite being a middle-income country, around 2.8 million children in the Philippines do not go to school**. Life is incredibly tough for the country's nearly 17 million indigenous people***, who face

discrimination and displacement from ancestral lands. They are also often bullied at school, which forces many children to leave school early*.

"We didn't participate in any community activities because we were ashamed to mingle with them. We were afraid to be bullied and experienced discrimination," Shirley says.

Unequal access to health services also means that many indigenous children and families cannot access basic medical care. Preventable diseases, such as tuberculosis, dengue fever and measles are common among their community, and there is a high maternal and new-born mortality rate. 28 out of every 1,000 babies die before their fifth birthday****.

Adding to these challenges, Shirley lives in a disaster-prone area. Around 20 typhoons lash the Philippines each year and in 2018, Tropical Cyclone Usman struck her town. Heavy rains destroyed the vegetables she had grown to eat, and she was left with almost nothing.

Shirley joined a Caritas-supported program, and that became the turning point in her life. In partnership with the Socio Pastoral Action Centre Foundation Inc (SPACFI), this program strengthens the capacity of indigenous people to lead lives of dignity, grow in self-esteem and attain sustainable livelihoods. It also helps them to advocate for land rights, obtain better employment and improve their access to health, education, housing and sanitation. Nearly 1200 Manide people have benefitted so far.

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With Caritas Australia's support, Shirley trained to become an indigenous health worker and learnt to supplement her income by growing vegetables.

Shirley now lives in a government-supplied house and grows more than enough produce to feed her family. She sells the rest of her harvest for extra income. The program has also helped Shirley's children with school fees, uniforms and supplies.

Shirley recently took over her father's role as tribal chieftain and represents her people on the Municipal Health Board. As a leader in her community, she helps Manide people access medicines, vaccines, healthcare and nutritional advice. Not only has she improved her own life, she is leading her community to create change for future generations.

"I became the voice of my tribe to have their needs heard," Shirley says. "As a trained health worker, I am confident to talk, to mingle with non-indigenous people, even with government employees."

SPACFI's Community Development Worker, Mr Eric Encinas, says fewer children are now sick and malnourished, and more are going to school due to greater acceptance of the Manide people.

"To have Shirley as a representative for indigenous people gives courage to the community," said Mr

Encinas. "The most significant change in this community is the affirmation of their right to be heard, right to education, right to participate in community activities."

Shirley says there's still a long way to go to fight for better employment opportunities and to reduce discrimination but together, they'll get there.

I am proud of what I have done for my tribe," Shirley says. "My dream is to be able to provide for my kids and have them finish their studies...I am so happy and grateful for all the help of Caritas Australia. I hope and pray to continue their assistance, particularly to the needs of indigenous people.

Shirley

Your support is vital for people experiencing poverty and oppression. When you support Project Compassion, you are standing in solidarity with indigenous people like Shirley, so they are able to speak up for and access their rights. Let's Go Further, Together.

* [World Bank 2018](#), ** [World Bank](#), *** [UNDP](#), **** [Asian Development Bank, WHO paper 2018](#)



Shirley administers multivitamin drops to a child at the local government health clinic near her Manide community in Camarines Norte, Philippines.

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1. Read and discuss/write your responses:

- Identify the key challenges this community is facing.
- Explain how Caritas Australia and their partner in the Philippines are empowering the indigenous community to overcome some of these challenges.
- What have been the impacts of Shirley's participation in the Caritas Australia supported program. Evaluate these changes and rank them in order of importance. Justify your choices and rankings.
- What are two facts you learnt about poverty and injustice from Shirley's story?

2. Innovative materials

Shirley earns an income by collecting the abaca from a nearby forest. Abaca is the dried bark of banana trees - the raw material used to make the slippers. They are then made and sold through a co-operative.



Why does Shirley use this material? Research abaca. What are the benefits and disadvantages of that material? Is the material sustainable? Why/Why not? What material with similar features could you use?

Try and make slippers at home. Use a template for slippers - there are many online. What did you discover in the process?

What other sustainable fabric technologies are emerging in the fashion industry? Why are sustainable materials becoming more mainstream? Research and list.

Curriculum: Design and Technologies: Years 7 & 8 : ACTDEK032 Years 9 & 10 ACTDEK040, ACTDEK046.

3. Complete the [Problem and Solution tree](#)

Select one issue that Shirley and her community faced: e.g lack of healthcare, discrimination.

Curriculum: Health and PE Year 10: [\(ACPPS098\)](#), Geography: Year 10: ACHGK076, ACHGK078,

4. Discover the Universal declaration of the Rights for Indigenous Peoples

Read the [Summary Fact Sheet of the Key Features.](#)

You can access the full United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples document [here](#).

Create a world cloud that summarises each article in one or two words.

Draw a cartoon or image to illustrate one or more of the articles in the declaration.

Curriculum: Civics and Citizenship Year 10 ACHCK093, ACHCK094

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Engage with the Country Study [Thinglink](#) and do some of your own research to find out the information below. Suggestions for reliable sources are included on the Thinglink and below.

<p>Predict life expectancy in the Philippines and Australia. Find out the correct answer. Does this surprise you? Why/Why not What has changed? https://ourworldindata.org/life-expectancy</p>	Australia	Philippines	<p>https://www.britannica.com/place/Philippines</p> <p>https://dfat.gov.au/geo/philippines/Pages/philippines-country-brief.aspx</p>	
	Prediction:	Prediction:	What are the official languages?	
	Actual:	Actual:		
<p>What is the population of the Philippines? What is the population of Australia? https://ourworldindata.org/world-population-growth</p>	Philippines:	Australia	What system of government does the Philippines have?	
<p>What is the poverty rate in the Philippines? https://data.worldbank.org/ http://hdr.undp.org/en/data</p>			<p>In what region of the world is the Philippines located?</p> <p>What direction is it from Australia?</p>	
<p>List three major factor/s affecting poverty and wellbeing (E.g. access to clean water, sanitation, education)</p>			Describe the ways Australia is connected to the Philippines. E.g. trade that occurs between the two nations, services that are exchanged, immigration history, etc.	
<p>Summarise Caritas Australia's support to improve wellbeing</p>			<p>Select two relevant Sustainable Development Goals.</p> <p>Explain your selection. www.globalgoals.org</p>	

JUDGE: A Catholic worldview

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Not all of us can do great things. But we can do small things, with great love.

Saint Teresa of Calcutta

Reflection questions:

- How does this quotation relate to Shirley's story?
- What could be considered a “great” thing and a “small thing”.
- What does “great love” mean?
- What can you do to show great love?

ACT

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

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

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RELIGIOUS EDUCATION THEMES

Year 7 & 8: Initiation and belonging: Indigenous minorities in the Philippines are often made to feel as though they do not belong. Locate two scripture references that illustrate belonging.

Year 9 & 10: Catholic Social Teachings/ Human Dignity: Watch '[CST in 3 minutes](#)'. Identify one CST principle and explain how it is illustrated in Shirley's story.

How is this principle applied in your school?

How do you apply this principle in your own life?

PRAY

Complete this prayer with your own words:

God of all peoples. You have made us all the same, in your image. Empathy and connection protect us from discriminating and excluding each other.

TAKE AWAY AND SHARE

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