

Global mission projects by Cook Communications Ministries International are supported by children who take part in Cook's VBS programs. Every year, thousands of children, representing hundred of churches, contribute to these mission programs. Below are the stories of a few of the children overseas who have had their lives touched.

A Ray of Hope for Bhola

Bhola Kumar has a very difficult life, but has a ready smile, and greets everyone with a hearty "Praise the Lord!" He lives with his family in a village on a river in one of the poorest states of India – Bihar. The shirt he is wearing in the photo is the only one he has. He usually goes around shirtless, saving it for special occasions.

Bhola, a 12-year-old, stopped going to school in the second grade so that he can earn about 50 rupees a day (about \$1).



What is his typical day like? He gets up at dawn and eats a very modest breakfast of "roti", a simple Indian bread, with some vegetables. For most of the rest of the day he looks after goats. Sometimes he gets something to eat at lunch; sometimes not. In the evenings he washes dishes for a family in a nearby house to make a small amount of money. Once in a while he baby-sits his younger brother so that his parents, his elder brother, and sister can go to work in the fields. He goes to bed early, when the sun goes down, because their house has no electricity.

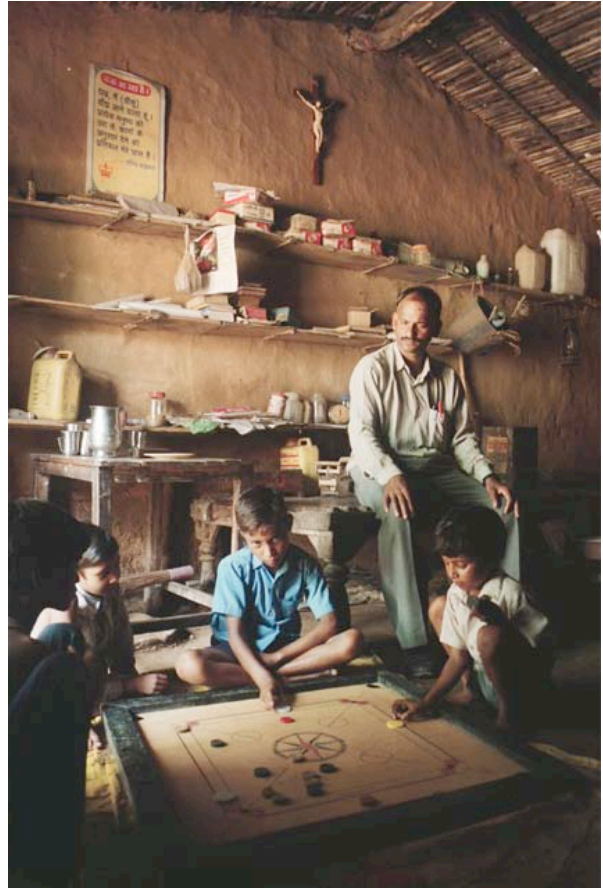
Cook International partners with Seva Bharat in India, a ministry that sponsors Children's Bible Clubs throughout the country. Not long ago,

Bhola was invited to attend the CBC an hour every evening. He was only too eager to do so, since he doesn't have much interaction with other children in his daily routine. Bhola and his younger brother both attend CBC. Although Bhola cannot read or write, he loves to sing CBC songs at home and narrate

Bible stories to his family. He's also happy to be at the Bible Club because they play games there, and he doesn't have a chance to do too much of that otherwise.

There are many other children like Bhola in and around his village. Some work in the quarries, some on the looms and many work as bonded laborers for rich landlords. One of his friends climbs the tall hills that surround the village and brings down a big rock each time. His job is to break it into small pieces. For each large bucket of rock fragments, he is paid the equivalent of 30 cents. It's dangerous work, but his family is so poor they need the money desperately.

Please pray for Bhola—and the tens of thousands of boys and girls like him who are being exposed to the Gospel of Jesus Christ on a regular basis. What a privilege it is to partner with Seva Bharat to put God's Word into the hands—and hearts—of these precious children.



Hope in a Baghdad Hospital

Little Ammar, a 9-year-old with terminal leukemia, couldn't smile. His facial nerves were damaged to the point where the muscles just wouldn't work. He was a Muslim child who had been receiving treatment in a Baghdad hospital for four months. One special day Ammar got the opportunity to hear about Jesus and His love when he received his very own copy of the Arabic *Picture Bible*.

On this same visit to the Children's Teaching Hospital, the team met the administrator who welcomed them, received his own copy of the *Picture Bible*, and allowed them to distribute *Picture Bibles* to the children in the different wards. When they started giving the books out, everyone wanted a copy. They only had 80 copies that day. The next day they took 120 more. And the doctors, nurses and staff ... all of a sudden, all of them said they have children... all of them wanted their own copy of the *Picture Bible*.

“How dare you bring this foreign religion into this house!”

“Where did you get this book?” Sasha's father snarls, grabbing it out of her hands and heaving it across the room. It lands crumpled on the floor.

The girl's eyes fill with tears, and she wonders why her dad has suddenly become so angry.

“I...I...I got it at my class,” she stammers.

“What class?” he demands.

“The lady at my after-school class gave them out today after she told us a story about Jesus from the book,” the dazed girl responds quietly, looking down at her feet.

“How dare you bring this foreign religion into this house!” the father explodes. “Those people are liars! Don't you understand? I forbid you to go there ever again. Leave that evil book right where it is!”

Frightened and confused, Sasha runs to her bedroom. Meanwhile, her red-faced father remains in his chair trying to calm down. He can hardly believe that a person could be bold enough to give a child such a book—a *Picture New Testament* with an illustration of Jesus Christ right on the front! Don't they know almost everyone in their community follows the teachings of Allah? *These people will pay for this irresponsible act*, he resolves.

With Sasha sound asleep in her bed, he sits in his chair thinking about his harsh response to his daughter and regrets that she went to sleep without eating. He eyes the book on the floor and has a fleeting thought about picking it up. Over the next several hours, he finds himself glancing, then looking, then staring at the book. It is as if the book is calling out to him.

He finally gives in, stands up, and walks over to pick it up.

Seated in his chair again, Sasha's father reads the Bible from cover to cover, drawn to the story of Jesus, a man who says He is God. The words and the pictures seem to talk to him, and he becomes lost in the pages.

By the time the sun comes up, he has decided to find out more about this Jesus. Could all of these stories be true?

When Sasha awakens, her dad calls her. He hugs her and thanks her for bringing the little book home, and they make plans to meet together with the Bible club teacher, so he can ask many questions.

Soon he makes a decision that will change the course of his life—when he asks Jesus Christ to forgive his sins and to be his personal Savior.

Today he is the pastor of one of the largest churches in his country.

Once he understands Jesus Christ's love for him, everything changes. He becomes consumed with telling everyone about this Jesus, and eventually studies to become a pastor. Today he is not only pastoring one of the largest churches in his nation, but also mentoring other pastors and church workers.

“The Loan Sharks Want Me,” Says Teenager in India

“After my father's foot was cut off, my family went deep into debt,” says 14-year-old Rajya Lakshmi. “Even when I quit school and worked every day, we couldn't make enough money. Now the loan people say they want me.”

There's no doubt why the loan sharks want the beautiful teenager. They could make many times the value of the loan by selling her into India's underground sex industry.

Rajya's father used to support the family in a jungle area by making an inexpensive, but potent liquor from the sap of palm trees. He lost most of one foot several years ago when he slipped under the wheels of a moving train—and could no longer cultivate his trees. Rajya's older sister is severely handicapped by polio and against many odds has survived into her teenage years along with Rajya. Meanwhile, Rajya's younger sister, Yaaka, is still in school, supported by money that Rajya withholds from the loan payments.

The three sisters recently drifted into an after-school Children's Bible Club, where Christian workers provide daily tutoring and Bible lessons.

"We like the Children's Bible Club and have been coming here every day," Rajya says. "We are learning that Jesus is a healer. We can see pictures of Him healing those people in the picture book. Now I am praying that Jesus will heal my sister's legs."

The "picture book" to which Rajya refers is her copy of *The Picture Gospels*, an illustrated version of the first half of Cook's popular *Picture New Testament*. Last year CCMi distributed 1.3 million of these to youngsters like Rajya and her sisters all over India.

Later, the Children's Bible Club leader comments, "The sisters are virtually outcasts in our neighborhood. Recently they began to show up every night. They don't want me coming to their home, because their father is often intoxicated.

"We never know how long children like these sisters will be with us," he continues. "But we have taken them in to minister to them in the name of Christ. We are praying with them for healing and telling them about Jesus. We are also praying about the family's financial situation."

How big is the loan that has almost destroyed Rajya's family and threatens her future? Approximately 2,000 rupees—a little less than 50 American dollars.