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I was born normal, chubby and cute. I only received the polio vaccine once when I was a baby. My mother breast-fed me exclusively for only three months. At the time, my family had economic problems, and sometime there was no money to buy milk for me. My health was not good, and I was often sick. When I was about 2 years old, I got a very high fever. My parents took me to the health center in my village, and the nurse gave me an injection in my left buttock. The next day I could not move my left leg. Some people said I'd contracted polio. Since then, my life has changed completely.

The best memories of my childhood were when I could run around my house, smiling and happy. Times became tougher when I started school. I was the only disabled child in my school. My classmates didn't want to have a friend like me because I was crippled. Actually, I hate remembering the part of my past that has made me hurt and sad. When I was in kindergarten, almost every day they pushed me against the wall and beat me. They threatened me that I should not cry, should not report what they've done to the teacher or my parents, and should not touch any toys. But when I started 4<sup>th</sup> grade in elementary school, I started to find good friends. They helped me through the hard times and loneliness.

I had psychological problems because not everyone around me could accept me for who I was. I was often moody and irritable at home, but I couldn't tell them what happened at school, what people called me when I was walking, or that I was treated differently from other children. They often blamed me when I fought with other kids who teased me. My family thinks I'm moody, grumpy, and a troublemaker. Whatever happened in the past, I am not angry with them. I've tried to understand that my family didn't know how to reach children with special needs. I've tried put in my mind that they actually loved me, but just didn't know how to express their feelings. It's much better for me to think like that than to think about the bad things in my life and what hurt me.

Actually, my parents tried a lot of things to heal my left leg. For a couple of months, they took me for physiotherapy, but had to stop because of economic problems. Then they tried traditional medicines, took me to a shaman, tried drinking water magic, ritual healing, acupuncture, and much more. I'm tired of trying so many ways to make me better, because all of it was to no avail.

I experienced a lot of challenges to getting an education. At the time I graduated junior high school, while other children continued on to high school, I had to help my grandmother in the rice fields. My parents did not have enough money to pay for our education (my sister, my brother and me). Because I am disabled, my parents thought that there was no use for me to get higher education. They thought that nobody could accept working with a person with a disability. But, long story short, there are some people that God sent to help me get a pretty good education.

It took a lot of effort to get a job. Many times I was rejected when applying for a job because of polio. Despite the sadness, feelings of failure and depression, I did not give up. I kept trying until I finally got a job.

Sometimes the demands of the culture and environment do not support us and creates an obstacle for disabled people to show their ability.

I have a dream that I can help at least one person in my life, give them hope like what I have now. I used to think my future was so dark, but with the help of good people, I have hope.

