

A STORY OF MYSELF DISABILITY NEVER MAKES ME DISABLED

Nobody wants to be born with disability, no parents in this world want to have a kid with physical impairment. Yet, when it comes to you there is nothing you can do but to take it for granted. This happens to me. I was born with disability. I never know what it feels to walk, to stride, to stroll, to run or to step my feet on the ground but I NEVER REGRET IT. Thank Allah The Almighty, I manage to be a pride of my parents and to do good things for people around me.

My mother gave me a birth in *Bukittinggi*, a city about 90 kilometers away from *Padang* the Capital of West Sumatra Province Indonesia. My father was so excited to know that his first child was a son. A son that someday he expected to guard the family when he is away.

Initially, my parents never suspected any physical disorder with their baby. The baby looked just healthy and fine. They started feeling worried when I was two years of age. I never showed physical progress just like any other babies. I was already two years old but all thing I could do was sitting. They tried to walk me but my legs were so weak to support my body. Having consulted a doctor, they found out that I suffered from a congenital defect which hampered muscular development. They were shocked and sad to imagine my future life. They have a disabled son. A child who will always depend on them physically. Soon they realized that there was nothing they could do but accepting this destiny. "This could just be a blessing in disguise," said my father to my mother.

Time flies and it was just about time for me to get schooling. Some friends suggested that my father send me to a special school for the disabled. However, my father thought that he had to send me to ordinary schools for my disability should not prevent me from enjoying formal education just like any other normal children. My mother also agreed with what my father thought. Then we moved to Padang and they sent me and my only one brother (being born normally) to regular schools. I and my brother went to the same schools. I finished all my studies in public schools, from primary to high schools, even to university and I did that on my wheelchair. I got along pretty well with other normal students. A few of them ridiculed me though. But I was determined that all mocks and ridicules meant nothing. It was a challenge for me to pay the hard work of my parents to raise me, I ought to make them proud of me. I recall how my mother pushed my wheelchair in rainy and/or scorching days to get me to school. She never complained and neither did my father. My father kept encouraging me that I could do things that other normal children do, even I could do better things than they do. It was definitely true. I was always the

best and outstanding student in class during my schooling despite being the only student studying on wheelchair. I'm greatly grateful to Allah The Almighty for having such great parents.

Having finished my senior high school, I was determined to continue my study to university. My father was so happy to hear it and gave me his full support. However, a few friends said that I would do the impossible. They said, "finishing your high school is good enough for you. Don't dream too high man. The university where you want to study is not accessible for disabled people!" Again, what they said never discouraged me. I've got to be a pride of my parents. I must study in university. Then I told what my friends said to my mother. She just smiled, but I could see a tear drop rolling on her cheek, and said, "keep reaching your dream son."

Thanks to God The Almighty and my parents, I was accepted in a famous State University in my city. When I got to the university for the first time, I was a little disheartened to find that what my friend used to tell me was true. The university was not accessible for disabled people. No elevators nor lifts. Most classes were on the second and/or the third floor, and even the fourth floor. The only way to get to those classes were steep and narrow stairs. I kept questioning myself, "How could my wheelchair get there?" "Am I gonna be able to pursue my dream?" My father seemed to be able to read my mind. He said, "Don't worry son, every cloud has a silver lining, where there is a will there is a way. Trust me. *Your disability will never make you disabled!*"

Again thanks to Allah and my parents, I could go through all obstacles and hindrances with the help of my faithful friends. They happily carried me on my wheelchair all the way up to the second or third floor. Even, when possible, some lecturers were kind enough to move the class downstairs. Eventually, I managed to finish my study in university within 3 years and 10 months and earned a degree in English Literature with graduation category of *Cum laude* (outstanding student).

Again and again thank to Allah, you never know what lies ahead for you in the future, I am awarded a scholarship to study in Australia. Now I am in Australia already. Allah also gave me a chance to meet a kindhearted and helpful Muslim sister in Australia who then referred me to MCF. This Muslim organization donated an electric wheelchair to replace my old wheelchair that I have been using for 27 years. This is really meaningful for me. My life is now much easier and I could ease the burden of my parents a bit. I am really grateful to Allah and Muslim brothers and sisters here especially MCF who have made it possible for me to feel the sense of freedom, to be a little bit independent. I could now move wherever I want to just like using my very own feet. Alhamdulillah, I make dua after my prayers that those who have helped me directly or indirectly are

always bestowed with goodness and blessings by Allah. This shows that Muslim brotherhood goes beyond nationality and ethnicity. When I come back to my city Padang Indonesia, this will hopefully be something to reflect on by the government so that they start thinking about providing accessible infrastructures for people with special needs. People with disabilities would be independent when they are provided with accessible facilities just like what I am experiencing here in Australia. What MCF has done also serve as a good role model for Muslim organizations in my city. I will share this valuable experience with my Muslim brothers and sisters in Indonesia. Thank you very much MCF and Ibu Janeth who is like my own mother, many thanks also to my Indonesian friends who care so much about me.