

Standing Tall



When you meet Vishnu, you will be struck with a wave of positivity and confidence. She flits around the fields like a free spirit and gazes up at the sky with the kind of look that makes you think she's going to grab it all in her arms. Vishnu is a beautiful young lady who reflects life through her spirit.

But it wasn't always this way for Vishnu. When every other child had grown out of their stumbling phase, and into their limbs, Vishnu was still trying hard to keep her feet on solid ground. Vishnu was diagnosed with Polio.

When she is done with her work for the day, Vishnu narrates, "Once upon a time I was only three feet tall because I had to bend over and grip my legs while dragging my feet which were crippled. My parents were always praying that I should walk

again.” Vishnu says, in her quaint Hindi-Malawi dialect, with a pensive smile on her face.

Her parents recall their days of agony, when they cursed their fate and karma to have punished their daughter for absolutely no fault of her own. They had grown bitter towards life and had given up trying to find the ray of hope at the end of the seemingly endless tunnel.

But a miracle was waiting to cross Vishnu’s path. Between the 1990s and now, slowly and steadily, there has been a team of committed, passionate and selfless men and women who are ready to offer their time and expertise to battle easily preventable diseases like Polio. They have been working tirelessly, in over 50 plants of the Aditya Birla Group to ensure that kids below the age of 5 are vaccinated in a timely manner and those already having fallen under the clench of the disease are returned the freedom they had lost. Over the last 5 years alone, nearly 22 million children were vaccinated in around 73,693 booths.

Vishnu unfortunately was not one of those children who took the Polio dose in time. But all was not lost. “A miracle happened as I underwent polio-corrective surgery. After months of physiotherapy, much anguish and physical pain, now I can almost walk straight again”, Vishnu chirps.

Thankfully, the war didn’t start and end at Vishnu. The stirring cause of complete freedom from Polio was taken up by the Government of India. Alongside Rotary International and The Aditya Birla Group, WHO, UNICEF, CDC, and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation left no stone unturned to contain the

crippling disease. And India, today, walks on as a “Polio-free Country.”

As testament to the committed effort, Vishnu no longer has to bend her back and look up at the world. She can now stand straight, look everyone in the eye and leave steady footprints on the path she takes.