

### III. Now “More Education” is the Reply

Throughout the world, physically and mentally challenged people face discrimination and social stigma. Taunting and name-calling is widespread. Parents of such children are also often over-protective and in their anxiety to protect the child from bully and accidents, so they keep the child confined their homes. Often non-disabled siblings also miss school too, to care for their disabled siblings.

Kuna, a four years child lives with his parents in Upara Nilampadu village of Pottangi block in Koraput District. He has motor impairment. Today he is able to go to the Early Childhood Development Center and plays happily with his new friends, but just two years ago it was a very different

story. His birth was a great shock for his parents. They were worried for his future. His mother was cursing God because of his unkindness to Kuna, whereas Kuna's siblings were quite healthy. “Kuna grew up, but never went to school because he couldn't walk and I didn't have the money to buy him a wheelchair.



Because of that, he could never go out anywhere” said his mother. When Kuna was of five, he became the victim of teasing by his friends and others in the village. He felt his disability stigmatized him and hence preferred isolation. Kuna's mother recalls those days. Education advisors of Vikash came to her house and encouraged her to enrol her son in Early

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Childhood Development Center. Since that day Kuna has been attending the center and her mother has been participating in different parent groups to share experiences with others who have disabled children.

In addition to teaching, various therapies are provided to Kuna in the center. Physiotherapists make Kuna practice exercises everyday. Six months later several improvements were noticed in his condition. Now he can walk comfortably and he is very punctual and regular to the class. He is able to recite numbers, letters and songs fluently.

Kuna's mother is very grateful to all the facilitators, education advisors and children who are supporting him. “Thanks to them,” she says, “my son's life has changed; I couldn't have done it all on my own because I have to work to take care of my five children.”

Nilamani Manik, Kuna's teacher, explains “Now, when we ask Kuna or his mother about Kuna's future, we get the same answer from both of them i.e. more education. So we encourage him for higher studies and we do our best to help him to reach at the goal. Because we know he has the same rights to education as the other children”