

Ali Jookhun

“Some still think it is a curse”



Having a child or a teenager with a disability can be an ordeal for parents. Especially if they have not been prepared. This is what Ali Jookhun, president of the U-Link association, confirms.

From the beginning, the president of the NGO U-Link is pleased that today, thanks to technology, many disabilities can be detected very early, well before birth. So parents are prepared. However, he said, certain disabilities can be noticed only at the birth of the child. “This is a shock for parents. And the way this news will be announced to them will determine their reaction. We often wonder who the best person to perform this task is. Is it a doctor, a psychologist...? In any case, it should be a person who has been

trained to announce this kind of news. Because the announcement has an impact on the acceptance of the child. This is facilitated by a ‘positive’ announcement. Once the child is accepted, in the minds of parents, they consider him like any other children,” says Ali Jookhun.

He indicates that the education level of parents, in many cases, affects the acceptance of the disability of their child. He says that it is a very complex process that takes time. “We need psychological support and sometimes even religious

support. Do we realise that today in Mauritius, some people are convinced that a disabled child is a curse? They are wrong. Rather, it is a blessing. You learn a lot from these children.”

Therefore, according to him, the person who announces the news to the parents must downplay the situation. “He must explain that there are, nowadays, all kinds of facilities to raise a child with disabilities. In fact, the acceptance of the disabled child plays considerably on how the news is announced to them,” he insists. He specifies that unlike some handicaps, others are not visible immediately. This is the case of autism or intellectual disabilities. Thus, it is only as the child grows up that his parents will be aware of his disabilities.