

Employers can give disabled a chance in life

What was the main reason for accepting this challenge?

This expedition means a lot to me. First, it is a victory over my handicap. It is also one of my childhood dreams that I was able to realise. I had many fears at the beginning which I learned to overcome; I have finally mastered myself. People must be confident in themselves when they want to achieve something in life. Even if you have a handicap, you have many other abilities.



What were the most memorable moments of the journey?

The expedition took three years to prepare. I joined the team of Defi Integration only seven months back after one of the members of the crew had to drop out. I benefitted from intensive training and I had to repeat a hundred times the different manoeuvres onboard and we worked on safety measures. Initially, having a person with a visual handicap onboard the Jolokia was

not on the agenda.

I had many questions on my mind when we left France. I was very uncertain about whether we would reach Mauritius alive. A really frustrating moment was off the shore of Gascogne where the sea was quite rough. I started to believe that maybe I had set myself too big an objective. But we gradually started to function as a team and I very rapidly learned to be comfortable on the boat. The more we sailed, the more I became independent.

Do you have a particular message for our readers?

The message is that if we are able to do this in sports, we are also capable of doing it in the world of work. Being handicapped does not mean that you must give up everything. We can always overcome these disadvantages at all levels. The Jolokia adventure is a very good example.

Employers must at least give a chance to handicapped people. There is a need to change the professional attitude vis-à-vis disabled people; we also have capabilities. The integration of handicapped people in the professional world will bring new values at work.

What activities has the team been involved in since you landed in Mauritius?

We have been visiting many educational institutions to pass on the message. We had workshops with Mauritian NGOs and other associations. We fully support all the initiatives of NGOs and the government to integrate disabled people in the world of the work on the island.

Are you married? Do you work in France?

Yes, I am married to Caroline, who is also in Mauritius with my three children – Gabriel (7), Alexandre (5) and Morgane (7 months). I work for the Union Nationale des Aveugle in Bordeaux and I am responsible for fund-raising for the association which specialises in training guide dogs for the blind.