

June 9, 2006 – AIDS spreading rapidly in the Shekhawati Region
By Harindra Singh Bagwara

After his son passed on of AIDS, 72 year old Bhimaram, of district Seaker, has been making pots to earn his living. He is clueless about the disease that claimed his son's life. But he is conscious of the fact that his daughter-in-law is not going to survive for a long time, because she too is suffering from the same terminal disease.

In the Shekhawati region's various villages there are innumerable families whose story is more or less the same as that of Bhimaram's. In the Voluntary Counselling and Testing Centre (VCTC) of Seaker's Sri Kalyan Hospital, Pinky, 12 years old, has come from Sree Madhopura along with her two sisters and one brother, all of them HIV positive. Pinky's father expired three years back, whereas her mother breathed her last two months ago. Being the eldest, its Pinky's responsibility now to feed and raise the other three siblings. Anila, with whom Pinky has come, said that after the demise of her mother the kids are living with their maternal aunt's. Further, she said that in Madhopura alone there have been four or five AIDS-related deaths. Initially people used to single out the HIV positives people. That's not the case now. Compassion has taken over discrimination. A young gentleman from Kanchanpura was so distressed after he lost his wife to AIDS that he has joined Rajasthan Network of People Living with HIV/AIDS. Promoting AIDS awareness has become the sole aspiration of his life. However when his mother, sister-in-law and other women of his family were talked to, it was found that they were blissfully ignorant of the disease.

❖ *The names of the positive people have been changed.*