

LIVING WITH HIV and AIDS - INDIA

Case Study: Brahmaramba Allure, aged 16, southern India

"I live with my brother, Subarao, who is 13, and my grandfather who is 80. I lost both my parent to AIDS last year.

My father was a carpenter and my mother a daily labourer. They looked after us with a lot of love. I wanted to become a teacher and my father assured me that I could study as long as I wanted to.



Brahmaramba, aged 16, is now working as a tutor in a school.

Last February, my father fell ill with fevers and was unable to go to work. He became thin and weak. He was tested and found he had HIV. He did not share the results with me, but I saw the report and wept bitterly.

Two weeks after my father's test my mother was also asked to do the same test and was found HIV positive. I took care of my father. I was very disturbed and could not focus on my studies.

My father died the day before my exams began. My mother fell ill within a week and never recovered.

There was no food as no one was earning. We spent days without food. For a week before her death, mother was bed-ridden. We could not afford to admit her to hospital so we looked after her at home. I never expected my mother to die so fast, within two months of my father.

I was depressed. All day I thought about my brother, my studies, and whether my relatives would look after us. People who were affectionate before would not come close to us. Neighbours stopped visiting our house.

I stopped my studies to earn so my brother could go to school. I was only able to get a job in a tobacco grading unit, working every day and earning 810 rupees (\$30) a month. I hated the job; I had always expected to be a teacher.

I am now working as a tutor in a school run by World Vision. I am the breadwinner. I will take care of my brother and grandfather and will help my brother complete his studies. I wish I had my parents. I did not want to do this, but I am forced into it.

In our society, it is impossible to insist on an AIDS test before marriage. I know I am vulnerable. I feel threatened by this disease. If we start talking then other children will not have to go through what I suffered. I have started discussing it in my coaching class and with the friends in Karunamaya Children's Club, a group of 12 of us who meet every month.

Now I am ready to talk to others about AIDS and spread awareness of HIV. Men from the village go to the city and come back to their wives once a year. Some women enter into prostitution, while landlords force others into sex. Some of the young boys in the village have already been with women. It is important that young people are educated about HIV and how it spreads like this – especially girls."

For you to do

- With a partner, prepare an interview with Brahmaramba. Prepare questions you will ask and seek to see the world through her eyes. Role play your interview in front of the class.