



Psychosocial Support for Those Who Are Affected **HIV/AIDS IS WITHIN YOUR COMPOUND!**

Most people living with HIV/AIDS suffer from fear and stigmatization. Today in our community if you don't meet societal expectations, one is rejected, isolated, discriminated, abused and treated like an unwanted vessel. When people discover someone is HIV positive, they try to link in their thoughts, that it is a consequence of sexual immorality, unfaithfulness or IV drug use. It is very difficult for people to open up about their status or get tested for fear of the outcome or from the treatment of others. People with HIV have been characterized as bad, irresponsible or prostitutes.

My great hope is for everyone to get tested for HIV; anybody can be a victim- HIV does not discriminate. It does not care who you are, where you came from, how much money you are worth, or what you do, anyone can get it. Lets all join hands together to prevent transmission share problems, promote safe behaviors and stop our greatest challenge, which is the myth and stigmatization surrounding HIV.

Have you ever been tested for HIV? Do you think that it can never happen to you? No one is ever prepared for HIV to strike in your home, among your family, or your community. People remain naive, depersonalizing the virus..."it belongs to someone else", "it will never happen to me." It is high time for each of us to acknowledge HIV within our community and realize, we are all affected by this disease.

Overcoming AIDS isn't a job for just one person; it requires many of us, working together to stop the spread that is killing generations of people. It will take a worldwide movement of diverse and committed individuals, organizations and people like you to fight the disease.

Every person can make a huge difference in a variety of ways that can improve people's life. By understanding the impact and government policies and using your voice, with the media, and elected officials, you can help raise awareness of HIV and AIDS. The global HIV crisis is one of the greatest humanitarian challenges of our time sweeping entire nations and more importantly, our families. My question to all of you today - where are your children, your sisters and brothers and the entire extended family? What is their status? These are questions we are supposed to prioritize and take action by spreading the word. Please help yourself and help your community by helping those in need.

I wrote this document after learning that every home in my village has an HIV/AIDS survivor. Aren't these all of our neighbors and families? So to all of us, we are all in this and all affected. As you think about other people who you know who have the virus or have died from it, think about your own homestead first. You may have a son, daughter, cousin or partner who is positive but you are not aware. As long as you have families and friends, you are not an exemption.