



## **The Silent Killer**

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Much has been written, said, and speculated about this epidemic, which according to UNAIDS estimates has caused 48 million infections worldwide. Various organizations are dedicated to the cause of spreading awareness, providing medication, and rehabilitation (social acceptance) to those inflicted with this deadly disease, popularly or I should say unpopularity known as *AIDS*.

To make matters more clear, *AIDS* stands for *Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome*: *Acquired* means you can get infected with it; *Immune Deficiency* means a weakness in the body's system that fights diseases; *Syndrome* means a group of health problems that make up a disease. *AIDS* is caused by a virus called HIV, the Human Immunodeficiency Virus. People who test positive as having the HIV antibodies are called "HIV-Positive." Being HIV-positive, or having HIV disease, is not the same as having *AIDS*. This is determined when the bodies T-cells drop below a certain critical level. Many people are HIV-positive but don't get sick for many years. As the HIV disease continues, it slowly wears down the immune system making the body more susceptible to contagious disease, as the immune system is the body's disease fighting mechanism.

*AIDS Kills*. And the irony is that it kills in silence. This silence is mainly due to two reasons. First, more than 60% of all infections occur in regions where, due to lack of proper education, people are just unaware of the potential risks of this killer or are lacking access to care, support, and treatment. Second, the social stigma associated with the name is so strong that most of the people infected (even in developed nations) feel that it's the end of life for them. As such, they isolate themselves from everyone due to the fear of social ostracism. More than damaging persons physically, the stigma kills them mentally. The question is what is the most effective means of combating this silent killer? The much obvious and logical answer partially lies in spreading *Education*.

Each and every one of us has it, in him/her to bring about a change. We just need to introspect and we will find an answer. The questions and issues being addressed in our program are how we, in our capacity, can contribute towards the global struggle with *HIV/AIDS*. Our contribution as human beings ought to be one that treats all humans equally and respectfully. At the present, millions are lacking information in regards to this specific issue. In response to requests from the countries involved with this education project, eight refugee areas and over a thousand people will be given the opportunity to engage in education programs to help change the current trends and provide the possibility for preventing future losses.