

Ensure **the law** treats **women fairly**, says **WAO**

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KUALA LUMPUR: Despite amendments to the Federal Constitution to provide for gender equality, the challenge for both the Government and society is to ensure Malaysian women of all faiths are not discriminated against.

Women's Aid Organisation executive director Ivy Josiah said women's groups believed that any discrimination in Syariah law must be amended on the basis that Islam upholds principles of equality and justice for all.

"It will be untenable and unacceptable that different standards apply to Muslim women."

Josiah also spoke of the discrimination a Malaysian wo-

man would face if she marries a foreigner and had a baby overseas.

"Her baby would not be an automatic citizen unless the father is Malaysian," she said.

She also cited the example of widows losing their pensions if they were to re-marry, unlike widowers.

Josiah was among five panellists who spoke at a forum titled "Human Rights for the Disadvantaged," organised by the Human Rights Commission of Malaysia in conjunction with the launch of Malaysia's inaugural Human Rights Day

Datin Paduka Marina Mahathir, who spoke about

discrimination faced by HIV/AIDS victims said they would have to secure jobs to buy medicines they need, "but the prejudice against them means that they are often denied jobs or are dismissed once their status is known."

"Their right to shelter is also often denied by families and landlords who throw them out of their homes," she said.

Marina also said that HIV-positive women might sometimes be forced into divorce, forced to abort their foetus, subjected to violence and even fatal beatings.

Their children may also be taken away, she added.