

Public still ignorant of HIV/AIDS: Marina

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By **Maria Angela**

KUALA LUMPUR, Sat: Euthanasia as a measure to end the suffering of People Living With HIV/AIDS (PLWHA)?

This was the shocking suggestion made by a member of the public to Malaysian AIDS Council president Datin Paduka Marina Mahathir recently.

This, the person said, will help curb the rise in the number of PLWHA cases.

"This underlines the extent of ignorance on the disease among the public.

"How could one even think of implying such an idea towards a problem which affects many innocent people, including that

of women and children, who have much of a right to live as anyone else," she said.

She was speaking to reporters after launching the National Office of Human Development (NOHD) Charity Art Exhibition here today.

Earlier in her speech, Marina said the MAC was particularly interested to learn and share NOHD's experience on how the inter-religious approach has contributed to the success in its efforts to provide welfare services to PLWHA.

She said spirituality is something which PLWHA needs as some people claimed that the lack of it is what caused the disease to spread.

"But the fact is that any-

one can get infected, even the innocent and spirituality should then be a source of strength.

"Thus, religious organisations should be part of the forefront in AIDS and HIV patients' support. HIV/AIDS is no longer just a health issue.

"It is affecting every facet of human life and is a reflection of our principles, beliefs and way of life," she said.

More than 40 million people worldwide are currently living with HIV/AIDS of which 1.7 million are in South East Asia.

Almost 21 million people have died from the disease since the 1980's. AIDS has also left more than 13 million children orphaned.