

Marina: Detailed data needed to combat AIDS

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PETALING JAYA: A more detailed study into the AIDS epidemic is required to combat the disease more effectively.

Malaysian AIDS Council (MAC) president Datin Paduka Marina Mahathir said statistics compiled by the Health Ministry were not comprehensive and were of little use to formulate effective prevention measures.

"For example, Johor has the biggest number of HIV/AIDS cases because it has many drug rehabilitation centres.

"One of the ways data (on AIDS) are collected is through mandatory testing in government rehabilitation centres. The figures will be biased towards men because drug

users are usually men.

"It will also be biased towards Malays because for some reason, drug users are mostly Malays," she added, after presenting Bonuslink points donated by BonusKad Loyalty Sdn Bhd to six MAC affiliates here yesterday.

According to figures released by the Health Ministry, there were a total 44,208 HIV/AIDS cases last year, with most victims unemployed and between the ages of 30 to 39.

Johor had the highest number of cases followed by Selangor and Negeri Sembilan while 41,738 cases involved men.

"The figures don't tell us a lot. Within a certain age group, 20 to 29, we don't know how

many are men and women and how many got it due to drug abuse or something else.

"There is no analysis of the data, so we are pushing for a better analysis," said Marina.

She said MAC was currently working with the Women and Family Development Ministry and other government departments for gender segregation in all the data collected.

"Right now, we don't know how some of the women got infected, how old they are, where they live, which part of the country most of them come from, or whether they are married to drug users.

"If we don't know these things we cannot prevent HIV/AIDS effectively," said Marina.