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# Growing number of AIDS orphans a looming crisis

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**KUALA LUMPUR:** A new social problem is emerging as more children are orphaned as a result of their parents succumbing to AIDS.

Malaysian AIDS Council (MAC) chief Datuk Paduka Marina Mahathir said MAC has been giving financial aid to some of the orphans for the last five years.

It is now taking care of about 300 AIDS-affected and infected orphans.

Unfortunately, the help is limited to children aged 12 and below.

According to the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) there is an estimated 14,000 such orphans below age 15 in the country at the end of 2001.

"Where are all of these children. We do not know what happens to them," said Marina.

Most of them are being taken care of by relatives and non-governmental organisations.

She believed that the UNAIDS figure is an underestimation of the actual number of cases.

"If each of the more than 50,000 HIV-positive cases recorded since 1986 were to have one child each, then the figure would be much higher," she said after the launching of Project Iceberg 2 and its HIV/AIDS Information Manual yesterday.

Women and Family Development Minister Datuk Seri Shahri-zat Abdul Jalil officiated the event. Also present was Deputy Finance Minister Datuk Dr Ng Yen Yen.

There were 6,978 new HIV and 1,204 AIDS cases last year. This works out to about 19 new HIV and three new AIDS cases per day.

Project Iceberg 2 is the second phase of an awareness campaign on HIV/AIDS among the Chinese.