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# Up to 30 per cent HIV cases from heterosexual relations

**KUALA LUMPUR:** The number of HIV infections among women has sharply increased in recent years.

According to Malaysian AIDS Council (MAC) president Prof Dr Adeeba Kamarulzaman, this is because women in rural areas lack awareness.

Adeeba said HIV infection among women increased from 9.4 per cent in 2000 to 19.1 per cent in 2008.

"Though most HIV cases are due to drug addiction in which needles are shared, there has been an increase of up to 29.9 per cent infection in heterosexual relationships.

"The lack of understanding and awareness of HIV and AIDS has caused rural folk infected with the HIV virus to be isolated from the community. As well, the number of children infected has increased," said Adeeba at the MAC biennial general assembly, which was opened by Deputy Home Minister Jelaing Mersat.

Adeeba said it was sad to note that even medical practitioners had reservations about treating HIV carriers.

Isolated groups such as drug addicts, sex workers, transvestites and homosexu-

als had to be treated with care to curb the spread of HIV, she added.

"HIV infection among sex workers and transvestites has reached about 10 per cent. Though homosexuals account for a lower 3.9 per cent, it can also be considered high and, therefore, worrying."

However, there had been an overall drop in the number of HIV/AIDS cases, said Adeeba, due to numerous preventive measures and awareness programmes carried out by the government and non governmental organisations. —  
Bernama