

Headline **WHO: Kids stffl vulnerable to AIDS**  
Date **02 Dec 2010**  
MediaTitle **New Straits Times**  
Section **Local News**  
Journalist **N/A**  
Frequency **Daily**  
Circ / Read **136,530 / 330,000**

Language **English**  
Page No **L-27**  
Article Size **157 cm<sup>2</sup>**  
Color **Black/white**  
ADValue **2,174**  
PRValue **6,522**



# WHO: Kids still vulnerable to AIDS

**KUALA LUMPUR:** Although the rate of HIV infections has declined in the region, HIV/AIDS is still a serious public health problem, with children being the most vulnerable group.

Dr Samlee Plianbangchang, the World Health Organisation regional director for Southeast Asia, said yesterday that infections among children had increased by 46 per cent between 2001 and last year.

He, however, said elimination of mother-to-child transmission of HIV by 2015 was possible, and WHO was committed to this goal.

"The threat of HIV/AIDS to children highlights the need to strengthen health systems at the primary health-care level and to integrate HIV-specific interventions within broader maternal and child health services."

Globally, an estimated 33.3 million people lived with the virus, and 2.6 million were newly infected last year, Dr Samlee added in a statement in conjunction with World Aids Day yesterday.

In Southeast Asia, 3.5 million people are living with HIV/AIDS, largely in India, Indonesia, Myanmar, Nepal and Thailand.

According to WHO, an estimated 220,000 new HIV infections were diagnosed last year in the region and 230,000 people died of AIDS-related illnesses.

The populations at highest risk of HIV include female sex workers, men who have sex with men, transgender populations and people who injected drugs.

It said that issues of healthcare ac-

cess, stigma and ignorance, and the imperative to prevent transmission of HIV to a new generation are central to the response to HIV/AIDS.

Regionally, women constitute 37 per cent of the 3.5 million people living with HIV/AIDS, and without any intervention, about a third of infants born to HIV-positive mothers could acquire HIV, it said.

While the virus can be transmitted to an infant during pregnancy, delivery or breastfeeding, only one in three HIV-positive women now has access to prophylactic anti-retroviral treatment in the region.

WHO said Thailand was the first country in the region to achieve universal coverage of effective interventions and has virtually eliminated paediatric HIV/AIDS. — Bernama