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US largest donor to global fund

KUALA LUMPUR: The United States government is the largest donor to the Global Fund in fighting AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria, and works closely with other donor countries in ensuring that all resources are targeted to save as many lives as possible.

The Global Fund is an international financing organisation that aims to attract and disburse additional resources to prevent and treat human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) and acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS), tuberculosis and malaria.

United States ambassador to Malaysia, Datuk Paul W Jones said apart from contributing to the fund, the US also provided technical assistance through the US Agency for International Development to help recipient nations of the Global Fund resources, including Malaysia, make the most and efficient and responsible use of those resources.

"The US has been at the forefront in the fight against HIV and AIDS globally via bilateral and multilateral programmes and through the US President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR). We have directly supported more than three million individuals on anti-retroviral treatment."

Jones said this in his speech to the staff and volunteers of The Women and Health Association of Kuala Lumpur (Wake) after visiting the Wake office, here.

Also present were Malaysian AIDS Council vice-president Hisham Hussein.

WAKE is a women's organisation which provides shelter and care for women and children with HIV/AIDS or reproductive health problems and who are homeless or abandoned by their families.

The organisation is funded in part by the Malaysian AIDS Council, which was awarded a grant of US\$5.6 million by the Global Fund in May, 2011.

Jones said his visit to WAKE was to learn more about the work of the non-governmental organisation in combating HIV and AIDS in Malaysia.

"You (WAKE staff and volunteers) serve on the frontline in the fight against HIV and AIDS, and your work is absolutely crucial to all our collective efforts to overcome the disease.

"Overcoming this disease cannot be accomplished by one nation alone but collectively, we can turn the tide of HIV," he said.

Meanwhile, Hisham said in conjunction with World AIDS Day 2011 today (December 1) with the theme, "Getting to Zero", the MAC would continue to work with various NGOs in its outreach programmes to increase public awareness of HIV and AIDS.

He said this year, World AIDS Day would focus on three targets - Zero new HIV infections, Zero discrimination and Zero AIDS-related deaths.

"Various efforts to combat HIV infections in the country have shown some positive results to date, and the key to preventing infections and reducing the casualties are public awareness and concern about HIV and AIDS," he added. - Bernama