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## Society takes healthcare issues to rural Sarawak

**KUCHING:** The global community celebrates World AIDS Day this year with the theme 'Universal Access and Human Rights'.

"Access to healthcare should be equal to all, especially to marginalised communities such as sex workers, those who are sexually abused, women and children," said president of Sarawak AIDS Concern Society (SACS) Yuwana Podin.

She stressed that access should not only be confined to healthcare, but also to education and information on the transmission of HIV/AIDS, access to outreach work conducted by the society and access to health education as a whole.

The theme, she said, was chosen as a means for global leaders to work towards universal access to HIV/AIDS prevention, treatment and care. These efforts are the fundamentals of human rights.

SACS was established to actively address HIV/AIDS issues in Sarawak, with a focus on preventative measures.

Recognising that rural communities in the state have limited access to information, the society is also concerned with improving their knowledge on basic human rights, specifically their rights to a healthy life and protection against transmittable diseases.

"In the past year or so, the society has extended its outreach programmes to rural communities such as in Baram and Belaga areas," Yuwana said.

She said human rights are about people, the communities they live in, and about governments making a commitment to honour and respect the dignity of people who are vulnerable and people living with HIV (PLHIV).

PLHIV, as human beings, also have the rights to be respected by others as well as rights to healthcare despite their ill health.

"The Ministry of Health has continued to uphold these rights through the provision of subsidised medication to PLHIV in the country," Yuwana said.

The society welcomes partnerships with other non-government organisations as well as relevant government in order to effectively reach out to the rural community, she added.