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Firm does its bit for HIV kids

RM150,000 pledged for programme

IN MALAYSIA, HIV/AIDS was not reported to the Health Ministry until December 1986. Up to December last year, 84,630 HIV cases were reported to the ministry, of which 14,576 suffered from AIDS and 11,234 died from it, that is, three deaths per day in 2008.

About 10 people are tested HIV positive every day with many more going unreported.

Children are also not spared. A total of 2,027 children, aged between two and 19, were infected with HIV and 445 were AIDS cases.

The Malaysian AIDS Foundation (MAF), recognises that children living with HIV/AIDS have immediate needs that require immediate solutions and financial support.

Through the success of the

Paediatric AIDS Fund it is the foundation's aim to increase support to benefit children aged between 13 and 19 years.

It is for this reason that the Keep in School Scheme (KISS) programme was set up in 2008 to support poor children infected and affected by HIV/AIDS.

The fund is aimed at making a difference in the lives of HIV/AIDS infected children by allowing them to continue their secondary school or vocational education by meeting their day-to-day needs.

For the first time this year, children aged between 13 and 19 years are given the support.

The KISS programme provides financial aid to minimise the pain and suffering of children living with HIV/AIDS.

Through this scheme, financial assistance and sponsorships are offered monthly to the children to meet daily needs such as food, clothing and schooling necessities as well as transport to seek HIV

treatment.

The foundation works together with paediatricians from local health clinics, Hospitals Partner Organisations and Shelter Homes such as Rumah Soleha to identify HIV/AIDS infected or affected children, (infected: HIV positive, affected: HIV negative (one parent who is HIV positive or died of AIDS).

Besides from foster homes, the children identified can be from individual families but must be Malaysian citizens aged between 13 and 19. Most of these are schoolchildren.

Families and caregivers of children infected/affected are required to formally apply with the doctor's consent and declaration forms.

The RM150,000 pledged by L'Oréal Malaysia towards the KISS programme will go a long way in easing the financial burden of low-income families with a child who is HIV infected as well as children who are HIV-negative.

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Cash aid: (From left) Jean-François Couvé, Tay Ai Leen and Datin Paduka Marina Mahathir at the cheque-presentation ceremony.



All smiles: Alfred Cheng, Tay Ai Leen, Datin Paduka Marina Mahathir, Jean-François Couvé and Rita Shum at the ceremony.