



Touching Lives

International AIDS Memorial Day 2011



This year's International AIDS Memorial Day (IAMD) was held at the Sultan Salahuddin Abdul Aziz Shah mosque in Shah Alam, Selangor. The IAMD event marked the third year of Islamic memorial observance was held in remembrance of the more than 12,000 individuals who have passed on due to AIDS related conditions in the predominantly Muslim country of Malaysia, by offering mass Quranic recitals and prayers, and religious sermons.

With MAIS at the helm as the main organiser, the event served as an urgent wake up call for other state religious authorities to take the lead in addressing HIV and AIDS related issues and vulnerabilities in the Muslim community at the respective states through amalgamation of public health principles in faith-based responses to the epidemic. The celebration was also part of the ongoing HIV & Islam initiative pioneered by the Malaysian AIDS Council (MAC) and Department of Islamic Development (JAKIM) in 2009 to additionally educate religious leaders and officials on HIV and AIDS, and issues affecting communities at greater risk of HIV infection. Both MAC and JAKIM served as co-organisers of the event which saw a turnout of some 1,000 guests comprising religious leaders of various faiths, government officials, health care providers, members of communities, activists, and celebrity spokespersons alike.



The priority target populations for the 2011 International AIDS Memorial Day celebrations were most at risk populations (MARPs) including infected and affected members of the communities by HIV in Malaysia. Secondly, invited members of the Malaysian Government as well as multi-lateral and partner organisations, all of whom work within the HIV arena and finally, the event targeted the media.

IAMD is one of the world's oldest and largest grassroots mobilisation campaigns for HIV/AIDS awareness in the world. Started in 1983, the Candlelight Memorial takes place every third Sunday in May and is led by a coalition of some 1,200 community organisations in 115 countries across the world, hosting local memorials to honour lives lost and raise social consciousness about HIV. Among the other topics that gained media coverage were Treatment, care and support for People Living with HIV, Mother living with HIV in conjunction of mothers day, Children living with HIV and Stigma and Discrimination. The event was testament of a unified multi-sectoral movement against HIV and AIDS, as evidenced by the additional support received by the Ministry of Health, Tesco Stores Malaysia (the country's leading hypermarket chain), and Grand BlueWave Hotel Shah Alam. Media Prima Berhad provided extensive media coverage, in the lead up to, and throughout the event.

