



Malaysian AIDS Council Rejects Guidelines to Identify Gay and Lesbian 'Symptoms' in Schoolchildren

Kuala Lumpur, 19 September 2012 - Malaysian AIDS Council (MAC) expresses its disheartenment over the introduction of guidelines to help parents and teachers identify gay and lesbian 'symptoms' in schoolchildren, published recently by Yayasan Guru Malaysia Bhd (Teachers' Foundation of Malaysia) and the Putrajaya Consultative Council of Parents and Teachers Associations.

The guidelines list eight perceived 'symptoms' – four each of gays and lesbians – and caution, "Once the children have these symptoms, immediate attention should be given."

"Singling people out based on their sexuality is the very foundation of discrimination," remarks Datuk Dr Raj Karim, President of MAC. "We know all too well the negative impact such practice has on the lives of sexual minorities, especially those living on the fringes of society. It will drive them further underground and force them to live in greater fear of being 'identified'."

Concerned too about the guidelines' psychosocial implication on schoolchildren and young people, Datuk Raj further elaborates, "These unfounded guidelines will only breed intolerance among schoolchildren. Those exhibiting the perceived 'symptoms' will be subjected to discrimination, ridicule, and bullying by their peers and we must not allow such stigmatising condition to permeate our education system. We have the responsibility to ensure all children are given equal opportunities for positive personal development and growth, and protection against harm. Therefore, having the best interest of all children in mind, we strongly reject and call for a withdrawal of the guidelines."

Gender and sexuality-based discrimination impedes access to health equities, including HIV prevention, treatment, care and support services. This situation is particularly evident in sexual minorities and other marginalised populations as reported in our field operations. MAC strives to address structural barriers to HIV education, prevention and healthcare in order to maximise our reach to the underserved segments of society.

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Malaysian AIDS Council

The Malaysian AIDS Council (MAC) was established in 1992 to serve as an umbrella organisation to support and coordinate the efforts of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) working on HIV/AIDS issues in Malaysia. MAC works in close partnership with government agencies, the private sector and international organisations, to ensure a committed and effective NGO-led response to the HIV/AIDS epidemic. In addition to providing nationwide coverage of HIV prevention, treatment, care and support services, MAC and its Partner Organisations serve as the common voice for communities most affected by HIV/AIDS in the country. Learn more at www.mac.org.my.

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