

Children with HIV/AIDS in need of support

Children with HIV/AIDS need strong support from the community because the government does not provide a continuous funding scheme for them, local NGOs say.

"We have been searching for continuous donations for nine children with HIV/AIDS whom we assist. Three of them have died due to malnutrition and difficulties attaining medical treatment," said Novita E. Wuntu, an activist with the Citra Usadha Indonesia foundation (YCUI), the oldest HIV/AIDS NGO in Bali.

Novita, said that the foundation had submitted many proposals to a number of companies and social organizations to raise funds for HIV/AIDS children in Buleleng, Ubud and Denpasar.

She said the funding support from the Bali AIDS Commission had only lasted a year. Last year, the commission provided cash donations for scholarships and for daily needs of 100 children with HIV/AIDS.

"The donations helped them very much because most of them are very poor".

However, the commission discontinued the donations, leaving the YCUI to rely only on short-term donations from companies and the local community.

In Buleleng, only two children, who lost their parents to the disease, have received assistance. One of them received cash assistance from a children's foundation and the other from his uncle.

"These children are very susceptible to diseases, such as coughs and breathing difficulties. Therefore, they need long term and sustained assistance," said Novita, whose job is to help people with HIV/AIDS get medical access.

Last week, a number of organisations focusing on women's and children's issues campaigned about protection for women and children with HIV/AIDS in Bali, including by calling for better and non-discriminative health access for them and providing free antiretroviral (ARV) syrup medicine for the children.

The call was made during a workshop held to commemorate the Day Against Violence toward Women.

"Cases of violence against women and children are often left unsolved in Bangli because there is no institution that can handle them. Besides, local people there are often neglected," said Ni Nengah Budawati, director of Legal Aid Foundation of Alliance for Indonesian Women.

"More than 100 children who have HIV and hundreds of others feel the impact because their parents are infected and need help to get healthcare and education and avoid discrimination," said Putu Utami, director of Spirit Paramacitta, a foundation that since 2001 has assisted people living with HIV/AIDS.

The provincial Health Agency said that since 1987, there had been 123 children with post-birth infections, comprising 2.5 percent of the total 4,833 cases of people with HIV/AIDS.