

'20-25 mn AIDS orphans by 2010'

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IMPHAL, **May 12**: It has been estimated that globally every fifteen seconds, a child loses a parent to AIDS. And, AIDS orphans are most vulnerable towards the HIV pandemic. The AIDS orphans crisis has a catastrophic impact on households and communities deepening poverty and hardship. And to take notice of these vulnerable children public and media attention is needed to disseminate the message to larger audience.

More than 25 million children world wide have lost one or both parents to AIDS and behind the statistics there are millions of stories of children suffering. And to ensure the urgent measures are taken to reintegrated them back into their society need to lobby governments to consider these vulnerable children as a priority.

It this regard talking to IFP one of the member of the Manipur Network of Positive People (MNP+) on the observation of the 'World AIDS Orphans Day' held at Kangla hall today maintained that millions of children are growing up deprived of education, basic needs such as foods, water and shelter are at high risk of HIV infection, discrimination, exploitation and violence in the form of forced labour, prostitution and drug trafficking.

And by 2010 the member of AIDS orphans worldwide is expected to climb to an estimated 20 to 25 million children. Experts also believe that millions more orphans remain unaccounted for in India, he said.

In Manipur even though there is no scientific study it is expected that nearly 50 percent of the children affected and infected by HIV/AIDS have lost one or both parents to AIDS. Stigmatized, facing profound financial and emotional despair and AIDS orphans have no means of making themselves heard. And in addition to the psychological trauma of losing a parent, orphans are less likely to receive healthcare, education and other needed services are often threatened by malnutrition, illness and HIV infection. Today, a diverse coalition of organizations, government officials and everyday citizens is standing up to make children a priority in the fight against AIDS.

The **World AIDS Orphans Day (WAOD)**, is a grassroots campaign launched in 2002 by FXB (Francois Xavier Bagnoud) to draw attention and advocate on behalf of the more than 25 million children orphaned by AIDS. And providing care to AIDS orphans and vulnerable children as a part of their inherent rights has been a key message emphasized by the movement all over the world WAOD 2009 with the theme 20th anniversary of the convention of Child's Rights would be a great opportunity for activists and people living with the virus particularly. Children to access to a stronger response, great accountability and more resources and services.

And, India being the home to over two million children who lost their parents to the HIV/AIDS pandemic, the NGO functionary also expressed to IFP that strong resentment that in spite of gravity of the problem the government is yet to demise a mechanism including passing of a legislation to insure social and medical security of these vulnerable children.

And, here the role of state government is to set up a orphanages exclusively for the AIDS orphaned children by providing doctors, nurses and counsellors for their care and maintenance felt the state NGOs.

The observation which was held today at the Kangla hall was organized by joint effort of social awareness service organisation (SASO) along with its CHAHA partners namely the Manipur Network of Positive People (MNP+), Dedicate peoples' Union (DPU) and the Sneha Bhavan.

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