

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE HEALTH MINISTRY STATISTICS

Abuse of women, children soars

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APINYA WIPATAYOTIN

The five-fold jump in domestic violence victims in four years emphasises the urgency for the issue to be put on the national agenda, Senator Wallop Tangkananurak said yesterday. On average, 28 women and children were victims of family violence every day this year, according to statistics released yesterday by the Public Health Ministry. This compared with five cases per day in 2002. On average, one child aged below five was a victim of domestic violence each day.

A total of 10,241 cases of domestic violence or harrasment were reported between January and October this year _ sexual, physical and mental.

The ministry said one third of the tormentors were people close to the victims, including husbands and fathers. Love affairs and jealousy were the major cause of domestic violence, followed by alcohol and drugs, and sexual abuse.

Mr Wallop, an outspoken child rights advocate, urged the government to put the problem of domestic violence on the national agenda and take serious action.

Speaking at the first National Symposium on Eliminating Domestic Violence, Mr Wallop said children and women were particularly vulnerable as Thai society had a culture of sex discrimination between men and women.

Men were recognised as the family head, but when they suffered from work pressure or were drunk, women and children became victims of their aggressive behaviour.

Mr Wallop said all sides should have a say in the drafting of a national strategy on eradication of domestic violence, to ensure the measures solve the root cause of the problem.

``There are various forms of domestic violence`` in Thai society, such as violence in a family living with HIV/Aids patients in the North, or a family affected by southern violence or the tsunami disaster.

``It is necessary these people be allowed to express their own problems, so the various agencies can response to their demands,`` he said.

Public Health Minister Phinij Jarusombat concurred supported and said the ministry provided medical care advisory teams and mental rehabilitation to victims of domestic violence.

The ministry also found that although the rate of domestic violence has been increasing, the suicide rate has fallen from 8.2 per 100,000 people in 1999 to 6.4 per 100,000 this year.

It attributed this to an improving national economy and effective mental health surveillance.

The Department of Mental Health said major causes of suicide include chronic disease, such as HIV/Aids and cancer, depressive disorder, jealousy and mental illnesses. It plans to open a website next year to counsel people considering suicide.