

Children's rights groups speak up on kids 'lost in love'

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FLASHBACK: Our report yesterday

CHILDREN'S rights groups believe it is not the case of social networking sites and lack of parent supervision which contribute to children being 'lost' as much as living in crime-prone areas.

Following *The Malay Mail's* front page report yesterday on children as young as nine years old being lured by paedophiles, three groups we spoke to yesterday opined the environment a child grows up in plays a huge role in his or her social development.

- **Voice of the Children** chairman Sharmila Ganesan said social networking sites and lack of supervision by parents are not the only factors that had influenced children to "go missing". She said the environment where the family lived was also a contributing factor.

"If they live in a crime-prone area, their children would more than likely come in contact with destructive characters who will influence them.

"These characters will trick this unhappy children, mostly teenagers, into thinking they are friends who understand their predicament at home. But, they have ulterior motives instead.

"In many cases, the boys will be enticed into taking drugs while the girls would be lured into prostitution."

- **Protect and Save The Children** association director Madeleine Yong said a more extensive support group system should be established to "take care" of low-income families or single parents.

"At hospitals, for example, if a young mother gives birth to a baby and upon checking she has no husband, the hospital should alert the Welfare Department.

"The department officers can talk to the woman and find out how she would be able to cope raising the child. If she has to work extra hard to make ends meet, negligence will occur regardless of what age her son or daughter is at."

She said checks should be done more frequently in areas where lower income families live and to find out how they fare raising a family.

● **Empower Malaysia** executive director Maria Chin Abdullah said the Welfare Department and the Women, Family and Community Development Ministry should go down to the ground more than what they are doing presently.

"We must go to people and find out what problems these families are facing. They should have vans going around among the lower and lower middle income groups where the majority of such problems occur.

"Having crisis centres alone aren't enough. These families need someone to go to them and provide help."

READ: Lost in 'love'