

# World Blood Donor Day

"Blood, a gift for life. Thank you." 14 JUNE 2004



STORIES FROM AROUND THE WORLD



Department of Essential Health Technologies | Blood Transfusion Safety



## WORLD BLOOD DONOR DAY 2004

In every corner of the world, people came together on June 14, 2004 to celebrate the wonderful gift of blood.

Every day, in fact almost every second, someone who is seriously ill receives a blood transfusion. It may be a child with malaria, a boy who has been injured in a road accident or a woman who has a complication in pregnancy. Too often, we take it for granted that there will be a regular supply of blood available in the hospitals for a transfusion should we need one. We forget that behind a transfusion service lies a well-run network of health professionals, lab staff and donors to ensure that the blood supply is safe. Yet in many parts of the world this guarantee does not exist - more than four-fifths of the world's population cannot be certain that their loved ones will receive a safe blood transfusion. Often it is the countries with very high burden of disease that suffer most from the shortage of this precious commodity.

World Blood Donor Day is aimed at spreading the message that having volunteers who are willing to give blood regularly, for no payment, is the best possible way of ensuring a safe supply. This idea is gradually spreading from country to country. The concept behind the day last June was that this would not be a one off event, but that it would be developed, year by year, to encourage a greater understanding of the need for blood. We congratulate all those who made it such a special day - a day that touched so many spirits and which showed the importance of blood. In particular, young people were at the centre of the day to celebrate what we call 'The Gift of Life'. Whether it was the schoolchildren singing their own music in South Africa, the teenagers carrying banners in Persepolis or the young Bulgarians who organized a painting exhibition, there was an excitement and enthusiasm about the day that was phenomenal. It was the first time that such an event had taken place, and no-one could have predicted how well it would work. The day was supported and organized by the four organizations working to provide safe blood across the world, the World Health Organization, the International Federation of Blood Donor Organizations, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, and the International Society of Blood Transfusion.

We hope that World Blood Donor Day 2005 will be as successful as an event celebrated last year. Many countries have seen how it has worked to help establish a solid base of voluntary blood donors. Many of them saw how much media attention and publicity it received.

Now is the chance to build on what was achieved last June, to create even more awareness of the importance of voluntary blood donation. Above all, this is about reaching out to people, and showing them that they are part of a community which cares. The guarantee that your country's blood supply is safe is a guarantee which is needed across the world, for rich and for poor. Let's work to make that possible, by honouring those who become blood donors.



## WELCOME SPEECHES

*Global Launch in Johannesburg, South Africa hosted by South Africa National Blood Service (SANBS)*

A major media (television, radio and the press) and entertainment event was held in Johannesburg with invited dignitaries, celebrities and the launch of a new video about youth programmes (Club 25) with participation of more than 1500 students from 27 schools and opening addresses from WHO, IFCRCS and SANBS. The Minister of Health addressed the youth and testimonies from blood recipients personified the message 'BLOOD, A GIFT FOR LIFE, THANK YOU.'



*Professor Anthon Heyns, Chief Executive Officer, South Africa National Blood Service*

South African blood donors have always been a special and in many ways unique group of persons. Blood transfusion was started in this country by medical students who voluntarily donated to their patients in the Johannesburg hospital in truly vein-to-vein transfusions. In 1937 this became too complex to arrange for the students and the service was handed over to the Medical Graduates Association. It is interesting that at the one of the first meetings of the newly formed Rand Blood Transfusion Service, the blood donors accepted ownership of the organization and the donors have since then acted as custodians of the transfusion services as they evolved

and spread throughout the country. The blood donors have structured, governed and directed the services to ensure that blood transfusion is practiced as an organization based on voluntary non-remunerated donors joined together in a community-oriented not-for-profit organization, adhering to the highest ethical standards. The service has a mission with one overriding goal: to serve the patients of the country by providing all patients sufficient low- risk quality blood and services related to blood transfusion. The scope of the service is still vein-to-vein as in the earliest days. All that has changed is that this link from the donor's vein to the patient's vein has been stretched to include all the complex systems that now characterize blood transfusion.

South African blood donors can thus be proud that they have for more than sixty years been involved in the practice of blood transfusion based on principles that is a model for the rest of the world. We are therefore indeed privileged that the World Health Organization has chosen SANBS to be the official host of this very special event. Blood donors in this country all extend their hands to join with fellow blood donors across the world to celebrate this first World Blood Donor Day.

South Africa like many other countries in the world, and particularly in Africa, is in the throes of the devastating HIV/AIDS pandemic. The impact of this infection has posed a challenge to the blood service to maintain a safe blood supply. We have managed to do this, but it has only been possible because of the support of the regular blood donor. We have also recognized that it will not be possible to sustain an adequate safe blood supply if the young people of this country are not inspired by those who have come before them to remain involved and to continue with this wonderful service to the community. You, the scholars and Club 25 members indeed are the future of blood transfusion and those patients who need blood and blood products rely on your commitment.

Many donors have donated 100, 200 and even more units of blood. Considering that a donor can only donate every two months, it is indeed remarkable that in South Africa over the last four years more than 2 000 donors reached the milestone of 100 donations, 350 have given 200

donations and quite extraordinary, 18 donors in South Africa have given more than 300 donations.

This gives me the opportunity to honour one blood donor who may well be regarded as a symbol of what can be achieved. He exemplifies a truly focussed life-long commitment to serving the community by donating blood. Mr Maurice Creswick has donated an incredible 342 donations and he is still actively donating every 56 days!

Maurice holds the official world record for whole blood donations, 336 in July 2003, and on this certificate of the Guinness Book of Records, it is stated that since his 18th birthday in 1944 he has given the equivalent of 188.9 litres of blood! What a wonderful achievement to be able to serve one's community and those who need blood in such a way!

It is indeed an honour to ask Mr Creswick to come forward to receive his certificate.



*Dr. Steffen Groth, Director, Department of Essential Health Technologies, World Health Organization*

I should like to take this opportunity on behalf of, the Department of Essential Health Technologies, WHO, to thank the South African National Blood Service (SANBS) for inviting WHO to attend the launch of World Blood Donor Day 2004 and for supporting WHO in its strategies to improve global blood safety.

Blood safety has been clearly identified by WHO as a priority and has underlined the need for urgent and sustained focus to improve the safety of the global blood supply. Blood safety presents a well-recognized global concern as well as for WHO Member States. However, WHO is not alone in this endeavour to improve the availability of safe blood worldwide. The important partners include organizations directly related to blood safety and this year three of those organizations: the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, the International Federation of Blood Donor Organizations and the International Society of Blood Transfusion have joined forces to co-sponsor World Blood Donor Day. Between them, these organizations represent 192 Member States, 181 national Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, 50 national voluntary blood donor organizations and thousands of blood transfusion specialists throughout the world.

World Blood Donor Day builds on the success of World Health Day 2000 which was devoted to the theme 'Blood Saves Lives. Safe Blood Starts With Me.' The enthusiasm and energy with which this day was celebrated indicated that there would be a positive response for an opportunity to give thanks to the millions of people who give the precious gift of life. It also builds on International Blood Donor Day organized annually by the International Federation of Blood Donor Organizations since 1995.

The celebrations taking place here and all around the world today, is not intended to replace events such as national Blood Donor Days, but provides a special opportunity for a united, global celebration on a day that has particular significance: the birthday of Karl Landsteiner who discovered the ABO blood group system. Karl Otto Landsteiner made numerous contributions to pathological anatomy, histology and immunology, all of which showed, not only his meticulous care in observation and description, but also his biological understanding. But his name will no doubt always be honoured for his discovery in 1901 of, an outstanding work on, the blood groups, for which he received the Nobel Prize for Physiology or Medicine in 1930.

The overall objective of World Blood Donor Day is to improve the safety and adequacy of national supplies of blood by promoting a substantial increase in the number of safe, voluntary non-remunerated blood donors who give blood regularly. World Blood Donor Day provides a unique opportunity to give thanks to the very special people who provide the foundation of a safe blood supply, available to all patients when requiring transfusion. It is important to state clearly that WHO is not alone in its endeavours to improve the availability of safe blood worldwide. Today's challenges can only be met by all of us working together in true and meaningful partnerships and I am especially pleased to be here today to congratulate SANBS on the successes achieved with their Club 25 Programme. The spread of HIV in the eighties caused blood transfusion services across the world to seek new strategies to collect safe blood. In 1989, Zimbabwe started targeting a new pool of low-risk donors: students aged 16-19. The first batches of these students became so committed to the venture that when they reached completion of their schooling they decided to create the Pledge 25 Club, committing them to make at least 25 blood donations by the age of 25.

The initiative was particularly successful in keeping these young people protected from HIV and other illnesses because part of their pledge was that they would maintain a healthy lifestyle in order to give safe blood. Indeed, figures proved that HIV infection rates among blood donors fell from 4.45% in 1989 to 0.61% in 2001, in a country where the infection rates in the sexually active population was 33.7% at the time.

Today, Pledge 25 clubs are still going strong in Zimbabwe. As well as promoting healthy lifestyles and setting a good example to other young people, the experience seems to have had positive effects on the members' personal development. Many Pledge 25 members have become successful professionals and leading figures in their communities. Some of the original members are planning to set up a Pledge 50 Club.

The model has now been adopted in several other countries: Haiti, India, Indonesia, Malawi, the Philippines

and Uganda. The Pledge 25 programme is a model for every country striving to ensure that all patients requiring transfusion have access to safe blood.

South Africa started its own version of Pledge 25 - simply called Club 25 - in 1999. Club 25 now counts more than 35 000 members, providing 15% of the blood supply nationally. In South Africa, 80% of new infections occur among 16 - 28 year-olds. The prevalence of HIV infection among Club 25 members is only 0.04%.

Blood donor programmes around the world benefit greatly from contributions and support from a range of service organizations such as Rotary Clubs, Lions Club and many, many others. In addition community groups, sporting clubs, business and church groups offer tremendous support in helping to motivate and recruit voluntary non remunerated blood donors. Today we thank you for your continuing support.

Every second, someone in the world needs blood. Millions of people owe their lives to people they will never meet - people who donate their blood freely and without any reward. Blood, a gift for life.



*Dr Neelam Dhingra, Coordinator, Blood Transfusion Safety, World Health Organization*

Today is a historical day. The world is celebrating the 1st ever World Blood Donor Day, and I feel proud to be part of

this global celebration, among you here in South Africa. On behalf of the blood safety programme of WHO, I would like to thank SANBS for extending all their support for launching the 1st World Blood Donor Day today on 14 June 2004, globally.

To give our message to the world and to help the countries, governments, organizations, individuals and the potential blood donors understand the need for blood donation, and also to reach out to the communities, a Campaign Kit has been developed which talks about what is World Blood Donor Day, why is World Blood Donor Day important, ideas for the World Blood Donor Day campaign, possible slogans and messages, how to start a voluntary blood donor organization, questions and answers about blood donation. Website dedicated to the World Blood Donor Day has also played a key role in disseminating this information. It is hoped that these resources will be useful for countries to develop blood donor programmes based on voluntary unpaid donations.

The focus of World Blood Donor Day 2004 is youth - with a special focus on successful youth peer education and promotion programmes. And also to make, the youth of today, aware of their roles and responsibilities in the bigger world out there. What can they do to make a difference, bring about a change from where we are today, and make them understand their true potential, their importance and the true meaning of life. It has been seen that young unpaid donors are among the safest blood donors and thus an integral part of a successful health care system.

By designating one special day to celebrate the role of voluntary blood donors around the world, it is hoped that a new generation of blood donors will follow their example, providing the safest blood possible for use wherever and whenever it is needed to save lives.

The spread of HIV in the eighties caused blood transfusion services across the world to seek new strategies to collect safe blood. Youth in Zimbabwe realized that their future was in their own hands. This is why, some years ago, a project was launched by youth themselves whereby

school leavers pledged to give blood 25 times by the age of 25, while also committing to lead healthy lives in order to give safe blood. This programme has significantly contributed to the success of the safe national blood supply since 1989.

The initiative was particularly successful in keeping these young people protected from HIV and other illnesses as part of their pledge was that they would maintain a healthy lifestyle. Based on the same principle, South Africa further strengthened the concept and started the Club 25 in 1999. Club 25 now counts more than 35 000 members, providing 15% of the blood supply nationally. Originated in Zimbabwe, these groups have served as examples for several other countries facing blood safety problems in Africa and Asia.

Today, we would also like to take this opportunity to launch a video on Pledge Club 25 programmes in Malawi, the Philippines and South Africa, that attract large numbers of young voluntary non-remunerated blood donors who pledge not only to donate blood regularly, but also to adopt safe, healthy lifestyles to protect their own health. Stories from Club 25 members and recipients of blood donations whose lives were saved by the generosity of donors have been captured through this video. The Club 25 programme is being widely promoted on World Blood Donor Day through the international media, is a model for every country striving to ensure that all patients requiring transfusion have access to safe blood.

Let us together enjoy the video and convey our thanks to the millions of donors who for years have been saving lives and take a pledge today to recognize our bigger role in life and our responsibility towards our fellow humans.

It's all about being human.



*Mr Peter Carolan, Senior Officer, Health and Care,  
International Federation of Red Cross and Red  
Crescent Societies, Geneva*

With the experience of just one World Blood Donor Day (WBDD) behind us, is it too ambitious to expect that future celebrations on this Day could ever surpass the wildest dreams of the organizers? Based on my own observations on the launching of the inaugural WBDD in Johannesburg 14 June 2004 (where 1500 young people shared in the celebrations with some older donors and patients who attended the launching to offer a personal message of thanks to donors) I have the feeling that these young people are helping to create a new world movement which has enormous potential; yes, even bigger than the organizers of the first WBDD had planned.

It was apparent in Johannesburg that young people had clearly identified with a cause which transcended all nations and all divisions among peoples. Many of the young people had already made a commitment to give more than 20 blood donations by the age of 25 years and they were acutely aware of the need for healthy lifestyles to enable them fulfill such a commitment. As young adults they were prepared to take ownership and responsibility for leading healthy lifestyles and for the care of others who may need a blood transfusion. Many of these young people had bonded together through the formation of Club 25 membership - a concept now given an international focus whereby young people in many countries formally commit to regular blood donations.

But even more significantly the events of WBDD in Johannesburg forced everyone present to look beyond blood and blood donation. Listening to the words of the patients who were also present at the launching of WBDD we came to see what blood actually represents in the eyes of the person who really needs it. And it seems that what touches the heart of the patient is not so much blood in its constituent parts, or even the gift of blood per se. What the patient wants, what the patient sees and receives is "hope" itself, dressed up as the gift of blood. The young Club 25 members and blood donors in general thus provide the very essence that enables patients to cling to life.

For me the future World Blood Donor Days may therefore be compared to a massive global marketing exercise where the focus is actually on something so often regarded as intangible, "hope" itself! Certainly we can assume WBDD will always celebrate the giving and receiving of blood, but if in the eyes of patients the end product of voluntary blood donation represents hope, then WBDD offers much more than recognition and gratitude for the millions of voluntary blood donors around the world. If we accept that at a community level we have both 'young adults' and 'older adults' participating together in an exercise which may best be described as the marketing of hope by being active blood donors, then there are exciting possibilities for everyone. Suddenly WBDD has potential in making quite a significant contribution to human development.

Indeed in some countries where voluntary blood donation is already an established part of the landscape there is increasing evidence to suggest that the role of voluntary blood donors in society extends well beyond health care and provides a very solid basis for civil society. The gesture of voluntary blood donors giving up their time, holding out their arms and donating blood to people they will never know and never meet remains an extraordinary symbol of solidarity. There is a real sense of belonging to a community when people literally 'lie down to be counted' as voluntary blood donors, and the symbolism seems that much more powerful when young people are involved: at least it seemed that way in Johannesburg at the launching of WBDD.

To foster positive attitudes to voluntary blood donation is a huge task, but one which can pay rich dividends reaching well beyond the realm of health economics. Simply speaking this is about the local community taking ownership in the blood service: the blood service exists for their benefit and its success or failure depends on the degree of active participation by the local community. And this is why WBDD is so important in any community as it helps to focus on those ordinary citizens, the young and the not-so-young, whose actions can help motivate others to accept their responsibility to ensure the world has an adequate supply of life-saving blood. With its focus on the unsung heroes in health care WBDD helps to highlight the things that connect all of us together.

Involvement in WBDD can now scarcely remain an option for anyone interested in providing a tangible expression of hope to the world; the gift of blood provides such an expression, and those who give their time and blood on a regular basis help to reinforce the foundations of society thus enhancing prospects for community development.

Reflecting on my own experience of more than 25 years of work with blood services around the world my feeling is that people generally give blood for emotional reasons. Reason and logical thought processes tend, if anything, to discourage blood donation because many people remain ignorant of the physiology of blood loss and replacement.

So in this sense people give blood in spite of their fears, but thankfully people always come forward as voluntary blood donors every moment of the day. Medical care would soon grind to a halt if they did not, and so maybe through their generosity these voluntary blood donors are providing leadership in maintaining some sort of communal solidarity and social cohesion around the world. So I think WBDD organizers really owe a debt of gratitude to regular blood donors and the students of Johannesburg because I think with their example and initiative which was clearly to the fore on 14 June 2004, we may have stumbled upon something akin to a global movement for a better world.

Is it even too strong to suggest that voluntary blood donation and WBDD is a practical, positive step to world peace?



## AFRICA'S RESPONSE TO WBDD

*Dr Ebrahim M Samba, Regional Director,  
WHO office for Africa, World Health Organization*

Here is an excerpt from the speech given that day by Dr Ebrahim M Samba, the World Health Organization's Regional Director for Africa. "It gives me great pleasure to use this occasion, firstly, to express my sincere thanks to all those who contribute each day, behind the scenes, to saving human lives by donating their bit of blood. From now onwards, the date of 14 June, every year, will be dedicated to expressing our acknowledgement to all blood donors for their role in helping to save the lives of so many women, men and children, regardless of their race, religion or place of origin.

"Every year, more than 80 million units of blood are collected worldwide. Yet only 35% of the blood so collected comes from the developing countries which account for 82% of the world population. To make up for this shortfall in the African region, there is urgent need for appropriate strategies that will help not only to collect sufficient quantities of blood that is safer for patients, but also to ensure behaviour change among our populations in the light of the growing threat of HIV/AIDS which is taking a heavy toll on our continent.'

Dr Samba made it clear that the recruitment and retention of low-risk blood donors was paramount for the continent, spelling out that one of their targets was that all countries of the region should achieve at least 80% of recruitment of voluntary non-remunerated blood donors by the year 2012.

"That target might seem ambitious but is achievable provided that we all play our role, from now onwards, and that all people in good health decide to join forces with the family of voluntary blood donors in their respective countries." At the moment, only 10 countries in the African region have a system whereby blood is taken only from voluntary donors, while a total of 14 countries have, so far, achieved the 80% target. Côte d'Ivoire, South Africa and Zimbabwe are among countries which, despite having HIV prevalence rates of between 10% and 33%

among adults, have nonetheless reduced HIV prevalence to less than 0.2% among regular donors.

Dr Samba said there was still a long way to go, but if countries could continue in the efforts they had been making in recent years to set up effective national blood transfusion systems including the formulation and implementation of policies and strategies suited to their realities, then there was a good chance that they would meet the 2012 target.

He concluded: "That is why I am urging you to respond, in your numbers, to this clarion call for the human solidarity that not only puts back the smile on the faces of people who have lost hope, but also brings joy to people who give generously, not for the sake of remuneration, but for the sole purpose of bringing relief to people in suffering."

## AFRICAN REGION

### ALGERIA

A new postal stamp was issued on the theme of blood donation by Algeria a week before the big day. The country went to great extents to make the most of the event, and on June 14 itself, a ceremony was held in Algiers with the President of the Republic in attendance, during which, 119 people were awarded medals for National Merit, as well as diplomas, for their part in helping the National Blood Agency. Several associations in the country marked the day by organizing blood donation sessions and arranging a small meal for donors. The number of blood donations in Algeria has risen steadily in recent years, from 174,000 donations in 1994 to nearly 300,000 in 2003. Over the same period, the average number of donations measured per 1000 citizens rose from 6.4 per 1000 to 9.07 per 1000. WBDD is a notable way of increasing awareness of this progress among the population and to encourage people to donate regularly. The agencies are aware of the need to do more to encourage donation, and in this regard have acquired four new mobile units which go out to the regions to collect blood on specific days. There has been major support and coverage by the national media - nearly all the newspapers carried stories about the WBDD - which have used this opportunity to educate on the advantages of a proper blood supply and why this is essential for the country's future.

### BENIN

During the weeks leading to the WBDD, there was an extensive coverage on radio and TV - to spread information on the need for safe blood and encourage more regular voluntary donors.

### BURKINA FASO

Leading up to the WBDD, there was a nationwide campaign with a caravan moving across the country. Among the activities organized to mark the event, were; concerts, friendly soccer matches, and a popular cross-

country race in Ouagadougou. During the official ceremony the role of voluntary donors was appreciated and acknowledged. The Minister of Health, WHO and Blood Donor Associations' representatives gave speeches. Entertainment was provided by the professional musician Sinaré Candé and the pupils of the Choir Privé la Source, who presented songs specially composed for the occasion. The pupils and Ms Candé were selected to symbolize the main recipients of the blood products: children and women; and at the end of their presentations, they expressed their gratitude on behalf of children and women from Burkina Faso, to the blood donors. There was good media coverage of the event.

### CAMEROON

Prior to the WBDD event, seminars, debates, interviews, blood donation, visits to families of blood donors, to patients in hospitals and to blood banks were among the activities which took place. Sporting activities including cross country races, football and wrestling, attracted many people. On June 14, there was a procession, a performance by traditional dancers and an award ceremony to thank and honour blood donors.

### DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

WBDD events were held in collaboration with the Programme National de Transfusion Sanguine de la République Démocratique du Congo and the Fédération des Associations de donneurs bénévoles de sang. The official ceremony recognized the contribution made by blood donors. A theatrical presentation "For a Drop of Blood" was given.

An award ceremony was held for blood donors. The dignitaries who attended included the Health Minister, Vice-Minister of Health, the General Secretary of Health and the Director of the National Programme of Blood Transfusion. The campaign motto was: "Chers donateurs bénévoles de sang, l'humanité entière vous dit merci pour votre geste d'amour" "Je suis un héros car mon sang sauve des vies. Et toi?"

## GABON

In Gabon, the local newspaper l'Union printed a list of the most regular blood donors, with a special thank you note to mark the occasion. Each donor also received a special certificate, handed out by a representative from the Ministry of Health. Promotional T-shirts were also given out at the donation centres.

## GHANA

In Ghana, a big effort was made to secure the services of voluntary, unpaid donors. The day gave them the chance to thank their 'unsung heroes' who donated many units of blood. According to a laboratory technician, one donor told him, "There's nothing like being able to save someone life, and that's what happens when I give blood." On the day, 117 voluntary non-remunerated donors reported to the clinic at Obuasi and gave blood.

## GUINEA

There was a nation wide campaign to promote WBDD. Among those who received awards were; the 5 best donors who received the National Order of Merit. Schools, blood donor clubs, military garrisons and also the Pre-university and Civic Instruction and teaching institutions played a role in disseminating the information on voluntary blood donation.

## MOZAMBIQUE

There were activities to mark WBDD. Banners and posters were put up. It was a special day dedicated to blood donors to say Thank You for their gift of life. Information was provided on the importance of blood safety and blood donation.

## NIGERIA

The Nigerian Society for Haematology and Blood Transfusion, and the Nigerian Red Cross, marked the day across the country by setting up an essay competition for students in secondary school, with its title being 'blood, a gift for life.' Recognition plaques were presented to regular blood donors. The organizers hoped that the day would make people far more aware of the need to give blood, and to recruit a group of new donors. To reach more people than ever, they set up mobile blood donor centres to travel to parts of the country which had not been previously accessible.

## SENEGAL

In January 2004, Senegal launched its own national campaign to recruit and retain more blood donors. The aim was to encourage 5,000 more people, to join the 25,000 they already had as regular donors.

Officials calculated that they could do this by targeting one region every month during the whole year, to spread their resources. On WBDD, a major celebration was televised in the town of Touba, 190 km from the capital Dakar, with H.E, the President of Senegal gracing the event.

## SOUTH AFRICA

The most spectacular celebrations were seen in South Africa, where WBDD was launched on June 14. World Blood Donor Day partners, the Nelson Mandela Foundation and the South African National Blood Service held a celebration featuring a concert by local artists, stories from Club 25 members and from transfusion recipients whose lives were saved by the generosity of donors, and celebrity guest speakers who highlighted the importance of giving blood. Many celebrities turned out to back the campaign, which also included a huge number of young people and schoolchildren - the people upon whom the future of a safe blood supply depends. The day began with a wonderful banner competition, with children

coming up on stage at the Mosaiek Auditorium in Fairland, Johannesburg to show their colourful displays. Nearly 1000 children from around Johannesburg were brought in for the day, so that they could rub shoulders with their favourite musicians and TV personalities. The compere, Colin Moss, a well-known South African television presenter and actor, added to the ambience as he introduced the different schools and delegates.

Speeches were given by Dr Steffen Groth, Director of the Department of Essential Health Technologies and Dr Neelam Dhingra, Coordinator, Blood Transfusion Safety, from the World Health Organization, as well as Mr. Peter Carolan, Senior Officer, Health and Care Department from the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

The young people who make up Club 25 members also shared their experiences with the audience. South Africa is one of the 39 countries in the world where 100% of blood is collected by voluntary donors. One of the highlights of the day was the arrival of the Health Minister who donated her first unit of blood. The rest of the day included performances from the well-known musicians Mandoza, known as 'the kwaito king', and Heinz Winckler, winner of the 2002 Idols competition. The event was a huge success, with huge media coverage in national papers and TV stations.

## TOGO

There was a blood drive held in December 2004 in Soviébé, Lomé, to mark the World Blood Donor Day. This event was organized by the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. The main theme was to say thank you to the donors and to encourage more people to become regular voluntary donors.

## ZIMBABWE

Government officials in Zimbabwe, one of the 39 countries with an all-volunteer blood supply, praised the youth who contribute 75 percent of the nation's total blood collections. Zimbabwe Health and Child Welfare Minister David Parirenyatwa noted that the country has taken a leading role in teaching neighbouring nations about donor recruitment.



*South African Minister of Health*

## AMERICAS REGION

### ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA

In the Caribbean, new efforts are underway to recruit more donors in order to meet the growing demand for blood. For the past 20 years, the Antigua and Barbuda Red Cross has been encouraging donors, but the need is great. In recent times they have had to import blood from the US to meet demand. Two years ago, a new Red Cross operation began to collect blood for the Holberton Hospital in Antigua. They set up an operation to screen donors, and transport blood to their pathology department. WBDD gave them a new incentive to recognize that work. They held a week of activities to educate the public about the need to provide a safe blood supply. The Minister of Health donated a unit of blood and wall plaques were presented to businesses that promote blood collection drives in the community.

### ARGENTINA

For the past three years, Argentina has been taking action to change the way people think about blood donation in order to increase the number of voluntary regular donors. The Government wants people to see blood donation as an act of social responsibility and solidarity. The Ministry of Health established a National Blood Plan to promote blood donation and set up blood donor groups. WBDD was celebrated in Argentina as part of an ongoing, concerted effort to promote blood donation and to honour those individuals who donate blood regularly and voluntarily. This included viewing a live web cast of the ceremony in Washington by the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO).

### BRAZIL

Brazil has more reason than many other countries to celebrate the day. Parties were held in Sao Paulo and flowers were given out to donors, so that they could emphasize how many lives had been saved by blood donation. Up until 1995, only 10% of the blood donated to the Fundacao Pro Sangue group, Brazil's main institution for blood donation, was given by voluntary unpaid donors.

Today, 70% of the donors are voluntary and, of these, one third are women. Many posters were produced which were distributed at schools and health centres, to get their message across to young people.

### CANADA

A campaign to encourage blood donations was launched, the "This Summer, Carry the Torch" between June 14 and September 5. During this 12-week period, the province usually needs 80,000 donations. Canadian Blood Services released a new Ipsos-Reid survey showing that the country's citizens exaggerate their intentions to donate blood. The survey found that nearly 30 out of every 100 eligible Canadians (28 percent) said they intend to donate blood in the next year, and most respondents said they believed a quarter of Canadians are blood donors. In reality, only 3.7 percent of Canadians donate blood.

### COSTA RICA

Many schools became involved in the day. By singing about it and holding debates, they understood why it was important to recruit more healthy donors to the cause. A number of radio stations across the country also played an important role in getting the message across. A celebration was held in Plaza de la Cultura in the capital city San José. Individuals who had donated the most blood to their regional blood bank attended the ceremony and received certificates. The children who had designed the best drawings were awarded prizes and there was dancing and music as well as informative talks.

"The whole of humanity says thank you to you for your gesture of love."

### CUBA

In 1997, Cuba achieved the target set by WHO of 1 voluntary blood donor per 20 inhabitants. Nevertheless, regular, voluntary donation still needs to be encouraged. To mark WBDD, ceremonies were held in every province

in honour of outstanding donors, who received certificates and medals. At the Marianao Blood Bank in Havana, the country's oldest and youngest blood donor were given special awards and the two donors planted a commemorative tree in the gardens of the blood bank. The press and television covered all the events that took place across the country.

## ECUADOR

Celebrations were held in the capital, Quito, including an awards ceremony attended by over 100 people. The media covered this event and awards were given to donors and to organizations working to promote voluntary blood donation. Outside the capital, further events were organized to mark the day, including well-attended celebrations held in Ambato and Portoviejo. Campaigns will continue to run to encourage voluntary donors to give blood regularly.

## EL SALVADOR

A ceremony was held in honour of blood donors and was attended by 145 guests, including Cristabel Abarca, who has made 108 blood donations in her lifetime, and blood donors from all over the country. The efforts of organizations and individuals were recognized by awarding medals and certificates to all those who had in some way contributed to promoting regular, voluntary blood donation. A special mention went to Eva María Dimas, an Olympic weightlifting champion, who fronted a publicity campaign aimed at recruiting donors. Campaigns were also run to dispel some of the myths surrounding the subject of blood donation, including rumours that contaminated needles are used or that giving blood causes donors to faint. In this way, it was hoped that El Salvador could increase the proportion of blood donors who give blood voluntarily and regularly. Currently, only 10% of donors are voluntary and the aim is to increase this figure to 50% by 2007.

## HONDURAS

In Honduras, two parallel events were held to mark WBDD. Ceremonies took place in Tegucigalpa and San Pedro Sula to thank the voluntary donors who give so generously and to honour those organizations that promote blood donation. Representatives of health authorities, the Red Cross and donor groups gave speeches on the importance of voluntary donation. Three blood donors recounted their own experiences and spoke of the severe blood shortages in Honduran hospitals. They explained that blood donation was an act of social responsibility. The National Blood Programme put up a display and distributed leaflets to inform the general public about blood donation.

## JAMAICA

Jamaica announced that recipients of blood will soon be required to sign consent forms before a blood transfusion is conducted. Speaking at a ceremony in Kingston, the Manager Director of the National Blood Transfusion Service, said recipients must be aware of all the consequences of the treatment as with any medical procedure. This awareness campaign is aimed at giving the blood donors as well as recipients and the general public all the information available in relation to blood safety and blood donation.

## NICARAGUA

WBDD began early in Nicaragua, with representatives of the Red Cross, the Health Ministry and WHO/PAHO viewing the live web cast of the ceremony held in Washington at 8 a.m. In the country itself, an awards ceremony was attended by the Health Minister and voluntary donors. International Recognition Awards were given out to six national organizations working to promote voluntary blood donation and National Recognition Awards were received by 100 national organizations. A special plaque was awarded to the Nicaraguan Red Cross for its work in this area. On Friday 18 June, a special meeting was held for over 300 voluntary donors in recognition of their contribution.

### PANAMA

The day was celebrated with a special event attended by over 150 guests, ranging from health sector workers, university researchers and representatives from the Health Ministry, non-government organizations, the fire service and the police force. The ceremony was held in honour of everyone who works to promote blood donation.

Speeches were made, including one speech by a voluntary donor and the hotel in which the event was held provided an area where people could donate blood during and after the ceremony. The government is working with several organizations including the JICA (Japanese International Cooperation Agency), which is providing funding and material support to recruit voluntary donors. This support will increase when the Government approves the creation of a National Institute for Transfusion Medicine.

### PARAGUAY

In Paraguay, the day was celebrated with a moving ceremony in recognition of voluntary blood donors. Voluntary donors recounted their experiences and the Health Minister gave a speech on the subject. Also, the first group of blood donor recruiters to be trained in accordance with the Red Cross "Making a difference" manual received official certification. The manual aims to encourage recruitment of voluntary, unpaid, altruistic blood donors. The same group of recruiters is designing a voluntary blood donors web page on behalf of the National Blood Transfusion Association.

### PERU

Peruvian students were given the chance to design a poster for the day, and the best design won a prize and was also used to promote blood donations. A week-long series of events was held to mark the day, and encourage more donors to come forward.

### UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

The Americans used the day to launch "Donation Nation", a national programme to increase blood donations among federal government employees to try and reduce their blood shortages across the country. Individuals who are eligible are encouraged to donate blood twice a year, with the best performing blood centres competing for prizes and awards. "Every two seconds a blood transfusion is needed in the United States and there is simply not enough blood to fully meet that need. Each year, volunteer blood donors like you become everyday heroes, donating life-saving blood," Thompson said. "Please consider joining the millions of Americans who make the simple, safe and lifesaving gift of donating blood", said the Secretary of Health. A statement was also issued by the Secretary of Health and Human Services recognizing and thanking blood donors for their generous contributions to their fellow Americans."

In co-operation with the American Association of Blood Banks (AABB), America's Blood Centers (ABC) and the American Red Cross (ARC), government agencies were asked to organize blood drives. Every year, the ARC collects more than six million units from volunteers, which goes to patients in 3,000 hospitals across the country through its national network, but they would like to collect far more. Across the United States, the day was marked with celebrations. In New York, the Mayor gave a press conference and there was a discussion about the need for more blood, especially during the summer months. In Lincoln, Nebraska, a town which loves sport, the day was marked at the ballpark where the semi-professional baseball team plays. Tickets were given away in weekly draws, and blood donors were recognized during a break in the game.



*Campaigns to encourage voluntary donors*

## EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN REGION

### IRAN

Collaborative efforts were made with Iran Red Crescent Society on the occasion of WBDD. Blood donors who had given blood more than 100 times as well as the oldest and youngest donors were given awards. A symbolic dedication was given to Dr. Sheikholeslami for breaking the record of blood donation: 175 times. A national handball championship in honour of the WBDD organized in June by the National Handball Federation.

### JORDAN

A ceremony was held on the occasion, where individuals and corporations, who had made remarkable contributions in blood donation, were recognized. A blood donation campaign was launched on the occasion among business corporations and civil societies of Jordan. Arrangements were made with all media establishments in Jordan to assure successful coverage for the occasion and the campaign. Communications were made with the government organizations, NGOs and the business sector to contribute to this campaign. Communication was also made with trade unions and professional unions of Jordan to participate in the campaign. Seminars and lectures on blood donation were held during the week preceding and the week following the occasion. The support of the Ministry of Islamic Affairs was requested to encourage blood donation, through mosques and religious preachers. Invitations were sent to all medical journals in Jordan to cover the occasion and promote participation in the blood donation campaign. Coordination with the Health Education Department in the Ministry of Health to design a special logo for the occasion, and to launch an education campaign on blood donation. Coordination was established with voluntary associations specialized in activities related to blood donation, to take an active role in the campaign. Such associations are:

- Jordan Association for Blood Diseases.
- Siena Association for Cerebral Palsy. -Foundation for the Care of Cerebral Palsy.
- Associations of Friends of Liver Disease Patients.
- The Society for Care of Neurological Patients.
- Association for Chest and Cardiac Diseases and Surgery.
- Associations of Friends of Kidney Disease Patients.
- Jordanian Foundation of Families of Cancer Patients.
- Jordanian Society for the Promotion of Organ Donation.

Particular activities included issue of a special poster dedicated to WBDD with a special logo, publication of a special issue of "Al Amal" newsletter dedicated to the occasion (the newsletter is a periodical, issued by the staff of the National Blood Bank of Jordan), printing and disseminating of educational leaflets, stickers and a flyer dedicated to the occasion, hoisting street banners dedicated to WBDD with the special logo in selected areas in Jordan, printing and disseminating of T-shirts with the occasion logo, printing special brochures, listing with appreciation the names of individuals and companies, who contributed to the campaign.

### KUWAIT

WBDD was a great way of increasing awareness among the populations, opportunity to emphasize the importance of blood donation and especially to say THANK YOU to blood donors. The day was successfully publicized.

### LEBANON

The Lebanese Red Cross Antelias-Naccache branch, in collaboration with the Rotary clubs of Meten organized various activities to celebrate WBDD.

## EUROPEAN REGION

### MOROCCO

The Moroccan Blood Donor Association aimed at creating awareness about blood donation in all regions of Morocco, as a blood caravan travelled across the country in the week leading up to WBDD. On June 14 there was an evening celebration with entertainment.

### QATAR

A senior official with the Blood Donor Unit at Hamad Medical Corporation in Qatar announced that the families of patients who had received blood transfusion would no longer be required to donate blood. Siddika Ismail said last year in 2003, 70 percent of blood collected by the donor unit was from volunteers, with the remaining blood coming from relatives of patients. The unit now plans to shift to an all-volunteer blood supply and will soon begin nucleic acid testing for HIV and hepatitis, she said.

### SAUDI ARABIA

WBDD was marked by several activities and events to say Thank You to regular voluntary donors and to encourage new donors to join. There was also a presentation on safe blood donation.



### ARMENIA

When Armenia became an independent state, one of the systems that suffered was its voluntary donor recruitment programme. Since then, they have used both patients' relatives and paid donors to supply blood, but they are very keen to revive their programme based on voluntary blood donors. They produced booklets and posters on June 14, and held meetings in hospitals to discuss how blood could be collected safely, allaying fears about infection during blood donation.

### AZERBAIJAN

The Azerbaijan Red Crescent society started to celebrate this date from June 11. On that day in the State Blood Bank, the employees and volunteers of Red Crescent carried out an encouraging campaign and expressed deep gratitude to those people, who regularly gave blood to children with Thalassaemia and Haemophilia as well as to others who need blood. The donors were really happy that their initiative was recognized. "We are trying to help people who are suffering. If I know that my blood saved the life of even one child, I will think that my own life has sense," said one of the blood donors. The information about these blood donors was presented to Red Crescent by the State Blood Bank. Six volunteers acting within Red Crescent 'Volunteer Blood Donor Recruitment' project became blood donors. It should be mentioned that the project has been carried out by the Red Crescent since 2003 with the cooperation of the Azerbaijan Republic Scientific-Research Institute of Haematology and Transfusiology and the Norwegian Red Cross, which financially supported the project.

During the implementation of the project, 40 volunteers were trained on blood donor recruitment with 193 new recruits as voluntary blood donors, a result of five campaigns. On June 14 near the metro stations 'Baki Soveti', 'Elmlar Akademiyasi' and 'Neftchiler', 10 Red Crescent volunteers distributed brochures issued by Red Crescent "Blood is the source of life and power" among the general public. 2000 people were reached during the

campaign. Along with the brochures, Red Crescent distributed 3000 posters "Give blood and save lives" and produced 100 T-shirts and 100 caps. Later on in the Secretariat of the Red Crescent a 'Memorandum of Understanding' was signed for 2005-2007 between the Azerbaijan Red Crescent and Azerbaijan Republic Scientific-Research Institute of Haematology and Transfusiology. The previous Memorandum had been signed in 2003 for 2003-2004. The representatives of the State Blood Bank, UNDP and other organizations participated in this event. The Director of Blood Bank gave two interviews to local radio, where he highly appreciated the cooperation with Azerbaijan Red Crescent and mentioned the significant role of Azerbaijan Red Crescent in blood donor recruitment in Azerbaijan.

## BELARUS

A special ceremony was held for young donors in Minsk, capital of Belarus, to show gratitude for those who give blood. Belarus already has a successful voluntary donor programme, thanks to years of education and awareness about blood donation, and collects 40 to 44 units of blood per 1000 people a year, a figure that corresponds to the WHO targets for a good provision. On June 14, a competition was held to see who had designed the best poster for the promotion of safe blood donation and a healthy lifestyle.

## BELGIUM

A new summer campaign was launched in Belgium to coincide with WBDD. The posters were designed to put people in a holiday mood. They show a bottle of sunscreen, a camera, sunglasses and some maps. In the front there is a to-do list, with the words 'donate blood' which has not been ticked off. The Belgian Red Cross - Flanders wants people to think of donating blood as a natural task, as important as going on holiday, and are inviting them to come to blood transfusion centres. On June 14, they also launched an 'e-card' on their web site - a little note that people could send to a friend, inviting them to donate blood.

## BULGARIA

In Bulgaria, a beautiful and moving exhibition of children's paintings was held in the town of Burgas on June 14, and its theme was 'My story of one drop of blood'. All the children had in some way benefited from blood transfusions. The Bulgarian Red Cross, The Ministry of Health and the National Transfusion Centre joined forces to popularise non-remunerated blood donation in their country under the slogan "Blood is a gift for life. Thank you!" They also held an awards ceremony where ten voluntary donors were given specially designed plaques and a certificate of honour. All the transfusion centres had an open day to encourage new recruits to walk in and see their work.

## COUNCIL OF EUROPE

The Council of Europe, a leading European organization in the field of blood transfusion, joined the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, the International Federation of Blood Donor Organizations, the International Society of Blood Transfusion, and the World Health Organization to celebrate the first World Blood Donor Day on 14 June 2004. Under the patronage of the Secretary General and Deputy Secretary General, the Health Division, together with the French Blood Establishment - Alsace organized a campaign to raise awareness in blood donation among the staff and visitors of the Council of Europe. This initiative provided an opportunity to express solidarity and to thank those individuals who voluntarily donated their blood without any reward, except the knowledge that they had helped to save lives. Finally, the WBDD at the CoE created wider awareness to the importance of voluntary blood donation.

## DENMARK

There are 238,000 donors in Denmark, and all of them were sent a magazine with articles about the day, and about blood donation activities. The launch event in South Africa was shown on TV in Denmark, and the media were

told about WBDD and what it means. A funny poster, called "From Arm to Arm", was distributed around the country to highlight the link between the person going in to make a donation, and the patient whose life will be saved by it.

## FINLAND

A history of the Red Cross Blood Service in Finland, written by Professor Juhani Leikola, was published on June 14, as a way of showing how much had been done in the Scandinavian country to help blood donation. The day was also used to bring in more donors. A tiny key ring was designed and presented to donors that week, and emphasis was made to ensure that there would be enough blood products to help all the community.

## HUNGARY

Hungary has a good history of blood donation, with ten million people donating blood regularly, but there is one region that stands out. The village of Detk has 10% of its population as regular, voluntary donors, which is an extraordinary figure. On June 18, there was a big celebration to mark the first WBDD, organized by the country's Red Cross and their Blood Transfusion Service. Detk officials gave a computer and certificate to each of its schools and thanked the general practitioners who had persuaded young people to donate blood.

## ICELAND

An Open Day in the Blood Bank in Reykjavik, was organized, where the general public and dignitaries were invited to discover the blood bank for themselves. Soccer players were contacted to help with the promotion of blood donation in secondary schools. Media campaign in the newspapers, radio and TV with a notice to the population, that in order to maintain self-sufficiency in blood, new blood donors are needed every year to replace those donors, who are no longer able to give blood.

## ISRAEL

In Israel, 50% of blood donors are aged between 17 and 40. They are encouraged to maintain a healthy lifestyle and to avoid any infections or illnesses which could jeopardize their blood donation and health. WBDD was seen as a way of giving thanks to individuals who donate blood of their own free will, and to encourage more people to become regular donors throughout the year.

## ITALY

WBDD was celebrated by the Blood Donor Association located in Milan, "Amici del Policlinico Donatori di Sangue" through a Happy Hour organized to thank all blood donors who save the lives of many people with the simple and precious act of blood donation. The location the event was a prestigious cloister in downtown Milan, an ancient and elegant place where blood donors, sponsors and collaborators were invited. The evening entertainment was provided by a singer and a jazz band of 22 people that played jazz including "Fever" to "Georgia in my mind", "New York New York" and "April in Paris". In line with the best Milan tradition, the event was characterized by a rich buffet and drinks served by a staff of young donors.

## LATVIA

The main thanksgiving event - a concert and recognition of donors took place on 5 June, in one of the most splendid buildings of Riga - The House of Blackheads. 450 donors from all around Latvia were invited. A concert was performed by the leading performers of the Latvian National Opera. Donors were awarded with Diplomas of Honoured Blood Donor. Speeches were given by the Chairman of the Latvian Parliament, a representative from the Cabinet of Ministers and Riga Municipality, Minister of Health and the President of the Latvian Red Cross. This event was organized by the Latvian Red Cross and financially supported by the Riga Municipality.

## LUXEMBOURG

The National Society for Blood Donation presented Certificates and Honours to corporations that made remarkable contribution to the WBDD campaign. On June 13, the event of the European Union Parliamentary elections was used by the donor associations to distribute information. There was also a good coverage provided in the press.

## MONACO

In the week preceding the WBDD there was a campaign with the distribution of letters with a special stamp. On June 13, visits were organized as well as an information exhibition in a tent placed near the harbour, and the blood bus was also present and interested persons could get in and obtain information about blood donation.

## THE NETHERLANDS

General target - Making use of WBDD on 14 June was an opportunity to send out the message to our donors and the general public that blood donations are of great importance. *Sub-target* - Increasing our name familiarity and improving donor commitment. *Theme* - Sending out the message to donors that patients really appreciate their efforts. *Target groups* - Donors and the general public of the Netherlands.

*Project aim* - In addition to personally and nationally thanking the donors within the framework of WBDD, WBDD 2004 also featured a special theme, i.e. 'patients thank donors'. It was through this theme that we hoped to bring patients and donors closer together. By means of the message "I really appreciate your effort!" "(from the patient) and "I am doing this for you!" (from the donor) the project group aimed at bringing the two parties closer together

## POLAND

In celebration of the first WBDD the activities which took place include conventions and ceremonies, which honoured individuals and corporations with remarkable contributions to blood donation, special galas, concerts and folk festivals, dedicated to extending gratitude to all, voluntary blood donation campaigns, with the participation of famous sportsmen, popular artists and well known public figures, widespread blood collection actions, both in Regional Blood Centre sites and in the open air with mobile teams in buses. Small gifts with logos and candies were distributed to donors on this special occasion. News and reports on WBDD in mass-media, including national and local TV, radio and press. Lectures on voluntary blood donation were held in schools, addressing future blood donors. Special information on WBDD on Regional Blood Centre websites, expressing respect and gratitude to all blood donors.

## ROMANIA

As part of WBDD celebrations, an award ceremony was held in honour of donors. A special THANK YOU message was addressed to them for their gift of life. This occasion was also used to disseminate information in relation to safe blood transfusion as well as blood donation.

## RUSSIAN FEDERATION

Russian Transfusion Association invited blood donors for thanking voluntary non-remunerated blood donors and celebrating World Blood Donor Day. The programme of the day included an "Open Doors Day" in the Blood Centre of the Ministry of Health "Blood service - bridge between donor and recipient". This was followed by the opening of a Memorial Board "For donors and doctors saving the wounded in wars, with blood". There was also an award ceremony of winners of the competition "The Best Donor of Russia. Give blood - save life!"

## SLOVAKIA

Our Blood Center is in Nové Zámky, Slovakia. Our region is situated near the river Danube and since the bridge of "Maria Valéria" was built again we have started a good cooperation with the Blood Center in Esztergom, Hungary, in this field. Every year we organize together for blood donors from both countries a day dedicated to blood donation - "The bridge, which connects us". And the river Danube and the bridge are the symbols of our cooperation. We hope that our friendship will get stronger and last for a long time. We are glad, that on the 14th June 2004 we could take a part in the celebrating together, WBDD in Esztergom, Hungary.

## SLOVENIA

Celebrating the National Blood Donor Day and the WBDD only 10 days apart was very convenient for Slovenia. Our National Blood Donor Day was on 4 June, in recognition of the anniversary of the first official blood collection and conservation after World War II. We therefore started with celebrations a little earlier. The Blood Transfusion Centre of Slovenia and the Slovenian Red Cross organized the main celebration in the capital city Ljubljana. One specific activity was the presentation of a special issue of "Dostop" ("Approach") magazine, containing 21 articles written by different authors, from scientists to artists. The basic topic was altruism and its importance in the modern world. The magazine is free of charge and is distributed to most societies, organizations and publicly influential individuals who can support and build a positive perception about blood donation. An exhibition of posters from different countries, appealing to people to give blood was also prepared.

The premises of the Blood Transfusion Centre were decorated with hundreds of balloons, displaying the logo and motto of WBDD. All blood donors who visited the centre during the week of celebration received a special gift of thanks. Media support (TV, radio, newspapers, electronic media) was quite strong. The representatives of the Blood Transfusion Centre and the Red Cross, as well as many blood donors were interviewed on several news-

shows on national TV, the commercial TV stations and radio stations. Hardly any Slovenian newspaper missed the opportunity to report about the importance of a sustainable blood supply and about the activities organized for this purpose. On 6 June there was a gala concert of the Slovenian Police Wind Orchestra. In this way we wanted to show our respect to the Slovenian blood & bone marrow donors. We also invited participants of the 3rd International Postgraduate School of Immunogenetics in Transfusion Medicine, which was taking place in Ljubljana at the same time. The selection of the audience had a symbolic meaning - it brought together some of those who jointly make blood transfusion and bone marrow transplantation a reality. The concert hall was filled to capacity and the solemn atmosphere showed us that altruism and knowledge are some of our most significant national values. On 12 June the Slovenian Red Cross, supported by the Blood Transfusion Centre of Slovenia, organized a big traditional open-air meeting of several hundreds of blood donors from all parts of Slovenia. Within the programme, the special guest was the Slovenian Minister of Health, who joined the celebration and conveyed his tribute to the people who give blood - the gift of life.

This year's celebrations were concluded with an article, greeting and thanking all blood donors and inviting non-donors to think about joining us and giving blood. The article was published in most Slovenian newspapers on 14 June.

## SPAIN

A speech was given during the WBDD celebrations at the Salón de actos del Ministerio de Sanidad y Consumo (P. Del Prado) by the President of the Spanish Federation of Blood Donors. The theme of the speech was "Blood a gift of life. Thank you." The International Federation of Blood Donors Organization -IFBDO - set the date of June 14. The date was set in agreement with ISBT, the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies - as well concerned about the blood donation - and supported, from the highest positions by the World Health Organization.

The unique celebration of a date of international character has a fundamental objective: to award, honour, thank and highlight the BLOOD DONOR; volunteer, altruist, generous. WBDD gives the opportunity to increase awareness in society. This day is dedicated to those who make it possible, the blood donors. Therefore, the Spanish Federation of Blood Donors, in partnership with the Ministry of Health, organized an award event to those who have shared their healthy blood with those who needed it. For them, who have given the amazing mark of 75 donations, which means 6 times their own blood volume, are given the title of GREAT DONOR. Few things in life are so transcendent and as so deserving of recognition. To this group of generous champions we unite the Personalities and Organizations that deserve the National Merit of Blood Donation by their close collaboration with an activity that is without doubt a paradigm of human solidarity.

## SWEDEN

The award: "Donor Action of the Year" was split this year between three activists in Arvidsjaur and SAAB in Linköping. In Arvidsjaur the couple Göran and Greta Lenmann and Gunnel Person worked as volunteers within the Red Cross to call blood donors and make sandwiches and coffee, when the blood bus visited Arvidsjaur. "They did this with much warmth and joy, so that all donors were happy to come back next time" explained Anne-May Anderson, responsible for the blood bus in the blood center of Umeå. Since the beginning of the 1980's with many military blood donors, Göran organized other members of the local population to become blood donors. He did this by arranging for a stop-over of the blood bus next to the health centre. The blood bus comes from Umeå twice or thrice per year - and up to now the citizens of Arvidsjaur have given 5.764 blood bags (and there are 7.200 inhabitants in Arvidsjaur.) In Linköping SAAB over several decades has established a blood collection room right next to the main entrance - without any cost to the blood centre. And the employees are allowed to give blood within working hours. "The advantage of having a room outside the gate is that all blood donors have the possibility to give blood there", says Pia Alm, blood donor

coordinator at the Blood bank in Linköping. In the old gatehouse, which is now guarded as part of the Cultural Heritage, last year 1.657 blood bags were collected, which corresponds to approximately 7 % of the need for blood in Östergötland. The award-ceremony in Linköping took place on WBDD, June

## SWITZERLAND

During the week preceding and following WBDD, all blood donors coming to one of our centres were given a small, special present: A small chocolate and a card, saying "Thank You for having given Blood today" and informing them about WBDD. Outside of all bigger Blood Donation Centres in Switzerland there were specially created flags, informing the public since the beginning of June about WBDD. The main action: The Swiss Federal Minister of Interior accepted our invitation and came yesterday afternoon to donate blood himself. On this occasion, the media was invited for a photo session and television coverage. The feedback in the media was high. Many Swiss newspapers reported about the WBDD. Media coverage on radio was high as well: The director of the Swiss Blood Transfusion Service was invited to Swiss German radio for a live broadcast which covered all important aspects of blood donation.

## TURKEY

The Blood Banking and Transfusion Society of Turkey (BBTST) conducted activities in co-operation with the Ministry of Health and Red Crescent Society such as display of posters in hospitals, schools, public areas such as bus stops for a week starting from 7 June. Brochures about blood donations were distributed to donors and people. Advertisements appeared in newspapers mentioning WBDD and celebrating voluntary donors on this occasion for two days. Collar rosettes attached were distributed to all visitors in hospitals on 14 June. Workshops and seminars were organized at hospitals in which big blood banks are established. People were informed about this day and the importance of voluntary and regular donations. Ministry of Health, Turkish Red

Crescent and BBTST jointly organized a Press Meeting and released a common message to the public about this day. Two messages were on the Turkish posters: "Thousands of people living in this country owe their lives to volunteer donors. Thanks for your regular donations" "We cannot perceive them, but they are among us. They donate their blood for those they do not know at all. 14 June celebrates world volunteer blood donors".

### UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND

*"Celebrities and supermarkets rally together to support blood donation on 'World Blood Donor Day'"* Thanks to the helping hand of celebrities like Pete Waterman, DJ, John Peel and TV presenter, Carol Smillie blood donor numbers are set to get a boost, commencing WBDD. The first screening of a new generation of advertisements, featuring a total of nine top celebrities was launched by the National Blood Service to coincide with the WBDD. Each piece tells a true story of how the individual celebrity's life was touched by the need for blood. The initiative was intended to raise awareness and so encourage new donors to come forward. Carol Smillie said "Most of us just assume that blood will be there if we need it. It's so easy to forget that there are thousands of volunteer blood donors needed every day and without them all the life saving treatments and procedures that take place regularly would simply stop. I'm so glad to be involved because volunteer blood donors really do save lives" A Spokesman for the NBS said "Blood stocks can fall during the summer period and yet demand remains constant with around 9,000 donations required daily. Through WBDD and the support of so many celebrities, each sharing their own true life stories, we hope to encourage more people to roll up their sleeves and save lives." He added, "We have a range of recruitment activities planned up and down the country. Our message is clear, if you're thinking about becoming a blood donor please pick up the phone or visit our web site and do just that." The NBS and supermarket giant ASDA chose WBDD to join forces for a unique initiative aimed at increasing the number of people giving blood, as well as promoting the importance of blood donation in general. The

partnership saw ASDA stores across the region taking part in a variety of events including blood donor sessions for staff and customers, announcements on in-store loudspeakers and coverage on ASDAtv and ASDAfm, as well as recruiting new donors both inside and outside local stores. ASDA Store's Community Director, said: "As part of our continued commitment to supporting local communities, we're delighted to team up with the NBS and hope our support will help many more people across the UK."



WBDD Campaign

## SOUTH-EAST ASIA REGION

### INDIA

There were a huge number of activities planned by the National Blood Transfusion Council, the Governments of India and of West Bengal State, the AIDS Prevention & Control Society & WHO, India. A motorcycle rally was held on 14 June from Raktadan Bhavan to Science City, Kolkata, as well as ceremonies to thank the most prominent voluntary blood donors.

The Association of Voluntary Blood Donors, West Bengal had a two-day programme on June 13 and June 14, 2004. The programme included ten blood donation camps, and a workshop for school education experts to recruit the donors of tomorrow. In Punjab, a cycle rally and a press conference were held to stress the importance of safe donation. Osmania Medical College Doctors' Forum, a voluntary body of doctors concerned with health and development, held a media briefing on the day to popularize the concept of voluntary blood donations in the state of Andhra Pradesh. In Delhi, thank you messages for blood donors were sent on inflated balloons around the prominent sites in the city. There was also a symposium on quality in blood donation to provide an opportunity to highlight the fact that voluntary non-remunerated blood donors are the foundation of a safe blood supply, as they are associated with significantly lower levels of infections that can be transmitted by transfusion, including HIV and hepatitis viruses. In Calcutta, a state bus and a tram car decorated as tableau with blood donor organizers moved across the city throughout the day thanking the donors and inviting people to become blood donors.

In West Bengal, the Voluntary Blood Donors' Forum in collaboration with West Bengal State AIDS Prevention & Control Society celebrated this Day by organizing a national workshop on non-remunerated Voluntary Blood Donors, where leading motivators and eminent scientists and physicians participated. 25 blood donors were part of a programme which was inaugurated by the Minister of Health and Family Welfare. West Bengal Ministers of State and government community leaders were present. In Madhya Pradesh WBDD was celebrated in a grand way. From 1 to 14 June, blood donation camps were set up throughout the state, after two months of preparation.

### MYANMAR

Special WBDD Day badges were made in order to highlight the day. A Health talk for WBDD took place in the Institute of West Yangon (Htandabin), where the speakers explained the motto "Blood, a gift for life. Thank you." On the day itself a ceremony was held in the International Business Centre (IBC) Yangon, jointly organized by the Department of Health and Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA). Nearly 400 participants attended as well as representatives from the Ministry for Health. A mass blood donation session from Yangon University was held in the University Hospital organized by its Red Cross Society.

### NEPAL

A one-day talk program was held in Lalitpur District focusing on the youth on campus. An exhibition took place in Kathmandu at its blood bank and central office. There were thanks for regular donors who were given a shield and certificate. Tea and snacks were on offer on behalf of the Blood Donors' Association.

### SRI LANKA

An ambitious programme of events was planned to celebrate WBDD which focused on the youth. A public lecture on blood safety and donation was held to attract and educate the unpaid blood donors particularly the young people. A special award ceremony for blood donors was held with some famous sports people giving their support. WBDD T-shirts, caps, pins, banners and stickers were produced to promote visibility and focus on the donation of blood to save lives.

### THAILAND

A huge number of events were organized in Thailand, including a "Walk for Life" parade by blood donors and their families from various participating groups which ended at the National Blood Centre in Bangkok.

## WESTERN PACIFIC REGION

### CHINA

China decided to mark the day by holding an academic symposium which promoted the safety and efficacy of blood transfusion. More than 200 health workers came to the event, where experts gave lectures on "Selection from low-risk donors", "Quality assurance in transfusion" and "Rational use of blood in Clinics". They also set up a new freestanding blood collection site in QI BAO town, a suburb in Shanghai on 13th June 2004. A total of 163 units of blood were collected on that day in the new region, hitting top in daily voluntary collections. In a bid to increase the scientific awareness of the importance of voluntary donations, information related to significance of low-risk, voluntary non-remunerated blood donation was disseminated to the public through press conference, radio programs, TV broadcasts and newspapers on the day itself. More than 5000 elaborate souvenirs, like T-shirts, mugs, pins and flyers with WBDD logo and messages were also distributed to the voluntary donors in appreciation for their altruistic act of giving blood.

Hong Kong launched a "Thank You, Blood Donor" greeting card design competition in April 2004. The winning designs of the print-card group were printed as "thank you" cards for donors who give blood beginning June 14. The Hong Kong Red Cross started the territories' voluntary non-remunerated blood donation programme in 1952. To date, the Hong Kong Red Cross Blood Transfusion Service (BTS) is the only public institution providing blood to all hospitals in Hong Kong. The success of the BTS in achieving blood adequacy and safety in Hong Kong relies largely on the support of voluntary non-remunerated blood donors. We were pleased to announce the dedication of 14 June every year as the WBDD and were most delighted to join the world in celebrating this special occasion with our blood donors. To dedicate WBDD, complimentary messages were written from the Chief Executive of Hong Kong Special Administrative Region to blood donors in Hong Kong. Hong Kong holds an Annual Donor Award Ceremony to present awards to multiple times donors with donation at 25 times or its multiples. This year, there were more than 1,700 awardees, including the record keeper with more than 300 times of blood donations! In addition, awards were also presented to schools with

outstanding achievement in Schools' Blood Donation Programme. Secondary school students have always been our education focus for blood donation and they have been one of the major sources of blood collection in Hong Kong.

The media was invited to cover the Donor Award Ceremony in celebration of WBDD. Souvenir badges on WBDD and Thank You cards were presented to blood donors who came to give blood from 14th June 2004 onwards.

### COOK ISLANDS

The Red Cross society started its media activities the week before. There was a competition for the best poster done by school students and prizes for this were presented at the launch. Blood donors were invited for a special lunch with the Minister of Health.

### JAPAN

WBDD in Japan was celebrated in various Blood Centres. Among the activities included "A Potted Plant Campaign" and information on blood donation and blood safety was widely disseminated.

### MALAYSIA

This country planned a series of blood donation campaigns in Johor Bahru, Johor. In conjunction with WBDD, health workers held a big event promoting the act of blood donation in several shopping malls in and around Johor City. They also set up an exhibition related to health promotion, blood donation and the humanitarian work carried out by the Red Crescent Society.

### MONGOLIA

In Mongolia, enormous efforts were made to publicize the day and spread the message about the need for a safe, secure blood supply. A specially made TV advertisement

went out on Mongolian National TV and UBS TV on June 13 and 14, 2004, and information was published in the newspapers. A special phone card with promotional information was printed, and two large advertisement boards were installed in the central square of Ulaan Bator that week. A press conference was held on the actual day in a hotel, where awards were made to donors.

## NEW ZEALAND

In New Zealand the theme for World Blood Donor Day was “unsung heroes” and some of the country’s well known heroes in sport and entertainment honoured donors by acting as hosts at each New Zealand Blood Service fixed site, welcoming donors and providing them with refreshments. The NZBS mascot “the Blood Dude” was dressed as a super hero and super hero suits were even worn by a member of the reception or nursing staff at each centre. The Former Prime Minister, himself a recipient, agreed to take part on the day. The NZBS developed a red armband as a creative device for the day - the colour signifies life-giving blood, it is worn on the arm where the donor blood comes from and it is representative of the cuff. TV personalities and other celebrities wore this band on the day itself. The NZBS also turned the water in two fountains red to signify the quantities of blood needed on a daily basis.

## PHILIPPINES

Several blood donation teams were based in different strategic places in Manila, mostly in the big shopping malls. Leaflets, streamers, and other publicity material were also given out to maximize awareness of the day.

## SINGAPORE

What better way to thank blood donors than having recipients express their gratitude to blood donors on WBDD? Hospitals, clinics and medical institutions were enlisted to invite those whose lives were touched by the selfless contribution of voluntary blood donors to pen a

note for the gift-of-life. Publicity posters and post cards were put up at hospitals, clinics and also Railway stations to invite people to send in their notes of thanks. These post cards were displayed as a “Wall of Thanks” at the blood centre.

An 8-day road show cum blood donation was also held in the centre of Singapore. Donors who had donated their 75th, 100th and 125th unit of blood were presented with a medallion by a Minister, and the Champion of Champions Award was launched, as part of the WBDD celebration, to recognize the contributions of donors who have given their 150th unit of blood. A special WBDD pin was given to blood donors from 1st June, to encourage them to wear the pin on 14 June to commemorate the day itself.

## SOLOMON ISLANDS

On 14 June there was an Annual Awards event, instigated to thank and honour partners, and the volunteer donors who had selflessly made donations to help the Blood Service.



*Expressing gratitude to volunteer donors*

# HOW TO START A VOLUNTARY BLOOD DONOR ORGANIZATION

## THE IMPORTANCE OF A VOLUNTARY BLOOD DONOR ORGANIZATION

The ideal foundation for a safe blood supply is a committed group of healthy, altruistic blood donors who have been recruited - and retained - by a well-organized and dynamic **voluntary blood donor organization**. Countries that have efficient voluntary blood donor organizations are able to sustain a constant inflow of donors. The goal of securing a sufficient number of voluntary, non-remunerated blood donors has not yet been achieved in many of the countries with the greatest need for a regular and safe supply of blood. A voluntary blood donor organization can be critical in ensuring that there is a sufficient blood supply. This Fact Sheet outlines how to set up and administer such an organization in your community.

## WHO SHOULD BE INVOLVED

A few highly enthusiastic volunteers should be found, preferably at the local level. While medical doctors are experts in their field, they often have little or no experience in marketing, public advocacy, media strategy, fund-raising, or law. It is in these areas that the expertise of volunteers can be especially helpful. The volunteers should be supported by an adequate budget that will cover logistical expenses and also pay for outreach campaigns.

## THE ROLE OF VOLUNTEERS

The role of volunteers within a blood donor organization should include the following:

- Maintaining close contact with local blood centres to ascertain the need for donors
- Urging lawmakers to enact legislation, where necessary, to prohibit the practice of paid or family replacement donation
- Working closely with health authorities to establish the necessary guidelines for blood donation - for instance maintaining the anonymity of both donor and patient - and ensuring that blood centres are sufficiently modern and efficient. Experience shows it is difficult to retain donors if collection facilities are shoddy and blood centre staff inefficient and badly trained
- Enhancing the donor's experience by greeting, guiding and accompanying them throughout their donation experience
- Helping educate current and potential blood donors about the crucial service they can provide by avoiding high-risk behaviour
- Urging other voluntary organizations - such as church groups, boy and girl scout organizations, labour unions and sports teams - to support and participate in the recruitment of voluntary blood donors
- Forming partnerships with curriculum coordinators of schools and training colleges so blood donor information becomes part of educational programmes

## CREATING A NATIONAL NETWORK

When a number of local donor organizations have been established, a national organization of voluntary, unpaid blood donors can be created. The national organization should have a board that would include a medical adviser from a blood bank, a coordinator of information activities, and a legal expert who can advise on legislative matters. The national donor organization should, at an early date, establish a comprehensive database of local blood donor organizations and seek funds - preferably from public sources - for the establishment of a national office. These funds would be used to facilitate:

- Participation in exchange visits and international donor federation meetings
- The purchase of office equipment, computers, and a phone line with a permanent and easily recognized phone-number
- The production of press packets to target media and regular newsletters to be distributed to the public; the purchase of software to create on-line campaign materials and recruitment tools
- The development of a logo, T-shirts and other recruitment material geared toward new donors
- Training seminars for new volunteers

Developing a strong donor culture and efficient donor organizations may take years and considerable patience and work. But the rewards - a network of efficient blood donor organizations and a regular and safe blood supply - are well worth the effort.



## STRATEGIES TO ENCOURAGE REPEAT BLOOD DONATION

The National Blood Service in the United Kingdom has carried out extensive research into donor motivation and retention in England and Wales. Following are some of the findings and methods that can help recruit and retain blood donors in other countries:

service they receive from staff is professional, caring and appreciative, and are willing to forgive or ignore any negative experiences that they might have had.

### SESSION AVAILABILITY ENCOURAGES DONATION

Donor frequency and donor retention are largely driven by session availability. An appointment options should be available at each collection centre and all donors should be attended to in a timely manner. If people are forced to wait for unacceptable periods of time while at the donation centre they perceive the staff to be inefficient, unenthusiastic, and ungrateful. If beds are empty while people are waiting to donate, these negative impressions tend to be reinforced.

### GOOD TREATMENT OF DONORS PROMOTES RETENTION

Donors must be treated as individuals. The manner that thanks, reward and recognition are applied has an effect on retention, as does giving more bedside care to first-time donors. The aura of a professional and organized “medical” environment is also essential to maintain motivation. Donors tend to be put off if they have bad experiences, such as failed venepuncture or bruises.

### CONTINUED REINFORCEMENT KEEPS DONORS INVOLVED

Donors should constantly be made to feel good about belonging to a select group of altruistic people. Donors must be educated about the world of blood, as the knowledge that blood donation is essential to prevent deaths is a strong motivation. Written communication can be used to inform and educate, but must appear in jargon-free language and not give the perception of waste. Repeat blood donors perceive that there is a constant need for blood and approach blood donation with feelings of duty, responsibility and pride. They tend to feel that the



*Blood donation shouldn't harm the donor*

## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ABOUT BLOOD DONATION

### WHY IS IT NECESSARY TO GIVE BLOOD?

There is a constant need for a regular supply of blood, especially in developing countries where there is seldom enough of this precious resource. Since blood can only be stored for a limited period of time before use, regular blood donation ensures patients can get blood transfusions whenever and wherever needed.

### WHAT IS SAFE BLOOD AND HOW IS IT USED?

Safe blood is blood that does no harm to the person who receives it. Safe blood can be life-saving, but unsafe blood can cause serious illness or even death to the recipient.

Blood is unsafe if, at the time of donation, any infection is present in the donor's blood that can be transmitted by transfusion. Infections that can be transmitted by blood include HIV, which leads to AIDS; Hepatitis B; Hepatitis C; Syphilis; Chagas disease and Malaria. Safe blood is used mainly for transfusions that are given to women with pregnancy-related complications; children with severe anaemia; accident victims; and surgical and cancer patients.

### WHAT HAPPENS WHEN I GIVE BLOOD?

Before you give blood, you will be asked some questions about your medical history, current health, lifestyle and recent travel. These questions will be asked only to safeguard your own health and the health of the person receiving your blood. In some countries, blood is still not yet tested for all infections that can be transmitted by transfusion. This is why it is so important to be truthful about any reasons why your blood might not be safe. You will be told whether you are eligible to give blood and, if not, whether you may be able to donate blood in the future. Any personal information that you are asked to give will be kept confidential. After answering the questions you will also be given a brief medical examination to check your pulse, blood pressure and weight. A drop of blood will then be taken from your fingertip to check that giving blood will not make you

anaemic. Your health is very important to the blood transfusion service and blood will not be taken unless you can safely make a donation that day. Donating blood is simple. You will be made as comfortable as possible, usually in a special chair or on a bed. The area inside one of your elbows will be cleaned with an antiseptic solution before a trained health worker inserts a sterile needle, connected to a special blood bag, into your vein. It usually takes about 10 minutes to give a unit of blood.

After resting for 10 or 15 minutes and taking some refreshment, you will be able to return to your normal activities although you should avoid strenuous activity for the rest of the day. You should drink plenty of fluids for the next 24 hours. Blood donation is very safe and few donors suffer any discomfort or problems during or after donating.

### WILL I CATCH ANY DISEASES BY DONATING BLOOD?

No. The needles used in blood collection are new, clean, and sterile and are disposed of after each use. These instruments will not come into contact with any other donors. There is no risk of acquiring any disease, such as HIV, hepatitis B or C, through donating blood if new, sterile and disposable equipment is used for each donation.

### WHY AM I NOT PAID FOR MY BLOOD DONATION?

The life of every patient who receives blood depends on the openness and honesty of the individual donors who have given their blood. Research shows that people who give blood freely and without any financial reward have little reason to conceal information about their health and lifestyle that may make them unsuitable to give blood. 'Paid' or 'family replacement' donors are statistically more likely to conceal information about their health and lifestyle, and thus their blood has been proven to be less safe than that of voluntary nonremunerated donors.

### WHO SHOULD GIVE BLOOD, AND HOW OFTEN?

Blood can be donated by most people who are healthy and do not have an infection that can be transmitted through their blood. The age at which people are eligible to give blood varies between countries, but is commonly between the ages of 17 and 65. Healthy adults can give blood regularly. In most countries, men can give blood every three months and women can give blood every four months.

### WHO SHOULD NOT GIVE BLOOD?

The first concern of the blood transfusion service is to ensure that blood donation does no harm to the donor. If you think that your blood may be unsafe, another person's life may depend on your decision not to donate blood.

You should not give blood if:

- you are feeling unwell
- you are pregnant or have been pregnant within the last year
- you have certain medical conditions, such as heart disease, high or low blood pressure, diabetes, epilepsy
- you are taking certain medications
- you have or may have recently contracted a sexually-transmitted disease, such as HIV or syphilis, that can be passed on to a patient through your blood
- your lifestyle puts you at risk of contracting an infection that can be transmitted through your blood: for example, if you have more than one sexual partner or have sexual contact with prostitutes
- you have ever injected drugs
- you have had sexual contact with anyone in the above categories.

Remember, you or a member of your family may need the gift of blood one day. You would expect to receive safe blood others have an equal right to know that the blood they are given is safe. And even if there are health

reasons why you can't actually give blood, you can still help do something amazing, for example by encouraging your family and friends to donate.



*Department of Essential Health Technologies  
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