

Message from the Regional Director



Safe blood saves millions of lives each year. Provision of safe blood is a fundamental need for the health system of every country. Blood cannot be synthesized artificially. Human beings are the only source of this life-saving product. But a shortage of safe blood in several developing countries often leads to unnecessary deaths or ill-health. Hence there is an urgent need for more people to donate blood on a regular basis to save precious lives. Against an annual estimated requirement of 15 million blood units in the South-East Asia Region, only around 9.5 million units are collected every year.

Blood can also be a potential source of transmission of several dreadful diseases. These include among other, HIV, hepatitis B and hepatitis C. The shortage of blood and the risk of often fatal infections can be considerably reduced by promoting voluntary, non-remunerated blood donations. All over the world it has been shown that regular, voluntary, non-remunerated donors from low-risk population groups are the safest donors. In the South-East Asia Region, only 61% of donated blood is obtained from voluntary donors. However, there is a great variation between, as well as within, the countries. Clearly, there is an urgent need for social and political leadership to prioritize this critical area.

World Blood Donor Day has been designated as an annual event by the World Health Assembly in 2005. On this day, we recognize the “gift of life” made by voluntary blood donors. We celebrate and express our gratitude to all those who are helping to save lives and mitigate misery by donating blood. The celebration of this day by several partners including WHO, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, the International Society of Blood Transfusion and the International Federation of Blood Donor Organizations also aims to raise awareness globally about the need for regular and voluntary blood donation. The ultimate goal is that every country should achieve 100 per cent voluntary and unpaid blood donation.

The theme of this year’s World Blood Donor Day is “Giving Blood Regularly”, to support national blood programmes in building a stable base of voluntary unpaid donors who make a long-term commitment to blood donation.

WHO will continue to provide technical support to global efforts in augmenting the availability of safe blood. We are also committed to work closely with the collaborating organizations for promoting voluntary blood donations through active involvement of governmental and nongovernmental organizations. Together we are striving towards the ultimate aim of assuring universal access to safe blood and blood products.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Samlee Plianbangchang". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Samlee Plianbangchang, M.D., Dr.PH.
Regional Director