

## **Message from Dr Poonam Khetrapal Singh, Regional Director for WHO South-East Asia Region, on the occasion of World Blood Donor Day, 14 June 2017**



Safe blood saves millions of lives each year. A blood service that gives patients timely access to safe blood and blood products in satisfactory amount is a vital aspect of an efficient health system. Blood is an important resource, both for scheduled treatments and urgent interventions. Every second, someone in the world needs blood for surgery, trauma, severe anaemia or complications of pregnancy. Blood is also vital for treating the patients during emergencies of all kinds (natural disasters, accidents, armed conflicts, etc. and during outbreaks).

Ensuring safe and sufficient blood supplies requires the development of a nationally coordinated blood transfusion service based on voluntary non-remunerated blood donations. Blood transfusion is an exceptional technology that amalgamates science with altruism.

The World Health Assembly in 2005 designated 14 June as World Blood Donor Day, to be celebrated as an annual event in collaboration with the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, the International Society of Blood Transfusion, and the International Federation of Blood Donor Organizations. Since then, every year, on 14 June, countries around the world celebrate World Blood Donor Day (WBDD) to raise awareness of the need for safe blood and blood products and to thank blood donors for their life-saving gifts of blood.

While the need for blood is universal, millions of patients requiring transfusion do not have timely access to safe blood and there is a major imbalance between developing countries in access to safe blood. It is generally recommended that the equivalent of 1–3% of the population should donate blood to meet a country's needs. WHO has developed a global strategy for safe blood to guide Member States in strengthening their blood transfusion services and providing safe blood to everyone who needs it. WHO is providing technical support to Member States in escalating the implementation of the global strategy for safe blood. Components of the Global Strategy for Safe Blood include establishing nationally coordinated blood transfusion

systems, 100% voluntary, non-remunerated donations, improving and assuring the quality of transfusion transmitted infections (TTIs) testing, the rational use of blood, separation of blood components and haemovigilance.

Currently, around 15.9 million units of blood are collected annually against the estimated requirement of 18 million units annually in the WHO South-East Asia Region. Of these, around 82% of donated blood is obtained from voluntary non-remunerated donors (VNRDs). The ultimate goal is for every Member State is to achieve 100% voluntary and unpaid blood donations by 2020. All collected blood units (100%) are tested for TTIs. Around 47% of collected blood is separated into blood components. Most of the Member States have developed national guidelines for the rational use of blood.

Blood transfusion is an indispensable element of emergency health care also. Emergencies upsurge the demand for blood transfusion and make its supply difficult. The satisfactory supply of blood during emergencies necessitates a well-structured blood service. It can only be guaranteed by appealing to the entire community and to a blood donor population from low-risk areas committed to voluntary unpaid blood donation throughout the year.

This year's campaign focuses on blood donation in emergencies. In any crisis or emergency situation, the natural human response is "What can I do? How can I help?" Therefore, in response to that the slogan for the 2017 campaign is: "What can you do? Give blood. Give now. Give often".

The campaign underscores the role every single person can play in helping others in emergency conditions by giving the treasured gift of blood. It also centres on the fact that it is vital to give blood regularly so that the blood stock is sufficient before emergencies arise.

On World Blood Donor Day 2017, I express my gratitude to voluntary, non-remunerated donors for their noble life-saving contribution. I urge Member States to involve, educate and empower communities to regularly and voluntarily donate blood. I also urge Member States to ensure that safe blood is accessible for all patients requiring transfusion in an appropriate manner, thus contributing to patients' health, safety and survival.



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Regional Director

<http://www.searo.who.int/entity/bloodsafety/en/>