

Towards 100% Voluntary Blood Donation

A Global Framework for Action



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Preface

Blood transfusion is a core service within health care systems and individuals who donate their blood provide a unique contribution to the health and survival of others. Every country faces an ongoing challenge to collect sufficient blood from safe donors to meet national requirements. The donation of blood by voluntary non-remunerated blood donors is recognized as being crucial for the safety and sustainability of national blood supplies. Systems based on replacement donation by the family and friends of patients requiring transfusion are rarely able to meet clinical demands for blood while paid “donation” poses serious threats to the health and safety of the recipients as well as the donors themselves.

While some countries have well-established systems of voluntary blood donation, the majority are still dependent to varying degrees on family/replacement donors and sometimes on paid donors. Building a sustainable base of safe blood donors requires a long-term approach that requires not only the establishment of an effective voluntary blood donor programme but also improved public awareness and acceptance of the importance of blood donation as a social norm. With the publication of this global framework for action, the World Health Organization (WHO) and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) aim to support national blood donor programmes in building a stable base of the safest possible blood donors to ensure the safety, sufficiency and sustainability of national blood supplies.

WHO and the IFRC are committed to the achievement of 100% voluntary blood donation and have a long history of collaboration in the area of blood safety and availability. The strength of the partnership lies in its complementary and synergistic approach at national as well as global level. WHO is committed to supporting its Member States in building safe and sustainable national blood supplies and works primarily with ministries of health, national blood programmes and national blood transfusion services. The IFRC focuses on building community awareness and promoting voluntary blood donation through its network of National Societies.

The strategic collaboration between WHO and the IFRC was marked by the designation of Blood Safety as the theme of WHO’s World Health Day on 7 April 2000, supported by the IFRC. This formed the foundation for the establishment of World Blood Donor Day¹⁻² jointly sponsored by WHO, the IFRC, the International Federation of Blood Donor Organizations and the International Society of Blood Transfusion. The Day is now celebrated each year throughout the world on 14 June to raise awareness of the importance of blood donation and recognize the contribution of voluntary non-remunerated blood donors in saving lives and improving health.

The two organizations have also jointly organized a series of regional and national training workshops for blood donor managers and have produced *Developing a Voluntary Blood Donor Programme*,³ a CD-ROM containing materials for use in training courses for blood donor managers, staff and volunteers working in blood donor programmes.

Towards 100% voluntary blood donation: a global framework for action strengthens the collaboration between WHO and the IFRC and is designed to help in forging even stronger partnerships between health authorities and civil society in the goal to ensure the safety and availability of blood transfusion for all patients who require it as part of their treatment.

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