

MALAWI BLOOD TRANSFUSION SERVICE



CLUB 25 NEWS LETTER

JULY/AUGUST 2005

Malawi Blood Transfusion Service (MBTS) is appealing to all youth to become voluntary non-remunerated blood donors as a “Club 25” member. Several countries have established “Club 25’s” such as Haiti, Togo, Botswana, South Africa, India, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Philippines, Indonesia Bangladesh and Malawi. In Malawi, “Club 25” has been established in institutions of learning and training such as; universities, colleges, and secondary schools and in community youth groups. Youths contribute approximately 80% of the total blood collected by Malawi Blood Transfusion Service. So far 75 individual clubs have been established in the southern region of Malawi. Plans have been developed to establish clubs in the central and northern regions later this year. The goal is to establish “Club 25” Chapters countrywide and reach out to all youth in Malawian.

What is “Club 25”? This might be a strange question to some people. However, it is definitely not to young people. This is one of the most prestigious clubs in the world. “Club 25” is a club for young blood donors aged between 16 and 25 who pledge to donate at least 25 units of blood in their life time. In Malawi, the initiative falls under the Malawi Blood Transfusion Service (MBTS), which provides the support and infrastructure required.

A Video and DVD on “Club 25” , which was launched at the Malawi Institute of Tourism (MIT) in March 2004, has been produced. Two Malawians, Joyce Nhlane and Megder Mkonjo signed up as the first members. World Health Organisation (WHO) and International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRCRCS) are using the video as promotional material for young people who would like to become club members worldwide.

“Club 25” ensures that youth remain eligible and safe blood donors by encouraging them to lead a healthy lifestyle. In this regard, young blood donors play an important role in HIV/AIDS prevention and control strategies as peer educators. In this way, their role in community-health advocacy messages for behavioural change and HIV prevention has a significant impact. Thus, they create synergies for the national efforts in the promotion of safe lifestyles.

What are the objectives? The objectives of “Club 25” are to educate, motivate and recruit Malawian youth to donate blood regularly. “Club 25” also seeks to retain young blood donors and develop a culture of blood donation amongst Malawian citizens. “Club 25” provides comprehensive information on HIV/AIDS to all club members so as to promote safe lifestyles amongst its members. In the long term, with an increase in the number of blood donors, this will ensure a safe and adequate blood supply to all hospitals in Malawi.

Who can become a club Member? To be eligible as a member of “Club 25” a person must be within the age bracket of 16-25 years, must have donated at least twice and once in the past 12 months, must commit to donating at least 25 units of blood in their life time, should try to donate at least twice a year and commit to leading a safe lifestyle and avoid risky behaviour.

What are the benefits of being a member of “Club 25”? This is one of the most frequently asked questions. There are many benefits, most of these are intangible but are nevertheless significant. Club members learn leadership skills and achieve personal development through social interaction. In addition, members are recognised as role models for their “*gift of life*” and “*saving lives*” through blood donation and for the Global Network of “Club 25” members. They are also recognised for their good work and altruism by receiving MBTS milestone awards, free information and training on safe lifestyles and avoidance of risky behaviour.

Young people are encouraged to join “Club 25” and increase their sense of belonging to the Global Blood Donor Community. In addition, members have a chance to share experiences, ideas, insights and are able to support and encourage one another. HIV prevalence rates in “Club 25” members are much lower when compared to a matched population of youth who are not “Club 25” members.

“Club 25” will ensure that safe blood is always readily available for all who need this *life saving fluid* in the hospitals of Malawi. It is very pleasing to note that “Club 25” has been well established, with a solid foundation and a promising future. These achievements have been recognised by WHO and IFRCRCS and the International Community, which identified Malawi as a model in 2005 for other developing countries.

As youth of Malawi, let us show our commitment and pride by signing up as active members of “Club 25” and join the Global Movement to save lives through blood donation. Paradoxically, it **COSTS** nothing to give blood yet blood **SAVES** lives. And we all know that once **LOST**, a life can not be **BOUGHT!**

All young people who qualify to become club members are encouraged to liaise with their institutional heads and club patrons (usually School Heads) and contact the MBTS “Club 25” Coordinator.

Give blood, save lives!

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