

PRESS RELEASE

MALAWI BLOOD TRANSFUSION SERVICE



Announcing World Blood Donor Day, 14 June 2007

“Celebrating your gift of blood”

World Blood Donor Day is celebrated every year on 14 June to honour and thank those people who give the most special gift of all – the Gift of Life, by donating their blood on a voluntary, non remunerated (unpaid) basis.

Malawi Blood Transfusion Service (**MBTS**) will, for the fourth year running, join the international community to commemorate the day on June 14. To mark the day, MBTS will organise events and activities at the **Indian Country Club, Area 2** in Lilongwe, where representatives of blood donors from across the country will be in attendance. This year, the theme is **“Safe Blood for Safe Motherhood”** to highlight how voluntary blood donors play a vital role in saving lives of thousands of mothers and their newborns. Each year over 500 000 women die needlessly during pregnancy or childbirth – 99% of them in the developing world.

Uncontrolled severe bleeding can kill even a healthy woman within two hours. Loss of blood contributes up to 44% of maternal deaths in Africa where the risk of maternal death is 1 in 16 compared to 1 in 65 in Asia and 1 in 2700 in North America. Up to one quarter of all maternal deaths could be avoided by ensuring that hospitals have an adequate supply of safe blood and blood products. The need for safe blood is universal, but access to safe blood for those who need it is not. The shortage of safe blood is acute in developing countries, where the majority of the world’s population lives. To ensure that its citizens have access to safe blood, each country needs voluntary unpaid blood donors who give blood regularly.

As one element of worldwide efforts to ensure universal access to safe blood, the day itself aims to raise awareness of the need for safe blood, to thank and honour those who donate blood and to encourage current and potential donors to commit to regular voluntary blood donation. The day is also a call to action to governments, national health authorities and national blood transfusion services, to expand and ensure the quality of their blood donor and blood collection programmes.

World Blood Donor Day is jointly coordinated by World Health Organization (WHO), International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), International Federation of Blood Donor Organizations (FIODS) and International Society of Blood Transfusion (ISBT). Each year these partners join together in an international event that provides focus for a global media campaign to raise awareness of the need for safe blood and the importance of regular voluntary unpaid blood donation. The founding partners will this year hold a global event in Ottawa, Canada hosted by Health Canada in conjunction with Canadian Blood Services and Hema-Quebec.

MBTS will take this opportunity to create an awareness of the importance of voluntary unpaid blood donation and to encourage more people to become regular blood donors and promote the static blood collection centres in Blantyre and Lilongwe.

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