



World Blood Donor Day

Local Theme: Every Drop Counts: Give Blood Today



An Ambitious Drive for Life

By EVANS ONGWAE

An ambitious drive by Safaricom, BloodLink Foundation and the National Blood Transfusion Service to recruit new regular blood donors is making great progress. During the launch at the Kenyatta International Conference Centre (KICC) in February this year, a record 1,300 donors came forward and this was replicated in subsequent drives countrywide. The KICC event set a record in the number of voluntary donors in a single drive. Another drive was held in Kisumu in April and 804 pints of blood were donated.

During these drives GlaxoSmithKline donates Lucozade drinks while the National Hospital Insurance Fund (NHIF) provides the logistics.

Dubbed Safaricom "Blood for Life drive" the nationwide blood donation campaign seeks to address the perennial blood shortage experienced by the country and help save lives.

Current national blood demand stands at 200,000 units a year against a supply of 100,000. A shrinking pool of donors consisting mainly of secondary school children has meant that the blood requirements of the country are not being met. Blood is mainly used to treat anemia in pregnant women and during childbirth, children suffering from blood deficiency due to infections like malaria, trauma cases such as accident victims and in routine surgery.

The current shortfall is attributed mainly to issues related to the advent of the HIV/Aids virus. Donors are reluctant to donate due to fears of their HIV status being known to themselves or others since they have to be screened for the virus and other infections before their

blood is accepted. Coupled with this is the fear of use of unsterilised needles.

However, BloodLink Foundation Executive Director, Mr. Joseph Wang'endo, says these fears are unfounded. One's health status is confidential and can only be released to the donor on request. All needles used are sterile disposables and the chances of infection are nil.

It is against this backdrop that Safaricom "Blood for Life Drive" was conceptualized. Working with the National Blood Transfusion Service and BloodLink Foundation, the initiative hopes to raise 10,000 units of blood by December this year. Other partners are KISS FM and pharmaceutical giant GlaxoSmithKline. The initiative is busy educating Kenyans on the need to donate blood regularly and is also addressing those unfounded fears.

Bloodlink Foundation (BLF) a local charitable trust also works amongst corporate organizations in urban centres in inducting employees as regular blood donors.

Since September 2004, 50 corporate organisations have been inducted. Among these are General Motors, Safaricom and Kenya Commercial Bank, all of them leaders in business but with strong social responsibility agendas.

The foundation has been conducting education seminars for these organizations to dispel the fears associated with blood donation and enlighten them on the accruing benefits both to the donor and society at large.

The organizations are at the same time encouraged to incorporate blood donation into their CSR activities. Blood donation is probably the only CSR activity that requires no budgetary commitment from these organizations.

Message from the Minister for Health

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surgery.

Children and pregnant mothers use over 50 per cent of the blood transfused in our hospitals.

In order for the National Blood Transfusion Service to meet the challenges posed by the decreasing donations against a background of increasing demand several strategic initiatives have been put in place. There are now comprehensive Blood Policy Guidelines for the management of the Blood Programme. These guidelines specifically address the procedures for collection, processing, storage, distribution, and use of blood and blood products. Strengthened management system is being developed to implement the policy. In addition a network of six Regional Blood Transfusion Centres in Nairobi, Kisumu, Nakuru, Embu, Mombasa, and Eldoret have been established. The service, through these regional centres, is vigorously addressing



the issue of insufficient blood supplies. This will be done through community participation and mobilization to identify and recruit low risk blood donors.


This day has been set aside to honor many of our blood donors who through the years have voluntarily given their blood to save a life.

I, on behalf of the many patients who have benefited before, sincerely thank donors and encourage them to continue supporting the service by donating blood. I also appeal to our potential donors to come forward and donate blood. Any healthy individual between the ages 16-65 years can

donate blood two to three times a year without any ill effect. You can donate blood in any of our Blood Centres and hospitals. The country still needs blood to save the lives of many in our hospitals.

— Hon. Charity K. Ngilu
Minister for Health

'The day is designed to celebrate and thank those individuals who voluntarily donate their blood without any reward except the knowledge that they have helped to save lives'



NATIONAL HOSPITAL INSURANCE FUND

The National Hospital Insurance Fund (NHIF) is proud to be a part of the World Blood Donor Day. June 14th is celebrated internationally each year as the World Blood Donor Day (WBDD) aimed to promote voluntary blood donation globally as well as thanking voluntary non-remunerated blood donors.

NHIF is providing an environment where Kenyans are provided with affordable accessible and quality healthcare.

NHIF appreciates the fact that voluntary unpaid blood donors are the foundation of a safe blood supply. Notably WBDD is also an important strategy to reduce transmission of serious illnesses like HIV/AIDS, malaria, hepatitis B and C.

Our responsibility is ensuring that members who are admitted to hospitals have access to safe blood. We will continue to partner with other stakeholders to raise awareness of the need for blood and blood donors.

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MAKE A DIFFERENCE TODAY

Donate Blood

Join the Safaricom Blood For Life Drive at the Mombasa Makadara Grounds on the 14th - 18th June 2006, 9am - 5pm.

