



## WORLD BLOOD DONOR DAY 2011

### VOLUNTARY UNPAID BLOOD DONATIONS INCREASE, SAVING MORE LIVES

#### In Afghanistan: already 60% of collected blood from voluntary unpaid blood donations

*14 June 2011 / Kabul* - The number of countries collecting all their blood supplies from voluntary unpaid donors increased by more than 50 per cent between 2002 and 2008, according to new global data from the World Health Organization (WHO), released on World Blood Donor Day, 14 June.

World Blood Donor Day is celebrated each year to highlight the contribution voluntary unpaid blood donors make to public health. This year's slogan, "More blood, more life" aims to encourage still more people to come forward to give blood and save more lives.

"WHO's goal is for all countries to obtain all blood supplies from voluntary unpaid donations by 2020," says Dr Neelam Dhingra, Coordinator, Blood Transfusion Safety at WHO. "Nine years ago, 39 countries were obtaining 100 per cent of their blood supplies from voluntary unpaid donors: in 2008 that figure had gone up to 62. We hope that World Blood Donor Day will encourage more people in more countries to become regular voluntary blood donors."

Since the establishment of Afghanistan National Blood Safety and Transfusion Services (ANBSTS) in 2009, the Ministry of Public Health has carried out considerable efforts to ensure voluntary non-remunerated donation of safe blood. Numerous blood donation campaigns have taken place and key influential figures have campaigned in local communities for the benefit of blood donation. Currently estimated 60 per cent of all blood in Afghanistan is collected from voluntary unpaid donations.

"This is promising however yet a lot remains to be done to reach the goal of "100% voluntary non-remunerated donation" and ensuring the safety and availability of blood and blood products," says Dr Ahmed Shadoul, WHO Representative in Afghanistan. "Blood transfusion is a vital component of the country's health care system. Afghanistan, like other developing countries, is facing the risk of blood shortage that may lead to serious health consequences such as increased maternal mortality."

Unsafe blood transfusion also exposes patients for the transmission of life-threatening infections such as HIV, hepatitis B, hepatitis C and syphilis. These are preventable through actions to improve blood safety and availability.

WHO estimates that blood donation by at least 1 per cent of the population is generally sufficient to meet a country's basic requirements for safe blood. Requirements are higher in countries with more developed health systems. Among the greatest needs: to replace blood lost in childbirth (a major cause of maternal deaths worldwide), and to treat severe anaemia that threatens the lives of thousands of children who have malaria or are undernourished.

WHO along with other UN agencies is committed to work jointly with the Ministry of Public Health for the strengthening of efficient and sustainable national blood programme, to ensure developing a sustainable national blood banking and transfusion system services in Afghanistan and thus to substantially reduce the burden of diseases due to unsafe blood transfusions.

**Related links:**

World Blood Donor Day 2011: [www.who.int/worldblooddonorday](http://www.who.int/worldblooddonorday)

**For more information, contact:**

Liisa Keates, Communications and Donor Relations Coordinator, WHO Afghanistan

Tel: +93 702217730, Email: [keatesl@afg.emro.who.int](mailto:keatesl@afg.emro.who.int)

Dr Abdul Rasheed, National Professional Officer, HIV/AIDS and Blood Services, WHO

Afghanistan, Tel: +93 700072109, Email: [abdulgayoma@afg.emro.who.int](mailto:abdulgayoma@afg.emro.who.int)

Joel Schaefer, Communications Officer, Health Systems and Services, WHO Geneva,

Tel: +41 795164756, Email: [schaeferj@who.int](mailto:schaeferj@who.int)

Sarah Russell, Communications Officer, Health Systems and Services, WHO Geneva,

Tel: +41 795986823, Email: [russellsa@who.int](mailto:russellsa@who.int)

