



Press release: Improving blood transfusion services in Iraq through capacity building of health professionals

“Safe Blood Saves Lives”: *In the last few years, the Government of Iraq has taken the strategic decision to strengthen blood transfusion services (BTS) as part of its commitment to improve the overall efficiency and effectiveness of health care system, particularly the timely responsiveness of Emergency Medical Services to reduce health consequences of emergencies, crises and conflicts and save avoidable losses of lives.*

In the area of blood transfusion, the World Health Organization (WHO), in close collaboration with the Jordan Blood Bank, a WHO Collaborating Center, is providing to the Government of Iraq the necessary technical support to strengthen blood transfusion services, including building and upgrading the capacity of Iraqi professionals at various levels. This comprehensive blood safety program, financed by the EU, is part of the three year project (€13 million) to strengthen Specialized Medical Services in Iraq which started in January 2009.

Amman, 19 August, 2010— Today in Amman, under the patronage of H.E. Dr Nayef Al Fayez, Jordan Minister of Health, the Ministry of Health Iraq, in collaboration with the World Health Organization and the Jordan Directorate of Blood Bank, a WHO Collaborating Center (WCC) in the field of blood transfusion services, launched a series of training workshops to build the capacity of Iraqi professionals to provide quality blood transfusion services.

The main objective of the capacity building courses is to train, in four sessions of three weeks each, a total of 50 Iraqi health cadres working in the Iraq National Blood Transfusion Center and Regional Blood Banks so as to increase their technical and managerial skills to ensure safety of blood and blood products and optimize blood usage for patient health.

These training workshops have been organized as part of the European Union funded programme to support Specialized Medical Services in Iraq (Emergency Medical Services and Blood Transfusion Services). The Jordan Ministry of Health/Directorate of Blood Bank will host these training courses and this collaboration between Iraq and Jordan is in line with the bilateral agreement which was signed between the two countries in 2004 to support the health system in Iraq and has been renewed for another period of five years in September 2009. In his welcoming note, the representative of the Jordan Ministry of Health Dr. Daifallah Al-Louzi, Deputy Minister of Health, MOH Jordan welcomed all participants and reiterated the readiness of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan to provide full support to the health sector in Iraq.

According to Dr. Yacoub Al-Moussawi, Director of the Iraq National Blood Transfusion Center in Baghdad who is also participating to the training course, “Improving access to safe and sufficient blood supply to all segments of population in need of blood transfusion is a priority to the Ministry of Health of Iraq.” He also added that “the proposed training program will offer a unique opportunity to strengthen the efficiency of blood transfusion services in Iraq and will contribute to establishing an effective voluntary blood donation program”.

Mr. Jobst Von Kirchmann, Head of Development Cooperation, Delegation of the European Union to the Republic of Iraq stated that: “We fundamentally believe that supporting medical services and blood transfusion services will improve the conditions of ordinary people in Iraq, and ultimately contribute to the well being of everybody”.

In his opening remarks, Dr Said Arnaout, WHO Representative for Iraq a.i. stated that “the decision taken by the Government of Iraq to make blood transfusion a high priority in the national health agenda fits perfectly with the slogan of the World Blood Donor Day 2010: “New Blood for the World” . Activities of the year focus on motivating more people, particularly young people, to become blood donors. Young people can make an important contribution by donating blood and by recruiting other young people to become donors”. He also acknowledged with appreciation the key facilitation role that WHO Jordan Office has played in the preparation of the training program in addition to praising the cooperation between the two Ministries of Health of Iraq and Jordan. Dr. Arnaout also highlighted the importance of technical collaboration in such an important area which requires continued assistance of donor community. In this respect he thanked the European Union for its continued and support to the health sector in Iraq.

For more information, please contact:

Mr. Shadi Tanash, Technical Officer, Tel. +96279-7204117, tanashs@irq.emro.who.int

Ms. Ruba Hikmat, Media and Communication Officer, Tel. +96279-5096066, hikmatr@irq.emro.who.int

