



This week, the World Health Organization (WHO) and its partners celebrate World Blood Donor Day, the theme of which is “Every blood donor is a hero”. World Blood Donor Day is being commemorated this year while the world increasingly suffers from a shortage of blood supplies in hospitals and clinics. Out of the 80 countries where blood donation rates are less than 10 donations to every 1000 people, 79 are developing countries.

World Blood Donor Day aims to encourage more people to donate blood and identify methods for health systems and policy-makers to ensure blood transfusion services are safer and available to the global population.

The transfusion of blood and blood products helps save millions of lives every year. Transfusion can increase life expectancy and the quality of life for patients suffering from life-threatening conditions.

This service also supports complex medical and surgical procedures. In many countries, demand outstrips supply and blood services face the challenge of making sufficient blood available, while also ensuring blood quality and safety.

Today, in 62 countries, national blood supplies originate from 100% (or more than 99.9%) voluntary unpaid blood donation. However, 40 countries still depend on family donors and even paid donors and collect less than 25% of their blood supplies from voluntary unpaid donors. The goal of WHO is for all countries to obtain their blood supplies entirely from voluntary unpaid donors by 2020. Approximately 92 million blood donations are provided worldwide annually by unknown heroes who save lives every day, through their voluntary unpaid and regular blood donations.

The WHO Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean is commemorating World Blood Donor Day this year on Monday 11 June 2012 by asking staff of the Regional Office to donate blood. This is an annual event of the Office, coordinated through the national centre for blood

transfusion services, to set an example and provide a role model for donation. Parallel to this, a ceremonial event will be held in the Kuwait Conference Hall of the WHO premises in Cairo, inaugurated by Dr Ala Alwan, WHO Regional Director for the Eastern Mediterranean.

The theme of the 2012 World Blood Donor Day campaign, “Every blood donor is a hero” focuses on the idea that every one of us can become a hero by giving blood. It recognizes the silent and unsung heroes who save lives every day through giving blood voluntarily and regularly.

The objectives of this year’s campaign are to thank and reinforce the self-esteem of those who give blood so that they will continue to do so regularly. It intends to inspire those who do not give blood but who are in good health to start and encourages blood service staff to recognize blood donors for their “heroic” act each and every time they donate their blood. It also aims to persuade ministries of health to show their appreciation of blood donors and provide adequate resources to move towards 100% voluntary unpaid blood donation.

Blood is a substance that cannot be stored for a long time. Hence, there is a continuous need for regular supplies. It is important to encourage a sufficient number of healthy people to donate blood regularly to ensure that there is enough safe blood for individuals, if and when it is needed.

- [Video](#)

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