

13TH WORLD BLOOD DAY CELEBRATIONS

The 13th International world blood donor day was held today, 14th June 2016 at the University Of Nairobi Great Court. The event was organized by the Kenya National Board Transfusion Service (KNBTS) with this year theme being 'blood connects all of us'. Share life, give blood.

Speaking at the event, the Director for KNBTS Margaret Oduor appreciated the donors for their noble gesture. She also noted that most donors are below the ages of 25 (16-25 years) hence the reason they concentrate on colleges, universities and high schools for blood donations. She stated that the Board, together with other stakeholders was working on strategies to encourage even adults to donate. "It is only through such initiatives that we can be able to support the blood needs of this country". Margaret Oduor is an alumni of the University of Nairobi.

Dr. Daniel Kimani from Centre for Disease Control (CDC) stated that 'this is a day we take to evaluate our commitment for donating blood. Blood has connected us all and multiple donations continue to save lives'. The United States Government through President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) has provided approximately \$437 million in bilateral financial support to strengthen national blood transfusion services in 14 countries in sub-Saharan Africa and the Caribbean. PEPFAR has worked with Kenya since 2004 and it has invested over 60 billion shillings to strengthen blood transfusion in Kenya. In addition, it has supported blood donor mobilization and 1.2 billion units have been collected over a 12 year period. Currently, PEPFAR through CDC is supporting capacity building for health workers in the country so as to improve efficiency in operations.

Dr. Regina Mbinde from World Health Organization (WHO) stated that blood is an essential lifesaving practice. The demand for blood transfusion and blood productions is very high; from 3.9 million units in 2013 to 4.4 million units this is about 4% which will only cover 50% of the population. In Africa, only 21 countries are collecting blood. The shortage of blood is because of weak implementation policies and most people do not volunteer to donate blood. She concluded by noting that concrete actions are needed for safety blood transfusion and blood products.

The event was also attended by key stakeholders in the health industry including the Kenya Red Cross, Ministry of Health, among others.