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# Global Blood Safety Initiative

## Objectives, Principles and Activities

In early January 1988, a meeting was held at World Health Organization (WHO) headquarters in Geneva to consider a worldwide effort to safeguard blood from contamination by the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV). Representatives from the WHO Global Programme on AIDS (GPA) and the Unit of Health Laboratory Technology, the United Nations Development Programme, the League of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and the International Society of Blood Transfusion agreed to launch the "Global Blood Safety Initiative" (GBSI).

This endeavour arises from the common conviction that reducing the risk of transmitting HIV and other blood-borne agents by blood and blood products can only be effectively achieved for the long-term by establishing blood collection, banking and transfusion systems capable of employing quality assurance procedures (including HIV donor screening and laboratory testing) on a routine and sustained basis ("Integrated Blood Transfusion Service").

### The Consortium

A Consortium comprising all interested parties (governments, national Red Cross/Red Crescent Societies, other NGOs, bilateral and multilateral development agencies, foundations) will be established to provide resources and support for the Initiative.

The Consortium will comprise those organizations who agree with the objectives and principles and participate in the activities of the GBSI.

Those organizations with global responsibilities in aspects of blood supply (i. e. the World Health Organization, the League of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and the International Society of Blood Transfusion) will comprise the Secretariat for this Consortium.

### Objectives/Principles

The overall objective of the Initiative is to support the development of integrated blood transfusion services in all countries. This would include assurance of supplies of blood and blood products which are as safe as possible, accessible at reasonable costs and adequate to meet patients' needs, thereby reducing morbidity and mortality from failure to transfuse and from the complications of transfusion, including transmission of HIV and other infectious agents causing diseases. These other infectious agents include hepatitis B, malaria, Chagas disease and syphilis as well as others which may be identified in the future.



Principles guiding the Initiative are:

- \* Development of integrated blood transfusion services should occur within the broad context of national health plans and, in particular, within the context of national plans for AIDS prevention and control, in conformity with WHO's Global Strategy on AIDS.
- \* A country's supply of safe blood and blood products should be sufficient to meet patients' needs.
- \* Governments should take steps to encourage the appropriate clinical use of blood and blood products.
- \* A safe blood supply depends upon careful selection of blood donors. This is likely to be more reliable when appropriate screening tests are applied, donations are regular and voluntary and when donors are non-remunerated.
- \* To ensure quantity and safety, blood services need to be regulated and coordinated; the ultimate responsibility for appropriate regulation and coordination is governmental.
- \* Development of sustainable blood transfusion services is urgently needed where they are not yet established; prerequisites for successful development include demonstrable need, clearly defined responsible organization, government support, professional leadership, capabilities for training and assurance of continued funding of operating costs.

Development of integrated blood transfusion services may take years to achieve maturity. Such development should lead to coordinated blood programmes, capable of incorporating new technologies as appropriate.

Of overriding importance in the development of safe blood for individual countries is the recognition that no two countries are alike in their blood services. For example, the least developed countries usually rely heavily on the use of whole blood while industrialized countries are increasingly using blood components for specific applications. For this reason, country-based strategies for safe blood need to be geared to both the priorities and different stages of health care development including resource constraints.

#### Consortium Activities

Activities of the Global Blood Safety Initiative will be planned in conjunction with the governments of the countries concerned. Such activities will be guided by the objectives and principles of the GBSI; the plans developed for the GBSI will be integrated with the national medium term programmes for AIDS prevention and control.

Consortium activities within the Global Blood Safety Initiative could include:

- \* Immediate initiation of the planning process in countries where the prospects for sustainable blood transfusion systems appear promising;
- \* Support the provision of appropriate and adequate training for health workers;

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- \* Encourage strategies of health care that reduce the demand for blood such as improved antenatal care and the development and application of more rigorous indications for transfusions;
- \* Support the development and extension of blood collection capabilities;
- \* Support the development of the capability for testing, processing, production, storage, and delivery of blood, preserved cell concentrates, plasma and cryoprecipitate;
- \* Support the development of equipment maintenance capabilities and ensuring the supply of materials and spare parts;
- \* Support quality assurance in all phases of operation;

#### Consortium Secretariat

Administrative support for the Initiative will be provided through the following mechanisms:

- \* A Coordinator located within the Office of the Director of the GPA will be the focal point for Consortium activities.
- \* Responsibility for the development of strategies for blood services within countries will occur within the Health Laboratory Unit of WHO, in close collaboration with National Programme Support Unit (NPS)/GPA.
- \* A staff member within NPS will ensure that strategies developed and support mobilized by the Consortium are integrated within and complementary with national medium term programmes for AIDS prevention and control.
- \* A staff member within the League of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies will assist the Health Laboratory Unit in strategy formulation and will ensure maximum input and participation by the League and national Red Cross/Red Crescent Societies.

The activities of the Secretariat include:

- \* Receiving and processing requests for the improvement of blood services within the scope of the GBSI. These could be requests from countries to other Consortium members or vice versa;
- \* Exchanging information about activities of Consortium members, including countries, in areas involving the GBSI;
- \* Organizing consultations and meetings related to activities of the GBSI;
- \* Exchanging scientific and technical information related to the GBSI and associated activities.

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