KEYNOTE ADDRESS

BY

THE MINISTER OF HEALTH AND MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT FOR KWENENG SOUTH
HON. REV. DR JOHN SEAKGOSING

ON WORLD BLOOD DONOR DAY

Time: 0730HRS
Date: 14 June 2014
Venue: FRANCISTOWN

Values: Botho, Equity, Timeliness, Customer Focus,
Director of Ceremonies
Kgosi

Deputy Speaker of National Assembly-Hon Pono Moatlhodi

MP for Francistown West –Hon Dr Habaudi Hubona

MP for Francistown South –Hon Wynter Mmolotsi

His Worship the Mayor – Hon Kgalajwe

WHO Representative- Dr Felicitas R. Zawaira

Agt Deputy Permanent Secretary, Clinical Services- Ms Thandie Kgosiesele

District Commissioner

NACA Deputy Coordinator – Mr. Fraiser Tlhoiwe

Francistown City Council –Town Clerk

Area Councillor

Princess Marina Hospital Manager- Mr Setso Setso

Nyangabgwe Hospital Superintendent- Dr Malaki Tshipayagae
I am pleased to be with you this morning for the commemoration of the 2014 World Blood Donor Day. Today marks ten years since the World Blood Donor Day was launched in Johannesburg, South Africa. The following year at the Fifty-Eighth World Health Assembly, WHO Member States declared unanimously their commitment and support for voluntary blood donation, and Resolution World Health Assembly WHA
A58.13 designated World Blood Donor Day as an annual event to be held each year on the 14th of June.

World Blood Donor Day builds on the success of World Health Day 2000, which was devoted to the theme: “Blood Saves Lives; Safe Blood Starts With Me”. Like in many countries across the world we are gathered here this morning to thank blood donors and promote voluntary non-remunerated blood donation in our country.

Director of Ceremonies, since its inception in 2000 the National Blood Transfusion Service with the help of our partners has been the driving organization in the Government efforts to improve the safety, availability and accessibility of blood and blood products. The blood collection has increased by 72 % while the discard rate has decreased from 11.8% to 3.5% over the past ten
years. Despite these impressive results the blood collection remains below the national requirement. It is important to intensify strategies to raise awareness on the need for safe blood and blood products.

Ladies and gentlemen, transfusion of blood and blood products helps to save millions of lives every year. It helps patients suffering from life threatening disease live longer. The need for adequate and safe blood cannot be overemphasized. Blood is needed for critical conditions such as trauma, accidents, complications during pregnancy and many other conditions that may require blood transfusion.

This year’s theme for World Blood Donor Day is “SAFE BLOOD FOR SAVING MOTHERS”. Every mother should expect childbirth to be full of positive and joyful memories, but unfortunately for many women in Sub
Saharan Africa, this is not the case. Global statistics show that 500 000 women worldwide die each year from pregnancy related causes. One third of these deaths happen in Africa. The risk of dying at each pregnancy in developing countries is 1:140 while in Scandinavia it is 1:25000.

Director of ceremonies, maternal mortality remains a major challenge to health systems throughout the world. Global initiatives to intensify policy intervention for maternal mortality began with Safe Motherhood Initiative in 1987 as a response to growing concerns that Primary Health Care programs in many developing countries were not adequately focused on maternal health. The 1994 International Conference on Population and Development strengthened international
commitment to reproductive health. The focus on maternal mortality was sharpened when reduction in maternal mortality became one of the eight goals for development in the Millennium Declaration.

The target of the Millennium Development Goal 5 is to reduce maternal mortality ratio by three-quarter from 1990 to 2015. Botswana maternal mortality ratio stands at a rate of 190/100 000 live births.

Director of Ceremonies, maternal haemorrhage is the leading cause of preventable maternal death worldwide and encompasses before, during and after birth bleedings. It accounts for 25 to 30% of maternal deaths. Advances in obstetrics care have provided physicians with the diagnostic tools to detect, anticipate and prevent severe life-threatening maternal haemorrhage in most patients who have had prenatal
care. However even with the best prenatal care, unexpected haemorrhage does occur and the first step in management includes transfusion therapy.

There is need for all of us as a nation to stand up, fold our sleeves and call our fellow citizens to join multitudes of voluntary non remunerated blood donors in saving lives. We have to save the lives of our mothers. The availability of safe blood will give to every mother the opportunity to live with her newborn child. Orphanhood due to lack of blood is heartbreaking and this is avoidable.

Ladies and gentlemen, access to safe and sufficient blood including rational use of blood for transfusion still remains a challenge in most countries. It is therefore important to make regular blood donation our life time commitment. In line with the Melbourne Declaration,
voluntary blood donation should be intensified and kept in our country at the rate of 100%. Voluntary blood donors are indeed the safest as the prevalence of transfusion transmissible infections is lower in this group compared to other types of donors. Voluntary blood donors are motivated by altruism and a sense of moral duty to help those in need of blood. They are usually not under pressure to donate blood. They are just led by the spirit of compassion to help the sick person. In that way they are contributing to our 2016 vision of a Caring Just and Compassionate Nation.

As we are trying to ensure adequate blood supply, we should not compromise on safety of transfused blood. I would like here to assure you that my Ministry is committed to provide necessary resources to ensure that blood given to patients is safe. Over the past ten
years the HIV prevalence in donated blood has decreased from 7.7% in 2003 to 1% in 2013. This is a clear indication of an efficient donor selection system. In an effort to further reduce the possibility of infection transmission through blood transfusion, the National Blood Transfusion Service continues to review and improve its testing strategies, such as the implementation of the Individual Donor Nucleic Acid Testing. This test is used for the screening of HIV-1, Hepatitis B virus and Hepatitis C virus in donated blood. It is able to detect low levels of viral genetic material present in the body, long before the body begins producing antibodies in response to a virus, giving the ability to detect the disease at an earlier stage.

Director of Ceremonies, note that, the National Blood Transfusion service is required to collect 40,000 blood
units per year; however the two centers which are based in Gaborone and Francistown, respectively, have not reached the target for the past five years. As a result the Ministry of Health has decentralized blood collection to other four health districts, namely Ngami, Kweneng East, Mahalapye and Serowe. From August 2013 to April 2014, two thousand and thirty-eight (2,038) units of blood were collected in these health districts. My Ministry is committed to addressing the challenges encountered in collecting adequate amounts of safe blood. Vehicles and equipment will be provided this financial year to improve access to blood donors in most districts.

Ladies and Gentlemen, my Ministry will continue to put more efforts to ensure that blood collection is improved by engaging other stakeholders. The Public-Private-
Partnership (PPP) framework has been formulated, defining where private organizations could intervene for the improvement of the blood situation in our country. I would like to launch an appeal to organizations in the private sector to come forward and work with Government in strengthening the National Blood Transfusion Service. Safe blood for saving mothers will surely be available if the public and private sectors bring the much needed resources. This will facilitate the running of an effective and efficient national blood transfusion service. Let me take this opportunity to thank Bokamoso Private Hospital, Diagnostim Medical Laboratories, Okavango Air Rescue, Ngami Toyota, Acquarite, Maun Lodge, Banc ABC, the University of Botswana Wellness Department, and many other private
sector organizations, who have assisted the National Blood Transfusion Service in many different ways.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I would also like to thank the Government of the United States of America (USA) for supporting the blood safety program for the past ten years. Through the United States President Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR); funding the National Blood Transfusion Service has benefited from enormous financial resources that enabled important infrastructural development, hiring of additional staff, and acquisition of equipment and implementation of the quality management system. The new Francistown Blood Transfusion Centre built with PEPFAR funds is expected to be handed over in the near future. When the building is opened for operation the blood collection
and laboratory will be brought under the same roof, thus improving the coordination of regional blood transfusion service activities. We hope that the easy accessibility of the centre will increase the pool of regular blood donors.

It is important Ladies and gentlemen, to note that Princess Marina Hospital is addressing the problem of blood shortage by implementing the autologous blood donation initiative. This is where one donates blood for self use before a planned operation. Arrangements are being made for the rolling out of autologous blood donation program to more hospitals.

Ladies and Gentlemen, Let me also appreciate the positive contribution of the Ministry of Education and
Skills Development in improving the blood collection from secondary schools. I wish to emphasize that secondary schools remain the main contributors to blood supply in the country. In 2013, 47% of units of blood were collected from secondary schools, putting them in the leading position. Furthermore, please note that a remarkable group of out-of–school youth and in-school youth have pledged to donate blood at least 25 times in their life time (The pledge 25). These young people, Ladies and Gentlemen, also contribute tremendously to the improvement of blood collection by raising awareness on blood donation. On behalf of the Ministry of Health I wish to note the positive contributions of all blood donors for continuing to donate safe blood to the nation.
In conclusion, Director of Ceremonies let me appreciate the attendance and contributions of all the invited guests, public, senior civil servants, media and members of the Organizing Committee. This event has been a great success because of your commitment to excellence in the provision of quality of health services to the nation. Enjoy the rest of the day as we celebrate PULA PULA.