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Safe Blood For Africa Conducts West/Central African Donor Recruitment Workshop

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An International Blood Safety Workshop on the crucial role of "Developing Voluntary Blood Donor Programs" was held in Accra, Ghana, October 2 to 13, 2006 for 16 West and Central African countries. These workshops, organized by Safe Blood for Africa Foundation's Multi-Country Training Program, funded by PEPFAR (The President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief) and CDC, were held in collaboration with the World Health Organization, International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, the Ministry of Health of Ghana and the Ghana National Blood Transfusion Service. The two back-to-back workshops were held in French and English respectively.

"This program will save lives by increasing the availability of blood, and reducing the risk of HIV/AIDS and other blood-borne diseases in transfused blood," according to Safe Blood for Africa's Chairman, Jeff Busch. "We are grateful to PEPFAR/CDC for providing funding for us to conduct these programs in areas of Africa which have historically received little support for blood safety initiatives."

These workshops are "precedent-setting" as they brought together decision makers, blood service directors and blood donor recruitment staff from the 16 countries represented. Fifty-seven participants attended, many of whom have little opportunity for such specific training and to interact with professionals from other countries.

It is also the first in a series of such programs on key blood safety skills development being conducted by Safe Blood for Africa Foundation's African Multi-Country Training Program.

Diane De Coning, internationally recognized expert in blood donor recruitment who conducted the workshops, said, "Delegate response was tremendous. Key donor recruitment staff shared common challenges in recruiting and retaining adequate numbers of voluntary blood donors. We

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identified priorities for the region, including the need for an African Blood Donor Association and ready access to much needed and requested generic promotional material for adaptation by local blood transfusion services. Implementing the strategies developed at these workshops will have a major impact in meeting the demand for a safe and adequate blood supply in the participating countries. Additional capacity building and resources are desperately required, but this was a phenomenal way to start."

Safe Blood for Africa Foundation
<http://www.safebloodforafrica.org/>

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