



An Advocacy Toolkit for Strengthening National Safe Blood Systems

Introduction

Country blood systems face common challenges and vary in maturity in development. To address these challenges, many solutions involve other stakeholders within the health system that contribute to the strengthening of safe blood systems, such as providers, governments, and regional hospitals.

As countries work to improve access to and availability of safe blood, many are undertaking health system transformations to prioritize and strengthen these systems, which will require advocacy.

The advocacy approach outlined in this toolkit is not a set of stringent guidelines. Developing an advocacy strategy and/or messages may not happen linearly. Rather, the approach is intended to serve as a framework to help blood transfusion service stakeholders and advocates thoughtfully plan how best to achieve their goals. Although the following examples may be specific to particular countries, the methods used to accomplish change can be applied in various settings to address blood system issues.

This toolkit is designed to guide organizations and individuals in advocating for safe blood practices using the “Five Whys” technique. This method helps identify the root causes of issues, facilitating effective communication and targeted advocacy strategies.

1. Understanding the Need for Safe Blood

Why 1: Why is safe blood important?

- **Answer:** Safe blood is essential for life-saving medical procedures, including surgeries, post-partum hemorrhage, trauma care, and treatment of chronic conditions.

Why 2: Why is there a risk associated with blood transfusions?

- **Answer:** Risks include transfusion-transmitted infections (TTIs), reactions to incompatible blood, and inadequate screening processes.

Why 3: Why do these risks persist?

- **Answer:** Many regions lack adequate resources, infrastructure, and awareness regarding safe blood practices.

Why 4: Why is public awareness crucial?

- **Answer:** Increased awareness leads to more voluntary, non-remunerated blood donations and promotes safer transfusion practices.

Why 5: Why should individuals care about safe blood?

- **Answer:** Everyone is a potential blood recipient; ensuring a safe supply protects public health and saves lives.
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2. Creating buy-in from clinical practitioners

Why 1: Who are you targeting?

- **Answer:** Hospital physicians

Why 2: Why is the value of blood important?

- **Answer:** One Unit of Packed Red Cells can save the lives of up to 6 Neonates in need of an emergency transfusion

Why 3: Why are the risks of inaction critical?

- **Answer:** One donation can save up to three lives, and the lack of blood means these three lives are lost

Why 4: Why should clinical practitioners care?

- **Answer:** Everyone is a potential blood recipient; ensuring a safe supply protects and saves lives.

Why 5: Why is the message important?

- **Answer:** Dear Physician, a wasted unit of blood component is potentially a wasted life of your patient. Prescribe when it is the only remaining option and use the available blood units efficiently.

You may consult the national guidelines on the rational use of blood products available in your service for information on indications and doses.

Please return the unused units to the BTS to prevent wastage.

2. Crafting Your Advocacy Message

Key Components

- **Emphasize the Importance:** Highlight personal stories or statistics that illustrate the impact of safe blood.
 - **Identify Stakeholders:** Determine who is affected (patients, healthcare providers, families) and tailor your message accordingly.
 - **Call to Action:** Encourage specific actions such as donating blood, advocating for policies, or educating others.
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3. Targeting Your Audience

Identify Key Audiences

- **General Public:** Use social media campaigns and community events to raise awareness.
 - **Healthcare Professionals:** Conduct training sessions and workshops on safe blood practices.
 - **Policymakers:** Prepare briefing materials with data and the impact of the lack of blood to influence legislation and funding for blood safety initiatives.
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4. Utilizing Multiple Channels

Marketing Strategies

- **Social Media:** Create engaging content that shares facts, personal stories, and calls to action.
 - **Community Events:** Host blood donation drives and educational sessions to foster community involvement.
 - **Partnerships:** Collaborate with local organizations, schools, and businesses to amplify your message.
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5. Monitoring and Evaluating Your Advocacy Efforts

Measure Impact

- **Track Engagement:** Monitor social media metrics, event attendance, and participant feedback.
 - **Assess Knowledge Gain:** Conduct surveys before and after educational sessions to measure improvements in understanding.
 - **Adjust Strategies:** Use feedback to refine your messages and approaches for better effectiveness.
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Conclusion

Using the “Five Whys” technique to advocate for safe blood practices allows for deeper understanding and more impactful messaging. This toolkit provides a framework for effective advocacy, encouraging communities to engage in promoting safe blood initiatives.

This report is made possible by the generous support of the American people through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) under the terms of the Cooperative Agreement No. 7200-AA-18CA-00037 managed by Results for Development (R4D). The contents are the responsibility of R4D and do not necessarily reflect the views of USAID or the United States Government.

