



Press release by the Society for AIDS in Africa (SAA): 1<sup>st</sup> December 2022

EMBARGO: None (For immediate release)

**SECOND EDITION OF THE SAA WORLD AIDS DAY BLOOD DONATION EXERCISE**  
**1<sup>st</sup> December 2022, National Blood Service, Ghana Head office, Korle-Bu**



Fourth from right Asere Tsono Mants3, Nii Quao Donkor II, Mr. Luc Armand Bodea, ICASA Director/SAA Coordinator, Dr. Dilys John-Teye, representing the Ghana Blood Service Head Office, Mr. Stanley S. Sackey, representing Nii Ashaley Asuku II, Nii Laryea Cofie, Korle Bu Sempe Akwashongts3 and Nii Adotey Kanfra Gbegbeyishits3.

The Society for AIDS in Africa was established in Kinshasa in October 1990 during the 5<sup>th</sup> International Conference on AIDS and Associated Cancers in Africa, a precursor to the International Conference on AIDS and STIs in Africa (ICASA). The formation of the Society for AIDS in Africa, which was facilitated by the (W.H.O) to encourage the African continent to host international conferences on HIV/AIDS, a disease whose scourge had the hardest impact on the continent. This move encouraged and empowered Africans to directly address and respond to the challenges posed by the HIV and AIDS pandemic on the continent.

Since its inception, SAA has successfully organized 21 International Conferences on HIV /AIDS and STIs in 19 African countries. The 21<sup>st</sup> edition of the International Conference on AIDS and STIs in Africa was held in Durban- South Africa, under the theme "AFRICA'S AIDS RESPONSE: THE RACE TO 2030 – EVIDENCE. SCALE UP. ACCELERATE". This was the first time in its history that the conference was held virtually. Over 4025 delegates from 83 countries across Africa and other regions of the world participated virtually.

The Society for AIDS in Africa (SAA) organizer of the International Conference on AIDS and STIs in Africa (ICASA) the largest bilingual HIV/AIDS Conference, marked the celebration of World AIDS Day with the Blood donation exercise at the National Blood Donation center Korle Bu. This marked the second edition of the blood donation exercise as the Society for AIDS In Africa organized the maiden event in collaboration with the 37 Military Hospital, in 2020.

The theme and objectives for 2022 edition of SAA Blood donation exercise sort to reiterate to all key stakeholders, such as the government, general public and the health care givers the importance of donating blood and the importance of knowing your HIV status through regular testing at designated health facilities. The theme and objectives of this year celebration were :

**Theme:** Donate Blood to Save a Life.

**Objectives:**

- Provide safe and high-quality blood and blood components collected from volunteer donors to replenish the nation's blood banks.
- Motivate volunteer blood donors and maintain a permanent, well-indexed record of them.
- Educate the community about the benefits of blood donation.
- Encourage voluntary blood donation while gradually phasing out professional blood donors.
- Increase public awareness and education about HIV/AIDS.
- Increase public awareness in HIV prevention (Knowing your HIV status)

Prior to this exercise, SAA engaged the traditional leadership of the Korle Bu community and its environs, to officially inform them of this exercise as well as foster collaboration in the areas of education on best practices for HIV prevention, Sexual reproductive health and rights and the importance of blood donation. Recent statistics have shown an alarming decline in blood donation activities due to the ensuing COVID-19 pandemic despite increases in road accidents and maternal mortality rates due to hemorrhage.

Dr. Dilys John-Teye, on behalf of the CEO of the Ghana Blood Service, Ghana Head office, gave the opening remarks. She expressed her gratitude to the Society for AIDS In Africa in support the call for blood donations. She indicated that blood was an essential component in combating various health problems across board and civil society played a crucial role in promoting awareness for more people to donate blood to save lives. She was grateful to SAA for taking up the mantle and called for continuous collaboration by civil society in strengthening the health system in Ghana through regular blood donation exercises.

The distinguished chiefs and traditional council members with their supported by the communities were present for this World AIDS Day, blood donation exercise. Present was the Asere Tsono Mantsɔ, Nii Quao Donkor II, Stanley S. Sackey, representing Nii Ashaley Asuku II, Nii Laryea Cofie, Korle Bu Sempe Akwashongtsɔ and Nii Adotey Kanfra Gbegbeyishitsɔ.

Nii Quao Donkor II, Asere Tsone Mantsɔ, on behalf of all the distinguished chiefs and traditional council members, proffered his gratitude to the Society for AIDS In Africa. He expressed his joy and enthusiasm in seeing students at the St. Mary's Senior High School who graced the event as well as the need for civil society organisations like SAA in engaging traditional leaders to add their voices to the call. He mentioned that it was very important for civil society to continuously create such avenues for collaboration and most importantly education for the communities. Also mentioned that there is a need for more education at the grassroots level/community level in areas of HIV testing, HIV prevention and Sexual reproductive health and rights. He concluded by expressing his profound gratitude to SAA for leading the charge.

Mr Eddie Barnor a 66-year-old man who has donated over 86 times, said he started donating blood since 1976 and has not been to the hospital for any health issue. He stated that he donates every four months, which gives him free medical screening to check his health status. He said it was not painful donating blood as people speculated and appealed to all participants and the general public to donate since there were a lot of benefit to derive from it.

Mr. Luc Armand Bodea, SAA Coordinator and the Director of International Conference on AIDS and STIs in Africa (ICASA) in his opening remarks, was highly elated at the presence of the distinguished traditional rulers present at the blood donation exercise. He also thanked all participants that travelled far and wide to be part of this august occasion. Mr. Bodea highlighted the need for renewed support and commitment towards strengthening the health system in Ghana through blood donation. He mentioned that in response to the call after statistics showed a rapid decline in blood donation exercises during the peak of the COVID pandemic in 2019-2020, SAA continued to support this call by organizing the second edition in collaboration with the Ghana Blood service, Korle Bu. He also emphasized on the significance of World AIDS Day and the fact that blood and HIV treatment (Antiretroviral therapy) are crucial to saving lives. Through his interaction with section of the students present, he stressed on the need for more community engagement in the areas of HIV education, prevention and sexual reproductive health and rights. He used the opportunity to demystify rumors on HIV + status being a death sentence. He stated that through regular intake of anti-retro viral medications/treatment, one can live a perfectly normal life despite his/her HIV status. He encouraged the students to abstain from pre-marital sex and concentrate on their education but encouraged all youth present who are sexually active to engage in safe sex practices such as condom use.

He concluded by calling on the traditional leadership to embrace sex education within their communities to enable the youth especially adolescent, young girls and women to be able learn more about HIV, HIV prevention and best practices which go along way in reducing the HIV prevalence rate among young people as recent statistics from Ghana AIDS Commission showed a very high prevalence rate among young people, specially young girls in Ghana.

Mr. Stanley S. Sackey, representing Nii Ashaley Asuku II, on behalf of Nii Quao Donkor II, Asere Tsono Mantse, and all traditional leaders present, gave the closing remarks. He thanked SAA for commemorating World AIDS Day by organizing this blood donation exercise. He stressed upon the need to donate blood and shared a personal experience where a family member with a medical condition was given blood and family was called to replace it. He stressed that the situation was dire and if not for the intervention of blood donors which made blood available for use at that material moment, the outcome might have turned out to be worse. As such, he called on all and sundry to make blood donation a regular occurrence to save more lives.

Over 150 people participated in the programme. All donors were given care package kits for their collaboration. Mr. Luc Armand Bodea, ICASA Director/SAA Coordinator thanked all partners, participants as well as the staff of the Ghana Blood service, Head office, Korle Bu, that took time outside of their various schedules and to partake in such a worthy cause. He emphasized that this exercise would go a long way in saving lives and added that the Society for AIDS in Africa would continue to carry the mantle.

## NOTES TO EDITORS:

### **About The Society for AIDS in Africa (SAA)**

The Society for AIDS in Africa was founded in 1989 at the Fourth International Symposium on AIDS and Associated Cancers in Africa (now ICASA) Held in Marseille, France by a group of African scientists, activists, and advocates in response to the HIV epidemic. The establishment of the Society was the effect of the agitations of some African scientists for the conference to be organised on African soil. These agitations began in the preceding year at the end of the third meeting held in Arusha, Tanzania in 1988. The cause of these scientists was supported by the then Director of WHO, Dr. Peter Piot.

At the 1990 conference held in the Democratic Republic of Congo, an Executive committee was inaugurated to oversee the establishment of the Society and to coordinate a subsequent international conference on AIDS and STIs in Africa (ICASA) conferences. The society was officially registered in Nairobi, Kenya with a functional secretariat in Nigeria. The permanent secretariat of the Society for AIDS in Africa was established in 2009 in Accra-Ghana. For more information on SAA please visit [www.saafrica.org](http://www.saafrica.org)

Mr. Luc Armand Bodea  
ICASA Director/SAA Coordinator  
Permanent Secretariat  
Society for AIDS in Africa  
Mobile: (+233) (0)543748781  
Office Direct: (+233) (0)302913739  
Email: [lucbodea@saafrica.org](mailto:lucbodea@saafrica.org)  
Email: [lucbodea@yahoo.fr](mailto:lucbodea@yahoo.fr)  
Website: [www.saafrica.org](http://www.saafrica.org)