

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **Safe Blood for Africa Continues to Make Advances in the Congo Despite the On-Going Conflict in the Region**

**November 18, 2008** (WASHINGTON, DC) – As the fighting continues in the DRC, Safe Blood for Africa (SBFA) continues to make advances in cleaning up the country's blood supply. SBFA has a cooperative agreement with USAID to provide a blood safety program to secure a supply of safe blood for transfusion to prevent the spread of HIV and other infectious diseases. The primary means to ensure the safety of the blood being transfused is to implement a testing program with 100% compliance of transfused blood.

"Over the last few years, millions of lives have been lost in the DRC and the need for humanitarian aid has never been greater," said Jeff Busch, Founder and Chairman of the Safe Blood for Africa Foundation. "I am so proud of our staff there." "They continue to provide life-saving services in the most difficult of circumstances in war-torn Eastern Congo." "This Safe Blood for Africa program has the potential to save hundreds of thousands of lives." "Their perseverance inspires the rest of us to overcome the lesser obstacles that we face in securing blood supplies around the World."

SBFA is working to support the 57 health zones of the Eastern DRC region with an HIV prevention and training program in conjunction with another USAID program called AXXes, that provides primary health care services in the same areas.

While there's immense conflict taking place in the DRC, SBFA has managed to achieve great success with their program. SBFA has procured and delivered 20,000 HIV test kits and 10,000 each of Hepatitis B & C and syphilis test kits. In many areas, Congolese citizens and SBFA staff are walking several days in the jungle to deliver test kits to clinics in extremely remote areas. Currently, SBFA has trained over 65 blood safety personnel in blood transfusion safety, rapid kit testing, voluntary blood donation and core knowledge in blood transfusion and safety.

In order to achieve significant head-way with the reduction of the number of HIV and AIDS cases in the DRC, it's imperative that the test kits are delivered; that doctors, nurses and clinicians are trained properly on the usage of the kits and proper handling of the blood for transfusion. SBFA is providing the training for blood safety including voluntary non-paid blood donation, quality assurance in transfusion services, the appropriate clinical use of blood, the appropriate use of rapid test kits for the detection of transfusion transmitted infections and development of blood safety policies to support centralized blood services in compliance with international standards.

During this difficult time, SBFA is working to help reduce the enormous problem that an unsafe blood supply causes. It is estimated that between 5% and 10% of new HIV infections in the Congo occur through transfusion of contaminated blood or blood products, mostly among pregnant women and children. The people of the DRC have a constant reminder that their country's bewildering network of conflicts are not going away overnight but, they may have a bit more peace in knowing they are supported in creating a clean blood supply and at least one agonizing concern may be eased.

## **Safe Blood for Africa Foundation Organizational Partners in the DRC**

The network of Safe Blood's relationships include the AXxes program DR Congo's Ministry of Health, National and Regional Blood Transfusion Services, The Kinshasa School of Public Health, the Kinshasa Medical School, World Vision, the Belgium Red Cross, FHI – Family Health International, CODILUSI (South Kivu), AMIDOSA and FEDOBESA (Federation des Donneuras Benevoles de Sang in South Kivu who have 13,000 voluntary donor), and the Provincial Medical Coordinators.

## **World AIDS DAY**

Please remember World AIDS Day on **December 1, 2008**, Safe Blood for Africa Foundation and the One Million African Lives Initiative along with NBA star, Emeka Okafor will be supporting efforts to bring awareness and raise money to help fight the transmission of this deadly disease. Please visit [www.onemillionafricanlives.org](http://www.onemillionafricanlives.org) and the official site of the Charlotte Bobcats [www.nba.com/bobcats/](http://www.nba.com/bobcats/) for additional details.

To find out more about the Safe Blood for Africa Foundation, please visit [www.safebloodforafrica.org](http://www.safebloodforafrica.org).

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## **Media Contact**

Rebecca Turk | 310.663.0595 | [beckyturk@aol.com](mailto:beckyturk@aol.com)