



Good governance,
safe blood



GAP Annual Report 2020

Purpose

Wherever you are in the world, when someone volunteers to donate blood or they receive a blood transfusion under the Red Cross or Red Crescent – GAP is there to help deliver safe, best practice blood donation programs.

You see this commitment to global blood donation safety throughout our programs, disaster relief support projects and regular communication of advice and information.

We work to ensure blood services are well-governed, self-sustainable and safe for patients and donors. How? Through risk management and corporate governance of

blood programs, and by promoting knowledge exchange and safe practice.

Since 2001, Red Cross and Red Crescent blood programs globally have accessed our support, expert advice and training – and we extend this support to their country partner blood services.



Global Advisory Panel

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Front cover images courtesy of IFRC and Australian Red Cross Lifeblood



GAP global community (shown in increasing sizes): National Societies; supported countries in 2020; and GAP members



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Message from our President

Sharing real experiences and adapting to face the COVID-19 pandemic together, globally



Prof. Philippe Vandekerckhove
GAP President

Dear reader,

Worldwide, we have seen countries and organisations respond differently to the events of 2020 and the COVID-19 pandemic, with rapid rates of change and adaptation to new operating contexts at country-specific, regional and global levels.

An acceleration in the uptake of digital technology and advancement in technical capabilities across many countries has enabled new or altered ways of working. This has been most notable in resource-limited settings, where the application of video link technologies has enabled provision of remote support to countries and areas not previously accessible.

Red Cross and Red Crescent (RC/RC) blood services experienced dramatic shifts in donor behaviour and expectations, as well as significant changes in the way blood and blood products are collected and used.

Well-established systems and processes that had been highly effective were now considerably strained under the new context of global restrictions, fears and unknowns that 2019 introduced into our lives.

Blood services needed to develop new approaches and adaptive responses to continue to deliver the essential services of a blood program. GAP is committed to assisting Red Cross and Red Crescent blood services to meet these new and evolving challenges.

Drawing on GAP's previous experience in working remotely to support a country's blood services, we were able transition of all of our support programs quickly and easily into remote mode. And as the COVID-19 pandemic escalated over the course of last year, GAP continued to adapt to provide remote-enabled assistance and advice to existing support countries, many of which continued to experience blood donation challenges due to lockdowns and multiple waves of COVID-19 cases.

With funding provided by the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), GAP commenced the provision of a dedicated support program to help National Societies address the specific challenges created by COVID-19 that were affecting their blood program. GAP provided support to an expanded network of National Societies and blood services globally by sharing current guidance and recommendations, customisable resources, materials and training to help safeguard donors, staff, recipients and to ensure availability of blood to meet demand.

During this time, and despite facing their own COVID-19 challenges domestically, GAP members continued to contribute their support to RC/RC globally for the preparation of timely and relevant resources, advice, and training materials, which were adapted throughout the phases of the pandemic response. Examples included speaking on their own country's experience with COVID-19 in online webinars – a vital contribution to aid the delivery of practical advice to National Society blood services globally.

This sharing of real experience and lessons learned was recognised as a particularly valuable support element assisting RC/RC blood programs in navigating through the changing operational landscape during this period, particularly for resource-limited and GAP-support countries.

This annual report highlights the critical program of work that GAP has achieved throughout 2020, which will be remembered as a year of ingenuity, tenacity and great adaptation.

We look forward to building on the achievements of the last 12 months and to continue the positive developments in support enablement that have been realised through the blood community's global effort.

Sincerely,

Professor Philippe Vandekerckhove
MD, PhD, GAP President



Photo courtesy of Australian Red Cross Lifeblood

Business update

The ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic

As the global pandemic escalated in January 2020, we saw a common challenge faced by blood programs worldwide, from National Societies and support country blood services: ensuring safe blood was available to meet patient demand.

We heard from many countries that they experienced interruptions to blood supply, with shortages of blood donors and low stocks.

How we helped

In the face of restrictions, infection, donor behaviour changes and more, GAP provided proactive advice, as well as responding to specific requests for advice, on:

- managing blood stocks and/or donor shortages;
- managing staff and donor safety;
- blood safety;
- collecting convalescent plasma; and
- global mapping data (level of National Society involvement) to develop a country's disaster preparedness profile.

Our members played a crucial role

GAP members helped blood programs face the blood safety and supply challenges of COVID-19 by delivering new learnings to over 20 National Societies through a series of webinars.

Expertise on hand

GAP became more widely known through the global Red Cross and Red Crescent network as a focal point for blood-related enquiries.

We developed resources for our network, which we update as new information becomes available. We're developing a package of training and tools that will help Red Cross and Red Crescent blood services manage disaster preparedness and business continuity.

GAP programs pivoted

With many of GAP's programs involving in-country activities, global travel restrictions required adaptive and creative approaches to deliver these effectively. GAP's prior experience in delivering remote programs enabled a quick transition to this mode.

We rapidly pivoted to incorporate remote, online training and support – and we can see benefits in this model for future disaster preparedness and recovery programs.

Highlights of 2020



Responded to global requests for advice and support



Hosted 11 webinars, with excellent attendance



Completed the Nepal post-earthquake program Transition Plan



VNRBD program extended by Swiss Red Cross Humanitarian Foundation



Pivoted to remote support, globally



Updated programs and advice for COVID-19

Business update

Governance

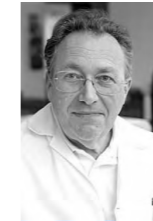
Executive Board

Provide GAP with effective governance, including the oversight of a permanent observer from IFRC.



President

Prof Philippe Vandekerckhove
Belgian Red Cross Blood Service Flanders



Vice President

Prof Wolfgang Mayr
Austrian Red Cross Blood Service



Board member

Ms Shelly Park
Australian Red Cross Lifeblood



Permanent board member

Dr Rudolf Schwabe
Transfusion Swiss Red Cross



IFRC representative

Mr Panu Saaristo
IFRC Health and Care Department

Regional Coordinators

Provide local expertise to run our programs.



Americas

Dr Elizabeth Vinelli
Honduras Red Cross National Blood Centre



Europe and Central Asia

Prof Wolfgang Mayr
Austrian Red Cross Blood Service



Asia Pacific

Dr Cheuk Kwong Lee
Hong Kong Red Cross Blood Transfusion Service

2020 election results

Prof. Wolfgang Mayr – GAP Vice-President and Regional Coordinator (Europe and Central Asia)
Dr Cheuk Kwong Lee – Regional Coordinator (Asia Pacific)

Business update

Members

National Society blood services and their representatives who share their expertise to support our programs in risk and corporate governance of blood services.

- Mr Chris Hrouda, American Red Cross Biomedical Services
- Ms Shelly Park, Australian Red Cross Lifeblood
- Prof Wolfgang Mayr, Austrian Red Cross Blood Service
- Prof Philippe Vandekerckhove, Belgian Red Cross Blood Service Flanders
- Dr Satu Pastila, Finnish Red Cross Blood Service
- Prof Erhard Seifried, German Red Cross Blood Transfusion Centre
- Dr Elizabeth Vinelli, Honduran Red Cross National Blood Centre
- Dr Cheuk Kwong Lee, Hong Kong Red Cross Blood Transfusion Service
- Prof. Eilat Shinar, Magen David Adom
- Dr Masahiro Satake, Japanese Red Cross Society Blood Service
- Dr So-Yong Kwon, Korean Red Cross Blood Services
- Dr Rudolf Schwabe, Transfusion Swiss Red Cross
- Assoc. Prof. Dootchai Chaiwanichsiri, Thai Red Cross Society National Blood Centre
- Dr Saim Kerman, Turkish Red Crescent Blood Services



Dr Cheuk Kwong Lee with blood donor mobile unit

All the best, Rudy

In 2020, GAP farewelled a founding member and the representative for Transfusion Swiss Red Cross, Dr Rudolf Schwabe.

Dr Schwabe was instrumental in the establishment of GAP as a Swiss Association and the framework under which GAP continues to operate under today.

He served many years as the GAP Chairperson and his significant contributions have helped guide GAP's program of work and strategic direction.

Thank you, Rudy, for your dedication and the pivotal role that you held in our organisation.



GAP President Prof Philippe Vandekerckhove presenting Dr Rudolf Schwabe with Honorary GAP President certificate in 2019

Business update

Strategic plan



Photo courtesy of IFRC

We're preparing for our next strategic plan, due for completion in 2021.

In this, we'll identify key strategic themes for GAP, areas where we could develop further, and put in place our objectives and performance indicators.

Our past performance against the 2014–2019 plan's strategic objectives and performance indicators has been evaluated, and will inform insights for the new plan.

We'll also draw upon the suggestions provided in our member survey – with particular emphasis on identifying our strengths, to leverage future opportunities for GAP.

The timing of this strategic revision means we'll be able to factor in the changing global context of COVID-19, to inform our future strategic direction.

Tools, resources and training

Self-Assessment in Europe and Central Asia

Our Category A Self-Assessment tool was completed in the Europe and Central Asia region – with very successful outcomes.

We experienced a high level of engagement from this region coupled with no significant risks being identified.

National Society blood services (Category A) in each IFRC region are regularly provided an opportunity to complete the Self-assessment to enable them to assess their corporate governance and risk management strengths and challenges.

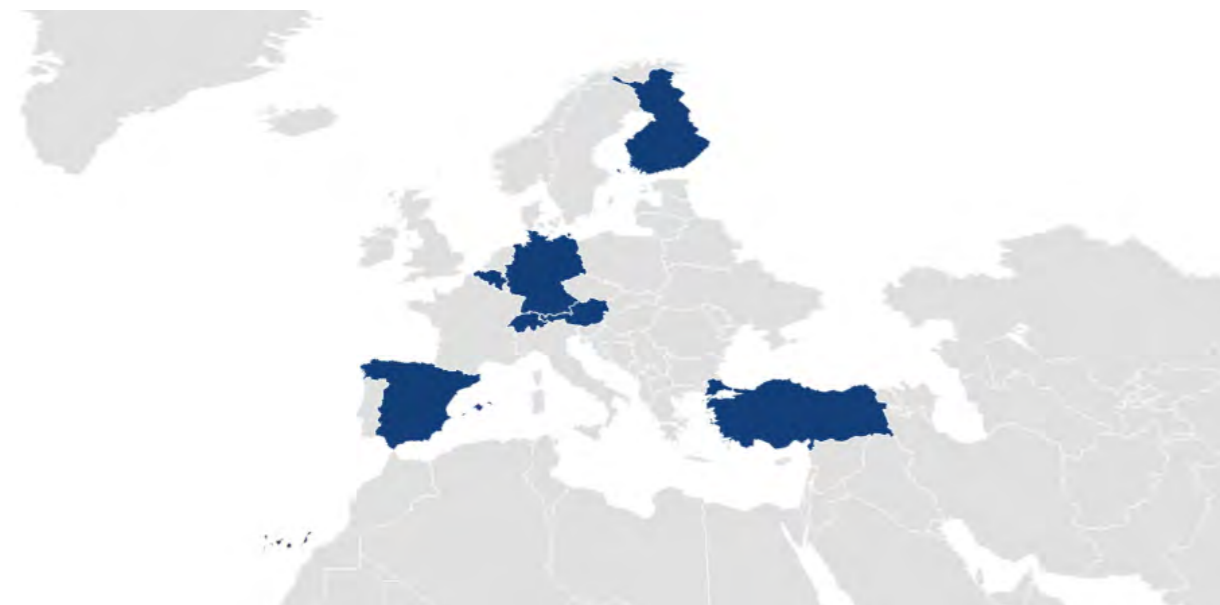
Testing to retain the value

We want to ensure that our Self-Assessment

remains a useful tool for National Society blood services, for both Category A and Category B (VNRBD) questionnaires.

Prompted by feedback received from GAP members and National Society blood services who have completed the questionnaire, we launched a comprehensive review of the tool to ensure it remains useful and relevant. Our review continues into 2021.

With a completed Self-Assessment, GAP provides a detailed individual report for the blood program, which identifies any potential risks and areas that need to be addressed – including recommendations and strategies.



National Society blood services in Europe and Central Asia that completed the GAP Self-Assessment in 2020: Austria, Belgium (Flanders), Belgium (French), Finland, Germany, Spain (Asturias), Spain (Madrid), Switzerland and Turkey

Tools, resources and training

GAP-led modular training package is a streaming success

We set out to help National Society blood services by developing a GAP-led training package.

GAP Modular Training materials are already being used in our country support programs in Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Laos.

In response to COVID-19, we added a dedicated module on managing blood sufficiency in the event of emerging infectious diseases which will fit within the broader disaster preparedness materials and modules.

Virtual delivery

There's demand for remote delivery of this training outside of the COVID-19 pandemic.

As we encounter travel constraints and unstable environmental factors with our country support programs, we've rapidly accelerated the adaption of the materials for full remote training and support.

We're drawing on existing technology to deliver the training, such as our website and video conferencing, and have also added e-learning as a delivery mode.

How it works

Our modular training program provides 'vein-to-vein' training, harnessing the significant expertise in our GAP membership. It's efficient and cost-effective, and can be tailored to country-level or regional, or to specific contexts and themes.

Five-step process

Present



In class, online or pre-recorded

Reference



Resources, support material, videos

Interact



Tailor the program with tutorial-style learning

Action



Activities, homework and action plans

Assess



Check competency



Photo taken prior to COVID-19 pandemic

Local implementation programs

Voluntary non-remunerated blood donation (VNRBD) programs

An increasing number of requests for advice and support for assistance with voluntary, non-remunerated blood donation (VNRBD) led to GAP launching the three-year targeted program in 2017.

More than three years on, GAP's VNRBD support program has:

- successfully developed new resources, tools and training mechanisms and piloted these in Tanzania and Bangladesh
- launched effective channels to regularly communicate advice, tools and resources to over 700 people in the Red Cross and Red Crescent network.

Sharing advice to our network

When the global pandemic resulted in additional challenges with donor management and blood sufficiency, we reached out to National Societies to provide them with timely advice and support.

Our technical advice was used in preparing the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) for World Blood Donor Day on 14 June.

With the success achieved in the initial 3 years, the Swiss Red Cross Humanitarian Foundation approved a two-year extension of the VNRBD program, for 2020-2022.

We continue the much-needed work to provide advice and training for National Societies, and



Blood donation event, Tanzania

this funding will allow the program to deliver specific support to National Societies involved in donor recruitment and retention through the GAP VNRBD Self-Assessment process.

The program will also continue to provide a dedicated VNRBD focal point and the ongoing development of targeted advice and resources.

“The safest blood donors are voluntary, non-remunerated blood donors [...]”

– World Health Organization (WHO), Blood Transfusion Safety

Local implementation programs

Learning from VNRBD in Tanzania and Bangladesh

When paired with engaged management and motivated staff in-country, the strategies and tools developed by GAP have proven in the two pilot programs to be highly valuable for supporting improvements in VNRBD.

There's now more visibility, support and reliance on the Tanzania Red Cross for donor recruitment and retention from the Tanzanian Ministry of Health. Since our support, they've seen increased communication and mobilisation in all regions of Tanzania.

In Bangladesh, we saw a positive improvement in blood safety and GAP was also able to support the development of posters and brochures for their blood centres as COVID-19 became a challenge for blood sufficiency.

GAP continues to remotely provide support and advice for both pilot programs since their close-out in mid-2020, to ensure sustainability.



Blood donation event, Bangladesh



Blood donation event, Tanzania



Proud blood donors, Bangladesh

Local implementation programs

Providing countries with support

As many blood services are prioritising sustaining their own country's blood self-sufficiency during the pandemic, GAP is focused on supporting them with these challenges to ensure availability of blood donors to meet demand.

In 2020, we provided support to Nepal, Bangladesh, Laos, India and Honduras by:

- Directly communicating with blood service directors to understand current challenges and provide targeted advice.
- Sharing customisable tools and resources to assist with donor recruitment and management during COVID-19.
- Disseminating helpful and up-to-date technical information and resources from reputable international networks and organisations.

In India, we progressed the Technical Advancement Program by delivering virtual workshops to assist the Indian Red Cross blood banks to maintain consistent high standards providing them with a pathway to attain national accreditation.

Significant progress and a reduction in risk was achieved with the Honduras Red Cross blood service through the bilateral program with Swiss Red Cross (and expertise provided by GAP member Dr Rudolf Schwabe). As a result, the Honduras country support program

was closed out in 2020, with advice and support from Americas Regional Coordinator Dr Elizabeth Vinneli.

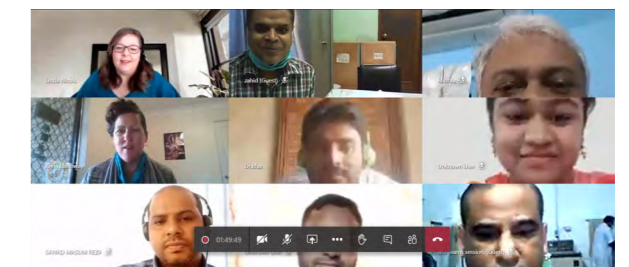
Top quality in Bangladesh

GAP is assisting the Bangladesh Red Crescent Society (BRCS) blood service in implementing a Quality Management System (QMS).

We provided specialist advice, training and remote-monitoring which is expected to significantly improve the quality and safety of blood products.

"We are so grateful to GAP for updating us with the scientific aspects of COVID-19 and the blood supply."

– Bangladesh Blood Program Director



GAP webinar with Bangladesh Red Crescent blood service



The existence of a resilient blood service is critical in disaster response and recovery.

Disaster response

Ensuring the availability and safety of blood supply

All blood services around the world try to disaster-proof their blood supply, both for direct or indirect impact.

As we know, when disaster strikes, blood services need to be ready and able to meet any increase in demand – and to ensure the continued safety of blood supply.

GAP has a specialist post-disaster role outlined in our terms of reference for the provision of “coordination of assistance to National Red Cross or Red Crescent blood services in post-emergency situations” and to “assist them in the rebuilding of their blood program”.

Our support starts with immediate advice but also includes coordination assistance for longer term recovery effort and support for rebuilding the blood program once the urgency of the crisis has passed.

Disaster response

Nepal

The multi-partner, post-earthquake recovery project in Nepal approached completion in 2020.

GAP worked closely with Nepal Red Cross Society (NRCS) and all partners to develop a smooth transition for them post-disaster support, ensuring the ongoing sustainability for the blood program in Nepal.

To ensure this work is sustained in the future for the NRCS, we created a Transition Plan.

This plan provides a comprehensive record of the project, including the strategies, structures and resources provided by all partners. The Nepal project partners also created a report to capture the highlights, challenges and lessons learned throughout the project.



NRCS transition plan report (2020)



New equipment for the Bhaktapur blood bank (Nepal)
Refurbishment completed in 2020

Disaster response

Indonesia

Hit by a tsunami and earthquake in late 2018, Indonesia received much-needed post-disaster support from GAP – and we continue to support their plans for future recovery.

We progressed work on equipment procurement and training workshop development activities. Our program, funded by the Belgium Red Cross (BRC), has several future-proofing disaster response activities planned for Indonesia.

With COVID-19 travel restrictions disrupting local capacities and the planned in-country delivery of workshop and training components, the program has been extended into 2021 and will be delivered remotely.

This support program looks to the future with Indonesia with deliverables including:

- disaster preparedness plans and training;
- emergency blood storage equipment and transport containers – to assist safe movement of blood in acute phase of any future disaster or crisis events;
- blood bank critical information and communications technology – to enable system connection to additional blood centres, which will provide improved management, visibility and connectivity for the national blood supply; and
- immuno-haematology and clinical training – to improve transfusion safety and best use of blood in times of critical shortage.

Lebanon

A devastating explosion in the Beirut port in August 2020 caused significant loss of life and of infrastructure: 178 deaths, 6000 injuries and 300,000 people left homeless. On top of that, two of their blood banks had considerable damage.

GAP assisted the Lebanese Red Cross Blood Transfusion Service to ensure that the blood program was included in the scope of any disaster appeals, if affected.

We also worked with the IFRC Middle East and Northern Africa (MENA) Regional Office to clarify and facilitate partner support arrangements for the rebuilding of the two

impacted blood centres, as well as provision of reagents and consumables to replenish emergency supplies.

Lebanese Red Cross expressed their gratitude for GAP's early support and advice which helped facilitate their blood program recovery.



Photo courtesy of IFRC

Finance

Income and expenditure

(all figures in CHF)

2020 Budget

Actual I&E 2020

(includes Australian and Swiss accounts)

	2020 Budget	Actual I&E 2020
Opening balance		
Australian account	673,220	673,220
Swiss account	88,034	88,034
Combined opening balance at 1 January 2020	761,254	761,254
Income		
Membership fee contributions	273,000	231,000
Bank interest	17,000	6,937
Other Income	142,354	412,674
Total Income	432,354	650,611
Expenditure		
Secretariat and Self-Assessment	(137,220)	(127,537)
Major Material Risk follow up (secretariat)	(26,933)	(26,933)
Project Support (Country programs, Modular Training)	(271,843)	(205,300)
Insurance	(1,000)	(665)
Website hosting, technical maintenance and software	(500)	(470)
Teleconference calls	(500)	0
Specialist advice (translation and professional expertise)	(10,000)	(2,261)
Annual General Meeting	(12,100)	(8)
Regional meetings	(15,000)	0
Stakeholder meetings	(6,000)	0
Major Material Risk follow up (travel)	(10,000)	0
Modular Training (travel and materials)	(40,000)	0
Country support programs (Nepal, Bangladesh, India, Laos)	(85,239)	3,404
Partner Funded Programs		
VNRBD project (Swiss Red Cross-HF)	(150,374)	(104,214)
Nepal Bhaktapur equipment (Japanese Red Cross)	0	(18,343)
Indonesia disaster (Belgian Red Cross)	0	(57,084)
Bank fees	(500)	(134)
Investment fee and exchange rate gains/loss		(3,063)
Contingency funds	(20,000)	(6,850)
Total expenditure	(787,209)	(549,459)
Closing balance at 31 December 2020	406,399	862,405

Note: The GAP Income and Expenditure is aligned with the Australian Red Cross Lifeblood (Lifeblood) financial statements. The Lifeblood accounts are audited annually by external auditors.

Finance

INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT

Global Advisory Panel (GAP) on Corporate Governance and Risk Management of Blood Services in Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

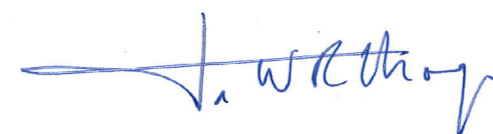
To ensure compliance with the Swiss Code of Obligations (as they apply to an association established under Swiss Law) which allows small organizations to appoint internal auditors without accounting expertise, I hereby present the report of the internal audit process conducted for the period from **January 1, 2020** to **December 31, 2020**. I believe that the evidence reviewed is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for this internal audit opinion.

The following activities have been conducted during the internal audit process:

- Review of the GAP Income and Expenditure Report for 2020, to ensure that closing balances for 2019 were correctly transferred to the opening balance for 2020,
- Review of the membership income as stated in the financial report,
- Review of the expenses for meetings and for the support of priority countries for reasonableness, and
- Review of the secretariat expenses for reasonableness.

During the audit, all necessary information and explanations required have been obtained.

In my opinion, the detailed Report of Income and Expenditure for 2020 has been properly prepared and is a veritable reflection of the transactions that occurred during the period of January 1, 2020 to December 31, 2020.



Em. o. Univ.-Prof. Dr. Dr. h.c. Wolfgang R. MAYR
Acting as Internal Auditor for GAP

Vienna, April 21, 2021



Global Advisory Panel

on Corporate Governance and Risk Management of Blood Services in Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

