On the 14th of February 2021, UNFPA Kenya partnered with the Ministry of Health, Kenya Red Cross Society and Damu Sasa to advance the accessibility and availability of safe blood and blood products through the Valentine's Blood Donor Drive. With the main event at Uhuru Park and other events across 52 donation facilities in the country, many embraced the initiative and donated blood. The main messages of the Valentine’s Day campaign focused on blood donation as an avenue to show love and share life with mothers giving birth across the country most affected by Kenya’s dangerously wide blood supply gap. Kenya’s blood crisis has heightened perilously, evidenced by the downward trend of blood units donated between 2013-2019. COVID-19 has further exacerbated the situation, where measures put in place such as restricted movement and physical/social distancing, in response to the pandemic, has constrained the smooth running of blood services. Bringing together voluntary blood donors at Uhuru Park was a statement that despite unprecedented challenges, the road towards ending preventable maternal deaths is not lost. A total of 5,300 units of blood were collected across the country over the three days. In Nairobi, 200 units were collected, with 100 donated on Valentine’s day.
Making blood available for all

In 2020, UNFPA Kenya established a partnership with Damu Sasa and Kenya Red Cross Society in actively preventing maternal and newborn deaths facilitating timely and equitable access of safe blood to patients for transfusion. Through an end-to-end blood services management system, and digital technology, the Damu-Sasa solution is improving the availability of blood, supporting its safety and enhancing its accessibility to save lives. The system is currently operating in 132 public and private health facilities across Kenya with potential to scale up nation-wide.

4 Key Achievements in 2020

1. Establishment and strengthening the digital blood donor system
2. Launch of an Android Blood donor app to link blood donors with health facilities
3. Strengthened coordination and outreach to key stakeholders at county and national level
4. Recruitment and retention of blood donors in two pilot counties through blood donor drives

LOOKING FORWARD - 2021

Based on a successful 2020, UNFPA will increase our support to transform Kenya’s blood supply system in the journey towards ending preventable maternal deaths. Major activities for 2021 include:

- Recruitment and retention of blood donors at county level in Migori and Kitui counties
- Enrolment and capacity building of health facilities into the Damu Sasa Blood system in Migori and Kitui counties
- Blood donation drives to recruit new blood donors and create awareness of the blood supply gap in Kenya
- Advocacy and awareness through media