

## News Release

Your Contact

Grace Mukasa: +254 711 794 081

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### **Merck continues to empower Kenyan women through “Merck More than a Mother” and “Merck STEM for Women and Girls” programs**

- **“Merck More than a Mother” supports infertile women through access to information, health and change of mindset.**
- **“Merck STEM Program for Women and Girls” starts today in Kenya.**
- **Merck inaugurates “OLYMPIC School” where they equipped the library with a computer lab as part of their program “STEM for Women and Girls” in Africa.**

Nairobi, Kenya, March 3, 2017 – Merck, a leading science and technology company, today announces their commitment to empower Kenyan women through their “Merck More than a Mother” and the start of “Merck STEM for Women and Girls” programs.

The day’s program also included a courtesy visit to Kenya’s First Lady H.E. Margaret Kenyatta at State House, Nairobi by the Merck delegation to brief her on the two programs and to explore possible areas of collaboration. The delegation consisted of H.E. Madame Brigitte Touadera, First Lady, Central African Republic; Belen Garijo, CEO, Merck Healthcare; Virgnie Baiokua, Minister of Social Affairs and National Reconciliation, Central African Republic; Rasha Kelej, Chief Social Officer, Merck Healthcare; Leonard Saika, Director - Regional Head of Social Responsibility & Market Development – Africa, Merck and Lina Ekomo, Central African Republic.

Speaking at the event in Nairobi, Belén Garijo, Member of Executive Board and CEO of Merck Healthcare emphasized: “I believe in women empowerment and especially childless women - they are mistreated and discriminated in many cultures for being unable to have children and start a family. Empowering these



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women through access to information, health, and change of mind set to remove the stigma of infertility is needed. Through “Merck More than a Mother” we are supporting this strong message together with our partners and we will continue our commitment to improve access to regulated and effective fertility care in Africa.”

Madame Brigitte Touadera, the First Lady of the Central African Republic (CAR) emphasized: “I am very happy to participate in today’s event of ‘Merck More than a Mother’ in Kenya as it follows the one we had for the Central African Republic (CAR) last month. As the champion for the initiative in CAR and for Francophone Africa, I acknowledge the role that “Merck More than a Mother” is playing to break the stigma around infertile women and to raise awareness about infertility prevention, male infertility and the necessity of a team approach to family building among couples which is very critical for Africa.”

“It is very important to empower infertile women through improving access to awareness and fertility care so they can bear children as part of their human rights. In case they can no longer be treated, ‘Empowering Berna’ project will contribute towards empowering and training them to establish their own small business so that they can be independent and re-build their lives – a woman is more than a mother, ‘Empowering Berna’ initiative will prove this every day,” Rasha Kelej, Chief Social Officer Merck emphasized.

In 2016, over 1,000 infertile women in Kenya, Uganda, Nigeria, Ethiopia, Liberia, Ghana, Central African Republic and Cote D’Ivoire who can no longer be treated have been empowered socially and economically to lead independent and happier lives through the “Empowering Berna” project.

Kenya’s Cabinet Secretary for Health, Cleopa Mailu stated: “As a ministry we are happy with the strategic partnership we have with Merck in Kenya through its Merck Capacity Advancement Program initiatives which are boosting our healthcare capacity with special focus on diabetes, cancer and infertility which contribute to the country’s economic progression”.

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“In recognition of the important role women can play in the economic and social development of Africa, Merck is empowering them to participate in STEM where they are currently under-represented, through the “Merck STEM Program” which we are launching today,” Garijo said.

Merck will inaugurate their initiative at OLYMPIC School where they equipped their library with a Computer Lab to encourage young girls to study science and technology as part of their “STEM for Girls and Women” program in Africa. Furthermore the winners of UNESCO-MARS awards will act as ambassadors in their respective countries.

The Governor of Nairobi County, Evans Kidero announced during his keynote speech: “We are happy to partner with reputable and innovative companies such as Merck. We believe that the only way to effectively tackle the health and research related challenges we are facing can only be through establishing Public Private Partnership models in implementing successful programs. The size and complexity of the task is so large that no single organization or institution can manage on its own, so integration of efforts is necessary to achieve the health gains that our nation deserves”.

“The Merck STEM Program will encourage our young women and girls to undertake science and technology related courses and make active contribution to the social and economic development of our country”, Kidero added.

“Through this program Merck is targeting to empower over 7,000 girls and 60 women researchers across Africa in 2017 through various initiatives which include setting up computer libraries in schools similar to the one we are launching today for the first time in Kenya at Olympic School in Kibera, Nairobi, and appointing the UNESCO-MARS research award winners as ambassadors for the ‘Merck STEM Program’ Rasha Kelej added.

### **About “Merck STEM for Girls and Women”:**

The program started UNESCO-Merck Africa Research Summit (UNESCO-MARS) as its first initiative that has been held annually since 2015. UNESCO-MARS aims to build research capacity and empower young African researchers with special focus

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on empowering women in the fields of research and healthcare to raise the level of scientific research in Africa and improve access to health solutions in the continent,” explained Rasha Kelej, Chief Social Officer, Merck Healthcare.

During the 2016 UNESCO-MARS, the ‘Best African Women Researchers Awards’ were launched for the first time with the aim of promoting women in STEM that saw five women researchers from across Africa recognized for the quality of their research. The first award went to Beatrice Nyagol from Kenya Medical Research Institute, who was also celebrated during the event in Nairobi.

During the event, a high level panel discussion by fertility experts and policy makers called for action to break the stigma around infertile women; raising awareness about infertility prevention and management; defining policies to regulate ART; improving access to cost effective fertility care by integrating it into public reproductive health services and building fertility care capacity and providing training to African embryologists.

The high level panel included: Sarah Opendi, Minister of State of Health, Uganda; Zuliatu Cooper, Deputy Minister of Health and Sanitation, Sierra Leone; Virginie Baikoua, Minister of Social Affairs and National Reconciliation, CAR; Joyce Lay, Member of Parliament, Kenya; Oladapo Ashiru, President of Africa Fertility Society; Joe Simpson, Past President, International Federation of Fertility Societies; Paul Le Roux, President of Southern African Society of Reproductive Medicine and Gynaecological Endoscopy; Kamini Rao, Chair International Institute for Training & Research in Reproductive Health, India; Mohamed Kamal, President of Future Assured Foundation, Nigeria and Rasha Kelej, Chief Social Officer, Merck Healthcare.

In addition to Kenya, “Merck More than a Mother” is already being implemented in Uganda, Ethiopia, Ghana, Liberia, Tanzania, Nigeria, Cote D’Ivoire and CAR.

### **During the event Merck also highlighted other CAP initiatives in Kenya:**

- “Merck Cancer Access Program” which aims to increase the number of qualified oncologists through “Merck Africa Oncology Fellowship Program” in partnership with the University of Nairobi, Kenya and Tata Memorial

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Hospital in India. Furthermore Merck aims to support women cancer survivors to establish their own small business so that they can lead an independent and productive life through “Merck More than a Patient” initiative.

- “Merck Diabetes and Hypertension Awards” with the aim to building a platform of diabetes and hypertension experts across the globe through a one year online diabetes and cardiovascular medicine diploma at University of South Wales, United Kingdom. In 2016 six winners from Kenyan universities received the awards.

Watch videos below of TV interviews in Kenya with Dr. Rasha Kelej, Chief Social Officer, Merck Healthcare and Joyce Lay, Member of Parliament, Taita Taveta, Kenya as they speak on infertility and what “Merck More than a Mother” initiative is doing in Africa.



[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K8epfQXIO\\_E&t=633s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K8epfQXIO_E&t=633s)

Merck More Than a Mother-Rasha Kelej, Chief Social Officer at Merck - TV interview on NTV



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[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1\\_vZLRyLkV8&t=1228s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1_vZLRyLkV8&t=1228s)

Merck More Than a Mother- Rasha Kelej, Chief Social Officer at Merck - TV interview on KBC Channel1

Watch TV coverage below of the "Merck More than a Mother" and "Merck STEM women and Girls Program" in Nairobi.



<https://youtu.be/JlcV3LE3sK8>

Coverage of Merck More Than a Mother and Merck STEM for Women and Girls, Kenya on Ebru TV

Watch below videos on the story of Grace Kambini, an infertile woman from Kenya before and after she enrolled in "Merck More than a Mother's" 'Empowering Berna' Program.



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6BdE5i9x02o>

Merck More Than a Mother with Grace Kambini AKA "Mama Chips"

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<https://youtu.be/7VzfaV6inpA>

Merck More Than a Mother - The Story of Empowering Grace Kambini

### **About Merck Capacity Advancement Program- Merck CAP**

The Merck Capacity Advancement Program (CAP) is a ten-year program aiming to expand professional capacity in developing countries in the areas of research and development, advocacy building, supply-chain integrity and efficiency, pharmacovigilance, medical education, and community awareness. It was established in 2012.

Merck CAP signature initiatives include the following: Merck African Universities Program, Merck Diabetes & Hypertension Awards, Merck Cancer Access Program, Merck More than a Mother and Merck STEM program for Women and Girls”.



Twitter handle: [MerckCAP](#)



Facebook page: [Merck Capacity Advancement Program](#)



YouTube Channel: [Merck Capacity Advancement Program](#)

### **About Merck More than a Mother**

The aim is to empower infertile women in Africa through improving access to information, health, change mind-sets and economic empowerment. Please visit to [www.merckmorethanamother.com](http://www.merckmorethanamother.com) for more information.

### **Merck More than a Mother Strategy and Objectives:**

1. Create a culture shift to de-stigmatize infertility and to build respect and understanding around infertile women in Africa.

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2. Raise awareness about infertility prevention management and male infertility by integrating the topics into existing healthcare infrastructure, such as HIV, maternal health, and mother and child programs.
3. Education and training for African embryologists to build the needed capacity.
4. Supporting policy makers to define artificial reproductive therapy (ART) policies to improve access to regulated fertility care.
5. Building advocacy and open dialogue and working closely with governments, policy makers, parliaments, healthcare providers, fertility experts and the media to define interventions that will reduce social suffering and improve access to regulated, effective and safe fertility care in Africa.
6. Empowering infertile women socially and economically through access to education and healthcare, and by changing mind-sets. For example, empowering women who cannot be treated by helping them to start a small business through the "Empowering Berna" project.



Twitter handle: [MerckandMothers](#)



Facebook page: [Merckmorethanamother](#)



YouTube: [Merck More than a Mother](#)

### About Merck Cancer Access Program

Merck has started this program in Africa with two initiatives:

#### 1- Merck Africa Medical Oncology Program

The first **Medical Oncology Fellowship Program** for Sub-Saharan Africa held at the University of Nairobi, Kenya and at Tata Memorial Centre in India, with the aim to increase the limited number of qualified oncologists in the continent.

#### 2- Merck More than a Patient initiative

In partnership with cancer patients' organizations across Africa, this will support women cancer survivors to establish small businesses in order to re-build their independent lives and become productive members of society.

### #MerckCancerTips



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Face book: [Merck Cancer Control Program](#)



YouTube: [Merck Cancer Control Program](#)

### About Merck Universities Program

The program provides European accredited diabetes and hypertension management for medical undergraduates and postgraduates from African universities. It enables them to become diabetes and hypertension ambassadors across the continent, especially in rural areas. More than 12,000 medical students from Angola, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Mozambique, Namibia, Tanzania and Uganda have benefited from this program and we aim to reach 25,000 by 2018.

Merck launched the “**Merck Diabetes Award**” and the “**Merck Hypertension Award**” in March 2016 as part of the Merck Capacity Advancement Program for Africa and Asia with the aim to build a platform of diabetes and hypertension experts across the globe.

### Merck STEM for Women and Girls

Through its annual platform **UNESCO Merck Africa Research Summit**, the **Merck STEM program** aims to empower young and women African researchers in order to prepare for the road ahead in Africa’s development as an international hub for research excellence and scientific innovation. Furthermore Merck has launched for the first time, “MARS best African Women Researcher Award” to empower women in the fields of Research and healthcare.



Twitter handle: [@Merck\\_MARS](#)



Facebook page [Merck Africa Research Summit](#)



YouTube Channel [Merck Africa Research Summit](#)

Please visit [www.unesco-mars.com](http://www.unesco-mars.com) for more information.

To read more about Merck Capacity Advancement Program initiatives in Africa, visit [www.merck-cap.com](http://www.merck-cap.com) and [www.merck-africa.com](http://www.merck-africa.com).

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### About Merck

Merck is a leading science and technology company in healthcare, life science and performance materials. Around 50,000 employees work to further develop technologies that improve and enhance life – from biopharmaceutical therapies to treat cancer or multiple sclerosis, cutting-edge systems for



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scientific research and production, to liquid crystals for smartphones and LCD televisions. In 2015, Merck generated sales of € 12.85 billion in 66 countries.

Founded in 1668, Merck is the world's oldest pharmaceutical and chemical company. The founding family remains the majority owner of the publicly listed corporate group. Merck, Darmstadt, Germany holds the global rights to the Merck name and brand. The only exceptions are the United States and Canada, where the company operates as EMD Serono, MilliporeSigma and EMD Performance Materials.