



Merck for Mothers in Asia Pacific

Responding to Local Maternal Health Needs

It all starts with a mother—she’s the beginning of a much bigger story. A healthy pregnancy and safe childbirth lead to a lifetime of benefits, both for her own health and prosperity as well as that of her children, family, community and nation—for generations to come. We call this the “Mom Effect.”

About Merck for Mothers

Merck for Mothers is Merck’s global initiative to help create a world where no woman has to die while giving life. We provide support for transformational and sustainable solutions that strengthen health systems to deliver high-quality maternity care services that benefit women and their communities. Through 2021, Merck for Mothers has reached over 18 million women in over 60 global sites through programs promoting safe, high-quality, respectful care.

Estimated Maternal Mortality in the Region¹

- **69 maternal deaths** per 100,000 live births
- **30.3% reduction** in maternal mortality since 2000
- **1 in 790** chance of a woman dying in pregnancy and childbirth
- **Challenges²:** Conflict, poverty, weak infrastructures, lack of reporting and monitoring and disparities in health coverage are barriers to improving maternal health outcomes in this region.



Global Sites:
Australia;
Cambodia;
China; Indonesia;
Myanmar;
Philippines;
Thailand; Vietnam

Programs and Collaborators in Asia Pacific

In 2012, we launched Merck for Mothers Global Grants — a corporate grant program that enables Merck offices around the world to support organizations that are improving maternal health. The Global Grants program is designed to be responsive to local women's needs and extends our reach and impact to many more countries across the globe. Since we launched, the program has contributed over \$40 million, supporting over 60 projects across more than 40 global sites.

A selection of grants we have made in Asia Pacific includes:

Australia | The Australian College of Midwives is developing a country framework for improving the quality of maternity care among indigenous communities – as outlined in the National Maternity Services Plan – through midwife trainings and awareness-building campaigns. The project is contributing high-quality evidence that demonstrates the efficacy of traditional, culturally appropriate models of maternity care.

Cambodia | World Vision is strengthening knowledge and practice of women in maternal health care and child health, including training mothers on the prevention and management of common childhood illnesses and equipping them with improved nutrition practices.

China | Project HOPE is increasing access to maternal health services and reducing obstetric threats for pregnant women with risk factors – including those of advanced maternal age – by strengthening clinical practice among health care providers, increasing women's ability to seek appropriate care and improving routine and emergency care at health facilities. The program targets areas with high maternal morbidity and mortality rates within the West China region.

China | Project HOPE is reducing maternal mortality through digital health interventions for pregnancy risk screening, assessment and management. The key activities center around early identification, early alert and early intervention for pregnancy-related risks among pregnant women and health workers. The program targets areas with high maternal mortality rates within the Eastern China region.

Chinese Taipei | The Zhi-shan Foundation is enhancing indigenous women's access to quality, comprehensive maternal health care and case management services in remote areas using a mobile health van to overcome geographic barriers and by training and building community networks of qualified caregivers.

Indonesia | Jhpiego is researching the barriers and facilitators to offering the full range of family planning methods in the immediate post pregnancy period. The study is informing the design and implementation of a package of interventions to advance post-pregnancy family planning and improve the quality of counseling and service provision in both the public and private health sectors.

Myanmar | The Japanese Organization for International Cooperation in Family Planning is reducing maternal mortality in the Ayeyarwady Region by helping women overcome socio-cultural and decision-making barriers in accessing family planning and maternal health services.

Philippines | Jhpiego is improving the quality of maternity care in public and private health facilities in the Sorsogon Province (Bicol Region) and establishing an effective referral network to increase timely emergency response to address obstetric emergencies.



Thailand | UNICEF is reducing risks of maternal morbidity and mortality among 15-19-year-old women by increasing access to youth-friendly health service packages that include comprehensive care before, during and after birth. By promoting expanded use of digital forums and online platforms to access age-appropriate information, services and consultation on sexual and reproductive health, UNICEF is reducing unintended pregnancies among adolescents.

Vietnam | Population Services International is broadening contraceptive options for Vietnamese women and their partners by registering underused methods, distributing multiple methods through channels accessible to underserved women including private clinics and hospitals, and integrating family planning counseling into antenatal and post-pregnancy care. The program is also educating women on the full range of contraceptive choices to allow women to choose an appropriate method based on their individual needs and preferences.

Vietnam | UNFPA is reducing cultural, educational and behavioral barriers to accessing and utilizing maternal health and family planning services across ethnic minority regions through innovative interventions focused on community education, provider capacity building and a digital tool to strengthen service delivery.

Project Spotlight

Philippines | Merck for Mothers joined the UN Foundation and UNFPA to launch Business Action for Family Planning (BAFP) – a partnership with business owners in the Philippines to provide maternal and reproductive health information to underserved women at the workplace. BAFP partnered with 11 private Filipino companies to implement the program, reaching 1.2 +million women with comprehensive family planning information and services. These efforts resulted in an 18% decline in absenteeism and a 43% reduction in staff turnover—yielding a 4:1 return on investment. This work led to the development of a return of investment tool, which UNFPA is using to make the business case for other companies to invest in workplace health programs.

1 [WHO's Trends in Maternal Mortality Report \(2017\)](#)

2 [Maternal mortality in Asia-Pacific - 5 key facts May 2018](#)

These programs are supported by funding from Merck, through Merck for Mothers, the company's \$500 million initiative to help create a world where no woman has to die while giving life. Merck for Mothers is an initiative of Merck & Co., Inc., Kenilworth, N.J., U.S.A.