Most of us consider the death of a woman during pregnancy or childbirth a tragedy confined to developing countries. But, we’ve learned that even in the most medically advanced nations, too many women are dying while giving life.

Why is this happening?

Regrettably, women do not have equitable access to high quality healthcare — even though this should be a fundamental right. Throughout Europe, it is women who are poor, young migrants or from minority ethnic groups who are most likely to suffer from poor maternal healthcare.

Together with our partners, we work with policy makers, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), health centers, social workers, healthcare professionals and local governments to link women to quality maternal healthcare and to raise awareness of these issues throughout Europe. We’re grateful for their continued collaboration and expertise, which has enabled us to help reduce the risks in pregnancy and childbirth for the estimated 5 million women who give birth in the European Union annually.

While our results are encouraging, there’s still more work to be done in order to ensure all women in Europe and beyond have the ability to access quality maternal health services, regardless of their socio-economic status, ethnicity or nationality.

Be well,

DR. NAVENTE RAO
Lead, Merck for Mothers
Merck for Mothers is our 10-year, $500 million (USD) initiative that applies Merck’s scientific and business expertise — as well as our financial resources and experience in taking on tough global healthcare challenges — to reduce maternal mortality worldwide.

To date, Merck for Mothers has contributed to improved access to quality maternal healthcare and family planning services for nearly 6 million women in more than 30 countries around the world. We’ve provided over €5 million in grants supporting projects worldwide and more than half of these grants directly impact women living in Europe.

Our Approach

Merck for Mothers is catalyzing transformative solutions to improve the quality of care women receive in health facilities throughout pregnancy and childbirth and improving access to quality modern contraceptives. Our efforts target three areas:

Enable health providers: equipping health providers with the skills, tools and technologies they need to deliver high-quality maternity and family planning services wherever women seek care

Develop and deliver life-saving products: placing life-saving maternal health products in the hands of women and their providers

Empower women: empowering women to make informed choices about contraception and get the quality care they need for a healthy pregnancy and safe childbirth.

Specifically in Europe, we are advocating to build awareness and action among policy makers to drive improvements in women’s rights and ensure equitable access to quality maternal healthcare.

Our Impact by the Numbers

- Nearly 6 million women have improved access to quality maternal healthcare and modern contraceptives
- 10,800+ providers and community health workers trained
- 2,650+ facilities strengthened to provide quality care
- 50+ programs
- 75+ partners
- 30+ countries
Equitable access to high-quality maternal healthcare should be a fundamental right for all women living in Europe. Unfortunately, the reality is different for millions of women who give birth in the European Union each year. In a region characterized by free movement and differing health systems, the gaps in access to care result in health inequalities, including poor maternal health.

**Maternal Mortality Varies in Europe**

**Maternal Mortality Ratio**
Deaths per 100,000 live births (2015)

**Snapshot**
- Denmark: 6 deaths
- Hungary: 17 deaths
- Ukraine: 24 deaths
- Albania: 29 deaths
- Romania: 31 deaths
In collaboration with local Merck offices in Europe, Merck for Mothers is supporting maternal health organizations that connect pregnant women to quality care and raise awareness of safe motherhood practices. These projects are improving maternal health in Europe and in sub-Saharan Africa, where issues related to access to quality maternal healthcare and rates of maternal mortality are among the highest in the world.

**MERCK FOR MOTHERS IN EUROPE: OUR COMMITMENT**

**BELGIUM**
Medics Without Vacation is supporting medical missions to train local health workers on maternal health in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

**DENMARK**
Maternity Foundation is expanding the reach of its Safe Delivery App, an innovative mobile health tool to enhance antenatal care and emergency obstetric care in Ethiopia.

**FINLAND**
Väestöliitto worked with foster care organizations in Finland to promote sexual and reproductive health among young girls.

**GERMANY**
Ethno-Medizinisches Zentrum e.V is reducing barriers to maternal healthcare in Germany among female migrant workers.

**GREECE**
Doctors of the World is enhancing existing Medicins du Monde facilities in Greece to ensure increased access to maternal healthcare for women.

**IRELAND**
Concern Worldwide is reducing maternal mortality and morbidity in Malawi through a package of community and facility-based interventions.

**ITALY**
Comunità di S.Egidio ACAP Onlus is integrating HIV/AIDS care with antenatal services in health facilities in Mozambique.

**ROMANIA**
World Vision Romania is training health providers and strengthening local government capacity to improve maternal health services in rural Romania.

**SWEDEN**
World Lung Foundation is developing a digital learning platform to support the delivery of emergency obstetric care in remote health facilities in Tanzania.

**SWITZERLAND**
Swiss Tropical Public Health Institute is improving access to care and treatment for HIV-infected pregnant women in Tanzania.

**UNITED KINGDOM (U.K.)**
British Pregnancy Advisory Service led a public awareness campaign in the U.K. that encouraged pregnant women to seek care from healthcare professionals.

**MERCK FOR MOTHERS IN EUROPE: OUR COMMITMENT**

Merck for Mothers is a founding partner in the Alliance for Maternal Health Equality. The Alliance is a unique coalition of European stakeholders committed to ensuring that all women in Europe have equal access to quality maternal healthcare.

The Alliance aims to increase awareness and garner greater attention to this critical issue among policy makers and the public, with a focus on promoting universal access to quality maternal healthcare, empowering women and collecting stronger data.
Eliminating barriers to care for migrant women

In recent years, the number of immigrants and refugees in Germany has increased substantially. Migrant women are a vulnerable and disadvantaged group due to the barriers they face when seeking care, such as language differences, cultural and socio-economic challenges and oftentimes a lack of knowledge about the local healthcare system.

Ethno-Medical Centre is implementing the “MiMi Initiative for Maternal Health” to improve maternal healthcare for migrant workers. The project raises awareness of services that are available to them and helps strengthen health professionals’ cultural and linguistic competence.

“We developed the ‘MiMi Initiative for Maternal Health’ because out of all female migrants, pregnant women are a particularly disadvantaged patient group when considering their gender and migration background. Our project aims to reduce these barriers and right now, it is the biggest health promotion program for this target group and we’ve already seen encouraging outcomes.”

– Ramazan Salman, Executive Managing Director, Ethno-Medical Centre
Providing quality care for vulnerable women

Greece is experiencing its sixth consecutive year of recession as well as increased poverty, widespread unemployment and an increase in unmet medical needs. These challenges, coupled with a surge in refugees and immigrants and the fact that nearly one-third of the population lacks healthcare coverage, have negatively affected women’s access to maternal healthcare in the country.

Through the “Mother & Child Project,” Doctors of the World’s Greek delegation is deploying mobile health units so that refugee women and women in remote regions are able to receive the maternal health services they need; strengthening the capacity of healthcare professionals to manage pregnancy and childbirth complications; and ensuring that antenatal and postnatal care is available to uninsured women.

“Pregnant women and infants are a priority for the Doctors of the World. They are the most vulnerable members of society, especially women without access to care, minority groups who live in remote areas of Greece and refugee and migrant populations. Our program, supported by Merck for Mothers, will offer free healthcare services for about 8,400 pregnant women and newborns in need of quality care.”

– Dr. Nikitas Kanakis, President, Doctors of the World Greece
Increasing access to maternal health services for women in rural communities

Romania has one of the highest levels of poverty, with 42% of the population at risk of poverty and social exclusion. It’s no surprise that the country’s maternal mortality rates are more than double the average of other European countries.

World Vision’s “Mothers for Life. Life for Mothers” program is improving family planning and maternal health services for vulnerable women in three rural counties in Romania. The program uses an integrated model involving training healthcare professionals to provide antenatal and postnatal care, raising awareness among women and girls about the services available to them and strengthening local government capacity to deliver maternal healthcare services.

“...For over 25 years, we’ve worked with our partners to improve the lives of children in the most disadvantaged communities. Through the ‘Mothers for Life. Life for Mothers’ program, we are using our resources to support specialists in delivering quality healthcare to current and future mothers, regardless of whether they live in urban or rural areas or are from rich or poor economic backgrounds.”

– Daniela Buzducea, Executive Director, World Vision Romania Foundation
DENMARK

Improving access to training and job-aids

The Maternity Foundation, a Denmark-based, non-governmental organization specializing in technology solutions for maternal health, is expanding the reach of its Safe Delivery App, an innovative mobile health tool that trains health workers in basic emergency obstetric and neonatal care. Developed in collaboration with researchers from the University of Copenhagen and the University of Southern Denmark, the app provides instructional videos on managing childbirth emergencies.

Results from field-testing in Ethiopia revealed that health workers’ skills in handling complications, such as postpartum hemorrhage and newborn resuscitation, increased by more than 100% after 12 months of use. By the end of 2017, the Maternity Foundation aims to reach 10,000 front-line health workers, resulting in over 1 million safer deliveries.

“The Safe Delivery App is in huge demand and is being used as an educational tool in small and large healthcare settings. By the end of 2017, our goal is to have 10,000 health workers in ten countries using the app so we can hopefully reach more than 1 million women.”

– Anna Cecilia Frellsen, CEO, Maternity Foundation
“We are honored to play a role in global efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. Through our ongoing commitments to address important health challenges, including maternal health, HIV/AIDS, cervical cancer and neglected tropical diseases, we are mobilizing the best of Merck to help save and improve lives around the world.”

– Kenneth Frazier, Merck Chairman and CEO