Merck for Mothers Global Grants Program
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 more than 60 global sites through programs promoting safe, high-quality, respectful care.

Maternal Mortality Around the World
- Every day, over 800 women die from preventable causes related to pregnancy and childbirth.
- 94% of all maternal deaths are in developing countries.
Background

In 2012, we launched Merck for Mothers Global Grants — a corporate grant program that enables Merck offices around the world to support nongovernmental organizations that are improving maternal health. The program is designed to be responsive to local women’s needs, focusing on how resources can contribute distinctively to increase health equity in maternity care and support.

The program takes a distinctive approach in each region depending on the context. Merck offices have sponsored projects in their own markets as well as in places with great need. With over 60 unique and diverse projects around the world, the Global Grants Program is:

- Improving maternal health in local markets;
- Engaging Merck offices in Merck for Mothers; and
- Providing seed funding to test innovative approaches

Global Grants Impact to Date

- More than 4.6 million women reached and counting
- More than 68,000 health care professionals trained

To date, the Global Grants Program has supported projects in more than 48 global sites, from Argentina to Vietnam. Merck offices have sponsored projects in their own countries as well as in countries with great need.

In Europe, we support maternal health organizations that link vulnerable pregnant women in medically underserved rural communities to care and family planning services, and raise awareness of safe motherhood practices.

In Latin America and the Caribbean, we support grantees and collaborators to strengthen the capacity of health workers through the use of technology and to educate communities about reproductive and maternal health, including a focus on the health rights of pregnant women.

In Africa and the Middle East, we support an array of programs that improve access to antenatal care and family planning, and provide support for pregnant women living with chronic health conditions. These programs also strengthen health providers’ skills and practices, while building strong referral networks to offer comprehensive, respectful care.

In Asia Pacific, our grantees and collaborators promote safe birth practices, strengthen midwifery education, improve access to family planning and promote health-seeking behaviors through workplace programs.

Geographical Reach

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Project Spotlight

**Brazil** | The National Supplementary Health Agency, Albert Einstein Hospital and the Institute for Healthcare Improvement’s “Projeto Parto Adequado” identified innovative and viable models of high-quality care during labor and delivery, incentivizing vaginal delivery for uncomplicated births and reducing medically unnecessary Cesarean delivery (C-section) rates in maternity hospitals. The program reached more than 320,000 women in over 100 different cities across Brazil. Additionally, around 450 health workers were trained and 113 maternity facilities strengthened their quality of care provision through this project. During the project, the rate of vaginal birth increased from 21.6% to 38% in 26 hospitals.

**Philippines** | Merck for Mothers joined the UN Foundation and UNFPA to launch Business Action for Family Planning (BAFP) – enabling business owners in the Philippines to provide maternal and reproductive health information to underserved women at the workplace. BAFP worked 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 on investment tool which UNFPA is using to make the business case for other companies to invest in workplace health programs.

**South Africa** | The Foundation for Professional Development (FPD) and University of Pretoria developed and implemented a training program for emergency medical service staff, nurses and local clinicians to improve their skills and knowledge, and the quality of services provided to pregnant women, emphasizing respectful care. In three years, they trained nearly 700 professionals in Eastern Cape. Additionally, there was a 16-20% increase in knowledge of how to manage obstetric patients and identify and respond to complications. The project was endorsed by the government which contracted FPD to continue the program using the same model – FPD agreed to train an additional 2,000 health professionals.

**Greece** | Through the Mother & Child project, Doctors of the World's Greek delegation deployed mobile health units enabling more refugee women and women in remote regions to receive the maternal health services they needed, strengthening the capacity of health care professionals to serve these women, and making antenatal and postnatal care available to uninsured women.