

# Merck Foundation meets the Head of State and the First Lady of Zambia to launch their programs in the country

LUSAKA, ZAMBIA, February 28, 2019 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Merck Foundation, the philanthropic arm of Merck Germany underscored their commitment to build healthcare capacity in Zambia during their high level meeting with The Head of State of Zambia, H.E. EDGAR LUNGU and The First Lady of Zambia, H.E. ESTHER LUNGU at the State House of Zambia.

The Head of State of Zambia, H.E. EDGAR LUNGU emphasized, "The government will support initiatives that are aimed at addressing infertility in the country. I am happy that Merck Foundation and the First Lady of Zambia have come on board to deal with infertility. Some women have been abused and divorced because in the African context it is believed that only females are infertile and though infertility affects men and women both. I am also happy that the Merck Foundation has trained journalists to understand infertility as the media is a front line in communication and that training them is the key to address challenges surrounding infertility".

Merck Foundation launched their programs in Zambia in partnership with The First Lady of Zambia, H.E. ESTHER LUNGU together with Ministry of Health. During the launch event, Merck Foundation CEO and President of Merck More than a Mother, Dr. Rasha Kelej awarded Her Excellency to acknowledge her efforts as "Merck More Than a Mother" Ambassador in the country.

H.E. ESTHER LUNGU, The First Lady of Zambia emphasized "We are excited to



Dr. Rasha Kelej, CEO of Merck Foundation and President, Merck More Than a Mother with The First Lady of Zambia, H.E. ESTHER LUNGU during their visit to a village in Central Province, Zambia to meet and empower infertile women



Dr. Rasha Kelej, CEO of Merck Foundation and President, Merck More Than a Mother presenting the award to The First Lady of Zambia, H.E. ESTHER LUNGU for acknowledge her efforts as 'Merck More than a Mother' Ambassador.

partner with Merck Foundation and are happy to launch their programs in our country. These programs will continue to make very significant impact on our people's advancement, as health is very critical to our social and economic development."

"We are very happy to award Her Excellency First Lady of Zambia, ESTHER LUNGU for her great efforts to empower infertile women as the ambassador of Merck More than a Mother. We have also underscored our long-term partnership with the Ministry of Health of Zambia to continue building healthcare capacity and train doctors in the fields of Cancer Care, Fertility, Diabetes and Hypertension. We are proud to make history by providing the first Fertility Specialist, Surgical Oncologist, Pediatric Oncologist and Gynecology Oncologist in the country. Our aim is to improve the health and wellbeing of people of Zambia and rest of Africa", emphasized Dr. Rasha Kelej, CEO of Merck Foundation and President, Merck More Than a Mother.



Dr. Rasha Kelej, CEO of Merck Foundation during her meeting with the President of Zambia, H.E. EDGAR LUNGU at the State House of Zambia.

Minister of Health of Zambia, Hon. Chitalu Chilufya thanked Merck Foundation for offering scholarships to Zambian medical personnel.

Dr. Rasha Kelej visited one of the villages in the Central Province to meet a group of Zambian infertile women to identify their needs and challenges and work on a concrete strategy to support and empower them and make their life happier. Also, to break the stigma of infertility through access to information, education and change of mindset using people's natural settings such as art, fashion, films and social media to raise awareness.

Merck Foundation introduced new and unique initiatives in the country to get the desired culture shift.

"We have introduced few innovative initiatives such as the 'Merck more than a Mother' Fashion Award in partnership with First Lady of Zambia and Zambia Fashion Week. We have introduced this award to encourage to create a meaningful fashion trend aiming to break the stigma around infertility and educate our communities that 'Fertility is a Shared Responsibility', and not only women are responsible for it.

Also, we have called for application for 'Merck More Than a Mother' Media Recognition Award to recognize and appreciate professional journalists who have produced accurate, informative and compelling stories about infertility, infertile women or couples" emphasized Dr. Rasha Kelej.

Merck Foundation has also worked closely with local singers to create songs that address the sane issue to sensitize the community with the aim to break the stigma of infertility and empower infertile women.

Merck Foundation also conducted the first Media Health Training in the country in partnership with The First Lady of Zambia, Ministry of Health together with Zambia Union of Journalists. It was attended by over 50 Zambian journalists and was organized to train journalists on the international standards and media ethics for reporting sensitive issues like infertility in Africa. It benefited the journalists in understanding the infertility issues in African communities and to

learn the best media practices to cover it with the aim to break its stigma and sensitize our communities through all media outlets.

Merck Foundation has started the partnership with Zambia Ministry of Health since 2016, through providing training for the first Fertility specialists in Zambia by providing clinical training on fertility specialty. Merck Foundation will continue to train more candidates to help infertile couples across the country.

Merck Foundation has provided training for the first Surgical, Pediatric and Gynecology, radiology and adult Oncologists in Zambia through one-year Merck Oncology Fellowship Program in India. Furthermore, Merck Foundation, in partnership with the First Lady of Zambia, will continue enrolling doctors from Zambia nationwide in the one year and two-year oncology fellowship program and master's degree program in Tata Memorial Centre, University of Malaya and Cairo University respectively as a contribution to improve cancer care in the country.

Merck Foundation will start their Merck Foundation Blue Points project to help improve access to equitable and quality diabetes care across Zambia through providing one-year on-line diabetes diploma to 10 doctors, one from each province in Zambia. Every diploma graduate will be able to establish a diabetes clinic in his center or hospital with the aim to help their respective communities to better prevent and manage diabetes.

Meet the candidates selected by Merck Foundation:

#### Merck Fertility/ Embryology Training

- 1.Dr. Moses Chirwa, IIRRH, India
- 2.Dr. Njekwa Samutumwa, Indira IVF, India
- 3.Dr. Mubambe Mulaya, Indira IVF, India
- 4.Dr. Mukaka Sampa, IIRRH, India
- 5.Dr. Isiah Hansingo, IIRRH, India

#### Merck Oncology Training

- 1.Dr. Kabisa Mwala, Surgical Oncology Fellow
- 2.Dr. Mulindwa Makasa Justin, Paediatric Medical Oncology Fellow
- 3.Dr. Paul Kamfwa, Gynaecologic Oncology Fellow
- 4.Dr. Grace Mizinga Chingo, Pediatric Medical Oncology
- 5.Dr. Swali Vusa Fundafunda, Gynaec Oncology
- 6.Dr. Charles Kapela Mwandama, Haemato Oncology

Diana Mbaluka  
Digisphere Consulting  
+254 736466513  
[email us here](#)

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