

Merck Foundation meets the President and the First Lady of Burundi to Launch their programs in the country

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NAIROBI, KENYA, March 22, 2019 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Merck Foundation, the philanthropic arm of Merck KGaA Germany underscored their commitment to build healthcare capacity in Burundi during their high level meeting with The President of Burundi, H.E. PIERRE NKURUNZIZA and The First Lady of Burundi, H.E. DENISE NKURUNZIZA. The discussion was led by Prof. Dr. Frank Stangenberg Haverkamp, Chairman of the Executive Board of E. Merck KG and the Chairman of Merck Foundation Board of Trustees and Dr. Rasha Kelej, CEO of Merck Foundation to explain their health capacity building programs which were launched in partnership with The First Lady of Burundi, H.E. MADAM DENISE NKURUNZIZA together with Ministry of Health and Ministry of Communication and media.



Prof. Dr. Frank Stangenberg Haverkamp, Chairman of the Executive Board of E. Merck KG and the Chairman of Merck Foundation Board of Trustees and Dr. Rasha Kelej, CEO of Merck Foundation with The President of Burundi, H.E. PIERRE NKURUNZIZA to discuss the

The President of Burundi, H.E. PIERRE NKURUNZIZA emphasized, "Burundi welcomes the programs of Merck Foundation. These programs are going to be very critical and beneficial for our people and their social and economic well-being. I wholeheartedly support Merck Foundation in our country, to enable the success of all their programs with the aim to build healthcare capacity and break the stigma of infertility."

During the launch event, Merck Foundation awarded Her Excellency to acknowledge her efforts as "Merck More Than a Mother" Ambassador in the country.

H.E. MADAM DENISE NKURUNZIZA, The First Lady of Burundi, President of Buntu Foundation

and Ambassador of Merck More Than a Mother emphasized “We are very happy to partner with Merck Foundation and launch their programs in our country. These programs will create a very significant impact on our people’s advancement, as health is very critical to our social and economic development.”

“Our aim is to improve the overall health and wellbeing of people of the continent at large. Through Merck Foundation, we commit to build healthcare capacity in the country to be able to provide access to quality and equitable healthcare solutions to the people of the country” Prof. Dr. Frank Stangenberg-Haverkamp explained.

“We are very happy to award Her Excellency First Lady of Burundi, MADAM DENISE NKURUNZIZA 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 her and her foundation, “Buntu” together with Ministry of Health and Ministry of Communication and media to build healthcare capacity and train doctors in the fields of Cancer Care, Fertility, and Diabetes care. We are going to make history by training the first oncology team, first fertility specialist and first diabetologist in the country. We are really proud of this plan”, emphasized Dr. Rasha Kelej, CEO of Merck Foundation and President, Merck More Than a Mother.

The First Lady of Burundi, H.E. MADAM DENISE NKURUNZIZA composed and sang a theme song for Merck More than a Mother, as a personal contribution to empower infertile women in Burundi.



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Also, a special competition was held between ten local choir groups from Burundi. They all composed and performed songs that addressed the same issue to sensitize the community about stigma attached to infertility and to empower infertile women. Also, to educate our communities that 'Fertility is not a stigma but it is a Shared Responsibility', and not only women are responsible for it.

The top three performing choir groups were selected and awarded by H.E. MADAM DENISE NKURUNZIZA, The First Lady of Burundi and Merck Foundation.

Merck Foundation also 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.

Additionally, Merck Foundation conducted the first Health Media Training in the country in partnership with The First Lady of Burundi, Ministry of Health together with Ministry of Communications and media. It was attended by over 50 journalists and was organized to train journalists on the international standards and media ethics for reporting sensitive issues like infertility in Africa. This training will benefit 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.

About 'Merck More Than a Mother' campaign;

"Merck More Than a Mother" initiative aims to empower infertile women through access to information, education and health and by changing mind-sets. This powerful initiative supports governments in defining policies to enhance access to regulated, safe and effective fertility care. It defines interventions to break the stigma around infertile women and raises awareness about infertility prevention and management. In partnership with academia, ministries of health and international fertility societies, the initiative also provides medical education and training for healthcare providers and embryologists to build and advance fertility care capacity in Africa and developing countries.

With "Merck More than a mother", we have initiated a cultural shift to de-stigmatize infertility on all levels: By improving awareness, training the skills of local experts, building advocacy in cooperation with decision makers and by supporting childless women in starting their own small business. It's all about giving every woman the respect and the help she deserves to live a fulfilling life, with or without a child.

The Ambassadors of "Merck More Than a Mother" are: H.E. NEO JANE MASISI, The First Lady of Botswana; H.E. DENISE NKURUNZIZA, The First Lady of the Republic of Burundi; H.E. BRIGITTE TOUADERA, The First Lady of Central Africa Republic; H.E. HINDA DEBY ITNO, The First Lady of Chad; H.E. REBECCA AKUFO-ADDO, The First Lady of Ghana; H.E. DJÈNÈ CONDÈ, The First Lady of

Guinea-Conakry; H.E. FATOUMATTA BAH BARROW, The First Lady of Gambia; H.E. KEÏTA AMINATA MAÏGA, The First Lady of Mali, H.E. AISSATA ISSOUFOU MAHAMADOU, The First Lady of Niger; H.E. FATIMA MAADA BIO, The First Lady of Sierra Leone; H.E. ESTHER LUNGU, The First Lady of Zambia.

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