



Merck for Mothers in Europe

Responding to Local Maternal Health Needs in Communities Around the World

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.”** Working with grantees and collaborators across sectors, we’re making the Mom Effect a reality for communities across the globe.



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. Applying our Company’s business and scientific expertise, we are working to improve the health and well-being of women during pregnancy, childbirth and the months after. Our grantees and collaborators have reached over 20.8 million women in more than 65 sites around the world to support healthier pregnancies and safer childbirth, contributing to the global effort to help end maternal mortality and morbidity.

Global Grants Sites
Bulgaria; Finland;
Germany; Greece;
Romania; Serbia;
United Kingdom;
West Balkan Region
(Albania, Bosnia,
Bulgaria, Kosovo,
and North Macedonia)

Estimated Maternal Mortality in the European Region

- **6 maternal deaths** per 100,000 live births¹
- In 2020, around **1,000 women died** due to complications related to pregnancy or childbirth²
- **50% decline** in maternal mortality rates between 2000 and 2020³
- **Challenges⁴** : Lack of reporting and monitoring, disparities among underserved and immigrant populations, mental health, variations in quality of care

Programs and Collaborators in Europe

In 2012, we launched Merck for Mothers Global Grants — a corporate grant program that enables Merck offices to support organizations that are improving maternal health around the world, beyond Merck for Mother’s focus countries India, Kenya, Nigeria and the United States. The Merck for Mothers Global Grants program is designed to be responsive to local women’s maternal health needs and extends our reach and impact to many more countries across the globe. Since we launched, the program has contributed over \$46 million, supporting over 85 projects across more than 45 global sites.

A selection of grants we have made in Europe includes:

Alliance for Maternal Health Equality | Merck for Mothers is a founding partner in the Alliance for Maternal Health Equality. The Alliance is a unique coalition of European stakeholders with an interest in helping all women in Europe have equal access to high-quality maternal health care. The Alliance aims to increase awareness and prompt discussion on this critical issue amongst policy makers and the public to help maternal health receive adequate focus in policy and legislative development.

Albania, Bulgaria, Romania and Serbia | The three-year “My Body, My Rights” program, implemented by the International Planned Parenthood Federation Networks in Albania, Bulgaria, Romania and Serbia, focused on underserved women and girls living in large Roma settlements in these four countries. The program worked with political leaders, primary health care providers, Roma communities and young Roma people to improve maternal health outcomes and empower women to make their own health care decisions.

Bulgaria | UNICEF is expanding home visiting services in Bulgaria as well as strengthening health provider skills and implementing digital tools to support high-quality maternal health care. This program is also working to empower women living in rural areas and from Roma ethnic minorities through the Bebbi mobile application which will include modules on maternal health, healthy pregnancy and disease prevention.

Finland | Väestöliitto worked with foster care organizations to promote sexual and reproductive health among young girls living within these institutions through educational events.

Germany | Ethno-Medical Center implemented the MiMi Initiative for Maternal Health to reduce barriers to maternal health care among female migrant workers. The project raised awareness of services and improving health professionals’ cultural and linguistic competence.

Romania | World Vision’s “Mothers for Life. Life for Mothers” program worked to develop and implement an integrated model aimed at facilitating access to family planning and maternal health care services, trained health care professionals and empowered local authorities to reduce the unmet need for family planning services in rural areas.

Romania and Moldova | Save the Children, together with Child Rights Information Center in Moldova, is developing and implementing an integrated model of maternal health care and family planning services, supporting pregnant adolescents and young mothers living in rural communities.

Serbia | UNICEF is improving the prevention and management of high-risk pregnancies in Roma populations across Serbia. This program is also focused on strengthening access to antenatal and postpartum care.

United Kingdom | White Ribbon Alliance is bringing together midwives and health care professionals to discuss rising maternal mortality rates, health disparities across marginalized communities, and national workforce staffing shortages.



West Balkan Region | The International Planned Parenthood Federation European Network is supporting young people's sexual, reproductive and maternal health needs during the COVID-19 pandemic by making sure that information and services are accessible and youth friendly, with special attention to those living in rural settings of the West Balkan Regions (Albania, Bosnia, Bulgaria, Kosovo, and North Macedonia).

Supporting European organizations driving impact beyond Europe

Additionally, we have supported work with eight European NGOs in Belgium, Denmark, Ireland, Italy, Netherlands, Spain, Sweden and Switzerland to advance maternal health in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Malawi, Mozambique and Tanzania. For example, Concern Worldwide (Ireland) implemented community-based interventions to highlight the importance of seeking antenatal care for pregnant women in Malawi. Maternity Foundation (Denmark) rolled out the Safe Delivery App, a digital health tool developed in collaboration with the University of Copenhagen and the University of Southern Denmark to enhance antenatal care and emergency obstetric care in Ethiopia which has now spread to more than 70 countries.



Project Spotlight

Greece | Through the Mother & Child project, Doctors of the World's Greek delegation deployed mobile health units so that more refugee women and women in remote regions can receive the maternal health services they need; strengthened the capacity of health care professionals to serve these women and ensured that antenatal and postnatal care is available to uninsured women. In three years, the project was able to improve access to maternal health services to more than 40,000 women and train almost 2,000 health providers.

1. World Bank (2023) [Maternal Mortality Ratio \(modeled estimate, per 100,000 live births\)](#)
2. WHO (2023) [Maternal Mortality Factsheet](#)
3. WHO (2023) [Maternal mortality ratio](#)
4. BMJ (2022) [Maternal mortality in eight European countries with enhanced surveillance systems: descriptive population based study](#)