

# African campaign reduces stigma and improves care around infertility

Following its successful launch in Kenya last year, medical technology company, Merck's campaign aimed at improving access to safe, quality fertility care across Africa is being rolled out in Uganda.



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## Opening the dialogue on infertility

The Merck More than a Mother campaign, a pan-African initiative aims to build fertility capacity, raises awareness about infertility prevention and male infertility. It also opens a dialogue to define interventions to reduce the stigma and social suffering of infertile women in Africa, which includes discrimination, and physical and psychological violence.

“Countless women in Africa face fear, abuse and discrimination every day simply because they are infertile. We are proud to work with the Ministry of Health, the medical community and parliamentarians to change perceptions and reduce the harsh social suffering of infertile women in Africa,” says Belén Garijo, Merck CEO: Healthcare.

## Causes of infertility in developing countries

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), lower levels of development are thought to be associated with higher levels of non-genetic and preventable causes of infertility such as poor nutrition, untreated sexually transmitted infections (STIs), unsafe abortion, consequence of infections caused by the practice of female genital mutilation, exposure to smoking and to leaded petrol and other environmental pollutants. Hence prevention awareness is very important.

## Embryologist training programme

Part of the campaign comprises the African Embryologists Training Programme in partnership with Indonesian Reproductive Science Institute (IRSI).

“Most sub-Saharan African countries don’t have trained embryologists hence providing training will contribute significantly to improve the quality and accessibility to fertility care to couples in Uganda and Africa, so that they can start their families,” says Minister of State for Health for Uganda, Sarah Opendi.

Merck will provide training for African embryologists in Indonesia starting with candidates from Uganda and Kenya, then scaling up to the rest of the continent.

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