

Our Africa: Merck Foundation launches wellness TV programme

Merck Foundation, the philanthropic arm of Merck KGaA Germany, has launched its first-ever TV programme *Our Africa by Merck Foundation*.



Source: Supplied. Senator, Dr. Rasha Kelej, CEO of Merck Foundation and host of *Our Africa by Merck Foundation*.

The first episode, which was aired on KTN in Kenya on 16 April and on NTV in Uganda on 17 April, focuses on raising awareness about the prevention of diabetes among African communities.

It has since received great feedback and reviews from the viewers of the two channels.

The first-of-its-kind TV programme, *Our Africa by Merck Foundation* is set to be the voice of the voiceless and to break the silence about many critical and sensitive social and health issues in Africa. The mandate includes topics on breaking the stigma around infertility; ending child marriage; ending female gender mutilation; stopping gender-based violence; supporting girl education; women empowerment and promoting a healthy lifestyle.

Senator, Dr Rasha Kelej, chief executive officer of the Merck Foundation expressed: "I am very happy to receive this very positive and encouraging feedback on the show from our African viewers."

"I have received numerous messages on our social media about how they enjoyed and benefited from the first episode and are looking forward to watching more episodes with their family and friends. Our viewers and social-media followers totally loved the fusion of addressing health and social issues with fashion, art and music! They found the show to be very entertaining and informative at the same time."

See the trailer of *Our Africa by Merck Foundation* below:

Raising awareness on the prevalence of diabetes in Africa

The first episode focused on creating awareness about the rising incidence of diabetes and ways to prevent it, through the African community of fashion and art with purpose.

Currently 45 million adults aged between 20 and 79 in the African region have impaired glucose tolerance which places them at high risk of developing Type 2 Diabetes.

These figures are estimated to reach 110 million by 2045. Moreover, Africa has the highest percentage of undiagnosed people: 70% of adults living with diabetes do not know they have it.

The first episode of *Our Africa by Merck Foundation* raised awareness about early diagnosis of diabetes. The guests highlighted that the early signs and symptoms can include frequent urination, increased thirst, feeling tired and hungry, vision problems, slow wound healing, and yeast infections. They also highlighted diabetes prevention such as eating healthily, exercising regularly, stopping smoking, and limiting alcohol intake.

The first episode featured young designers Gabriel Froid and Kinneh Mbenga from Mauritius and The Gambia; Cwezi, a popular singer from Ghana; and Teenusha Soobrah, a nutritionist from Mauritius. The purpose was to educate African communities about the prevention and early diagnosis of diabetes through dialogue and featuring awareness messages in their designs. Moreover, a song about diabetes called *No More Diabetes* was created by Cwezi, singer and musician from Ghana.

See the full-length first episode of *Our Africa by Merck Foundation* below:

This pan African show is conceptualised, produced, directed, and co-hosted by Senator, Dr Rasha Kelej, CEO of Merck Foundation. It is a platform to feature fashion designers, singers, and prominent guests from various domains with the aim to raise awareness and create a culture shift across Africa. The show is co-hosted by Brian Mulondo from Uganda.

Speciality training for our continent's doctors

"I am very proud to inform all our viewers that Merck Foundation has been providing specialty training for African, Asian, and Latin American doctors to better manage diabetes, hypertension, and endocrinology patients, through their *Merck Foundation Diabetes Blue Points Program* in partnership with African first ladies, ministries of health and medical societies.

In addition Merck Foundation provided 660 scholarships for a diabetes Master's course, a one-year postgraduate diploma and two-year Master's degree in diabetes, endocrinology and preventative cardiovascular medicines from a UK university for doctors from 43 countries in Africa and beyond.

Furthermore, the Master's course in the clinical management of diabetes is available in four languages, English, French, Portuguese and Spanish, and is endorsed by Diabetes UK for doctors from African and Latin American countries. Therefore, I'd like to ask doctors who are watching, to apply for our scholarships on submit@merck-foundation.com, to fill the public healthcare gap if needed in their communities," added Kelej.

“ “Stay tuned, a big surprise. A newsong Videoclip 'Like Them' by famous Ugandan singer and musician, Kenneth, produced by Wezi, a Zambian artist and the concept developed by me.

Watch behind the scene video. Coming very soon..."

Senator, Dr. Rasha Kelej

CEO of Merck Foundation pic.twitter.com/mpU2W0DurW— Merck Foundation (@MerckFoundation) [April 20, 2022](#) ”

"Already Merck Foundation has provided more than 1,300 scholarships in 32 critical and under-served specialties such as reproductive and sexual care; oncology; respiratory care; acute care; advanced surgery; paediatric emergency; orthopaedics; neo-natal care; fertility care, embryology, and more," Dr Rasha Kelej emphasised.

The *Our Africa by Merck Foundation* TV programme is currently being broadcasted in Kenya, Uganda, and Ghana. The TV programme will also soon be aired in other African countries.

"I am very excited to bring to you all the upcoming episodes of *Our Africa by Merck Foundation* TV programme. So stay tuned and prepare to get informed, get healthy, and be entertained!" said Senator, Dr Rasha Kelej.