

Prioritizing Breastfeeding – Building Sustainable Support Systems

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World Breastfeeding Week (1–7 August globally, 1–7 November in Greece) reminds us that breastfeeding is a cornerstone of health, equity, and sustainability. This year's theme from the Hellenic Ministry of Health — "Prioritizing Breastfeeding: Building Sustainable Support Systems" [3] — calls for environments that empower mothers and protect children. That resonates deeply with my recent experience in Southern Madagascar, where the act of breastfeeding revealed its most human, compassionate dimension.

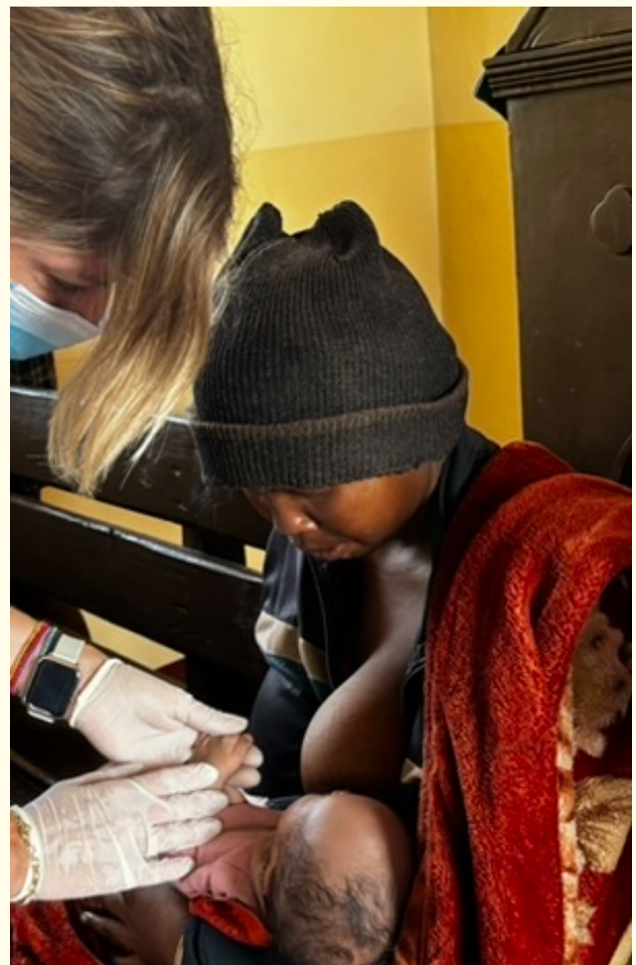
Main Article

In August 2024, as part of the humanitarian mission "Caring for the Children of Southern Madagascar", we collaborated with the Diocese of Toliara and Southern Madagascar to support malnourished children and lactating mothers [2]. The programme, which began by serving 500 children and now reaches more than 1,500, focuses on medical care, nutrition, and emotional well-being.

Through the distribution of essential nutritional supplements and medicines — vitamins, trace elements, and iron — we aimed to strengthen undernourished mothers and safeguard their infants' health. Yet beyond the medical dimension, this mission illuminated the profound symbolism of breastfeeding: women and grandmothers offering skin-to-skin warmth and comfort to infants, even when milk was scarce. These moments revealed breastfeeding as an act of love, resilience, and solidarity, transcending biology and language alike.

This year's World Breastfeeding Week message — building sustainable support systems — is not only a public health priority; it is a moral imperative. Health professionals, communities, and policymakers must create environments that empower mothers

and protect children [1], both in well-resourced and in vulnerable settings.



This picture is taken in the mission

Conclusion

Breastfeeding is nourishment, affection, connection, survival. From hospitals in Greece to villages in Madagascar, the message is universal: Where there is a mother, there is hope — and where there is care, there is life.

Bibliography

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