

## Promoting Breastfeeding in Madagascar

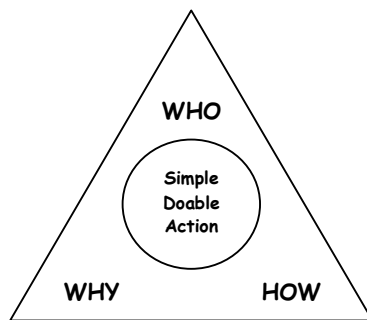
LINKAGES' program in Madagascar uses various media and materials to communicate key messages on breastfeeding within the context of the Essential Nutrition Actions. These materials include counseling cards, a newsletter, child's and woman's health booklets, flyers, and songs. Examples of breastfeeding materials are presented along with a description of their use.

### Counseling Cards

The counseling cards used by LINKAGES and its partners in Madagascar show an illustration on the front of the card and a story and a priority message on the back. The priority message—

directed to a particular target audience—presents a simple, doable action and gives convincing reasons for the action.

#### Structure of a good message



The counseling card below promotes early initiation of breastfeeding. Other cards promote exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months, frequent breastfeeds (10 times a day for babies less than six months), more food intake by the mother during breastfeeding, and the lactational amenorrhea method for birth spacing.

#### Front of Card



#### Back of Card

##### Lala breastfeeds immediately after delivery

One morning, Lala woke Jao up and said: "My belly is aching. I think our baby is soon to come to this world." Jao brought his wife to the clinic. The delivery went well. Jao and Lala had a boy. They called him Solofo. They were very happy. Lala remembered the midwife's advice during antenatal consultations: "Right after delivery, put your child to the breast. The milk your baby gets in the first hours will provide him with protection against germs and childhood illnesses." So, shortly after delivery, Lala was ready to breastfeed Solofo. The midwife helped her put Solofo to the breast. The baby started suckling heartily. Lala smiled. Her baby got a good start in life.

##### Message

**Mothers**, put your baby to the breast immediately after delivery to protect your baby against diseases.

##### **Additional information**

**Q:** *Why can't I wait several hours before giving the breast so I can rest for awhile?*

**A:** It is very important to breastfeed immediately after delivery because:

- \* the first milk or colostrum acts as the child's first vaccine;
- \* it helps prevent hemorrhage in the mother;
- \* it builds a strong bond between the mother and the child.

## Advantages of Using Counseling Cards

Counseling cards are an aid to the health worker and community volunteer for several reasons:

- The picture communicates a message before the health worker or community volunteer has spoken.
- The picture shows how an individual performed the small, doable action, which leads to the question, “You can do the same, can’t you?”
- Counseling cards can save time in helping people understand the message.
- The cards make the message more convincing because they indirectly communicate that the message is not coming from only the volunteer.
- The pictures on the counseling cards can be used elsewhere (on posters, as illustrations in child health booklets and literacy books, etc.), which reinforces the message.



## Using the Counseling Cards during Negotiation



An attractive visual and a carefully crafted message will be of limited value if the messenger shows a lack of respect and lectures the mother. Counseling cards are used most effectively if the health worker or volunteer engages into dialogue with the mother and follows the guidelines listed below.

- Greet the mother; show her respect.
- Find out if she or others in the community have any problems related to breastfeeding.
- Help the mother identify solutions. Show one card or at most two corresponding to the identified problems or the new practices that would help the mother. Give the mother time to observe the picture on the counseling card and to ask questions based on the picture. Guide her by asking, “What do you see in the picture? Who are the people? What are they doing?”
- Convey the key message. Add any missing information and emphasize the benefits of the action.
- Ask the mother’s opinion of the recommended action. Ask whether she knows people who do it and whether she can carry out the practice.
- If she says she cannot, ask what is feasible for her. Negotiate the new practice with her.
- Before leaving, ask the mother to repeat the practice she has agreed to try.
- Make an appointment for a follow-up visit.

## Newsletter

The health newsletter or “*Gazety*” is designed to reach a large number of people at a reasonable cost. The newsletter gives the same information as the counseling card but in another form. The newsletter can be distributed after a group discussion, individual counseling session, or childbirth.

The newsletter shown at the right, in Malagasy, discusses the lactational amenorrhea method (LAM), the benefits of breastfeeding and birth spacing, and other appropriate family planning methods for breastfeeding women.



## Health Booklets

The woman’s health booklet serves as a record and as a resource for the woman, health provider, and community health promoter. The booklet contains information on pregnancy, delivery protocols, micronutrient supplementation, diet during pregnancy and lactation, malaria, breastfeeding, and family planning. The booklet is used during antenatal, postnatal, and family planning consultations and visits to the health center when a woman is ill.

The child’s health booklet includes information on immunization schedules, vitamin A supplementation, deworming, infant and young child feeding, women’s nutrition, growth monitoring, LAM and other modern family planning methods, and management of childhood illness. Messages are presented through text and illustrations. Parents purchase a booklet (\$.60) for each child under five years. When they receive the booklet, the parents are asked to sign a page in it pledging to participate actively in protecting their child’s health. Parents refer to the booklet for information on a health topic, records of their child’s growth and immunizations, and the date of the next scheduled appointment.

The mother brings the booklet with her every time she takes the child to the health center. The child health booklet is used for all consultations—preventive and curative—at a health center. After the mother states the reason for her visit, the health worker selects the appropriate pages in the health booklet, counsels her on the topic, and indicates in the booklet which counseling messages and services were given. Community workers also use large versions of the booklets during home visits, immunization and growth monitoring sessions, and community health awareness events.



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## Songs

Community members sing about breastfeeding during group meetings and community events. These songs are also broadcast on the radio and performed at concerts by Poopy, Madagascar's well known pop singer. When Poopy gave birth to her second child, LINKAGES invited the experienced breastfeeding mother to serve as the national "Breastfeeding Ambassador." She agreed and recorded several songs on breastfeeding. "Proof of Love" (Porofom-Pitiavana in Malagasy) was particularly popular. The pop singer included it on one of her CDs and on a video clip. More than 20 radio stations broadcast the song, and all television stations showed the video clip. The company that produces protective covers for school textbooks printed Poopy's photo and the words to the song on the back cover of composition books. Poopy and her daughter, Miora, are shown below along with the words to "Proof of Love."

### Proof of Love

#### **Mother,**

The one you waited for  
Is now on earth  
The one you carried in your womb so long  
Mother,  
Look at those eyes, staring at you with trust

#### **Mother,**

Look at those small hands  
Holding tightly to you  
Because he loves you  
Mother,  
Do not forget  
That his whole life is resting  
Upon you

#### **Chorus:**

Take good care of your child at birth  
Give him breastmilk so he will grow well  
And strong  
Breastmilk is the only energy  
He needs to protect him  
Until his sixth month.

#### **Spoken word:**

*Mother, show proof of love to your child; give him breastmilk.*



## LAM Invitation Cards and Breastfeeding Flyer

The photo of Poopy and her daughter also appears on a colorful card that lists the three criteria for use of the lactational amenorrhea method (LAM) of family planning and invites women to discuss LAM with a family planning service provider or a community health promoter. Some women take cards for their friends or neighbors who might be interested in knowing about family planning services. The cards tap into grassroots communication networks and facilitate discussion about reproductive health issues.

As part of an intense breastfeeding campaign, community health promoters were asked to distribute a small flyer—the size of a playing card—to community members during certain hours on a specified day. The card promotes exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months. The card uses the familiar image of a breastfeeding mother that appears on counseling cards, the newsletter, and other project materials.