

# Chiesi Foundation's NEST Partners Meeting in Sub-Saharan Africa

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- *For the first time in the Foundation's history, a week of work and meetings with local authorities, hospital directors, doctors and nurses from Burundi, Burkina Faso, Togo, and Benin.*
- *The Foundation is active in the field of international health cooperation, through the transfer of scientific means and knowledge, and the support of projects that promote the right to health, with a focus on improving neonatal and respiratory health.*

**Parma (Italy), October 27<sup>th</sup>, 2023** - The first **NEST (Neonatal Essential Survival Technology) Partners Meeting** of Chiesi Foundation, a non-profit organisation set up in 2005 as an expression of Chiesi Group's corporate social responsibility, dedicated to research and international cooperation projects in the field of global health, was held from October 16<sup>th</sup> to October 21<sup>st</sup> in Ngozi, Burundi.

The NEST Partners Meeting was a time for the Foundation and its partners in the neonatal field to work together and meet in order to discuss progress and future plans for the **NEST (Neonatal Essential Survival Technology) model**. NEST is a replicable model that aims to reduce neonatal mortality rates by improving the quality of care in countries where access to quality care is not yet guaranteed. Hospital directors, doctors and nurses specialised in neonatology from Burkina Faso, Togo, Benin, and Burundi were all present during the week. The NEST Partners Meeting was also attended by **Ousmane Ndiaye**, neonatologist and professor of paediatrics at the University of Dakar, Vice President of the African Neonatal Association (ANA), who has been a partner of the Foundation since 2022.

There were two main sessions, chaired by **Maria Paola Chiesi** and **Massimo Salvadori**, President and Coordinator of the Chiesi Foundation respectively.

*“The Foundation's NEST Partners Meeting, which saw me in Burundi for the first time, was a key moment to emphasise, once again, the importance of partnerships and the need to work through joint actions towards common goals. In our case, reducing the mortality rate and ensuring quality neonatal care in Francophone Sub-Saharan African countries. I had the privilege of visiting the Neonatology Department of the Ngozi Hospital, where the Foundation has been working for ten years with space expansion activities, and training courses for health personnel - and to be greeted with a typical Kirundi welcome song by the mothers of the Kangaroo Mother Care (KMC) ward, designed for premature, sick, or low birth weight babies. An incredible experience that allowed me to see the daily value of our work first-hand,”* commented **Maria Paola Chiesi**.

Also placed within the week of the NEST Partners Meeting was an open day for institutions (October 18<sup>th</sup>, 2023) dedicated to the launch of the KMC (Kangaroo Mother Care) project in Ngozi Province. After a visit to the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit at Ngozi Hospital, funded by the Foundation, the Governor of Ngozi Region, Minani Desire, and the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Health, Isidore Ntiharirizwa, officially opened the event. The Provincial Doctor of Ngozi Province, Niyonzima Jean Bosco, Dr. Akindavyi Cléophile, General Director of the Ministry of Health and of the fight against AIDS, the Directors of regional hospitals in Burundi, and other national and international stakeholders also attended.

During the day, Professor Ousmane Ndiaye gave a speech in which he emphasized the importance of KMC as a low-cost life-saving method, especially in low- and medium-income countries where investment in maternal and neonatal care is still too limited.

Finally, Olivier Gahungere, a representative of the Ministry of Health, presented the *ENAP - Every Newborn Action Plan*, a roadmap that defines concrete goals and actions to reduce maternal and neonatal mortality in order to achieve target 3.2 of the UN Sustainable Development Agenda: putting an end to avoidable deaths of infants and children under 5 years of age, with the goal for all countries to reduce neonatal mortality to no more than 12 per 1,000 live births by 2030.

### **Kangaroo Mother Care (KMC)**

Kangaroo Mother Care is a method of care for preterm and low-birth-weight newborns, based on prolonged skin-to-skin contact, exclusive breastfeeding, and follow-up. KMC is strongly recommended by WHO, and it is particularly effective in LMICs due to its cost-effective benefits, including reduced infection risk, metabolic stability, enhanced breastfeeding, and stronger mother-infant bonding, resulting in lower neonatal morbidity and mortality.

## **The NEST Model**

The NEST model aims to translate the WHO national and international recommendations and standards to reduce neonatal and maternal mortality into practical and concrete actions. Strengthening the capacities of healthcare staff, reorganising spaces within hospitals to favour access for mothers and families who are considered active and central players in the care of premature infants, and involving local institutions so that they can guarantee continuity and quality to the interventions supported by the Foundation, are just some of the actions that are part of the model.

## **Chiesi Foundation**

Chiesi Foundation is a non-profit organisation founded in 2005 as an expression of the social responsibility of Chiesi Farmaceutici. Ethics and knowledge intertwine in the Foundation. The mission of the Chiesi Foundation is to enhance the wealth of knowledge inherited from the founding company, in order to improve health and alleviate the suffering of patients with respiratory and neonatal diseases. The main tools through which the Foundation strives to achieve its mission are science and solidarity. For this reason, the Chiesi Foundation has activated two specific programmes: Scientific research and international cooperation.

International cooperation, in order to contribute to reducing inequalities in the world and promote the full implementation of the right to health for populations in low- and medium-income countries, through the training and transfer of medical-scientific knowledge and projects aimed at sustainable development and progressive autonomy. In both areas, the Chiesi Foundation focuses its activities in the field of neonatology and pulmonology.

Since 2005, the Foundation has been listed in the register of private legal entities at the Parma Prefecture and since 2013 in the single registry of NGOs at the revenue agency - regional directorate of Emilia-Romagna.

For more information: [www.chiesifoundation.org](http://www.chiesifoundation.org)