

### **“At 4 years of age, he still looked physically like a child of 6-months”**

Omar's fragile health isolated him from the youngest age. His parents saw there the action of bad spirits and neglected him in favour of his younger brother. His maternal grandmother insisted on him being examined by a doctor.

When he arrived at the Madaoua Care Center, Omar was three years old. He looked like a child aged less than a year.



Suffering from noma, he exhibits a bone sequestrum along his full lower gum. His family did punctures on his chin to cure him, provoking fistulas; the child is severely traumatised. Omar's malnourishment weakened him as did his severe and recurring anaemia. An important growth retardation still prevents him from walking.

Omar spends a year at the care centre. The team sets as a first objective to stabilise his health by supporting nutritional recuperation. The child makes progress, enjoys playing, learns how to express himself and walk. With an appropriate diet, he recovers.

Despite all efforts, his progression remains slow, especially his weight gain. It will require a lot of patience, work and a strict diet for Omar to eventually reach 7.8 kilos, the minimal weight that has been defined by the government to stop considering a child as malnourished.

### **Treating him despite the family background**

In parallel, the family situation becomes complicated. The father took a second wife during Omar's mother's absence; tensions erupted. The mother goes back to the village and the maternal grandmother replaces her by the boy's side.

After months of antibiotic courses to fight his osteitis, Omar should be operated on... but his severe anaemia prevents this surgery. A new treatment begins to increase his red blood cell count.

In October 2017, the treatment's ineffectiveness gives rise to new tests. The cause of the anaemia is eventually identified: acute splenomegaly linked to malaria. This condition causes spleen hyperactivity that consumes red globules too fast. A new treatment is necessary that should last between three to six months.

The grandmother gets weary. She can't give up on her commercial activity any longer. The mother still refuses to stay at the centre. She wants to bring her child back to the village. In this tense climate, Omar goes back to the bush, very closely monitored by the Sentinelles team. We hope the operation will be performed as early as possible.