HOMMAGE
A great philanthropist has left us

SWISS/SENEGAL
A voyage towards healing

CONGO
Two very courageous sisters

HOMMAGE
A great philanthropist has left us
After a day of hard work, backs bent in the fields or carrying heavy burdens for a meagre salary, when evening comes many women from Sud-Kivu, in the Democratic Republic of Congo, go back to a makeshift shelter. It is impossible for them to find well deserved rest, or even sometimes to protect themselves from bad weather. Huts exposed to erosion or subsidence, hovels made of bits and pieces, threatening to collapse at any moment await their profound fatigue and distress.

Gender inequality concerning access to land, widowhood, rejection by their families, abandonment: so many reasons for their extreme vulnerability.

And not even a roof over their heads.

Exhausting work, day after day.

And not even a roof over their heads.

However, for these admirable fighters, a roof, however modest it may be, is equivalent to a minimum of stability, of security, of warmth, that of a home. Here, these women find the motivation necessary to carry out their work and thus respond more serenely to the needs of their children.

With the participation of village communities and especially with our support, Aline, Faida and the others will discover or rediscover the contentment of a home.

As part of our treatment programme for children, we sometimes have to take care of little ones who were born with a cleft lip and/or a cleft palate. Since these newborn babies have difficulty in eating, they usually arrive underweight. One of the many difficulties is to synchronize the baby gaining back an ideal weight with the arrival of surgeons who come to Madagascar to do these operations. Before surgery, Sentinelles takes care of the preoperative phase and more specifically of the nutritional recovery.

Here are the stories of two babies who were supported by Sentinelles.

Firstly, there is Fiderana, whom we started looking after when she was one month old and who had to wait until she was 5 years old to be able to undergo surgery for her cleft palate. As a matter of fact, the little girl was suffering from repeated bronchial congestions, which postponed surgery for a long time. However, thanks to close monitoring, she eventually underwent surgery with the doctors of an ad hoc surgical mission at the Soavinandriana hospital. Today, the young girl is finally able to express herself clearly.

As far as Narovana is concerned, suffering from a cleft lip and palate, he was brought to us by his mother when he was 2 months old. She couldn’t feed him correctly and his weight was below average for his age. Thanks to our weight and nutrition programme, he was able, when he turned one year and a half, to be operated on for his cleft lip during the mission “Operation Smile” last April. The surgery to correct his cleft palate will take place at a later stage during the next mission of “Operation Smile”.

IN BRIEF

Fiderana and Narovana cheer up again

As part of our treatment programme for children, we sometimes have to take care of little ones who were born with a cleft lip and/or a cleft palate. Since these newborn babies have difficulty in eating, they usually arrive underweight. One of the many difficulties is to synchronize the baby gaining back an ideal weight with the arrival of surgeons who come to Madagascar to do these operations. Before surgery, Sentinelles takes care of the preoperative phase and more specifically of the nutritional recovery.

Here are the stories of two babies who were supported by Sentinelles.

Firstly, there is Fiderana, whom we started looking after when she was one month old and who had to wait until she was 5 years old to be able to undergo surgery for her cleft palate. As a matter of fact, the little girl was suffering from repeated bronchial congestions, which postponed surgery for a long time. However, thanks to close monitoring, she eventually underwent surgery with the doctors of an ad hoc surgical mission at the Soavinandriana hospital. Today, the young girl is finally able to express herself clearly.

As far as Narovana is concerned, suffering from a cleft lip and palate, he was brought to us by his mother when he was 2 months old. She couldn’t feed him correctly and his weight was below average for his age. Thanks to our weight and nutrition programme, he was able, when he turned one year and a half, to be operated on for his cleft lip during the mission “Operation Smile” last April. The surgery to correct his cleft palate will take place at a later stage during the next mission of “Operation Smile”.

INDEPENDENT OF ANY IDEOLOGY, SENTINELLES, FOUNDED 1980 BY EDMOND KAISER, WORKS TO RESCUE AND ACCOMPANY CHILDREN AND ADULTS IN DEEP DISTRESS.

Marlyse Morard
Managing Director
**I NIGER**

### Obstetric fistulae mission in St. Camille

In April 2019 by Dr. Moussa Guiro at the St Camille Hospital in Ouagadougou. Ten of them were suffering from obstetric fistulae and two from prolapses. We organised the mission in Ouagadougou rather than in Tanguiéta in Benin as we usually do in collaboration with Dr. Charles-Henry Rochat, because of the safety conditions that have degraded in the Eastern region and make it difficult to travel from Fada N’Gourma. We hope to be able to go back there soon.

After the operations and a several-week stay in hospital, the women travelled back by bus to Fada N’Gourma where they met up to continue their convalescence. The atmosphere at the Care Centre is joyful even though some of the patients haven’t fully recovered yet and will need to undergo one more operation. However, these patients benefit from the support and encouragement of the other women and of the team!

---

**I COLOMBIA**

### Aurora’s imminent arrival

We are about to welcome Aurora, a 10-year old child. Her handicapped parents beg for a living. In addition, since they are addicted to drugs, they can’t consider working or taking care of their little one.

Therefore, Aurora was taken in by her uncle Jaime’s family. This working man dedicates his full attention and free time to his daughter Marcela. The favouritism towards her is very perceptible, so much so that his young niece feels excluded and doesn’t receive any tenderness nor love.

For a few months, Aurora has been participating in the programme of Don Bosco’s Centre. She goes there after school and gets educational support and meals. At the end of the day she goes back to her uncle’s place, but given her difficult behaviour Jaime has requested that she be taken care of by the service for children and youth protection.

We are now in favour of and ready to welcome Aurora. Nevertheless, we are counting on Jaime’s commitment to visit her and spend every weekend with her. Aurora is looking forward to staying at the Centre and we are very happy to get to know her better and support her as long as she needs it.

---

**I BURKINA FASO**

### A new vehicle changes everything

In 2018, the Gertrude Hirzel Foundation and the Noma-Hilfe-Schweiz organization funded the acquisition of a four-wheel drive Toyota Land Cruiser 78 Hard Top that can transport up to thirteen people. This model is a classic for many organizations, a true workhorse of the humanitarian world. After arriving in Niger at the beginning of the year, the vehicle was put into service in February and was immediately extremely helpful in organizing the surgical mission in Niamey, 1,000 km away from our Care Centre in Zinder.

Sentinelles uses three four-wheel drive vehicles and covers no less than 130,000 km of dirt tracks every year in order to raise awareness about noma, repatriate sick people to the Centre and follow up of affected children.

The children and their families, the team in the field and in the headquarters wish to express their sincerest gratitude for the support provided by the Gertrude Hirzel Foundation and Noma-Hilfe-Schweiz. They also all want to thank the people and institutions who support Sentinelles in its fight against noma.

---

We are now in favour of and ready to welcome Aurora. Nevertheless, we are counting on Jaime’s commitment to visit her and spend every weekend with her. Aurora is looking forward to staying at the Centre and we are very happy to get to know her better and support her as long as she needs it.

---

We are now in favour of and ready to welcome Aurora. Nevertheless, we are counting on Jaime’s commitment to visit her and spend every weekend with her. Aurora is looking forward to staying at the Centre and we are very happy to get to know her better and support her as long as she needs it.
In the Democratic Republic of Congo, Sentinelles runs a programme of support for vulnerable mothers. Abandoned by their husband, widowed or having had children from rape, these women have no one to count on and fight daily for their survival and that of their family.

At the beginning of this year, we had great pleasure in being able to close several dossiers of families who had become totally independent. Without delay we of course took steps to begin working with new families needing our support. Unfortunately, they are numerous in the region of Sud-Kivu. Sentinelles’ staff therefore ventured out, in spite of the heavy seasonal rains, on the magnificent but perilous roads of the region to meet village families.

Many of those that we meet are pointed out to us by members of the community, such as school directors, nurses or former beneficiaries of Sentinelles’ support. These people are a precious resource, allowing us to identify the most vulnerable. They are best placed to help us with the first investigation and target potential beneficiaries.

It was during one of these field trips in February, in a little village in the Kabare territory, that we met Aline and Faida. It was the director of a school who, concerned by their extremely difficult living conditions, contacted Sentinelles’ team.

When they were still very young, Aline and Faida left the family home following the violence inflicted by their father. This man, who before had been an exemplary husband and father, had lost his mind and his behaviour had completely changed. The two sisters had therefore decided to leave, each in their own direction, had married and given birth to several children. By great misfortune, history repeated itself and the husbands of Aline and Faida also went out of their minds.

Aline’s husband, traumatised by the death of five of his children caused by diseases such as cholera, measles and malaria, which he unfortunately didn't have the means to have treated, began to go mad before finally dying. A widow with her two youngest children by her side, Aline found herself with nothing but a tiny hut left to her by her dead husband. For her family’s survival she works in the fields. But her meagre salary hardly gives her sufficient to buy enough to eat. And this irregular work is not enough to send the little ones to school or to pay for medical treatment.
Faida was abandoned by her husband who suddenly lost all interest in his family and began to wander aimlessly from village to village. Reluctantly, the young woman had to return to her father’s house with her eight children. This very difficult cohabitation lasted for a few months, but she was forced to leave again when, during a fit of rage, her father decided to demolish the little hut which he had given her. So, the whole family moved in with Aline. At the moment there are twelve people living in a hut whose roof has begun to rot. With no bedding, all of them sleep crammed together on the floor in the damp.

Faida does the same work as her sister. She does small agricultural jobs in the owners’ fields. With her heavy family burden, she has great difficulty in feeding her children properly. When we met her, two of the youngest were suffering from serious malnutrition. Thanks to the nutritional aid given by Sentinellelles and a regular follow up, the children have begun to gain weight and strength. They were in an almost vegetative state when we saw them for the first time, but now they talk, smile and play again. It is a great joy to see them evolve and find a taste for life again.

We provided Faida with funds for a business as she wanted to sell cornflour and sugarcane. Her business had hardly begun when she started to feel ill and we took her to hospital for a consultation. She discovered that she was suffering from an umbilical hernia and would have to undergo an emergency operation. Faida was hospitalised and Aline with Joséphine, her sister’s eldest daughter, looked after all the children and managed the business. Quickly recovered from the operation, Faida thanked Sentinellelles profusely for having allowed her to be treated, without which she would not have survived and would have left her children to fend for themselves. Very enthusiastic, she took over her business again.

In the village, a wave of solidarity was born and Faida was able to obtain a piece of land at very low cost, a few metres from her sister’s hut.

After her mother’s recovery, Joséphine left for the “Cité de la Joie” in Panzi. Every year, this centre takes in about 200 young women having suffered violence in order to give them the means to overcome their problems. During six months, Faida’s daughter will acquire a multitude of skills which will allow her to take her life in hand once again and to rediscover her self confidence. On her return, she will be able to help her mother with her business, stock breeding or another activity that she may choose. The next important stages facing Aline, Faida and the Sentinellelles’ team is the construction of their two houses and enrolment of their children in school for the next school year. When stability has been reached for these two families, it will be easier to help them to become independent by concentrating more on their financial activities. The little piece of the journey during which Sentinellelles will be by their side has hardly started, but we can already see hope being reborn.

Since January, more than fifteen new families, all with different but so similar stories, are being followed by our social workers. Several house building sites are underway and the team is ceaselessly following the evolution of the small businesses and breeding projects chosen by the women. The children are making the most of their last days of holidays more serenely and with their stomachs full, looking forward to the new school year which is rapidly approaching. How proud they are to be able to go to school!
A journey towards healing

We wish to share with you Ndye Fatou’s story, a young Senegalese girl with a tumour on her face.

Ndye Fatou lives in Senegal in the small village of Sambe in the Diourbel region. Her father is a farmer and her mother a housewife. She has two older brothers, a younger brother and a twin sister. She doesn’t go to school. Her health doesn’t allow her to. Her first medical consultation took place in May 2018. The doctor who saw her reports a large mandibular tumour that has been developing for the past two years. Fortunately, this tumour is benign and, once taken away, Ndye Fatou will be well. The operation is not possible in her country, which is why it was decided that the little girl would be transferred to Switzerland to receive treatment.

We had to go through an obstacle course to obtain her official documents. As a matter of fact, her father’s name on the civil register extract did not match the one on his identity card! Fortunately, things eventually got sorted out and she could obtain a passport.

Ndye Fatou arrived in Switzerland on a beautiful November morning, accompanied by an escort of Aviation without Frontiers who travelled with her. We come and greet her at the airport, impatient to meet her. She offers a shy smile and takes the hand we reach out to her to get to the car that will drive her to the new life she will be leading for a couple of months. As a first step, a short stay at the hospital in Aigle to do some basic tests. Then she arrives at the foster house of Terre des hommes Valais in Massongex which will be her home during her stay. Surrounded by children with the same condition, Ndye Fatou adapts well to her new home and makes friends.

The first period of her stay is rhythmmed by preoperative consultations at the University Hospital of Geneva. These moments are the source of quite high anxiety for Ndye Fatou who doesn’t easily let herself be examined. She is also probably intimidated by all these white coats around her. She most likely doesn’t understand what is going to happen to her. Our presence soothes her. We do our best to explain to her the medical staff’s gestures and what are the operations ahead. We hope she’ll get used to the procedures because she is going to undergo heavy medical treatment. As a matter of fact, the tumour will need to be removed, then a piece of the fibula bone on the leg will be taken off to reconstruct her jawbone. Several surgeons will be at work during this intervention. Fortunately, the moments we spent in the waiting room are joyful and lively; we happily play and draw!

The surgery is a success, Ndye Fatou spends a couple of days in intensive care. But waking up proves difficult as she devel-
ops a strong anxiety. She sometimes has seizures, is confused or cries. Doctors talk about post-traumatic stress. We would like so much to be able to understand her feelings, how she went through the operations and her hospitalization. An interpreter who speaks her language, the Wolof language, enables better mutual understanding. The girl is also able to talk to her father (whom she loves so much!) on the phone to reassure herself. However, despite these actions, she needs to be transferred to the child psychiatry department where she’ll receive care best adapted to her situation, physical and psychological. We bring her pictures of her family that she hangs on the wall and enable her to realize that her parents think of her and don’t forget her. We do our best, so she doesn’t feel abandoned. A nice relationship develops between her and a very present volunteer. This will contribute to the girl’s recovery. After a few weeks at the hospital, she can be discharged and go back to the foster home. She has a bright smile when she arrives in Massongex where she is welcomed very warmly!

We believe that, once she is back at the foster home, things will go back to normal and Ndeye Fatou will calm down with the educational team and her friends. Unfortunately, after a few days that go well, she remains unsettled and expresses very clearly that she wants to go back home. However, she still needs to attend a few follow-up consultations before returning to her country can be considered. Some of them will be difficult, others will go fine. On the whole, the girl still shows anxiety during the treatment, but it is easier to treat her if she can actively participate: she is the one taking off the plaster or applying cream on her leg scar!

She will also need to get accustomed to her new face, something that is not very simple for Ndeye Fatou who expresses that she doesn’t find herself pretty and would rather not have been operated. But it is worth noting that this operation wasn’t only intended for aesthetic purposes. It was also a matter of saving the girl’s life because the tumour was starting to affect the trachea. It is only as time goes by that she’ll be able to appreciate her new look, and her return among her own family will most likely help her.

We keep the stay of the little patient as short as possible so she can go back home as early as possible. We go with her to the airport, where she can take leave of the volunteers who took care of her and wanted to say goodbye. We entrust her to an escort from Aviation without Frontiers who will escort her to Paris, where another volunteer will carry on with her on the Paris – Dakar leg. When in Senegal, her father will be at the airport to welcome her, accompanied by one of our team members in Senegal.

Ndeye Fatou is now back with her family, happy and relieved. Her family is very happy at the operation’s result. This new face will change her life according to her father. According to the latest news, she is doing fine and calmly goes back to her normal life. We wish her the best for her future endeavours.

---

CONCERTS FOR SENTINELLES

SATURDAY 5TH OCTOBER AT 19H
Temple d’Yverdon-les-Bains

SUNDAY 6TH OCTOBER AT 17H
Collège St-Michel à Fribourg

The Vevey Symphonic Chorus, Florence von Burg, violin and piano and Luc Baghdassarian, piano and direction, combine their talents to bring help to those particularly wounded people who Sentinelles has been defending for almost 40 years.

Come and join us to support our actions for a magnificent musical moment with Mozart, Mendelssohn, Fauré, Franck, Puccini and Rossini. Admission free, collection on the way out.
To inherit a considerable fortune is not common, but to dedicate the major part to helping the poorest children and women on the planet is even less so. This is what Gertrude Hirzel did for the last thirty years of her life thanks to the foundation that bears her name.

Saddened and scandalised by the ravages and disfigurement inflicted by noma on children that she had met during their hospitalisation at the HUG, Mrs Hirzel did not cease to use all her energy to see that all means were put into practice to try to understand, prevent and treat this scourge that mainly affects children from the countries of Sub-Saharan Africa. Following a substantial donation to the WHO, she agreed to take charge fully of more than ten years of research into this disease by financing GESNOMA (Geneva Study Group on Noma) through the intermediary of the University of Geneva. Her foundation also supported financially help for children suffering from noma taken in hand by Sentinelles, as well as surgical missions in Niger and Burkina Faso organised with the Association d’entraide des mutilés du visage (support for those with facial mutilation).

Mrs Hirzel was not just an ordinary donor, she insisted on going herself to consultations for children operated on at the HUG, bringing them presents, pencils for drawing, playing with them, comforting them before the interventions. Also for the research, she often attended group reunions, sometimes voicing her opinion and even once going to Sentinelles’ Centre in Niger to better understand the challenges and the complexity of the situation in the field. At the same time, under her impetus, the Foundation Gertrude Hirzel funded hundreds of projects by charities helping children and women in some of the poorest countries in Africa, Asia and South America.