SENINELLES
TO THE RESCUE OF WOUNDED INNOCENCE

Niger
All together for Sahila

Madagascar
Save Aina's tiny heart

Senegal
A family needs a roof

N° 267 / December 2019
JAB
CH 1208 Prilly
Poste CH SA
**Editorial**

Without significant action, an undernourished future

Of course, this space is not sufficient to share with you the wonderful successes of 2019, the unwavering support which touches us deeply, to relate the important work of our teams, to describe Sentinelles’ commitment to help women in a region of Burkina Faso where insecurity is becoming the norm.

Nor is this space sufficient to resume the challenges faced, the obstacles overcome, but it does allow us to express our anger. Anger faced with the undernourishment from which so many children suffer. It prejudices their future, perpetuates the cycle of poverty. Stunted growth and psychomotor development retardation and sometimes noma, embodied in this edition by the little Nigerian Sahila, are the consequences. Our indignation, however deep it is, is still not blind. It mobilises our strength, stimulates our will to continue with and develop our programmes, as without significant action, it is the future that will become undernourished.

Next year, Sentinelles, born from a choice made by Edmond Kaiser, the thought of whom serves as our guiding star, will celebrate its 40 years. Different events will mark this anniversary and we would be honoured to welcome you with us during concerts and other exhibitions.

But until then, we, Sentinelles from here and elsewhere, wish you dear readers a gentle transition into 2020, whilst thanking you warmly for your help, your loyalty throughout this year.

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**IN BRIEF**

**I SENTINELLES 40TH ANNIVERSARY**

1980 - 2020

Since its creation in 1980, Sentinelles has been involved in helping thousands of children and adults, encountered at the heart of their wrecked lives. Each day, the discovery of rejected people commits us to continuing this path, from the immediate emergency to life in the long term.

Sentinelles is the story of women and men, with at its point of departure the story of one man, Edmond Kaiser, who carried them in his wake, thanks to his determination to help so many wounded innocents.

It involves many volunteers who accomplish in the shadows immense and humble tasks, from the translation and distribution of this bulletin to transporting children who have been operated on, from hospital visits to the organisation of concerts, markets and exhibitions.

It involves skilled people who offer the fruits of their work, their talent, their experience, their conscientious work.

It involves responsible collaborators who commit to serving the most wounded in accordance with the donations that have been entrusted to us.

It involves our friends the donors of one franc or of thousands, always open to the suffering of others, without whom none of all the work that we mention in this bulletin could be achieved and continue.

**Thank you** to all those who, through their donations and their work have made and make this possible. **We need you.**
COLOMBIA

So close to our goal

In Colombia, Sentinelles commits to supporting a population of vulnerable women and children who are victims, among other things, of physical and verbal abuse. This is how we came to intervene, in 2015, in favour of Dora’s family, as her three children, then aged less than 6, were neglected and abandoned.

Today, Dora appears to thrive. She turns out to be one of the most active participants in our cooking and personal development workshop. Well integrated in the women group, she regains confidence in herself and in life, which positively reflects in the relationship with her children.

It wasn’t always the case. A few years before, the father of Dora’s partner was suspected of sexual assault on her daughter Karina who was just 4 years old. Legal charges were initiated but didn’t succeed as the alleged abuser passed away shortly after the filing of the complaint. After his death in late September 2016, Karina displayed a violent convulsive crisis and behaviour problems to which Dora will violently respond.

Karina spends the week in our Centre and joins her family for the weekend. Thanks to this arrangement, Karina can benefit from medical care and therapy. She attends to an educational support programme among other educational and play activities. She is able to communicate without aggressiveness with her peers, and she blossoms, thanks to notably, the kindly supervision of our team. At the same time, we support her mother to strengthen the relationship with her children and we work towards a successful family reunion.

SENegal

News of Mboye’s family, the former talibe

In the February 2017 bulletin, we introduced you to Mboye, a young talibe and his family, who suddenly found themselves without a roof over their heads. We therefore launched an appeal to help them to buy a piece of land and build a house in the region of Mbour. Thanks to your donations, the project could be undertaken and today the whole family is living comfortably and safely.

In addition to the administrative procedures and the construction of the house, Sentinelles has continued its socioeconomic accompaniment of the family. The children have grown up and the eldest have become a plumber and a builder. Mboye, the former talibe, is now an apprentice metalworker. The two girls have married and the youngest are still at school. The mother works selling couscous that she cooks wonderfully. A new life can at last begin.
We met with Aina (all names are fictitious) in a prison where her mother was incarcerated. Those unfortunate circumstances however allowed for the discovery of a serious health condition and most probably saved her life.

At the beginning of 2017, Mialy is imprisoned in the women’s section at Antanimora for a minor offence. Aged 19, she comes along with Aina, her 8-month old daughter. Like any woman who is with children or pregnant and comes to the Antanimora National Penitentiary, located in the capital city Antananarivo, Mialy is given the opportunity to benefit from Sentinelles’ support. This support begins inside the prison and continues after the liberation to ensure the best possible reinsertion of former convicts.

During her incarceration, our social workers who visit the supported convicts’ families, report that Mialy will need our continued support when she will get out of prison. As a matter of fact, she comes from a large family (her parents had 10 children) who live in precarious conditions like many Madagascans. Our workers also discover that Mialy has another child, Toky, a 4-year old boy.

Actions are initiated to try and improve this family’s economic situation, since Mialy wishes to go back to her parents’ place after she has have served her 6-month term.

Shortly after she left prison, when we visit her family, we realize that Aina’s condition will become our main concern. The child was already fragile in prison, she notably had difficulties in getting proper nutrition and our doctor would monitor her closely. Once her mother is free, Aina and her older brother are placed under weight monitoring by our doctor. They must regularly call on our medical practice for controls. During her first consultation with the little one, in November 2017, our doctor suspects a congenital cardiopathy and forwards her toward the paediatric department of the Soavinandrana that confirms the cardiac malformation. The paediatrician refers Aina to the doctors of the Chaîne de l’Espoir (Chain of Hope) that has recently taken over a children cardiac surgery programme initiated in Madagascar by Médecins du Monde. The first analysis made by the cardiologists show that the girl suffers from interventricular septal defect, one of the most common form of congenital heart disease affecting some children from birth. Her condition is considered worrisome and the diagnosis is confirmed by the specialists of Chaîne de l’Espoir who do periodic missions on the Great Island. Surgery is deemed necessary but is impossible to do in Madagascar, Aina will need a medical evacuation to France to undergo cardiac surgery. The association La Ribambelle, based in Marseille and a partner of Chaîne de l’Espoir, will be providing accommodation and medical treatment in this town.

This medical treatment programme for children with heart diseases works thanks to the (mostly volunteer) action of several partners; there is some waiting time because of everyone’s availability and the prioritisation of cases according to the medical urgency.
Waiting is long for everyone, especially since Aina’s condition was deemed urgent.

Our team acts on several fronts. Obtaining ID for Aina and her mother requires administrative procedures, which in Madagascar can quickly become an administrative conundrum.

Mialy doesn’t hold a national ID, a necessary document for her daughter to obtain the birth certificate which is lacking. It is necessary to go through a supplementary judgment to obtain it and apply for a passport for the little one.

Almost a year passed between the time Aina’s evacuation was announced and its accomplishment. She eventually leaves for Marseille at the end of February this year, after the last examinations confirm that her condition allows her to do the trip with a volunteer from Aviation sans Frontières. Locally, the Association La Ribambelle welcomes her and confides her to a volunteer family who will take care of her during her stay.

It is a great relief for everyone to learn that the operation, that wasn’t risk free, went well and shows good results. After two months spent more than 8000 km away from home, Aina can be reunited with her mother and brother, fully fit. The controls made after her return show satisfying results.

For Sentinelles, Aina’s support will continue both medically and socially and will last until her family is self-reliant. Her mother decided to move into one of her sisters’ place in a rural community 30 km away from the capital city. We support her by providing a relocation allowance and additionally by helping her create a small business. Aina, who is still too young, will go to school in due time in the same school where her brother starts attending class.
All together for Sahila

At the beginning of the year, we welcomed into our Centre in Zinder Sahila, a very small girl accompanied by her maternal grandmother, Hadiza. At death’s door, Sahila was immediately taken in hand. Today, she is a little girl full of life, who impressed us deeply with her strength, her courage and her mischievousness. It is for this reason that our collaborators on the spot wanted to share her life story with you who support our actions. Here is Sahila’s story, told by our team in Zinder, who became particularly attached to this little girl and her grandmother.

Sahila is just 3 years old. Born in 2016, she is originally from Bango, a little village in the north of Nigeria, in the region of Goumal, not far from the border with the Republic of Niger. From a modest family, her mother is a housewife and her father is obliged to leave regularly to provide for his family’s needs. She is the second child in the family, who have unfortunately already lost one. Her mother could not go to Sentinelle’s Care Centre for children suffering from noma in Zinder to accompany Sahila and it was her maternal grandmother who left with her to seek treatment and medical care.

In fact, Sahila is suffering from acute noma in the 4th stage of the disease (the fifth is the aftereffects). She is showing a very serious loss of tissue on two-thirds of her face, with an important bone sequestration and the smell characteristic of necrosis. Sahila arrived in the Centre in a generally alarming condition, the damage from noma was such that we all – even though faced with these urgent situations for so many years – were shocked by the extent and the importance of her lesions.

At the very beginning of the disease, Sahila developed a fever which evolved in just a few days; slight bleeding and then a bad smell followed in her mouth. Her parents turned to traditional healers, thinking that it was a sickness linked to evil spirits. Unfortunately, the traditional treatments based on powder made from tree bark, inappropriate in this case, just made the situation worse by delaying medical treatment. Noma therefore took over and developed with nothing being able to stop it. With no improvement and seeing necrosis developing rapidly, the family took the child to different medical centres in the region. Unfortunately, Sahila did not receive any treatment, except at the hospital in Magaria in the south of Niger (in the region of Zinder), where she was admitted to the Nutritional Rehabilitation Intensive Care Centre (CRENI). Here, she received a dressing and painkillers before being referred to us by Médecins Sans Frontières, with whom we have been working for many years.

Sahila arrived in our Care Centre in Zinder on 17th February 2019 with her maternal grandmother. We have seen many cases, but this one was truly exceptional. In addition to the noma, Sahila is undernourished, anaemic and weak. She is crying in pain and hunger as her grandmother doesn’t know how to feed or calm her. Sahila has no more mouth, no nose, one eye is affected. She is dying when we begin to treat her and put her on a liquid diet. A plan is put into place to prepare for the worst. Informed of the gravity of her condition, doctors and surgeons at the nearby hospital are ready to intervene.

The necrotic soft tissue and the bony parts of her face come away a few days after her admission leaving an enormous hole in what was her face. Her grandmother cried.
so much that day. This phase of the disease is a crucial moment for the child, but thanks to the treatment, Sahila is beginning to get better and recuperating little by little in weight.

On mission in Niger at that time, our director writes:

“Her little fingers wind around my hand, contorted by pain, no doubt by fear too. Faced with the motionless Sahila and her grandmother, one of our nurses, with precise movements, cleans, disinfects and protects what is left of her face. The grandmother looks away, crying silently. The emotion of the collaborators present is palpable, silent, respectful of so much suffering, physical, mental. Later, I will hear this question: when will noma end?”

At the Centre, Sahila’s grandmother carries her on her back or holds her on her lap, hidden by the hijab. She is afraid of others looking at her granddaughter, to protect her of course, but also because of the shame that she feels at seeing her so terribly affected by the disease. Things are not easy for us either. We must help the grandmother to overcome her embarrassment, accompany her in this terrible ordeal and look after her granddaughter. At first, they remain hidden in their room. When Sahila isn’t crying, she is sleeping, but this only lasts for a few minutes, at most a few hours. With time and thanks to our accompaniment, she begins to eat the daily meals and even goes out for a while into the courtyard with the other children. Sahila sits on a mat and watches the children play, then progressively joins in with the group. She then becomes joyful and recovers the taste for games and teasing. During her stay, her father – back from his time away – comes to visit her. He cried a lot on seeing his daughter, who he left when she was well, but he thanks us anyway because his daughter is alive. At the Centre, Sahila is gaining weight and making new friends. As it is too early to carry out reconstructive surgery, the grandmother learns the basic care, cleaning the wound and the dressing to be changed with care, with a view to their return to the village. We give her a kit of dressings, so that she can ensure regular care and we arrange a follow up programme for Sahila and her family, of course taking into account the security context as their home is in a very unstable region.

Sahila rejoined her family at the end of June, a little more than 4 months after her admission to Sentinelles’ Centre. Her grandmother tells us that the people from her village and surrounding areas were surprised and enchanted at their return. She expressed her thanks and those of all the family. A little while later, Sahila came back to Zinder for a check-up. Despite the good care taken by her grandmother, we had to treat a wound on the lesion, resulting from a shock brought on by a trauma. A new stay of two months was necessary. However, Sahila had lost none of her joy for life, her excellent appetite or her mischievous or laughing nature.

She rejoined her family on 1st August, very happy. Sahila is now a little girl who often plays with all the children in her village, without suffering from discrimination or embarrassment. However, Sahila’s story is just beginning for her, her family and for Sentinelles; because of the extent of her lesions, we will accompany her throughout the stages of facial reconstruction, ensuring a rigorous medical social follow up so as not to let noma win. The fight against noma does not end with the physical aspects of the disease, it also takes into consideration the devastating effects on a psychological, social and financial level. Sahila is by far one of the most serious cases with which we have been confronted, but her incredible courage and her strength of character make Sahila a true exception and a source of happiness for all of us, the Sentinelles team in Zinder.

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**Think about solidarity gifts for Christmas**

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<th>Books</th>
<th>Postcards</th>
<th>Bulletin</th>
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<td>Edmond Kaiser – La Grâce du Monde, Éditions de l’Aire CHF 25.-</td>
<td>A set of 10 Sentinelles photographs, 210 x 148 mm CHF 10.-</td>
<td>Annual subscription to Sentinelles bulletin (French, German or English) CHF 20.-</td>
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<td>Christophe Gallaz – Entretiens avec Edmond Kaiser, Éditions Favre CHF 20.-</td>
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*Please return this coupon to Fondation Sentinelles, les Cerisiers, Rte de Cery, 1008 Prilly, specifying the quantity desired, or order directly on our website www.sentinelles.org (plus postage)*

Name: ................................................................. First name: .................................................................

Address: ................................................................. ZIP: .......... Location: .................................................................

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I SENEGAL

An urgent housing need for a family in Fatick

When we started looking after the Ndour family in Fatick within the scope of the programme for Children Guides of Blind People, the parents were already quite old. Coura, their first daughter, is today 20 years old and she has two children whom she has been raising on her own.

Recently, Coura’s father, who had been very sick for several months, passed away. Their blind mother is way too old to be able to work and take care of the children. Coura is the one who bears all responsibilities and who runs the household with courage and self-sacrifice. She works relentlessly to feed and support her three younger siblings and her own children.

The family totally lacks privacy; the tiny house they rent is insalubrious and dilapidated. The father owned a small piece of land on which he never had enough money to build a house for his family. This is where Coura would like to build their home. Living in her own house, in a healthy, safe and rent-free environment, would enable her to eventually get her life back on track.

Our wish would be to enable Coura, her mother and children to make this dream come true and start 2020 in their new house.

You can support them!

Budget for the building of the Ndour family’s house

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Total budget for the building of the house: 4’768’350 CFA, i.e. 8’150 CHF