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# SENTINELLES

TO THE RESCUE OF WOUNDED INNOCENCE

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N° 281 / April 2022



## NIGER

Success of revenue-generating activities

## BURKINA FASO

Art therapy creative workshop

## COLOMBIA

Enriching animations for children

## Editorial

### ... I come to offer you my heart

People in dire poverty face insurmountable obstacles and suffer from multiple deprivations. Both cause and consequence of human rights violations, extreme poverty exposes them to major hazards in terms of healthcare, to inequalities, to exclusion. States and other economic institutions are responsible, at least partly. They perpetuate it, leaving large sections of the population by the wayside today still.

“When there is nobody around”, sings a great South American voice, “I come to offer you my heart”. This voice resonates and transcends the feeling of revolt in the face of particularly painful situations. It induces action.

Taking action with mothers by means of revenue generating activities, taking their wishes and potential into account, helps them to progressively improve their living conditions and rise above misery. Whenever possible, we encourage the formation of groups of women. Beyond the learning process, through fruitful discussions, they discover that they all more or less face the same difficulties and can therefore help each other. The problems of one or the other become collective and together they find the necessary impulse to overcome them.

On the other hand, what better indicator is there, unfortunately, than noma to reveal extreme poverty? In addition to medical care and the provision of their basic necessities, children suffering from sequelae of this terrible disease benefit from learning and therapeutic activities. Through art, as you will read to find out, they explore their inner self and develop new skills to express their feelings in a creative manner while strengthening their self-esteem.

Art is also committed. On 15<sup>th</sup> May, the musical notes of the ensemble Les Ministrings will fly off towards the Ukraine. These young talents are joining us with all their freshness and authenticity for a concert in support of the populations affected by the war.

Therefore, thanks to your faithful support, we contribute to the fight against poverty in a spirit of solidarity and participation.



*Marlyse Morard*  
Managing Director



### I MADAGASCAR

## Promise of a bright future for a young Malagasy

24-year-old Patrice is Harisoa's older brother who has been taken care of by our childcare programme for several years. He got his baccalaureate (high school diploma) in 2015, however, his family who is living off agriculture does not possess the means to allow him to pursue the higher education he so much desires. With our help, Patrice started eco-tourism studies at a specialised college in 2018.

After three years, he obtained a bachelor's degree and decided to continue his training in the tourism section at the "Institut National de Tourisme et d'Hôtellerie" (National Institute of Tourism and Hospitality) where he has just been admitted after having passed the entrance exams. He plans to obtain a master's degree that will allow him to create his own tourism agency in the future. We congratulate him on his journey.





## I BURKINA FASO

### Obstetric fistula and prolapse operations

Thanks to your support and that of the solidarity fund of the city of Geneva, 24 women watched by our programme were able to receive a surgical repair at the end of 2021. Sixteen of them were suffering from a prolapse and eight of them from obstetric fistula. After the surgeries performed by Dr. Moussa Guiro at the Saint Camille hospital, they stayed one month in our shelter in Ouagadougou for their convalescence. Before heading back to their place to the east of the country accompanied by Julie, our animator, they were able to regain their strength and receive training in order to start an income-generating activity once back home.



## I NIGER

### Surgical missions in Niamey

Last year, 20 children and young adults with noma sequelae benefited from reconstructive surgery at La Magia clinic in Niamey, in partnership with the NGO Hilfsaktion Noma. In Niger, the vast majority of children that are taken care of by Sentinelles are operated in the country. Complex surgeries are nonetheless performed in Switzerland, in collaboration with the plastic, reconstructive and aesthetical surgery Division of the Geneva University Hospitals (HUG). Two children were treated in 2021.

The children stayed in our Fighting against Noma Shelter in Zinder before leaving for Niamey for an operation or a consultation by doctors specialised in noma. Our partner Noma-Hilfe Schweiz, whom we warmly thank for its support, handles the participation in these missions and their organisation.



## — LES — MINISTRINGS

### CONCERT IN SUPPORT

of the women and children  
victims of the war in Ukraine

**Centre culturel des Terreaux**  
Rue de l'Alé 31, Lausanne

**Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> May 2022 à 17 h \***

*Come and discover these talented and very young violinists and share this moment of musical solidarity.*

*Free entry – pass the hat collection*

*\*subject to modification following the evolution of the health situation*

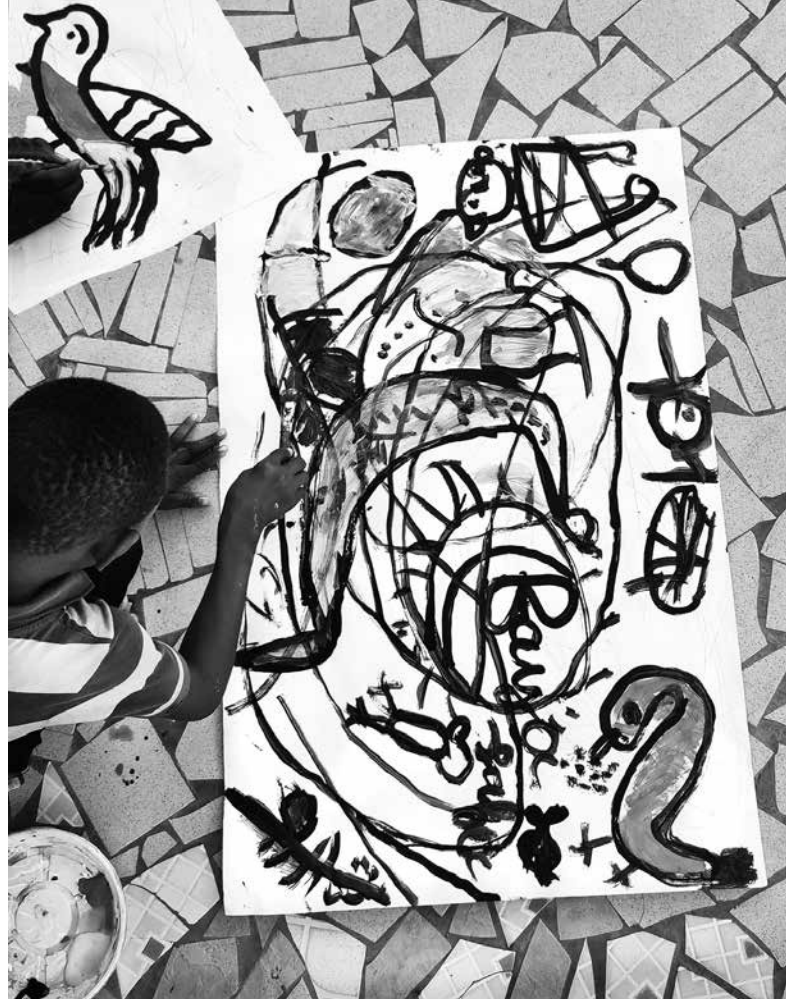
**I BURKINA FASO**

## A gateway to the inner world of children

Sentinelles has initiated a new collaboration with the Ouagadougou-based Waga Studio. This association, made up of artists and creators from different backgrounds, works to promote the arts as an instrument of well-being in Burkina Faso.

The children we have been following for years in our noma programme were able to participate in creative workshops in painting, body expression, dance and theatre for a fortnight.

When Sentinelles takes care of children with noma, the first priority is to provide medical care so that they can regain their health.



**In a second stage, sometimes years later, surgery attempts to repair the visible damage to their faces. The invisible wound caused by the disease in the hearts of children is often deep and even more difficult to heal.**

Stigmatisation from an early age, confrontation with the gaze of others, rejection, identification with the disease and victimisation are often part of the psychological difficulties that the child will have to overcome in order to be able to develop fully in life. Our work of social support for each child over the years also aims to promote the personal development of the children.

At the end of the two weeks, each child leaves with his or her own creations: T-shirts and large canvases on which he or she has been able to represent his or her dreams and/or favourite things.

These activities took place during the school support classes given this year by Casimir, a young man who was also a victim of noma as a child and who now wants to become a teacher. As Casimir points out, this approach is important to “help his little brothers and sisters to have confidence in themselves, not to shut themselves away, and to find their place in society”.

Seeing the concentration of the children during these workshops, and their smiles, one cannot but notice that it favours their development. And that they are very talented!





## Arts as tools for self-discovery

**President of Waga Studio, Silvia Ferraris is an artist and art therapist in the fields of dance/performance and visual arts with years of experience with street children.**

Her approach is to use the arts as a tool to explore the potential for personal development on different themes: self-discovery, increased self-esteem, stress reduction.

The workshops include different activities as gateways to the inner world of each person (video link below).

### BODY EXPRESSION

Feeling one's body in order to be able to get in deep contact with oneself, beyond models and conditioning, a very serious game.

### PLASTIC ARTS

What is the purpose of doodling with your eyes closed? To allow the creative process to be triggered and to experience the new. To find what is hidden in the traces left in complete freedom.

To open the doors to one's inner world, to one's reference points.

To allow an authentic return of one's experiences where the mind is put aside as much as possible. Little by little forms emerge, objects from the village, fruits from nature, all these elements that belong to the child's life.

### THEATRE

The sketches, always inspired by the child's daily life, allow the child to find his or her bearings in the situations played out and at the same time to observe himself or herself from the outside in a protected setting. One discovers one's voice, one's interactions with others. The whole person is challenged, and you come out of it very well!

### DANSE

Music is a kind of magic that allows us to let go, immediately.

The body as a vehicle for emotions and experiences that can be glimpsed in movements, gestures and postures. Dance as an opportunity to share its beauty with others.

It is not an exercise in the simple repetition of steps, nor a moment of pure release. Dance is an opportunity to give shape to one's identity, to experience oneself in an active process of self-creation.

With joy, fun and encouragement! ■





## I NIGER

# Building confidence, self-esteem and income

In all its programmes, Sentinelles takes care of the beneficiaries one by one, studying their specific needs and offering them the means, as far as possible, to improve their living conditions in the perspective of autonomy.

In Niger, the people followed are mainly children suffering from noma, a disease linked to poor hygiene, malnutrition and poor health. Those who make their way to our reception centre in Zinder are cared for, first and foremost, in terms of health. They are cared for by our nurses and “re-energised” by the rich and complete meals prepared by our team. They sometimes arrive at the Centre in an extremely weak state but leave a few weeks later, without any sign of malnutrition, healed, and often smiling despite their after-effects.

But the story does not always end there, as noma can strike a second time if the child’s hygiene deteriorates and nutritional intake is inadequate. Once back in

the village, the child unfortunately finds himself once again in an environment of extreme poverty and deprivation. So how can we ensure a lasting cure for these children who return to the living conditions that led them to develop noma?

This sustainable healing requires an improvement in the family’s food security, but in a country like Niger, which is at the top of the indicators of extreme poverty, how can we provide aid that can make a difference? Sentinelles distributes millet every year to the poorest families during the lean season (the period between two harvests), which is particularly difficult, but this gesture only alleviates hunger temporarily.

**One solution is to give beneficiary families the opportunity to improve their living conditions in a more sustainable way by helping them to develop income-generating activities.**

Sentinelles has decided to focus on this already existing aspect by training its team of social workers who accompany families in the choice of an activity and in its implementation. We provide small amounts of money that may seem insignificant but are just what is needed to get started.

These economic aids are primarily intended for the mothers of children



with noma, who are often left alone by their husbands who have left for neighbouring regions. The women generally know very well what they would like to do and what would be economically interesting in their village. They often choose to run small businesses selling basic goods such as condiments, peanuts, oil or cereals. Others opt instead for food processing by making cake (a product of groundnut processing) or roasted groundnuts. Sometimes they start a small goat farm, and we also train some of them to create home gardens. With a little advice and the creation of a plot of land in front of their house, these women can grow vegetables for the family diet.

Last year, about twenty microfinance loans were granted for income-generating activities, with some successes but also some failures.

Before financing, the profitability of activities is carefully calculated. Even if it is only symbolic, a contribution is always requested to make the family responsible and a repayment plan for the interest-free loan is discussed and established with the project owner. The Sentinelles team frequently follows up on the project to provide advice and guid-

ance. Once the agreed amount has been repaid, the money is paid back to the project owner to expand their business. If everything has gone well during the process, the team stops monitoring the business regularly because the family is considered economically autonomous.

Fassouma, the mother of young Mariama who was affected by noma in her early childhood, is undoubtedly on the way to this autonomy. She started an activity with a few cereals and condiments. She then adapted to the demand of the women in her neighbourhood and modified her offer little by little. Fassouma continued to reinvest her profits, which enabled her to double her business. Today, she saves part of her profits and continues to pay Sentinelles regularly. Fassouma is an example to many women.

Through this approach, Sentinelles hopes to generate income for families so that women can meet the urgent food and health needs of their children. Although this support does not meet all the needs, it has the advantage of enabling the women to gain self-esteem, confidence and ambition. This will undoubtedly benefit them in securing the well-being of their families in the future. ■





**I COLOMBIA**

## Opening up to new horizons

**In the Colombia programme, in spite of the difficulties arising from the pandemic, we were able to set up activities involving not only the beneficiaries of the Centre Tierra de Vida but also the local community, on top of individual support activities.**

During the pandemic, due to the immediate needs inherent to school closures, the Centre de Tierra de Vida (the name of Sentinelles in Colombia) was able to offer academic support to those youths who did not benefit from technology or adult assistance to follow online lessons, thus minimising the risk of dropping out.

After a year of preparation, the music school project was realised, enabling an exchange between some twenty local children and ten residents of the Centre. This interaction opened the doors of the foundation to the community, thus contributing to the prevention of youths being recruited by local criminal gangs. Some of the neighbours, sensitive to the relevance of such an initiative, mobilised and donated most of the instruments required to learn music.

In response to these interactions with the community, governmental organisations invited the youths, the families and the children of the Centre to take part in three cultural events. A few teenagers, such as Isabel, Valentina, Camilla and Daisiri started a dance group with the help of Meliza (whose story was told in our n° 278 journal). They train once a week and plan to take part in other events. It is encouraging to see that the Centre's external activities motivate the young people, keep them busy in a positive manner and enhance them.

This year we shall continue these activities in order to open up new horizons for those we accompany. Thank you to all individuals, families and establishments who joined us to support this endeavour and keep it going. ■

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