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# SENTINELLES

TO THE RESCUE OF WOUNDED INNOCENCE

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N° 277 / August 2021



## SWITZERLAND

Noma: personalities  
testify

## NIGER

Role of the school  
for children with noma

## SWITZERLAND

Concert by a virtuoso  
with a big heart

# Editorial

## Children deprived of education, exclusion and perpetuation of the cycle of poverty

« Education is the most powerful weapon to change the world », said Nelson Mandela.

Children, especially vulnerable children, need to be able to rely on inclusive quality education to develop lifelong knowledge and skills. While poverty limits access to school and poses a potential risk of school difficulties or even dropping out, other factors add to this.

In Burkina Faso, the extended period of school closure due to the pandemic and insecurity raises concerns about the recruitment of children by armed groups. In the north and east of the country, schools are being looted or burned, and teachers threatened. In communities hosting people displaced by violence, schools are used as emergency shelters and the influx of new children overwhelms the educational infrastructure that is still in place.

In Colombia, one of the most unequal states, the consequences of months of suspended schooling are a clear reflection of the gap between children from the most privileged social classes and the most vulnerable. Without access to technological tools or the Internet, and deprived of a school canteen, many students suffer from malnutrition and are unable to continue their learning process.

However, pandemic, insecurity and poverty are not the only roots of the problem. Discriminatory policies and insufficient investment perpetuate inequalities and deprive children of a fundamental right for their development.

In the current context, it is necessary to prioritise their nutritional and emotional needs and to offer viable alternatives to guarantee the right to education. We strive to do this, to the best of our humble ability, so that children can learn, grow, and become agents of change within their family and community.



Marlyse Morard  
Managing Director

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

## IN BRIEF



### COLOMBIA

## School support for children in Minas in COVID time

The pandemic has significantly affected the most vulnerable populations in Colombia. The Colombian National Administrative Department of Statistics recently published that 42% of the population currently lives below the poverty line, i.e., on less than USD 100 per family.

Amagá, Minas or Angelopolis are not spared. The consequences are significant, especially for children. The government still favours distance learning, as hygiene conditions remain precarious in many schools (sometimes lacking cleaning staff, drinking water or sanitary facilities).

Faced with these shortcomings, Tierra de Vida (the name of Sentinelles in Colombia) offers school support to children who are not part of our Centre. Brayan, Mariana, Jimena, Eliana and Juan benefit from this. They have been able to make up for many of their shortcomings, regain their self-confidence and are in good condition to succeed in their school year.





## I TREATMENT

### Arrival of a girl from Niger

Sahila, 5 years old, suffering from very serious after-effects of noma, arrived in Switzerland for an operation. Her face has been eaten away by the disease, but the vivacity and intensity of her eyes show us her strength and will to live. She lands in Geneva accompanied by Meriem, a volunteer courier from Aviation Sans Frontières.

At first a little unsettled when she leaves her companion, Sahila ends up trusting us and takes our hands to leave the airport. As we arrive in Sentinelle's office, she receives a hedgehog soft toy that she immediately adopts. After a night at the hospital in Renaz for an initial check-up, she goes to La Maison de Terre des hommes in Massongex (VS), where she quickly gets used to being with other children after 48 hours of quarantine due to Covid-19. Sahila will undergo various tests before being operated on. We will accompany her, to reassure her and surround her in the unknown world of the hospital. We wish her a warm welcome and much courage throughout the medical journey that awaits her.



## I MADAGASCAR

### Rose, a follow-up that bears fruit

We met Rose, now 20, when she was imprisoned for a minor offence. She came from a troubled country family and, like many other girls, had to leave home at a young age to work as a domestic in a wealthy family in the capital. She was 17 years old when circumstances led her to prison where she spent 7 months.

Rose was able to benefit from our support during her stay in detention: food aid, listening, psychological support, medical and legal follow-up as well as participation in our training and school support workshop.

Upon her release, we continued this support. Rose decided to follow a vocational training in our cutting and sewing workshop. After two years of courses, she was able to start her own business and now makes clothes at home, thanks to the sewing machine we helped her to acquire.

## CONCERT

We are very pleased to announce the concert organised by Sentinelles Fribourg with Nicolas Jungo on cello, Anne Steulet Brown on piano and Carole Collaud on the flute who will perform works by Haydn and Farrenc.

**Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> August**

**at 5 pm at the Centre le Phénix in Fribourg\*.**

On this occasion, our programme "Young women and their children imprisoned in Madagascar" will be presented.

Admission is free, and donations will be collected to support this programme. We hope to see many of you there.

(\*) subject to change depending on the evolution of the health situation.





## I NIGER

# School, a place of learning and integration for children with noma

**Sentinelles has been active in the fight against noma in Zinder since 1992. A large part of our staff's work consists of providing individual follow-up for children once they have recovered from the disease.**

This social follow-up takes place directly in their villages and ensures that the families take care of their oral hygiene, as well as following their development up until the necessary surgical interventions.

One of the most important aspects is also to encourage the integration of the sometimes disfigured child into his family and community. As often as possible, the child attends school in his or her village and parents are made aware of the importance of school.

In Niger, although great progress has been made in recent years in terms of education, the schooling rate remains extremely low. The country lacks resources: there are not enough schools and classes are overcrowded. Girls are the first to be forgotten by the education system and one in two is not enrolled in school. In 2018, only 27% of women in Niger over the age of 15 were literate, compared to 44% of men.

Sentinelles is particularly keen to ensure that its beneficiaries, both girls and boys, are enrolled in school and supports them

in continuing their education for as long as possible. In the 2021 school year, more than 100 children supported by Sentinelles attended primary or secondary school.

Our social workers visit the children in the bush, even in their classrooms, and talk to their teachers to find out about their level and attendance. Long discussions and awareness-raising sessions then take place with the families based on their progress at school. It is not always easy for parents to let their children go to school when their participation would be needed for field work and domestic chores. However, solutions are found through these exchanges, and above all, parents realise the importance of education for their future. Despite many successes, Sentinelles is still often confronted with school dropouts due to complicated family situations.

While the majority of the children attend school in their village, two new partnerships with boarding schools in Zinder allow eight young people to attend school or training in high quality schools.



**Kawaloudine (13), Fassouma (14), Mourza (13), Bilal (9) and Nana Hadiza (11) have all suffered from noma in the past and have been treated by Sentinelles. Fortunately, because the disease was detected in time, none of them has any visible after-effects. They started their schooling in their village and have just spent their first year at the Au Coeur du Niger boarding school.**

They are all in classes of different levels, but they thrive from being with many other students of their age. Their joie de vivre and enthusiasm when they leave the school show how much they enjoy this environment. In fact, they wear their boarding school uniforms with pride. Although they are away from their families for long periods of time, they are well looked after by their teachers and by the women of the Centre, who are cooks, nannies or nurses, and they are reunited with their families during the holiday weeks.

Mourza and Fassouma are two amazing girls. Coming from extremely disadvantaged families and having suffered from noma in their early childhood, they now shine and show signs of a bright future. Fassouma's level of French has improved considerably since she started at the boarding school. Mourza, at the age of 13, is already an assertive young woman with a wicked sense of humour. There is every reason to believe that she will be a true spokesperson for her community in the future. These two young girls take their studies very much to heart and study with their youngest classmate, Nana Hadiza, in the dormitory for hours before going to bed.

Sentinelles also supports young people in higher education when they have the capacity to do so. This was the case for Zeinabou, a young woman now 20 years old. She completed her basic health worker diploma this year and got very good grades. Zeinabou explains that she chose this profession to be able to work in the field of health and family planning for women. She came to the Centre to speak to the mothers and young children in the process of recovery. Her success is a great encouragement to our staff who have done a wonderful job with her for many years.

The time has come for her to stand on her own two feet and, who knows, perhaps our team will cross paths with her soon in a health post.

By treating noma victims and offering them the opportunity to go to school, Sentinelles contributes to the achievement of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals. Indeed, the Foundation's activities reinforce the objective of providing quality education for all, and the goal of ensuring that every human being lives in good health. Child by child, Sentinelles is part of the global fight against poverty, injustice and inequality. ■







## Accounts of the **Sentinelles** Fondation

**From January 1<sup>st</sup> to December 31<sup>st</sup> 2020** (in Swiss francs with year on year numbers comparing with 2019 period)

| EXPENSES                                           | 2020             | 2019             | REVENUE                                                    | 2020             | 2019             |
|----------------------------------------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|------------------|
| Burkina Faso                                       | 231'504          | 255'463          | Burkina Faso                                               | 44'654           | 33'334           |
| Colombia                                           | 136'183          | 130'620          | Colombia                                                   | 10'054           | 11'411           |
| Congo                                              | 133'599          | 118'676          | Congo                                                      | 69'875           | 22'746           |
| Madagascar                                         | 357'235          | 432'794          | Madagascar                                                 | 36'835           | 20'247           |
| Niger                                              | 311'570          | 375'649          | Niger                                                      | 20'956           | 33'935           |
| Senegal                                            | 221'743          | 229'966          | Senegal                                                    | 4'137            | 34'383           |
| Healthcare for children<br>operated in Switzerland | 59'463           | 64'552           | Donations for Children<br>with noma                        | 425'274          | 366'435          |
| Other Supports                                     | 3'345            | 4'137            | Winds of Hope Foundation                                   | 50'000           | 50'000           |
|                                                    |                  |                  | Gertrude Hirzel Foundation                                 | 60'000           | 50'000           |
|                                                    |                  |                  | Les amis de Sentinelles<br>(Republic and Canton of Geneva) |                  | 150'000          |
|                                                    |                  |                  | Les amis de Sentinelles<br>(City of Geneva)                |                  | 19'000           |
| <b>Subtotal</b>                                    | <b>1'454'642</b> | <b>1'611'857</b> | <b>Subtotal</b>                                            | <b>721'785</b>   | <b>791'491</b>   |
| <b>COSTS IN SWITZERLAND</b>                        |                  |                  | <b>OTHER ENTRIES</b>                                       |                  |                  |
| Salaries and expenses                              | 129'991          | 136'242          | General donations                                          | 789'238          | 669'592          |
| Facility costs                                     | 9'648            | 10'248           | Exceptional donations                                      | 318'590          | 147'609          |
| Sentinelles newspaper                              | 68'467           | 78'364           | Successions                                                | 107'972          | 110'340          |
| Communication media                                | 89'948           | 76'283           | Markets                                                    |                  | 1'072            |
| Administrative costs                               | 39'239           | 39'736           | Events                                                     | 2'372            | 4'012            |
| Historic records                                   |                  | 41'429           | Sales of Edmond Kaiser's books                             | 1'343            | 310              |
| Depreciations                                      |                  | 17'499           | Contributions to medical care                              | 7'688            | 10'528           |
| Other charges                                      | 20'182           | 5'733            | Taxes CO2/comm. Tax at source                              | 369              | 817              |
|                                                    |                  |                  | Interests on stock and c/c                                 | 62               | 39               |
| <b>Subtotal</b>                                    | <b>357'475</b>   | <b>405'534</b>   | <b>Subtotal</b>                                            | <b>1'227'634</b> | <b>944'319</b>   |
| <b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>                              | <b>1'812'117</b> | <b>2'017'391</b> | <b>TOTAL REVENUE</b>                                       | <b>1'949'419</b> | <b>1'735'810</b> |
| Profit or loss of the period                       | 71'575           | -239'875         |                                                            |                  |                  |

Sentinelles does everything possible to ensure efficient, high-quality and cost-effective operations. The services obtained free of charge or at a preferential rate, as well as the collaboration of numerous volunteers, represent an annual saving of more than one million CHF (1'204'922 CHF in 2020). If the amount of these free services is included in the expenses, the Sentinelles' budget would amount to CHF 3'017'039 CHF.

Audited accounts according to the audit report of 31 May 2021 by Fiduciaire DRP SA Geneva.

## I SWITZERLAND

# Noma: personalities are mobilising

This spring, Heidi.news and newSpecial (the magazine for staff of international organisations based in Geneva since 1949) gave the floor to Jean Ziegler, Bertrand Piccard and Ilias Petrou, head of clinic at the HUG. Excerpts from the testimonies of these three personalities who so actively support Sentinelles' commitments.



**Jean Ziegler**

*Vice-President of the Advisory Committee of the United Nations Human Rights Council.*

He denounces: "I have seen for myself the ravages of noma, a disease that causes some 150,000 deaths per year in Africa, South-East Asia and South America. In order for resources to be allocated to the treatment of noma, it would have to be included in the WHO's list of neglected tropical diseases. However, the WHO has refused to do so, which is unacceptable and scandalous, even though such a listing would make it possible to mobilise public funds and save thousands of children."



**Bertrand Piccard**

*Explorer, psychiatrist and clean technology ambassador.*

Bertrand Piccard talks about how he feels about this terrifying disease and how he is committed to helping the victims: "It is shameful that noma still exists in 2021. I have seen in Africa the devastation it causes. It is so horrible that many people prefer not to think about it, and it does not worry many people, like Ebola for example. Moreover, it affects countries that are not tourist destinations. If there were disfigured children on the beaches of the Maldives, maybe it would be different..."

Through Winds of Hope, we support organisations that have been in the field for a long time, such as Sentinelles. As long as the disease exists, we must do everything we can to help the survivors who live with major disfigurements and terrible functional after-effects."



**Ilias Petrou**

*Head of Clinic at the University Hospitals of Geneva.*

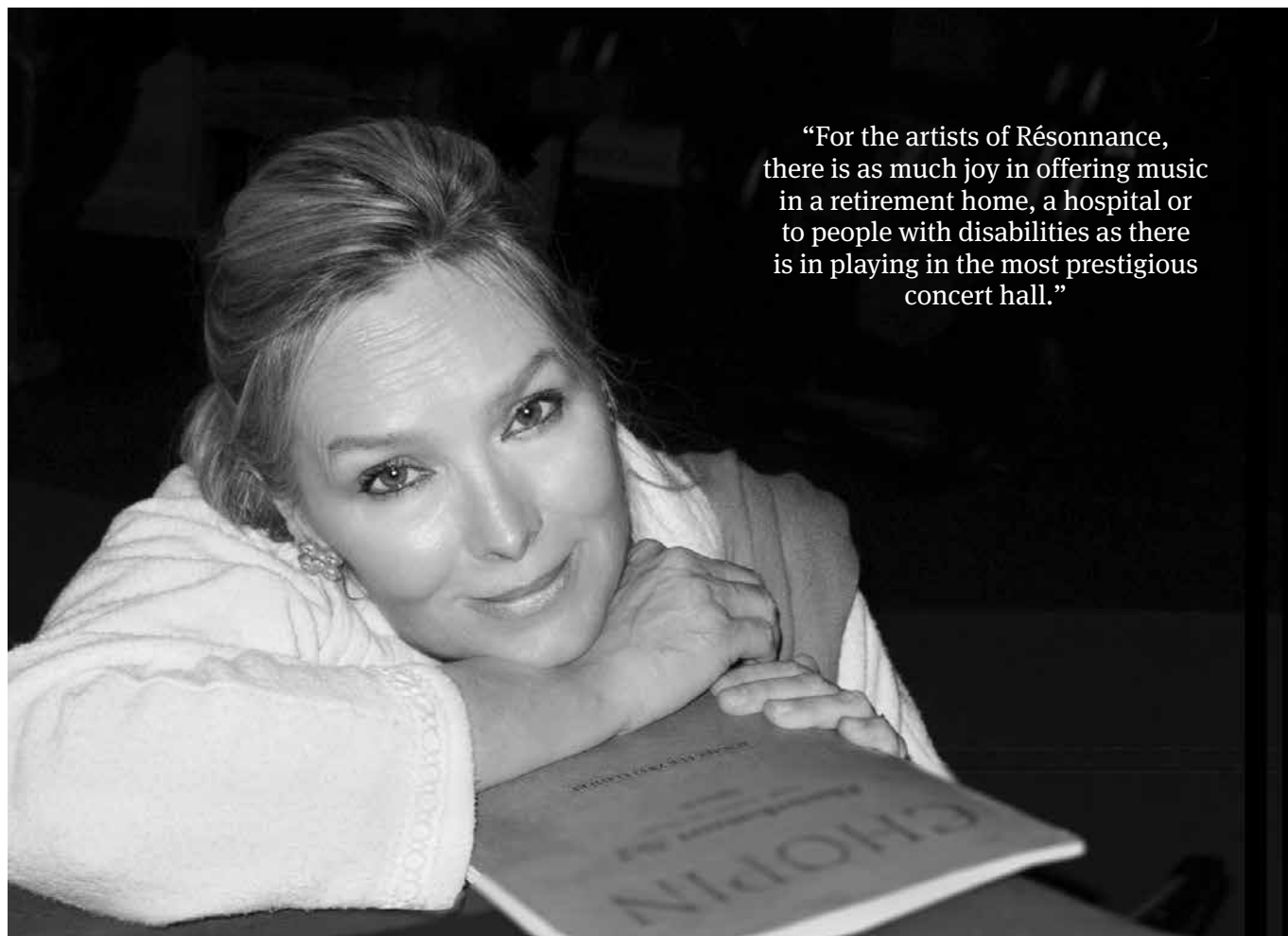
"Giving a face back to the victims of noma was a strong commitment for Prof. Brigitte Pittet (editor's note: she has operated on many children rescued by Sentinelles and organised surgical missions in Niger, Burkina Faso and Senegal - See more information on page 8). Although she has retired, we continue to operate together on the most complex cases. Noma surgery is very special, because the disease can destroy all the tissues of the face, not only the skin, but also the bones and muscles... Coming to Switzerland (editor's note: to be operated on) is the only chance for the children most disfigured by noma.

It is obviously necessary to develop local skills. But it is very difficult to train and, above all, to keep the next generation.

With Prof. Pittet, we would really like to succeed in reconstructing the musculature necessary for smiling, because restoring the children's ability to smile normally remains my dream! "

| SWITZERLAND

## Concert by Elizabeth Sombart



“For the artists of Résonnance, there is as much joy in offering music in a retirement home, a hospital or to people with disabilities as there is in playing in the most prestigious concert hall.”

**The Sentinelles Foundation would like to support our loyal friend, the virtuoso pianist Elizabeth Sombart, who has generously given several wonderful concerts in support of Sentinelles.**

Her next concert, with Michel Tirabosco on panpipes, will take place on

**Sunday 10 October, 5 pm**

**at the Salle Paderewski of the Casino de Montbenon in Lausanne**

A presentation of the work of Sentinelles will take place on this occasion and the gains of this evening will be dedicated to the activities of the Résonnance foundation.

Reservations and tickets at [info@resonnance.org](mailto:info@resonnance.org) or 021 802 64 46.

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