
SENTINELLES

TO THE RESCUE OF WOUNDED INNOCENCE

N° 279 / December 2021



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disfigured by an accident

NIGER

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by community radios

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by Edmond Kaiser

Editorial

Together we make a difference

Your generosity has been expressed in a thousand different ways throughout the year.

Without any expectation of a return, you have accompanied children in hospital, produced translations, immersed yourselves into our archives and, in spite of the prevalent incertitude, have organised events to highlight our actions. You have distributed our publication, saved the writings of Edmond Kaiser from oblivion, trained our staff, repaired our computers and forestalled IT risks, gathered and sorted out clothing, in a most careful manner.

Thanks to your donations, you have also enabled us to help particularly vulnerable children in matters such as health, education and environment. They were imprisoned with their mothers in carceral establishments of another era in the East of the Democratic Republic of Congo, left without care for lack of means in Madagascar and exposed to the violence in the coal mining region of Colombia. They benefited from a tight medical and social follow-up, respectful of their rights and their needs. Little by little, each in their own way has become an active participant in their development with a taste for learning and the impulsion required to achieve balanced growth.

In Switzerland we were able to receive children and young adults severely damaged by noma, with the assistance of partners both faithful and essential for treatments which they could not have benefited from in their country. It is with faith in their future that they returned there after several weeks or months.

Without you, none of this would be possible. We thank you wholeheartedly for your help in pursuing our actions, your commitment is our guiding light.

The whole of the Sentinelles team wishes you merry end of year celebrations and all the best for the New Year.



Marlyse Morard
Managing Director

IN BRIEF



ICONGO

Two Sentinelles programmes in Congo

The first programme dates from 2007 and consists of psychosocial support for women and children living in extremely vulnerable situations in the rural area around the town of Bukavu.

The second programme, set up in April 2020 and supported by La Chaîne du Bonheur, is devoted to emergency aid, psychosocial follow-up and support for the reintegration of women prisoners and their children in the prisons of Bukavu and Kabare.

In order to provide quality follow-up to the families, our team of social workers visits their homes every week. Since the creation of the programme in the prisons, the number of beneficiaries and therefore the number of trips has almost doubled.

In order to carry out all of its activities, Sentinelles' office in the Democratic Republic of Congo has hired a new social worker and a second driver. The latter's employment and the acquisition of a second car are essential for transporting food and other goods delivered to the prison, construction materials for housing assistance, and for transporting beneficiaries for medical reasons, in addition to field visits to monitor families at home.

The state of the road network in South Kivu being very precarious and the climatic conditions difficult during the long rainy season (from September to May), an all-terrain vehicle is essential for the smooth running of Sentinelles' actions. Each year, they will involve more than 1,500 visits and 15,000 km travelled.

We will soon publish a full report on this work in prisons.

I SENEGAL

Promise of a beautiful future for a young talibé

In 2014, Omar Pouye, a young talibé aged 14, is the victim of serious abuse from his marabout. Sentinelles then takes responsibility for the care, his psychosocial accompaniment as well as his family integration.

His affective lack takes a lot of time to heal and his behaviour makes his reinsertion difficult. He runs away several times and often fights with his friends. Living alone with his father who lives off little jobs in Tivaouane, he is separated from his mother who works in Dakar as a housekeeper.

Today, Omar is stable and finally happy, thanks to an income-generating activity (IGA) financed by Sentinelles. This IGA allowed his mother to leave Dakar and reunite with her son in Tivaouane. Since her return, Omar feels more secure and lives peacefully with his family. He is proud of taking care of his tomatoes and chili seedlings that he cultivates off-ground, and he is proud to follow training in metallic carpentry.



I SUISSE

Tributes to Edmond Kaiser brought to light

Olivier Paccaud, our archivist intern who is passionate about basketball, here with Thabo Sefolosha, has decided to focus his end-of-internship project on the valorisation of the tributes paid at the passing of Edmond Kaiser in 2000; and particularly the text of Jack Rollan, a radio host, co-founder of La Chaîne du Bonheur, and a great admirer of Sentinelles' founder.



A smiling future in inheritance



For a legacy, you have the opportunity to continue your generous commitment to helping people in distress and particularly battered children

Our legal counsel will answer you in confidence.

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I MADAGASCAR

Soary's battle

Soary is a 22-year-old woman from a rural commune in the Ambositra region of south-eastern Madagascar.

A little over three years ago, while travelling by bush taxi on the road to Majunga where she hoped to find work, she was hit by a car at full speed as she got out of the vehicle for a break, still drowsy and inattentive. Seriously disfigured (one lost eye, her face and nose bruised), she suffered severe wounds to her entire body.

The driver who had hit her took her to the hospital in Majunga, where Soary remained in a coma for seven days, then hospitalised for nine months. At that time, she was photographed in a request for donations and help relayed by local radio stations and newspapers to pay for her medical costs. The driver also contributed to the costs, but these helping hands were not enough to cover all the care she would have needed.

After her release from hospital, Soary stayed in Majunga for a month before returning to her family village. But the pain persists. She had no financial means, nothing could be done to relieve her, so Soary stayed at home, unable to do anything.

After a year, she started selling handicrafts among other Malagasy art dealers, near a popular tourist site.

A Swiss woman, returning from a trip to Madagascar at the end of 2019, contacts us and informs us of Soary's difficult situation. It was Elie, the driver who accompanied her on her trips there, who told her about the young woman. He had met Soary when he was transporting tourists and had been trying to help her with some antibiotics with his modest means.

Sentinelles decided to help Soary, whose care began in February 2020 when we managed to get her to Antananarivo, thanks to Elie's help. She is introduced to a specialist in maxillofacial surgery in the capital. He makes her aware that she will not regain her pre-accident face and that the various interventions planned are mainly functional. Several other specialists are involved in the various operations: an ophthalmologist for the eye muscles and the possible fitting of a glass eye, an ENT doctor for the repair of her nose so that she can breathe normally, and a stomatologist for the dental part and the gums.

Soary knows that her condition will require several more operations and that it will take time, but she is very brave and can count on the support of our team and the wonderful hospitality of Elie's family throughout this period.

Soary's testimony

"When I arrived in Antananarivo, all I could think about was improving my health, despite the state (aesthetic and physical) in which I was left by the accident I had and for which I have been stigmatised since.

The support of Mr Elie, who welcomed me as his own daughter, raised my spirits and motivated me greatly to resume my treatment.

I call Mr Elie "dadanay" (father) because that is what he really is to me. He is the one who brought me out of the darkness: verbal humiliations, exclusion, blames, jealousy of others in front of the generosity of the tourists towards me when I was still in Ambositra to carry out my activity of selling Malagasy arts and crafts. At that time, I was suffering a lot morally, suffering from the malice of others, which made me have nightmares every night. Physically too, because I still felt pain in my face, which oozed and gave off a foul



smell. All this while I had to find money to help my very poor parents and family. I was in a precarious situation because I was living from day to day.

When I arrived at Sentinelles, I was delighted and satisfied because I was not expecting the warm and touching welcome from the Childcare and Right to Be team. I didn't know then what was in store for me.

I am grateful to the whole Sentinelles team, starting with the Swiss headquarters, because, as I learned from Mr Elie, it was from there that the link was made to Sentinelles' intervention here. Since the beginning, I have been in good hands and feel reassured. My health has become my priority. This care has lifted my spirits and made me forget my previous worries because I can now live well.

I feel that my health is improving, just by the fact that I can now eat properly, whereas before I couldn't even get a bite in without dropping everything. My speech has also become understandable

and clear. Not like before the operation, when I used to nasalise and I was embarrassed because people didn't understand me or made fun of me.

It must be said that the problem of Covid with all the measures to be followed, especially the wearing of the mask, was advantageous for me because it hides the affected part of my face and does not attract too many sideways glances during this treatment period.

It's a good thing that the Sentinelles team and Mr Elie are there, otherwise I wouldn't be able to cope with the heavy and lengthy treatment, which is still uncertain with many surgical interventions. After the reconstruction of my face, there will still be the operation on my eyes and my teeth. This will depend on the progress and success of the previous operations.

Otherwise, I am optimistic about my future. I would like to resume my business of selling Malagasy arts and crafts where I did before." ■

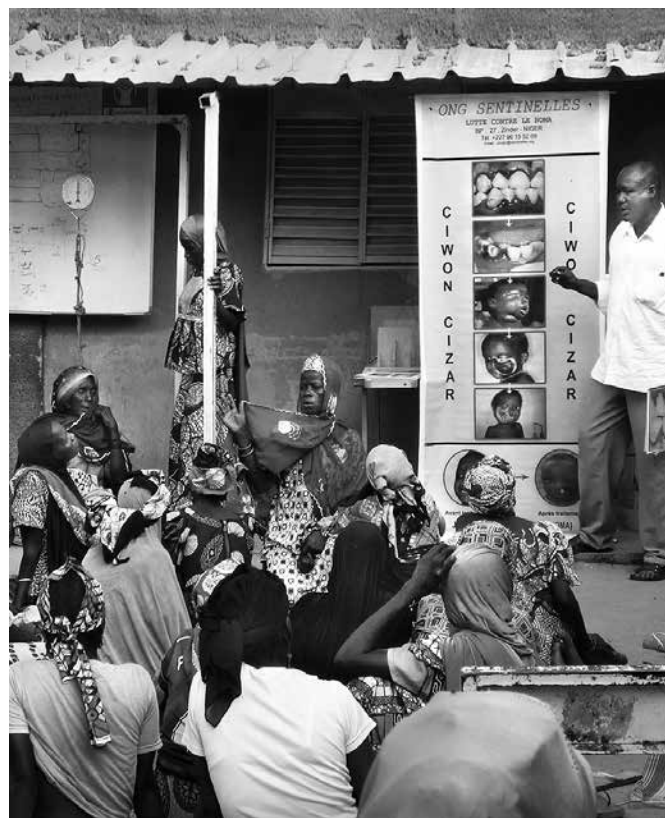
I NIGER

Community radio as an awareness-raising tool

A disease of poverty, noma is present throughout the Sahelian belt. As one of its risk factors is malnutrition, its development has clear links with the food insecurity that prevails in Sahelian countries. Therefore, as long as the population does not have enough to eat, the risk of contracting noma persists. Addressing the causes of the disease is therefore extremely complicated, as it involves having to solve a multifactorial problem. On the other hand, since noma is perfectly curable if detected and treated at the first signs of the disease, efforts must be made to inform the population about its detection.

Since 2002, Sentinelles has been visiting villages in Niger to raise awareness among residents and community leaders. About 10,000 people are informed each year about early detection of noma and its risk factors, mainly in the Zinder region. Our awareness-raising team is doing this hard work, but effectively informing the population of a country 30 times the size of Switzerland about an unknown disease, using basic communication tools, is a challenge. Sentinelles is taking on this challenge in the Zinder region, which is home to 3.5 million people, to strengthen its fight against noma.

In recent years, problems of insecurity have forced us to reduce the areas of action for community outreach so as not to put the Sentinelles team at risk. Following this observation and with the aim of reaching a larger number of people, Sentinelles has developed a project to broadcast radio messages with the help of five partner radio stations in the Zinder region.



Two information messages on the symptoms of noma and its detection are regularly broadcast on the air-waves covering a population of 2.3 million people.

They stress the importance of oral hygiene in children, explain how to detect noma and where to refer those with symptoms. They also give a voice to health care workers and former noma victims. Finally, they help the population to see noma as a disease and not as an unavoidable curse.

Almost the entire population living in the area covered by these community radios is likely to hear the messages, as radio is a popular medium in Niger. Even in the smallest villages, the chief often owns a radio. So, villagers often gather in listening groups to listen to certain programmes, discuss them and pass on the necessary information to the rest of the village. We use this community organisation to evaluate the results of our project. Thus, 15 pilot villages covered by the 5 radios were chosen and 45 listening groups were mobilised to follow the messages on noma and relay them to the surrounding population. The monitoring of these listening groups allows us to evaluate the understanding



of the information and its dissemination throughout the project. Every week, interactive programmes on noma are also broadcast. Villagers can call the switchboard to participate in the show and win toothpaste and toothbrushes. The radio administrations then send us statistics on the number of calls.

Since the start of the broadcast, the Sentinelles reception centre in Zinder has seen an increase in telephone calls. The increase in contacts is encouraging and shows that the messages are being heard. If the results of this pilot project are conclusive, it will be renewed for a period of at least six months. Other activities are planned in coordination with the National Noma Control Programme, which has just drawn up a 2021-2025 strategic plan. Improving prevention is one of the main axes of this plan and Sentinelles is working to strengthen it!

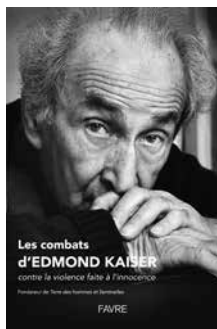
Effective prevention and awareness-raising activities are essential to avoid the onset of noma and the related treatment and heavy after-effects. They are all the more important as in 80 to 90% of cases children die when they are affected by noma,

because they have not been taken care of by a health structure or by our reception centre.

The Noma-Hilfe-Schweiz association has understood the importance of these activities; it is thanks to their support that we are able to carry out this first campaign of radio messages.

This is just the beginning, and we would be happy, faithful readers, to involve you in our efforts to fight this disease of bygone era.

During an awareness-raising session, some villagers, having recognised the symptoms described, directed our team to a neighbouring village so that we could meet Hamamata, who was suffering from a necrotic noma. Like her, many other children who come to our reception centre are usually informed by someone who has heard about noma and Sentinelles, which proves the importance of these public information activities. Today, Hamamata is smiling brightly despite her injuries. She will be followed by Riverkeeper for several years and may benefit from reconstructive surgery when she is older. ■



I SUISSE

Edmond Kaiser's struggle

In 1989, Edmond Kaiser began writing a book about Sentinelles' work. In a brief and rapid style, presenting the various struggles of the organisation, he draws large extracts from the movement's bulletins and its abundant correspondence, in order to comment on and illuminate its actions.

In 1991, the project ran out of time. The administrative and proofreading tasks demanded considerable effort. "Those who need it come first," he wrote to his publisher, "and we have too much work to go on forever." An abrupt end, a manuscript stuffed in boxes, a move to more pressing matters that had always taken priority for Edmond Kaiser.

In 2017, the rediscovery of this 700-page manuscript during the creation of the Sentinelles' archives raises the question of its significance thirty years later. In the conviction of the power of this text, the

objective must be to make the timeless message it contains accessible to our time.

As we are unable to publish it in its entirety, we have retained from the manuscript the struggles of Edmond Kaiser that seemed the most emblematic. Far from the great humanitarian methods, we will discover here the often harsh realities of his commitment, as well as Edmond Kaiser's first intuition to go towards others, determined to transform his impulse into action, stubborn and insistent, often funny and inventive, always courageous.

This text, which has just been published by Editions Favre, can be read as an exciting adventure story with its successes and disappointments, as a testimony of tireless commitment, or as a beacon of hope and an inspiring example. In its own way, this book seeks to call for the continuation of this commitment.

ORDER FORM to be returned to the address below or to info@sentinelles.org

I order copy(ies) of **Les Combats d'Edmond Kaiser**
(Edmond Kaiser's struggle) CHF 18.- per copy (plus postage and packing)

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EVENT



**Photographic exhibition "water",
hall of the Hospital
of Yverdon-les-Bains",
from February 1st to May 6th, 2022.**

Vernissage; February 4th at 5 pm

"In 1998, I had exposed for the first time water photographs at the "Galerie Ruine", in Geneva. And I had already done this for the benefit of Sentinelles.

I still remember the emotion and the joy when I gave the benefits generated by the sales to Edmond Kaiser, to whom I owe so much.

Time has passed, but my passion for water is still intact. Being an infinite subject, photographing the blue gold allows me to take, with the light setting, with the speed setting, different consistencies. By turns, she becomes crystal, molasses, cottonwool, ink... and so many other of its facets that I have yet to discover.

Today, I am happy to participate – with a drop of water in the ocean of human suffering – to the actions that Sentinelles leads so faithfully in favour of the most destitute. For the prints you will have the opportunity to discover will be sold and the benefits will, once again, go to the foundation that is very dear to me."

Corinne Hakima Junod

Reception of images

www.cjuno.ch

SENTINELLES
TO THE RESCUE OF WOUNDED INNOCENCE

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