
SENTINELLES

TO THE RESCUE OF WOUNDED INNOCENCE

N° 280 / February 2022



COLOMBIA

Music against
violence

NIGER

Noma Project :
Support by BCV Solidarité

CONGO

For a more dignified
life in prison

Editorial

Action and prevention, the essentials

The first issue of the year of our Journal, which now has the Zewo quality label, will take you to women prisoners with their children and young budding artists.

In the prisons of Bukavu and Kabaré, in the Democratic Republic of Congo, mothers and their children were literally languishing, deprived of their most basic rights. Their offences? Most often, neighbourhood disputes, theft of subsistence in connection with living conditions marked by deprivation and anxiety. Nothing spares the populations of the East of the country, hit by natural disasters, epidemics, infested by bloodthirsty armed groups and the scene of intense inter-community tensions. In such a context, the fate of women detained with their children receives little attention. Sentinelles' support humanises their detention and prepares them for their family and social reintegration.

In Colombia, children exposed to violence are diverted from the dangers of the street through music. They develop new cognitive and emotional skills and at the same time unite around a common project, with conviction and not without brilliance.

In Burkina Faso and Niger, our teams are stepping up their noma awareness-raising activities. Time is running out. Food shortages, forced displacements and the closure of health centres are affecting a large part of the population. All the indicators are red for this pitiless disease to claim more young victims.

Finally, this issue announces the publication of a book by Amadou Kaiser, son of Edmond Kaiser, founder of Sentinelles. The book is a restrained account of an exceptional life path.

Amadou and so many other people have needed, in their distress, benevolent actions that have changed the course of their lives. You are among those who contribute to their sustenance, health and fulfilment. Thank you.



Marlyse Morard
Managing Director

IN BRIEF



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TREATMENT

Returning home

Lawan, a young 13-year-old boy from Niger, was able to return home after a 6 month stay in Switzerland. He lives in the Zinder municipality with his parents and five siblings. His father is a trader, and his mother looks after their home. Lawan goes to school where he likes learning to read and count as well as seeing his friends.

He is a rather shy boy with adults, but at ease with his pairs with whom he loves playing football.

During his stay in Switzerland, Lawan opened up little by little and became a smiling boy adapting perfectly to his life in the Maison Terre des Hommes Valais where he was staying.

He came to us to be treated for an almost completely locked jaw of post-traumatic origin (he could not open his mouth anymore). Lawan was successfully operated upon at the Hôpitaux Universitaires de Genève. He showed great courage in the face of his treatment and the intensive physiotherapy exercises necessary after the intervention to avoid having his mouth close up again and which will have to be pursued in Niger.

At the end of his treatment in Switzerland, during which he learned and grew a lot, Lawan was able to go home. We wish him a happy return to his people and all the best for the rest of his life.

SENTINELLES IS ZEWo CERTIFIED



We are pleased to announce that, on December 8, 2021, Sentinelles was awarded the ZEWo label, the successful culmination of work that began over a year ago.

The ZEWo label certifies that Sentinelles uses donations efficiently, in accordance with its purpose and financial resources. It also certifies that Sentinelles is transparent in its reporting.

The 21 Zewo standards define in detail the requirements that Sentinelles must meet. They include an ethical aspect and oblige Sentinelles to maintain good governance, a good organisation and to carry out appropriate controls. Zewo's guidelines also regulate key figures, including administrative costs, in order to ensure the efficient implementation of its various programmes. They also require that the data protection and privacy of its donors be respected.

In short, this label is for you, dear friends and donors, the certainty that Sentinelles is relentlessly pursuing the mission entrusted to it more than 40 years ago by Edmond Kaiser, i.e., to bring help in an honest and responsible manner to people in major distress. Thank you for your trust.

I MADAGASCAR

Famine emergency



Famine has been raging in the vast southern region of Madagascar for several months. Drought is endemic there, but it is made worse by global warming.

In view of the emergency, Sentinelles wanted to provide support through a priest with whom it has been working for a long time to help reintegrate young boys in conflict with the law. Through its link with the sisters of Saint Vincent de Paul based in Beloha, one of the regions particularly affected by the famine, it was possible to transport ten tons of rice, cassava and cornstarch to the area. A daily canteen organised in Beloha benefits more than 1,200 of the poorest people who do not receive any assistance from the state. This vital aid will be renewed soon. Thank you for your support.

An exploratory mission will also take place in February-March in order to determine, in the longer term, what could be put in place in different villages to enable this essentially agricultural population to envisage a more serene future.

I SWITZERLAND

Born twice

Discover the extraordinary life of Amadou Tidiane Kaiser, born in Senegal in 1956. Punished and hung by the hands, he must undergo the amputation of both forearms.

Edmond Kaiser, deeply distressed by the fate of the child, brings him to Switzerland and adopts him. Schooled in Lausanne, he later leaves for Milan and then Parma where he settles as a physiotherapist. Optimistic, joyful, with an unusual level of empathy, spirited, he fascinates all who know him. Come and meet him too (only in French)!



Order form to return to Sentinelles, Les Cerisiers, route de Cery 16, 1008 Prilly, or by e-mail at info@sentinelles.org. The total of this book price is reserved for Sentinelles actions.

I order copy(ies) of (only in French) *Né deux fois*, Amadou Tidiane Kaiser (CHF 14.- plus mailing cost).

Name First name

Street

Postal code City

E-mail

Date Signature



I COLOMBIA

A music school, a parenthesis to flourish

According to the Amagá City Council's 2020 report on the public order situation in the municipality, the increase in violence is largely due to the micro-drug trade.

Currently, three criminal gangs are fighting for control of the area. These gangs are mainly financed by the sale of drugs, which explains why homicides and knife attacks are so frequent in the region.

The most alarming consequence of this trafficking is the recruitment of minors. It appears that the causes that lead young people to join gangs are most often desertion from the educational system and lack of job opportunities; they grow up with the dream of easy money or want to reproduce models followed within their own family or those of their neighbours.

In this hostile context, applications for admission to the Tierra de Vida Reception

Centre (the name of Sentinelles in Colombia) have increased. Mothers in particular are aware of the increase in this phenomenon and share their concerns with us. Some of the requests for admission are related to the difficulties that mothers face in preventing their children from ending up in such situations. Located in one of the five urban centres where knife fights periodically occur, the situation of our Centre and its capacity (up to 20 children aged 7 to 17 in boarding school), lead it to open its doors in order to keep these children away from all these dangers.

Every two months, Tierra de Vida organises events with dance, theatre or sports in public parks, with the aim of making

these spaces protective places for children and their families.

Among the cultural activities, the teaching of music to as many people as possible has a prominent place.

In concrete terms, the children learn to read notes and play a musical instrument, strengthen their creativity, curiosity and concentration and practice performing in public. They develop active listening skills, respect for others and consolidate collective work. Thanks to the Pasión & Corazón Foundation, Alexander, a professional musician who is a member of



the foundation, visits us once a week, travelling four hours to teach the children music. For him, “music is an art and teaching it to a child is the most precious treasure you can give them”.

This initiation confirms that it can be a deviation from harmful spaces, that it helps the artistic and personal development of each child. Valentina, a member of the school who is 11 years old, loves the lessons, sings and can already play the guitar, piano and flute. While learning the notes, she composed a song for her rabbit. Every Tuesday, Valentina looks forward to her lesson with impatience and loves to come and share this study time. Yuli, her

mother, says: “The music lessons have helped my daughter acquire many skills. I have noticed a change in her behaviour: she concentrates more easily and is interested in the various educational activities. Valentina shows a lot of interest and curiosity, she always wants to know more.”

Julieth, Colombia Programme Manager, sums up the experience of the children’s first performance: “I was surprised to see how much they learned in such a short time. In total, fifteen children performed in front of the audience with confidence and self-assurance. Each in his or her own way, according to age and ability, managed to present what they had learned

over the past five months. The parents were proud to be part of the concert.”

At present, the project offers this training to 30 children aged between 5 and 16. We hope that the results obtained will motivate the community to take part and thus increase the number of participants in this socio-educational space.

These photographs illustrate the path taken by the children, their discovery and learning phase with the various instruments available (flutes, piano, guitars and tambourines), up to the day of the presentation of the first musical arrangement that they have created with passion. ■

I CONGO

Prison support programme

In 2020, Sentinelles started a new programme in the women's section of the Bukavu Central Prison in the Democratic Republic of Congo. In July 2021, the programme was extended to Kabare prison.

Arrests of women are often linked to the distressing situation in which they find themselves. Lacking resources, some are pushed into committing various offences such as stealing food or not paying a debt, when they are not denounced following arguments. It can take months or even years before they even have the right to a trial.

Detention conditions are dramatic in the prisons of South Kivu. Lack of food or access to healthcare and deplorable hygiene conditions are the daily lot of these women and, for some, their children. The Congolese state does not assume its responsibilities and only a few associations, the Catholic chaplaincy and relatives of the detainees provide them with moral and material support, which is insufficient to guarantee a minimum of dignity in these overcrowded prisons.

When no other child-care solution is available, many children live in prison with their mothers, without any supervision. When they leave the detention centre, they have no reference points or schooling. As they grow up, these young people, who are discriminated against within their community, often end up turning to delinquency and organised crime as their only means of survival.

Sentinelles accompanies these women and children in order to guarantee them a dignified life in prison and an economic and social reintegration upon their release.

FOOD SUPPORT

There was a glaring need for food when we arrived in 2020. Usually only one meagre meal is served per day. Sentinelles organises deliveries of the necessary food several times a month.

ACCESS TO MEDICAL CARE AND PSYCHOLOGICAL FOLLOW-UP

The prison has its own medical team, but there is a lack of equipment and medication. Sentinelles buys the necessary supplies prescribed by the doctors when a prisoner or child needs them.



Hospitalisations and births in the maternity ward are also covered. Psychological support for women is also provided through regular group and individual sessions.

TRAINING AND PRACTICAL WORKSHOPS

Training (sewing, commerce, etc.), workshops (crafts, cooking, etc.) and information sessions (illnesses, rights, etc.) are offered. These activities enable the women to acquire knowledge and skills that will be useful to them once they have served their sentences.

CHILDREN IN PRISON

Some children in prison with their mothers have never known the outside world. A kindergarten created by Sentinelles allows them to practice activities, supervised by our social worker.

Those who are of school age are enrolled in school. When possible, they return to their families to follow a normal schooling and life. In these cases, Sentinelles makes home visits to ensure their well-being.



REINTEGRATION ASSISTANCE

Reintegration assistance begins in prison. A visit is made to the woman's home to find out about her family's living conditions and Sentinelles ensures that the link with the family is maintained to guarantee a good reception on return.

Upon release, the woman is offered a business or training so that she can pursue an economic activity. When she becomes independent, Sentinelles withdraws. Depending on the needs, housing assistance is available for the repair or construction of a house.

ANITA, A RELEASED WOMAN

Anita is 24 years old and was imprisoned in Bukavu Central Prison in January 2020. As her offence was not serious, she should not have been incarcerated, but the slowness of the judicial process and the lack of means of the young woman forced her to spend ten months in detention.

Separated from her husband, she had two children to support. Maurice, who is one year old, had to go with her to prison. Imani, who is six years old, was taken in by his grandmother. When our social worker met Anita for the first time, they and her son had been living in prison for four months.

Maurice was transferred to hospital because he was severely malnourished, but the young mother had no money to pay the med-

ical costs. Sentinelles took care of the hospital visits, the payment of the fees and the provision of adequate food support for the child. After a few weeks, the little boy was able to return to his mother.

Anita was released in October 2020 and returned home, but had no means of support. Sentinelles gave her some business capital that allowed her to start selling shoes on the street. This activity allowed her to get her head above water and to take care of her two children.

But Anita has another dream: to learn sewing and open her own workshop. We suggested that she start a training course alongside her business, which she would continue to run in the afternoons. Highly motivated, she found a training workshop and began her apprenticeship in February 2021. Sentinelles then provided her with a sewing machine, which she can keep for her own business.

In November, Anita had gained enough experience to open a sewing workshop. While finishing her courses, she makes items that she sells to her customers. Sentinelles helped her for a few weeks by providing food and paying for her son Imani's schooling so that she could sustain her new lifestyle.

Today, Anita is starting to become self-sufficient and once more has a smile on her face. ■



I NIGER

The fight against noma supported by BCV Solidarité

Each year, the staff of the Banque cantonale vaudoise decide to support a humanitarian project that they care about. In 2021 the Sentinelles Noma Project in Niger benefitted from this financial support.

The project supported by the BCV is part of Sentinelles' fight against noma in Niger and consists of two important stages.

RENOVATION OF THE CARE CENTRE

The aim of this project is to improve the care taking of noma affected children by renovating the Care Centre and acquiring equipment necessary for the well-being of the beneficiaries. Sentinelles is constantly seeking to improve the framework of its Care Centre in Zinder, in particular for the young children who live there several weeks or even months for treatment. With this in mind, games were obtained.

Several of the spaces have also been decorated with beautiful murals and the animation area has been refitted with furniture better suited to children.

AWARENESS RAISING, AN ESSENTIAL ACTIVITY

More than half of this financing is attributed to promising awareness raising activities. Indeed, noma is an easily treated illness if detected in time. But first it is necessary for the population, the health workers and the community leaders to be aware of noma and the reflexes needed to prevent or heal it.

Thus, BCV Solidarité also supports Sentinelles for a great awareness raising action aiming at training and informing the whole of the healthcare pyramid as well as the community network in all of

the six districts of the Zinder region. The training of the health workers and information provided for the community network and traditional doctors is also programmed. The awareness of the general public will also be raised by frequent radio transmitted messages.

The Sultan of Darnagaram, a highly respected traditional and religious leader in the Zinder region, as well as the notables of his court are also made aware so that they may transmit the messages during community events.

We warmly thank the staff of BCV Solidarité who, thanks to their precious contribution, enable Sentinelles to implement activities complementary to those already ongoing and that will increase the impact of the fight against noma in Niger. ■

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