

Sentinelles

To the rescue of wounded innocence



Colombia

Dora, a courageous woman

DRC

Namwezi, the hope of a better life

Syria

Support for infants

Editorial

Between hardship and confidence in the future

In a complex environment where adversity and hope exist side by side, our mission to provide immediate assistance and differentiated support to children and women in distress has a particular resonance. The stories shared in this Journal are testimonies of resilience in the face of often dramatic circumstances. They are also a stirring reminder of the significant and lasting impact of our actions on the lives of individuals, families and communities.

The short news items are no less evocative. They highlight the return home of two children suffering from noma who were delighted to be reunited with their loved ones, the vital support given to newborn Syrian babies and the empowerment of internally displaced women in Burkina Faso through making and selling soap.

In Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, a widow and her children, like so many others had been left completely destitute. The medical and social support provided by our valiant team enabled them to meet their basic needs and gradually move towards self-sufficiency. In Colombia, we wanted to share the story of a mother who is the head of her family. Her tale illustrates not only how reliable Sentinelles' support is, but also the strength of sisterhood.

My recent trip to this country was a stark reminder of the challenges faced by the most vulnerable and our staff's efforts in a volatile context, scarred by an upsurge in violence, political tensions and economic and environmental problems. Sadly, these are the reality, in virtually all the countries where we operate, making our commitment all the more crucial. Together, let's continue to make a difference, one day at a time.



Marlyse Morard
Director

IN BRIEF

NIGER Homecoming



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Bassirou before and after the operations carried out at HUG.

They were brought to us for surgical reconstruction of their faces following severe after-effects of noma, the disease that destroyed their faces. Hadiza underwent four and Bassirou three successful operations at Geneva University Hospitals. During their stay in Switzerland, the two children were cared for at La Maison Terre des hommes in Massongex, Valais. There, they received health care, were supervised by a professional educational team, attended school, played and took part in activities, surrounded by friends from various countries. Hadiza and Bassirou adapted well to life here. Initially shy and reserved, they became increasingly confident, cheerful and communicative. Since their treatment has now been completed, they are returning home with their faces reconstructed. They will be reunited with their families and will go back to school, strengthened by all the experience acquired during their stay.

BURKINA FASO Co-operative soap factory



A group of 15 women decided to set up a co-operative soap-making business. They come from the internally displaced families who have taken refuge on the outskirts of Ouagadougou and who we have been supporting since 2023. In January this year, they received training in soap-making techniques, enabling them to make *kabakourou*, a ball-shaped local soap. In February, thanks to our financial support, these dynamic women set up their own management committee and began producing and selling soap in their neighbourhood. This is a very promising economic activity, which also offers a fresh start for these women who have had to flee their homes, often leaving everything behind in the face of attacks from radical armed groups.



PORTES OUVERTES A new era

Fondation Sentinelles celebrated a major milestone in its history with an Open Day, marking the inauguration of its new premises. The event, which was both festive and immersive, was the perfect opportunity for participants to discover the breadth of our programmes and to strengthen the bonds between volunteers, donors, partners and staff.

Through presentations such as those on our programmes in Burkina Faso, Colombia and the Democratic Republic of Congo, visitors were able to learn about our wide range of activities which facilitate access to quality healthcare and education, and ensure the economic development of the people we support, with a view to helping them become self-sufficient.

During the day, we were honoured to be joined by Jean-François Clément, Mayor of Renens, and Karine Clerc, Municipal

Councilor for Children and Social Cohesion, among other guests. The musical performance by André Geiser and Rosy Bresse, with their carefully chosen repertoire on the themes of solidarity and mutual aid, won over the large audience.

We would like to express our deepest gratitude to all those who made the day such a success. Your loyal support inspires and encourages us.





Dora and her son Bairon.

COLOMBIA

Dora: a courageous woman

Our individual aid programme in Colombia supports women and children in vulnerable situations. Sentinelles aims to develop the skills of children and their families to ensure their autonomy. Dora is a courageous young woman who Sentinelles has been supporting for 11 years.

Julieth Gil, our local coordinator, shares with us the story of Dora, who Sentinelles has supported at different times in her life: «11 years ago, I met the Calle family, with a child suffering from meningocele (congenital malformation of the spine) and a dislocated hip. On our first visit, Dora hid Bairon because she didn't know why we had come. She didn't think anyone would be interested in them and her son's diagnosis». During the first few visits, Dora was suspicious and scared. She thought that, as a single mother with a child with reduced mobility, the institutions that visited her would try to separate her from her child. That's why, during her initial contacts with Sentinelles, Dora would hide her child. She refused our help for months.

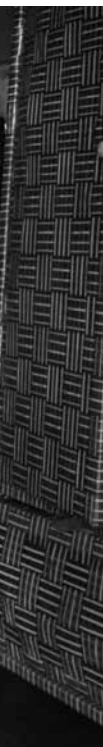
During the early years of Bairon's life, Tierra de Vida provided vital support for Dora. We worked with her to take care of all the administrative formalities so that

her son could have access to the medical care and equipment he needed. Over the years, Dora asserted herself as a mother and expressed her wish for Bairon to go to school. She was so determined that he should have the same opportunities as other children. The family lived in an area far from the road, and Dora would walk several kilometres with her son on her back to take him to school every day.

The road to independence

Over the years, Dora and Bairon became independent and could afford medical care, while he would find strategies to move around. He managed to go to school on his own and obtained his high school diploma. In 2021, he received a grant to finance his university studies. Dora was very proud that her son could fulfil his dream of becoming a vet.

At the beginning of 2022, Bairon asked Sentinelles for help to pay his transport



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Dora, her two daughters and her grandson.

to university. Sentinelles took over, this time paying for a motorbike taxi to take him from his home in Minas to his place of study every day.

In late 2022, Bairon was hospitalised for more than two months with respiratory problems and a bacterial infection in his bedsores. He passed away in early 2023. After the death of her son, Dora's life lost all meaning. She began to show signs of depression. Sentinelles supported her through her bereavement so that, little by little, she regained a taste for life. With regular, periodic support, we offer Dora psychological counselling. A few months later, we invited her to take part in our training project for women.

Thanks to her participation, Dora began to feel surrounded, integrated, accepted and loved by all the women. During the project, she had her ups and downs, but her colleagues

helped her to regain her strength and move forward.

Little by little, Dora became interested in the training courses. She took part in cookery and sewing classes, and felt useful again. She was so motivated and grateful that, together with her daughters Valentina and Luisa, they started a food sale and home delivery service. With the money raised by the sales, Dora is now able to pay the bills for her house. And that makes her proud. At the project's closing, Dora, who is very shy, asked to speak in front of nearly 60 women, to give her testimony and thank Sentinelles for having reached out to her at the most difficult times in her life.

Training for Dora

Dora felt safe and confident in the training environment. She discovered abilities she never knew she had. By

meeting other women, Dora realised that she is not alone, that despite all their day-to-day struggles, they know they can now count on each other.

Today, Dora is keen to continue her training, and is going to enrol in the second cycle of training in running a small business, sewing and creating leather goods. She has rediscovered her joy for life.



DRC

Namwezi: hope for a better life

Since the death of her husband from an illness in July 2023, Namwezi has struggled to provide for her five children, alternating between working in the fields and as a «portefaix» – informal jobs that are unfortunately the daily lot of many Congolese families – but which do not guarantee financial stability. Sentinelles provided her with food relief and helped with the administrative formalities involved in acquiring a plot of land. With our support, she was able to build her own house and put her family on a secure footing.

Namwezi was 28 years old when she was referred to us by a leading figure from Kabare territory. She is a widow with four daughters and a son. Since she lacked the financial means to cover the medical expenses for her severely malnourished daughter, the hospital refused to treat her unless she paid up front. Our team quickly went to the hospital to take charge of the medical care. We then went to her home to carry out a social assessment of this young mother and her children's living conditions.

Before his death, Namwezi's husband had worked as a stone breaker in a quarry, a back-breaking job that was not enough to cover the family's needs. This precarious

situation had a serious impact on the health of his children, who suffered from malnutrition.

Precarious living conditions

During our assessment, we visited her plot and her home, and were able to see the deprivation the family were facing. The mother and her 5 children were living in a cramped room of less than 5 square metres, with a single bed and a cloth mattress, which was infested with bedbugs. The children had to sleep on the floor. Their clothes were absolutely ragged. We could see round, swollen bellies under their clothes, sure signs of malnutrition or parasitosis. We also noticed that some of the children were itchy, had difficulty walking and were covered in fleas. They had never been able to afford to go to school. The house was extremely dilapidated, with a leaky roof and the wet season just around the corner. The family was constantly struggling to survive in the face of extreme hardship and had been completely abandoned.

Faced with this emergency, we took steps to provide immediate assistance to the family. We referred them to the nearest health centre, so that the children could be treated for malnutrition, and we provided them with



Namwezi and his family in front of their new home.

basic necessities, including food, a mattress and blankets. Every week, the Sentinelles team makes a home visit to assess the progress of the children's health and provide support if necessary.

A new home

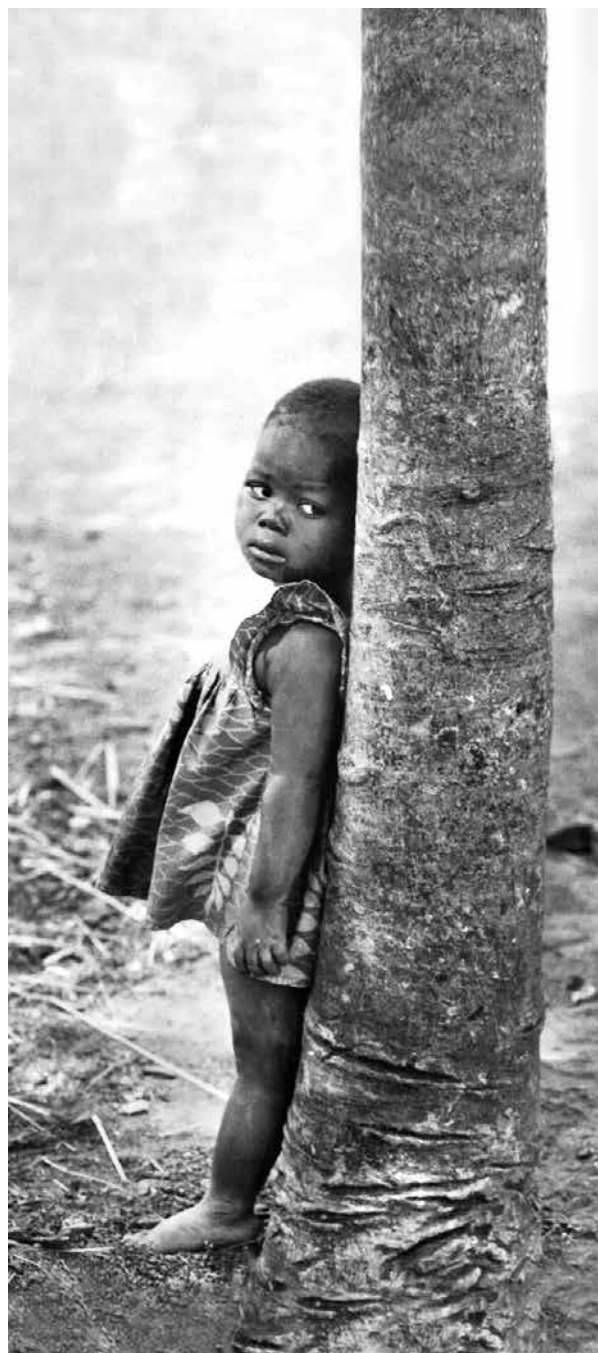
Our team then undertook the administrative procedures to ensure that the plot was officially in Namwezi's name, guaranteeing her property rights. Construction work on their new home began in February and was completed in March. Sentinelles helped the family to get settled in by providing the basic materials they needed. The children have been enrolled in school and food support is continuing. An income-generating activity will be set up with Namwezi to ensure her financial independence.

Today, Namwezi and her children can finally live in an environment where they can flourish.

Comptes de la Fondation **Sentinelles**

From 01 January to 31 December 2023 (in Swiss francs, with comparative figures for 2022).

| REVENUE | 2023 | 2022 |
|--|------------------|------------------|
| Burkina Faso | 49 666 | 53 054 |
| Colombia | 50 194 | 5 567 |
| Congo | 15 026 | 21 847 |
| Madagascar | 65 925 | 49 904 |
| Niger | 63 500 | 7 492 |
| Senegal | 1 839 | 4 343 |
| Other assistance/Care | 470 | 290 |
| Children with noma | 277 569 | 309 599 |
| Winds of Hope Foundation | 50 000 | 50 000 |
| Noma-Hilfe Association | 180 000 | 92 400 |
| Friends of Sentinelles (LADS) | | 10 000 |
| LADS/Republic and Canton of Geneva | 150 000 | 150 000 |
| LADS/Town of Geneva | 19 000 | 19 000 |
| BCV Solidarity | | 120 000 |
| Sub-total | 923 190 | 893 496 |
| Donations by the public | 845 388 | 701 044 |
| Estates | 852 006 | 14 958 |
| Markets | 1 364 | 4 517 |
| Events | 9 716 | 4 752 |
| Sales of Edmond Kaiser books | 53 | 4 216 |
| Contributions to medical costs | | 14 622 |
| Interest on current account | 47 897 | 15 |
| Sub-total | 1 756 424 | 744 124 |
| TOTAL REVENUE | 2 679 614 | 1 637 620 |
| EXPENDITURE | | |
| Burkina Faso | 300 500 | 337 533 |
| Colombia | 156 970 | 140 152 |
| Congo | 241 413 | 320 418 |
| Madagascar | 382 452 | 423 436 |
| Niger | 477 594 | 491 401 |
| Senegal | 320 386 | 317 201 |
| Care for children operated on in Switzerland | 79 440 | 77 239 |
| Other assistance | 2 000 | 12 466 |
| Sub-total | 1 960 754 | 2 119 846 |
| EXPENSES IN SWITZERLAND | | |
| Salaries and social security contributions | 132 023 | 122 565 |
| Sentinelles Journal | 58 249 | 62 060 |
| Communication media | 230 191 | 193 666 |
| Administrative costs | 22 595 | 22 869 |
| Other expenses | 10 303 | 4 271 |
| Sub-total | 453 361 | 405 431 |
| TOTAL EXPENDITURE | 2 414 115 | 2 525 277 |
| Change in restricted funds | 18 359 | 17 389 |
| Capital allocation/withdrawal | 283 858 | -870 268 |
| Net profit for the year | 0 | 0 |



Sentinelles does everything in its power to ensure that it operates efficiently, to a high standard and at the lowest possible cost. The services provided free of charge or at a preferential rate, as well as the contribution of numerous volunteers, represent annual savings of over one million Swiss francs (CHF 1,175,363 in 2023). If the amount of these free services were included in the total expenditure, the Sentinelles budget would come to CHF 3,544,146.

Expenses in Switzerland are divided between the various countries, administration and fundraising.

Accounts audited in accordance with the audit report dated April 29, 2024 by Fiduciaire DRP SA Geneva.



Syria Vital support for infants

Sentinelles is working in Syria to help babies whose destitute mothers produce little or no breast milk. This project, which supplements breastfeeding, provides vital support for almost two hundred babies every year. This commitment is made possible thanks to our collaboration with the Vivere association, whose team on the ground works entirely on a voluntary basis, with extraordinary dedication.

Against a backdrop of an almost-forgotten war and extreme hardship, with half of Syria's population facing hunger according to recent figures from the WFP (World Food Programme), the Vivere association team reports on Ahmed's alarming living conditions, bearing witness to the daily struggles of the families it supports:

«Ahmed is the 4th child of a modest couple who were displaced by the fighting and then, after several years of wandering, returned to the village to find shelter in a makeshift house they had borrowed because their own house had been completely destroyed by the bombardments of our dirty war.

In this dwelling there are no doors or windows, just blankets and plastic sheeting on the floor. This entire large family lives here together. The only furniture is these little foam mattresses on the floor to sit on and sleep on.

The father spends all day picking up bits of plastic to sell, to earn a crust for his family. »

The staggering rise in the price of basic necessities is making families even poorer. Maternal malnutrition rates are reaching unprecedented levels. Over the last two years, the amount of monthly support per child has more than doubled. This project is vital for these infants, helping to prevent malnutrition.

Sentinelles

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