

Sentinelles

To the rescue of wounded innocence



Niger
Physiotherapy
for Noma survivors

Congo
A long road
toward reinsertion

Solidarity
Life stories to share
for Christmas

Editorial

Culture, music and training in fragile contexts

As the year draws to a close, we are delighted to share some typical examples of our work for children and women in fragile environments fraught with insecurity, but also filled with hope.

In Burkina Faso, many people have been displaced by vicious attacks by illegal armed groups. Having lost loved ones, homes and livelihoods, they receive food aid, psychosocial support and moments of respite by participating in cultural activities which create bonds.

Women from disadvantaged backgrounds incarcerated in an outdated prison in the Democratic Republic of Congo take part in training workshops, where they learn new skills with a view to their reintegration. These privileged moments of sharing and learning offer them the prospect of a better future.

When noma has eaten away at their faces, children can no longer eat properly and speaking becomes difficult. Thanks to reconstructive surgery and physiotherapy, their daily lives are permanently improved, giving them a chance to live life to the full. Another continent, another environment. In Colombia, we offer young girls and boys with cognitive problems music therapy with multiple benefits. This gentle approach enriches their lives and encourages their personal development.

These initiatives would not be possible without the unfailing support of caring partners who respect the social and psychological realities experienced by each and every one of us. We also salute the valiant members of our teams, who themselves sometimes face personal challenges in an increasingly complex environment.

To all of you who support our commitments, we express our deepest gratitude and wish you a very happy end to the year.



Marlyse Morard
Director

COLOMBIA

Music as a therapeutic tool

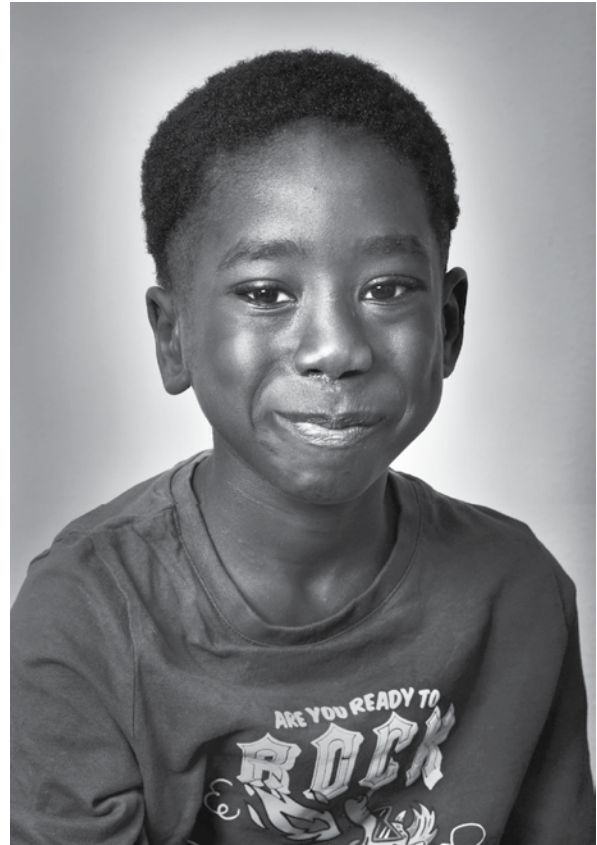
In Colombia, the Sentinelles Foundation works in the southwestern region of Antioquia province, where coal mines and drug trafficking jeopardise the personal and professional future of many young people. In this violent and insecure environment, Sentinelles' activities focus on protecting vulnerable children and adolescents, by tackling parental neglect, sill-treatment, abuse and violations of fundamental rights. For over 20 years, our organization has been running a foster home in the mining hamlet of Minas, providing caring and professional support to more than thirty children. A music induction programme has recently been launched. It has been designed as a psychodynamic therapy tool aimed at restoring, maintaining and developing the psychological, physical and mental health of the children in our care. The initial results are encouraging and show the important role musical expression can play in releasing trauma and post-traumatic stress in children.



SWITZERLAND

Brahim

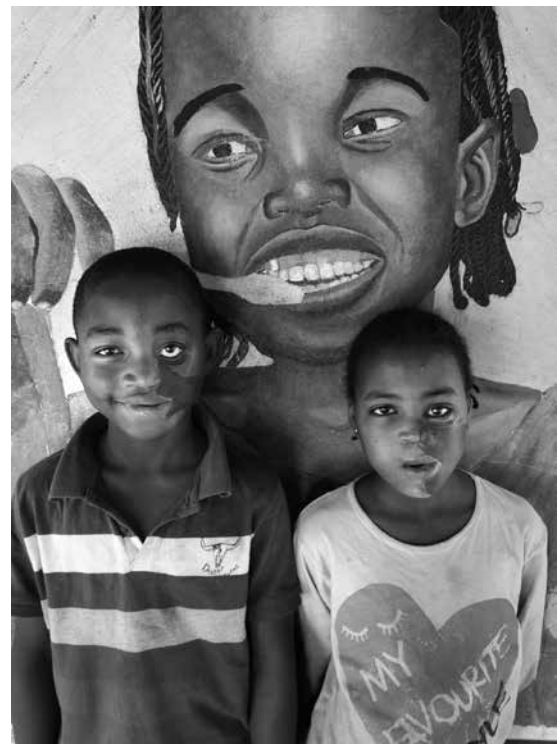
8-year-old Brahim arrived in September 2023 as part of the Care in Switzerland programme. He had ankylosis of the jaw (very limited mouth opening) following a fall from his balcony. Surgery for this type of pathology was not possible in Senegal. Brahim's situation was worrying, as he was finding it very difficult to eat. His health was deteriorating day by day. Sentinelles took care of him and organised his transfer to Switzerland so that he could receive the necessary care. He was operated on at the University Hospitals of Geneva in the maxillofacial surgery department, led by Prof. Scolozzi. The operation, aimed at improving the opening of his mouth, was a success: Brahim now has a mouth opening of 45 mm. Throughout his stay in Switzerland, he was looked after at the Maison de Terre des hommes Valais where he settled in well. Once his treatment was completed, he returned to Senegal where he was welcomed by the local team and his family. Today, Brahim can eat normally again and has returned to school.



BURKINA FASO

Workshops for internally displaced children and women

This year, in partnership with Waga Studio's team of art therapists, Sentinelles has launched a programme of artistic activities for around a hundred internally displaced children and women who have sought refuge in neighbourhoods on the outskirts of Ouagadougou, to escape the violence being perpetrated by armed groups in the country. Every week, three facilitators hold workshops in traditional dance, theatre, plastic arts and recycling. They have been working for several months with this group of children and women on their creative and personal development. Plans are afoot to put on a show during the cultural weeks, as well as to create objects from recycled plastics and sell them at markets. We'll keep you posted on the progress of this initiative, which offers a place for smiles and light-heartedness for these families who face many emotional ordeals in their everyday lives.



NIGER Essential rehabilitation for operated children

In Niger, Burkina Faso and Senegal, Sentinelles offers reconstructive surgery to children suffering from the after-effects of noma. Once they have been operated on, they have to undergo long-term physiotherapy to maintain the opening of the mouth, mobility of the jaw and the elasticity of the flap (1).

While the first thing that strikes us is the aesthetic appearance of these faces affected by noma, we are often unaware of the functional problems caused by the after-effects. As the tissues inside the mouth heal, they can form ankylosis, a kind of contracture that locks the jaw in a closed position, preventing the children from opening their mouths to eat or speak properly. Although they find strategies to eat and express themselves as best they can, they are often also subject to social stigma as a result of these disabling sequelae.

The importance of physiotherapy

Surgery to reopen the mouth is highly complex and the results are uncertain. It often requires the assistance of maxillo-facial and plastic surgeons. Based on a study of 121 patients operated on between 1990 and 2015, doctors at the University Hospitals of Geneva have shown that one way to achieve good results is to carry out long-term physiotherapy following surgery to prevent the mouth from closing up again, as if nothing had been done. Recurrences of constriction are frequent and represent a real headache for surgeons trying to avoid them.

Physiotherapy is therefore essential for many children with noma sequelae. It sometimes starts even in the acute phase of the disease. As soon as they arrive at the centre and during the healing phase, children must do exercises to prevent their jaws from constricting too much.

How do the sessions work?

At the Sentinelles reception centre in Niger, children who have undergone surgery are required to attend two physiotherapy sessions a day. They last half an hour and take place mid-morning and

before the evening meal. The children concerned know the drill and take it in turns to fetch their equipment when it's time for physio. Guided by our nursing staff, they take their place on a bench in front of the infirmary and begin the first exercise, which consists of placing a stack of tongue depressors in a specific place in the mouth. The challenge for our nursing staff is to make it look like a game, the aim being to place as many tongue depressors as possible, and even to increase the number, so as to open the mouth as painlessly as possible. To relieve tension, our nurses massage the children's temples during the sessions.

Fortunately, other techniques are more fun and enjoyable for those performing them. For example, there are the 'blabla workshops', where the children have to imitate the cries of certain animals or repeat onomatopoeia for which they have to make movements with their mouths that exercise all their facial muscles. There's also the blowing game, where they have to practise making soap bubbles or blowing through straws to make bubbles at the bottom of a glass. Sometimes these exercises only allow to gain a few millimetres of mouth opening, but



they will make all the difference to eating socially without feeling inhibited. Facial self-massage exercises are also used to soften the skin flap or scars of children who have undergone surgery.

Physionoma, a partner association

We train our care staff in noma physiotherapy; thanks to our partnership with the Physionoma association. Its members are professional physiotherapists and speech therapists, who have closely studied the techniques needed to improve mouth opening and maintain the elasticity of the flap after noma surgery. It is thanks to them that we have been able to train our nursing staff. Members of this association have carried out several missions to Niger in the past and continue to train our staff and update their knowledge using the latest remote meeting tools.

This was also the case last April and August, when symposiums were held during Online Meetings, with the study of several complicated cases. A discussion method based on collaborative team building and experience sharing has given our Nigerien team new ideas for improving children's mouth opening.

Bassirou, Hadiza and Fadilla

The age of the children is a factor in the decision to carry out surgery, as they need to be mature enough to follow through with physiotherapy. Bassirou, Hadiza and Fadilla are among the latest children to reach the required age; they recently underwent surgery in Switzerland. On their return, they spent three months undergoing intensive physiotherapy at the reception centre in Zinder, and now have to continue the exercises at home. Our team visits them regularly to ensure that their mouth opening remains stable and to stress the importance of these exercises, which they will have to continue performing for many years to come.

C.H.

(1) Fragment of vascularised tissue taken from the patient to fill in and reconstruct the damaged part of the face.



DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

Training for a better future

Since 2020, Sentinelles has been supporting mothers and their children who are being held in the female wing of Bukavu Central Prison in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Living conditions in the prison were alarming before Sentinelles intervened: lack of food and limited access to healthcare and hygiene were part and parcel of the daily lives of these women and their children.

Women are often imprisoned for reasons linked to their extremely precarious living conditions. Deprived of resources, some are forced into committing various offences such as stealing food or not paying debts, or are victims of false accusations, following disputes. These women, presumed innocent, may wait months or even years in detention before being brought to trial.

Some inmates have to have their children living with them in prison when there is no other childcare solution. Some children are even born in prison and have never known anything other than the prison walls. Food and material support, albeit insufficient, is provided by a few associations, the Catholic chaplaincy and prisoners' families. The families, who are usually very poor, find it very difficult to get to the prison because of the distance and the cost of transport, and are rarely able to provide enough food or basic hygiene products. Sentinelles has been making up for this shortfall since the programme was launched, and provides medical care. In addition, psychological support is provided through regular individual and group sessions. Training and awareness-raising sessions are offered to inmates, too.

Sentinelles has set up training courses in cutting and sewing, beaded handbag weaving, basket weaving and cooking to help prepare their reintegration into society and the world of work. There hadn't been any training activities in the women's wing prior to this programme being launched.

The team began by identifying the needs and possible venues for the various training courses. A dedicated space for training in sewing was set up, with the construction of a canopy to enable the women to continue their training, sheltered from the elements. Sentinelles provided 10 treadle sewing machines and the necessary accessories, so that the apprentices had the right tools to pursue the training. Two social workers are assigned to the programme to provide training in cooking and sewing. At the end of the training sessions, some of the machines are left at the inmates' disposal so that they can practice what they have been learning.

A trainer has been hired to teach how to make beaded handbags and basket-weaving. Once they have mastered the techniques, the inmates can pass on their skills to new arrivals, fostering a spirit of solidarity and collaboration between the women. Sentinelles also provides the materials needed for these crafts.

When they are released, the inmates who have regularly attended the training sessions receive a reintegration kit, including all the equipment needed to continue this



activity outside prison. For example, a woman trained in sewing will receive a treadle sewing machine, sewing thread, a pair of scissors and some fabrics. Our staff continue to support the women after they have been released, until they become financially independent.

Women who are released before completing their training are referred to a sewing centre or workshop for further training and receive a reintegration kit on completion of their training.

Thérèse* was sent to Bukavu Central Prison in August 2022, at the age of 20. While in prison, she took a course in cutting and sewing, but was released before she could complete it. In November 2022, Sentinelles enrolled her in the training centre of the Sisters of the Resurrection in Miti, one of our partners, for a period of 21 months. She completed her training in July 2024 and was awarded a certificate of attendance by the Provincial Head of Social Affairs. Thérèse completed her course with distinction and is now a seamstress. Sentinelles is currently helping her to open her own sewing workshop so that she can become self-sufficient.

Training activities in this prison have enabled the women to learn from each other and to forge links, discuss and share their experiences. The number of conflicts, which were frequent before the training courses were set up, has fallen considerably. Since the programme began, 65 women have been trained in cutting and sewing, 29 in handicrafts, 79 in cooking and 25 in basket weaving.

M.V.V.

* Assumed name

Life stories to share at Christmas

As the year draws to a close, we wanted to share some of the achievements that reflect Sentinelles' strengths with you: our expertise in noma, our holistic approach, our fight to transform the lives of forgotten people, and our psychosocial support for women and children.

These seven stories are the result of our teams and loyal donors' commitment. Without you, nothing can change. Let's work together so that these people can build their future.

HEALTHCARE

Noma, the gangrene that ravages the faces of mainly children aged between 2 and 6, is widespread in several African countries. Fatima, from a small village in Niger, suffers from this disease. Unfortunately, her lesions and the resulting constriction of the jaws are so severe, that an operation in her country is impossible. After arriving at our centre in Zinder with her aunt, the 8-year-old was left with only one option: to come to Switzerland for an operation to repair the after-effects of noma. In Zinder, Fatima is prepared for a long journey without any family members and to a foreign country, while the administrative formalities are dealt with. At our headquarters in Switzerland, the programme manager plans the surgical operations in collaboration with our valued partner, the Geneva University Hospitals. She is also in charge of finding a companion for the flight, a stay in a quarantine hospital, and trustworthy people to welcome and provide comfort to the little girl. Everything was ready and Fatima's transfer went off without a hitch. Her operation also went very well. She is now living at the Maison de Massongex, in the Valais, and will return home to her family after her convalescence. Our local team will be looking after her, both medically and psychosocially. Throughout this period, Sentinelles has been analysing Fatima's family environment and will be offering its support to the other members of the family, mainly by providing food aid and schooling for her brothers and sisters.

In Switzerland

For CHF 60.-, you can donate a physiotherapy session for a child with noma who has been transferred to Switzerland for treatment. This session helps to restore and maintain the elasticity of the tissues, while preserving the mobility of the jaw.

The proposals for support are grouped according to the four thematic axes that structure our actions: health, education, social reintegration and economic reinforcement.

To protect the people we support, the first names mentioned are fictitious and the photos used are for illustrative purposes, with no link to the stories told.

L.M.







Niger

Amina is one of the many children in Niger affected by noma. After complaining of pain in her mouth, her condition rapidly deteriorated, mutilating her face. Her distraught mother made the long journey from their village to Tanout, the provincial capital. A doctor familiar with Sentinelles' work referred them to our reception centre in Zinder. Our team distributed a complete kit (soap, mosquito net, blanket, etc.) to the mother to provide for herself and her daughter during their stay. A few months later, Amina underwent an operation in Niamey, the capital, without the need for a transfer to Switzerland. In the meantime, a social worker analysed the family's situation. Sentinelles offered Amina's mother financial assistance so that she could start her own soap-making business and generate income. The little girl now attends one of our partner schools. Our local team is continuing the fight against this disease by raising awareness among the inhabitants of remote villages and training local medical staff.

With CHF 25.- : Cost of a medical or dental check-up for 5 children.

CHF 50.- : You will enable the mother of a child with noma to start a small business (selling roasted peanuts, condiments, perfume, etc.) to improve her children's daily lives and health.

CHF 60.- : Meals for 1 month for a child at the reception centre.

CHF 120.- : One year's vocational training (sewing, metalwork or woodwork) for a young person recovering from noma.

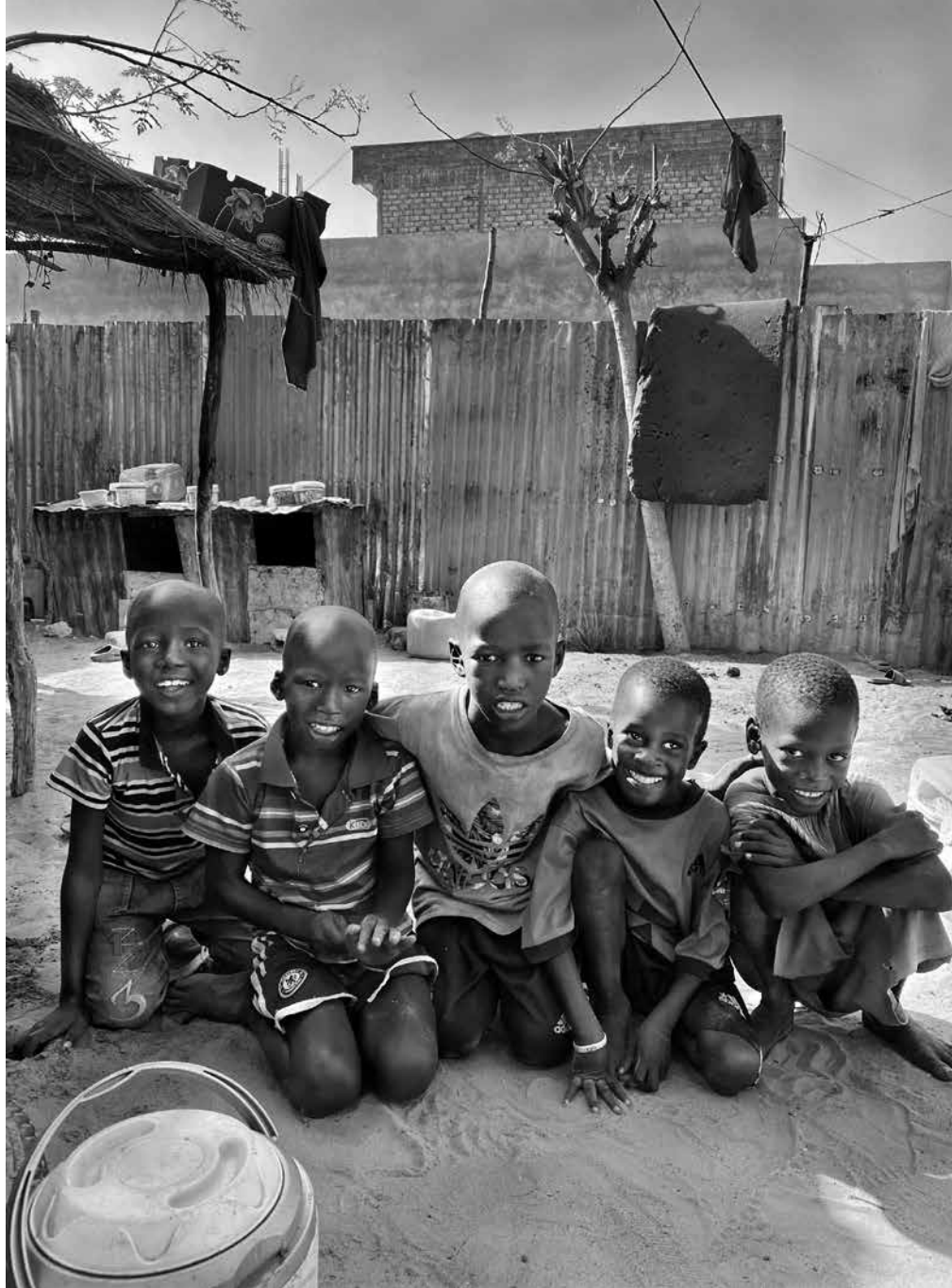
CHF 350.- : Medical equipment and basic supplies for 1 month at the Zinder reception centre.

CHF 500.- : Renovation of a family home following flood damage.

[MAKE A DONATION](#)

Senegal

The village of Kaba is more than 6 hours' drive from M'bour, where the Sentinelles team is based. Entrusted to a marabout by his parents at the age of 5 to receive a religious education, Amadou is now 9 years old and has no memory of his family. The daara, a Koranic school where he lives with around 40 other boys, is unhygienic, with no latrines or access to drinking water. A well-meaning local women alerted Sentinelles when she found Amadou lying badly injured on the floor, after having been forced to go out begging by the Koranic master. We don't know what really happened, but our team immediately took charge of Amadou and began negotiations with the marabout. As a result, all the children will be able to receive medical and health care. Gradually, the marabout agreed to allow the boys to attend school during the day. We are continuing to raise his and the local community's awareness of the living conditions of talibé children, and one of our social workers regularly visits the daara. Amadou can rest assured that Sentinelles will continue to monitor his progress and provide assistance if needed.

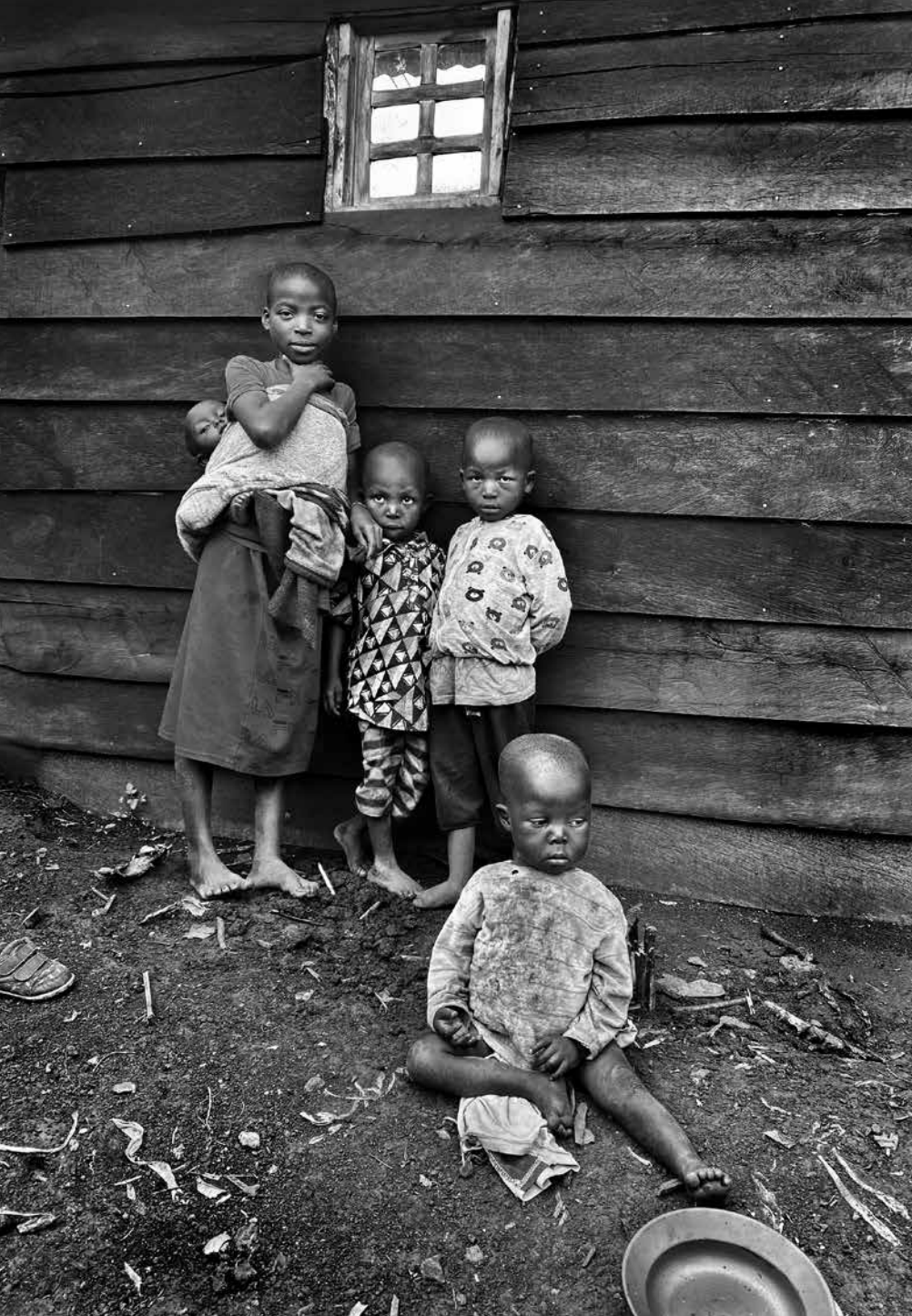


For CHF 50.- a month, you can help provide food for a family.

CHF 100.- a month, you can provide literacy classes for talibé children in a daara.

CHF 350.- will pay for a year's training as a metalworker for a teenager.

[MAKE A DONATION](#)



Congo

A serious armed conflict is raging in Bukavu, in Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo. This is the environment in which Marie, a widow with five malnourished children, lives. She is their sole provider. The small house where the family lives is in serious disrepair and the rainy season is fast approaching. Marie tried to find ways of repairing the roof. However, the costs were far too high for her modest salary, which was already not enough to feed her children properly. Fortunately, the chief of the neighbouring village reported the case to Sentinelles. Our team went to the village to assess the situation and conduct social enquiries. Together with Marie, our staff drew up a plan to secure the shelter and provide the family with the materials they needed for the repairs. Marie and her children were also looked after, receiving food and medical care. Her situation has gradually improved and, with a solid roof over her head, she can look forward to a brighter future. Many single women in the Bukavu region face a similar situation, and Sentinelles is currently receiving an increasing number of requests for housing assistance.



**Faites un don avec
TWINT !**



Scannez le code QR avec
l'app TWINT



Confirmez le montant et
le don

For just CHF 15.- a month, you can provide differentiated food aid for the malnourished children of a poor family.

CHF 60.- , you can provide a term of primary schooling for 6 children.

CHF 600.- per month, you can provide psychological support for women and children.

CHF 900.-, will fund the construction of an adobe or timber house for a family whose home is on the verge of collapse.

Madagascar

At the Maison Centrale d'Antanimora (the central prison) in Antananarivo, the capital of Madagascar, many people are struggling to survive, because despite the state's efforts, detention conditions remain very precarious. The building, which dates to colonial times, has a capacity for 800 people, but houses 5,000 male and female detainees, many of whom are held in pretrial detention on questionable charges. Lalao, a young mother, was remanded in custody while pregnant with her second child. Sentinelles intervened shortly after she was imprisoned to analyse her situation. Her oldest child, aged 5, was left alone at home. One of our social workers went there straight away to make sure the child was being looked after. The boy's grandmother has been found, and she will be looking after him. Sentinelles will ensure that he goes to school. In prison, Lalao has decided to attend the training courses offered by our team in order to learn a business that will enable her to generate an income when she is released and provide for her family. Even though her mother can't send her any money, she doesn't have to worry about not being able to feed herself, because we provide her with what she needs, and we keep a close eye on her little daughter, who was born within these four walls.

With CHF 21.- you can donate an ultrasound scan.

CHF 30.- will enable a child to attend a state school for a year.

CHF 40.- will enable a woman to give birth in good conditions.

CHF 238.- will provide a month's food for a mother with her child in prison.





Colombia

In Minas, Colombia, (informal) coal mining reigns supreme. The hard and extremely dangerous work in the mines means that many of the workers, mainly men, suffer from drug addiction, which often leads to violent behaviour. Lorena is 12 years old and lives with her father, whose behaviour has changed significantly because of drug use, and with her mother, who is economically dependent on her husband. Like many other children in this region, Lorena suffers from emotional deprivation and neglect, which has a considerable impact on her physical and psychological health. After being contacted by one of their neighbours, who was concerned about the fate of the young girl who was constantly hanging around outside, Sentinelles proposed that Lorena join our boarding school, where she would receive medical support from our team to treat her health problems. Her

mum, although willing to help, was unable to contribute to the costs of the board and lodging. We agreed with her that she would bake biscuits for all the children at the boarding school twice a week, enabling her to contribute despite her limited resources. Little by little, Lorena has rebuilt her life in this safe environment. Thanks to the joint workshops she takes part in with her mum, family ties are being re-established.

For CHF 25.-, you can provide food for a child in our foster home for a month.

CHF 50.-, you support the monthly psychosocial and educational care of a child.

CHF 100.-, you can provide a month's vocational training for a teenager.

CHF 250.- will enable a Colombian woman to start an income-generating activity.

Burkina Faso

Issouf is one of 2 million people in Burkina Faso who have been forced to leave their towns and villages because of violence perpetrated by armed Islamic fundamentalists. The little boy used to live in the north of the country with his brothers and sisters. His parents grew millet and reared sheep and goats to meet the family's basic needs and pay their children's school fees. One evening, an armed group attacked the village, forcing its inhabitants to flee. Only Issouf and his mother managed to reach the capital, Ouagadougou. Once they arrived, totally destitute, they were referred to Sentinelles by members of the community. Issouf and his mum received physical and psychological care, food and emergency supplies. A few weeks later, Issouf is smiling again and has made lots of new friends during the activities organised by our teams. With our support, his mother will start a business making and selling cakes, in order to provide for her son's needs and plan for the rest of their lives.

With CHF 75.- you can help feed a family of 10 internally displaced people for a month.

CHF 75.- is the cost of a psychological support workshop for a group of 10 people.

CHF 80.- is enough to give 2 goats to a family in Burkina Faso to start a small livestock farm.

CHF 95.- is enough to run a weekly activity workshop for 50 disadvantaged children.

CHF 100.- will enable a mother to start a business making and selling cakes and improve her children's daily lives and health.

CHF 500.- will fund an operation on a woman suffering from advanced prolapse.



SWITZERLAND Talents for Hope

Sentinelles is delighted to invite you to an exceptional concert on Sunday 19 January 2025. Acclaimed pianists Cédric Pescia and Nicolas Comi will reach new heights in a solidarity event to be held at the Montbenon casino in Lausanne. For one evening, the two virtuosos will light up the Salle Paderewski with their talent, performing Franz Schubert and Frédéric Chopin.

Cédric Pescia is a renowned Franco-Swiss pianist and a laureate of the prestigious Gina Bachauer International Competition. He has performed on a number of iconic stages, including London's Wigmore Hall. His interpretations of Bach, Beethoven and Debussy have been hailed by critics for their finesse.

Nicolas Comi is a piano prodigy from Geneva. He gave his first concert at just seven years of age. He has made a name for himself in the world of classical music, having been awarded prestigious prizes such as the Steinway Competition and performing with the Orchestre de la Suisse Romande.



----- SAVE THE DATE -----
TALENTS FOR HOPE

Cédric PESCIA and Nicolas COMI
join forces for a concert in support of children in major distress

Casino de Montbenon - Salle Paderewski - Lausanne
Sunday 19 January 2025 at 5 p.m.

Franz Schubert (1797-1828) Moments Musicaux D 780 : 1-3
Cédric Pescia, piano

Franz Schubert Fantaisie en fa mineur pour piano 4 mains D 940
Nicolas Comi et Cédric Pescia, piano

Frédéric Chopin (1810-1849) 24 Préludes opus 28
Nicolas Comi, piano

Tickets available from 19 November 2024 from: monbillet.ch
or by telephone: **024 543 00 74**

Don't miss this musical event, which promises an unforgettable evening of music, emotion and solidarity.

Sentinelles

To the rescue of wounded innocence

Rue du Bugnon 42 - 1020 Renens VD
Switzerland
f @ sentinellesfondation
info@sentinelles.org, www.sentinelles.org

Banque cantonale vaudoise, 1001 Lausanne:
BIC/SWIFT BCVLCH2LXXX
Swiss francs account: IBAN CH12 0076 7000 S045 9154 0
Euros account: IBAN CH14 0076 7000 T511 2794 9
Subscription: \$30/year



DONATION



Edition: 26'000 copies (fr/de/eng)
Publisher: Sentinelles
Layout: Judith Spinatsch
© texts and pictures: Sentinelles
Translations: Volunteers
Impression: PCL Print Conseil Logistique SA