

Sentinelles

To the rescue of wounded innocence



Colombia

'Land of life': enabling every child to dream, learn and grow in peace

Senegal

Sidy, the determination to succeed

Switzerland

45 years of Sentinelles: continuing to act together



Editorial

Towards a better future: 45 years of solidarity and inspiring journeys

As we celebrate Sentinelles' 45th anniversary, we look back with great humility and deep gratitude for your support. Our commitment to the most vulnerable people has never wavered, and the stories you will discover in this edition are vibrant testimony to that.

Each article highlights not only the challenges faced by those we support, but also their burning desire to survive, to live better. Whether it's Grâce, a young girl from Burkina Faso with severe scoliosis, Sidy who is courageously recovering from a painful and debilitating illness, or internally displaced women receiving vital training for the well-being of their children: they all embody enormous strength and determination.

However, we would like to draw your attention to the alarming situation of children and teenagers in the Amagá region of Colombia. Many are growing up in places where deprivation, tension and drugs are rife, and there are few real prospects for a better future. Their mental health is a serious concern, and the shadow of addiction and delinquency hangs insidiously over them. Despite an array of community-based initiatives, a brighter future remains beyond the horizon. Violence within families and by criminal gangs continues to weaken the social fabric, and without coordinated action, the vicious cycle risks being transferred from one generation to the next. Strengthening collaboration between civil society and public structures is essential, and we are working hard to achieve this.

Together, we can work to protect children and create social dynamics that bring hope to each and every one of us.

Our heartfelt thanks for supporting our actions, by taking part in the various events planned throughout this anniversary year and by making your precious donations.



Marlyse Morard
Director

BURKINA FASO

Preventing child malnutrition



Young children are the prime victims of malnutrition, when they are being weaned off breast milk. A sustainable, effective and inexpensive way of preventing malnutrition is to include fortified porridges in children's diets from the age of six months, as a supplement to breast milk. They are prepared from local products available in Burkina Faso, such as millet, cowpeas and groundnuts. The Sentinelles team explained how to prepare them to internally displaced women living on the outskirts of Ouagadougou. They received theoretical and practical training on the various possible combinations. The children really enjoyed the porridge during the demonstration phase, and the participants showed their willingness to adopt it on a daily basis for their own well-being.



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SWITZERLAND

New partnership with the CHUV (Lausanne University Hospital)

Khady, 18, arrived in Switzerland from Senegal. She was suffering from a heart condition that unfortunately cannot be operated on in her country, and is now being cared for by the CHUV, with whom we have a new partnership. Each year, five patients suffering from heart disease who cannot be operated on in their own country will be able to come to the CHUV for treatment, and Khady is the first to benefit.

Khady was accompanied by volunteers from Aviation Sans Frontières and had a safe journey. We met her at Geneva airport, then headed for the Riviera-Chablais Hospital in Rennaz, where she awaited her initial check-up. Even though she was tired and in a strange place, Khady remained happy and peaceful, a sign of the confidence she had in us, which touched us all.

Khady was successfully operated on at the CHUV in Prof. Nicole Sekarski's department, to whom we extend our warmest thanks, and then spent her convalescence at the Maison de Terre des hommes Valais, where the team took good care of her. Khady was now cured and can return home with a repaired heart and a new life ahead of her. We wish her all the best and a safe return home.



NIGER

Surgical missions in Niamey

In Niger, one of the components of Sentinelles' comprehensive support to child survivors of noma is to provide reconstructive surgery to redress the serious side-effects of the disease. Although some children are cared for in Switzerland, most operations are performed in Niger. In 2024, we stepped up our activities in this area, thanks to the organisation of several surgical missions by our partner Hilfsaktion Noma e.V. and the arrival in Niamey of Professor Brigitte Pittet, our lead surgeon.

In total, 26 children were operated on, and 3 of them even benefited from two operations during 2024. It has to be said that the side-effects of noma are difficult to repair, and several operations are often required to achieve a satisfactory result. One of the children who has undergone surgery is Mariama. She travelled to Switzerland in 2023, needing secondary surgery and was able to undergo the operation in September. Following her operation, she was able to start school in Zinder with our partner, the GRYK association.

COLOMBIA

“Land of Life” in Colombia: enabling every child to dream, learn and grow in peace



In the rural areas of Amagá, a mining town in the department of Antioquia in Colombia, childhood can be tainted by many ordeals and insecurities: rejection, lack of attention, humiliation, injustice, violence, abuse, loneliness - these are some of the childhoods and adolescent wounds that we strive to heal every day in our Tierra de Vida (Land of Life) home.

Felipe* was 7 years old when we took him into our children's home, following a complete family breakdown. Like many of the children around him, he was born, and raised in a particularly unsafe neighbourhood, riven by violence, crime and drug trafficking. From a very early age, he had to learn to cope with parental neglect, abandonment and absence; his father, who was caught up in drug pushing, is currently serving several years in prison, whilst ever since Felipe was born, his mother has struggled with drug abuse that has gradually driven her to live on the streets.

At the age of 4, Felipe was taken in by his grandmother, who tried to give him some emotional stability. However, at the same time as trying to cope with the struggles of daily life and the lack of financial resources, this task proved extremely difficult. Without a parental figure or guidance, Felipe's behaviour became increasingly defiant, and he rejected authority, wandering the streets late at night and hanging out in dangerous places. Although he is still very young, Felipe spends a lot of time with older teenagers and inevitably gets mixed up in dubious activities. At the same time, Felipe's results at school are deteriorating, which is of great concern to his grandmother.

Realising the danger, she called on Sentinelles, hoping to offer her grandson a safer environment in which to live. In September 2024, Felipe joined our foster home in the mining hamlet of Minas. The home, run by a team of professionals who specialise in supporting children in vulnerable situations, offers him a caring place where he can regain his self-confidence.

Away from the pressures of the neighbourhood and family tensions, he is learning to live in a structured environment where his educational, emotional and affective needs are taken care of. He is discovering the benefits of stable living arrangements for the first time, as well as the importance of routines that enable children to become more independent.

Felipe's counselling also helps him to better understand his emotions and express his fears and frustrations. Our psychologists work with him to calm his angry reactions, encourage him to open up and help him build solid self-esteem, despite his difficult past. Gradually, through age-appropriate therapy sessions, music workshops and nature outings, Felipe begins to open up, build trusting relationships and take a calmer view of the world.

At the same time, Sentinelles provides Felipe with appropriate tutoring. He tends to avoid homework, lacking the motivation and guidance to do it. In the home, monitors help him with his homework



and catch up on what he missed and, above all, motivate him to go the extra mile. Progress is still modest, but every little achievement is celebrated, every bit of progress is valued, to show him that he is capable of learning and succeeding.

For Sentinelles, Felipe's story is further proof of the importance of personalised and comprehensive support for children at risk and in vulnerable situations. It's not enough to meet their material needs: above all, these children need bonds of trust, encouragement and role models. Felipe mixes with other children in the home who share similar stories, creating a sense of solidarity and belonging. He doesn't feel as lonely in this community, which has become a place in which he can flourish without fear.

After just a few months, this little boy, aged just 7, has begun to see a different future for himself. The Sentinelles team is helping him build a simple but precious dream: to be able to go to school without fear, to play safely and grow up with dignity. Although there is still a long way to go, he is now in a position to rebuild his life. Our programme in Colombia has enabled Felipe, and many other children, to free themselves from very dangerous situations and transform their future by offering them a real chance to dream, learn and grow in peace.

C.D.

* *Not his real name.*



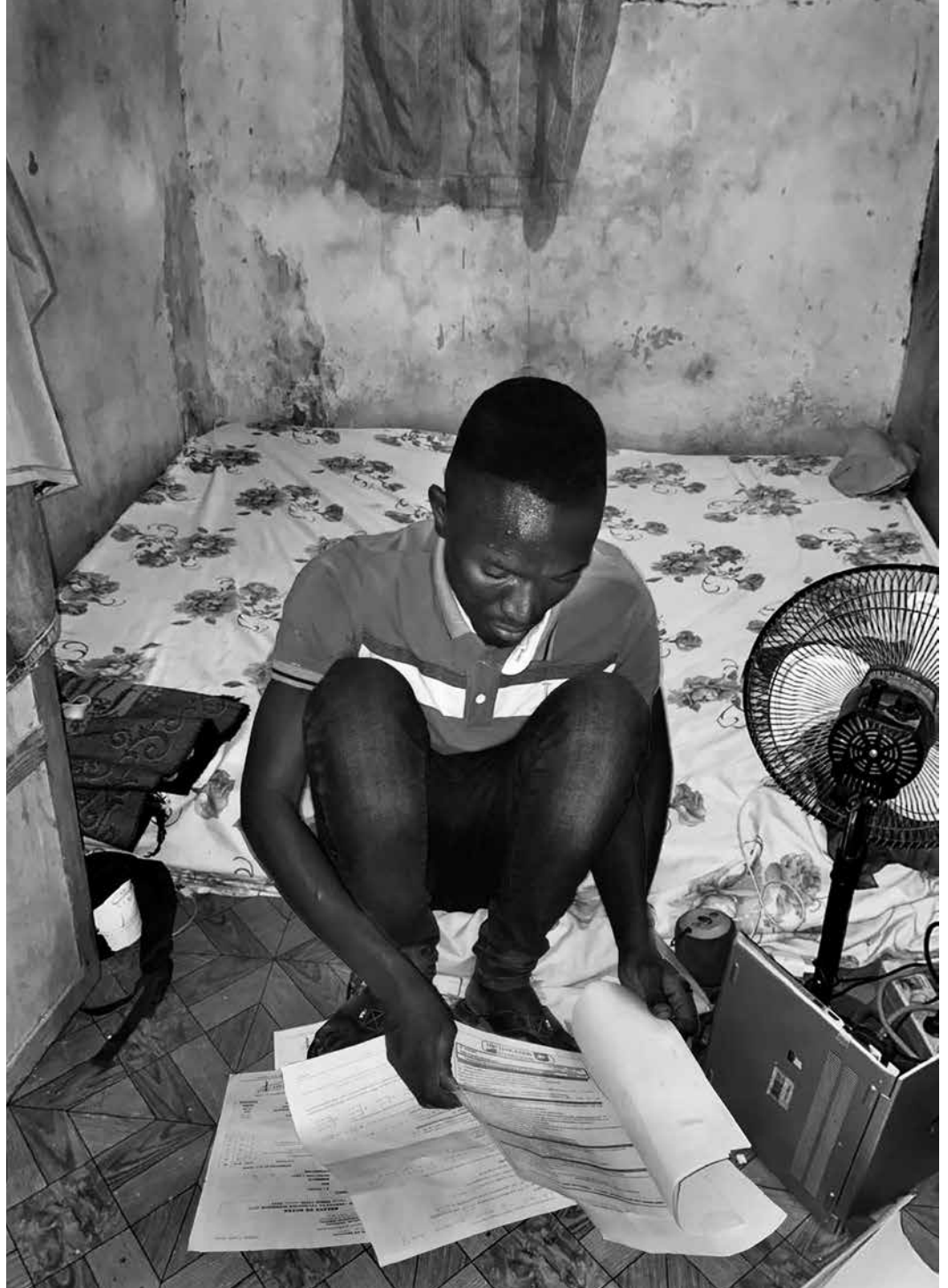
SENEGAL

Sidy's inspiring story

Sidy finished his secondary education in sciences and then moved from Thiès to live in Dakar, with the ambition of studying civil engineering at university. However, due to a lack of funds, he was soon forced to return home, putting his academic aspirations on hold.

Shortly after his return, Sidy was struck down by sciatica, an accident that plunged him into unbearable pain, preventing him from even standing up on his own. His physical health forced him to abandon his plans for the future. His distraught family undertook various fund-raising campaigns to finance his treatment, but the sum needed remained beyond their reach. Neighbours, who were touched by Sidy's suffering, also took up the cause, making repeated requests for support, but to no avail. It was against this backdrop that Sentinelles was contacted to come to his aid. Thanks to rapid intervention, Sidy was put in touch with our care programme social worker, who conducted an in-depth means test to assess the situation. Sentinelles covered all his medical expenses, enabling him to access the care he needed. After a long road to recovery, Sidy has finally regained his health. 'I never thought I'd get back on my feet again, and it's thanks to Sentinelles' unfailing support that I've been able to regain hope and believe in myself,' he says today.

Sidy continues to receive social support, with the aim of enabling him to continue his studies in his chosen field. He undertook a two-year training course and successfully obtained a BTS in civil engineering. He plans to continue his studies to obtain a vocational bachelor's degree and then a master's degree in civil engineering.



Sidy's father has passed away and so he and his siblings struggle to make ends meet. He has three brothers and a sister, divided between Senegal and Congo, where his mother and one of his brothers are also scraping to get by. His family's difficult situation is a further source of motivation for Sidy, whose ambition is to become a civil engineer so that he can support his family and help his mother return to Senegal.

Today, Sidy is driven by the desire to succeed. Here's what he has to say: 'It's with immense gratitude and pride that I'm writing these few words to you, because I cannot thank Sentinelles enough. I went through an extremely difficult period due to illness. Sciatica forced me to undergo a very expensive operation, an ordeal that seemed insurmountable for me and my family, who had very limited resources. But Sentinelles' intervention changed everything. Sentinelles paid for all my medical expenses, both before and after the operation, so that I was able to regain my health and be in great shape today. In addition to

this medical assistance, Sentinelles contributed to the success of my training, which lasted two years. Today, I'm a civil engineering technician, and I can't forget this act of generosity. I'd like to thank you sincerely, from the bottom of my heart, for everything you've done for me. Sidy.'

Congratulations to Sidy on his graduation and his inspiring career! We wish him all the best for his future studies!

M.V.V.



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What's hiding behind this Sentinelles panel ?

Discover the story behind this photo by listening to it at the exhibition to be held at the Forum de l'Hôtel de Ville de Lausanne.

SWITZERLAND 45 years for the cause: continuing to act together

In 1980, the Fondation Sentinelles was founded with a key mission: to help the most vulnerable. 45 years later, our determination and actions remain unchanged, and have grown even stronger. And thanks to our loyal donors, we have the capacity to pursue our vocation.

As you know, our strength lies in our holistic approach, which takes into account each individual's environment in order to improve their well-being and give them complete autonomy. Although Sentinelles has been around for 45 years, the sustainability of our programmes relies on stable funding. Your regular donations are vital to ensure that our projects can

continue to evolve and meet the changing needs of those who rely on us.

That's why we organise fundraising events throughout the year to support specific programmes. Awareness-raising activities are also aimed at encouraging solidarity and maintaining vital aid to those who have suffered most.

After a magnificent benefit concert by pianists Cédric Pescia and Nicolas Comi last January in Lausanne to support our programmes for children at risk, we invite you to take part in:

- **Until Thursday 27 March 2025 at the Hôpital d'Yverdon-les-Bains (eHnv):** Immerse yourself in the world of a child with the Sentinelles photo exhibition.
- **From Tuesday 20 May to Friday 23 May 2025, at the Forum de l'Hôtel de Ville in Lausanne:** Come and take part in a

round table discussion on noma, learn more about our field projects from our programme managers and meet our representative from Burkina Faso, who will be making a special trip to Switzerland to meet you. More details on our website.

- **From 20 May to 5 June 2025, at the Forum de l'Hôtel de Ville in Lausanne:** Immerse yourself in the talking photos that tell the moving life stories of the people we support.

The entire Sentinelles team looks forward to meeting you at these events, which will bear witness to our mission. Others are still in preparation, but we'd like to take this opportunity to thank you warmly for your ongoing support, which makes all the difference for the most vulnerable!

Sentinelles

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