

Sentinelles

To the rescue of wounded innocence



Switzerland

Two young Chadian women finding their smiles again

Colombia

Our care centre needs your help!

Senegal

Two years as a delegate: interview with D. Diene

Editorial

From chronic instability in the Democratic Republic of the Congo to the challenges facing Colombia

I have just returned from Uganda, where I met with the Sentinelles team working in Eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. This trip, organised to allow us to discuss our programme in the city of Bukavu and across the region, in complete safety, will remain deeply etched in my memory. As a reminder, in February 2025, Bukavu, the capital of South Kivu, fell into the hands of the M23, an armed group waging open war against government forces. What I heard there was gut-wrenching. The testimonies paint a brutal picture: pervasive insecurity, the crackle of gunfire and bodies found in the early hours of the morning, forced conscription of young men and their dehumanising training, a climate of suspicion undermining families and communities, money being extorted from each household, and total destitution for so many families who no longer have access to their fields or the informal economy. Obviously, the region has been unstable for decades, but there is no doubt that the security and humanitarian situation has seriously deteriorated in recent months. The population is being held hostage and subjected to atrocities of unprecedented violence. According to OCHA (the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs), the province of South Kivu has over 1,500,000 displaced people. The situation is made even worse by natural disasters and the Ebola epidemic. Yet despair has not taken hold. Faced with this chaos, the small team at Sentinelles and its partners are making tremendous efforts to reach out, in their own words, to people in extremely vulnerable situations.

Thousands of kilometres away, in Colombia, this vulnerability takes on a different form. Our centre has been affected by powerful earth tremors. In addition to the impact on how we organise our work, the structural damage caused requires major repairs to ensure the children's safety and the continuation of our activities. Such challenges clearly illustrate the complexity of Sentinelles' mission, and neither our teams nor the families we support, however determined they may be, can sustain their efforts without your invaluable support. Thank you!



Marlyse Morard
Director



From l. to r.: Grâce, Halime, and Joëlle (Care program manager).

FROM CHAD TO SWITZERLAND

to find a smile again

As part of a new Sentinelles project in Chad, and following a surgical campaign carried out in partnership with the HUG (Geneva University Hospitals), two young patients have recently arrived in Switzerland to receive treatment.

Grâce (18) and Halime (24) suffer from benign facial tumours, serious conditions for which, unfortunately, no specialist care is available in their home country. They were welcomed with great kindness on their arrival, after having been accompanied on their journey to Switzerland, thanks to the invaluable support of volunteers from Aviation Sans Frontières.

The two young women have been marvelling at this totally new environment which is a far cry from their everyday lives. The lake's vivid colours and the glistening snow on the mountains immediately captured their attention. They are showing remarkable energy and optimism, despite the difficulties associated with their health conditions.

They are staying at the Maison de Massongex (Terre des hommes Valais), and have adapted quickly to their new surroundings. Their medical journey begins now at the Geneva University Hospitals, where they are scheduled to undergo plastic and maxillofacial surgery. The aim is clear: to give Grâce and Halime faces that are both functional and harmonious, thereby restoring their will to live and smile.

We will support them closely throughout their treatment and wish them a full recovery.

J.D.



The care home before...



...and after the seismic movements.

COLOMBIA

Our care centre needs your help!

In the mining hamlet of Minas, south of Medellín, residents have learnt to adapt to their environment. However, for several months now, numerous low- to medium-intensity seismic tremors have been shaking the ground in the region, weakening public infrastructure and buildings. Several families have been forced to leave their homes, whilst neighbourhood associations are rallying round to find solutions.

As there are also a lot of mining operations in this region, the vibrations from machinery used to extract coal are exacerbating existing instability and increasing damage to buildings.

Day after day, the ground shifts, moves and changes. And little by little, buildings crack, roads collapse and water pipes are constantly springing leaks.

Our reception facilities have also been affected

Our centre has not been spared from these phenomena; by July

2025, the first cracks had appeared in the walls of our centre, which houses over 30 children as boarders and day pupils, as well as hosting numerous training and psychotherapy activities for women. Over time and with repeated tremors, some cracks have widened, whilst others have opened up to the point of threatening the stability of certain areas of the home. At the same time, the pipes have sprung a number of leaks, leading to water seeping in and the ground subsiding in certain places; floors have begun to warp, and some doors and windows no longer close properly.

Adapting to continue providing psychosocial support

We swiftly took emergency measures to ensure the safety of the children, teenagers and women in our care, as well as that of our staff. Several areas of the foundation had to be closed off, notably the library and the computer room, which we could see were particularly

unstable. As a precaution, we also stopped using the office shared by the educators and the psychologist after a huge crack appeared in one of the walls, posing too great a risk to staff.

In addition to this structural damage, the tremors have also severely disrupted the projects we run within the shelter. As certain areas can no longer be used for our activities to support children and women, we have had to relocate some of them. For example, the women's circles and the cooking and sewing classes are now held outside the foundation, meaning we have to rent a room in the village centre. At the same time, we have set up a partnership with the Sede del Adulto Mayor – Club La Alegría of Minas to ensure that cooking classes for women can continue, thanks to this senior citizens' association generously making its premises available to us.



The extensive mining activity around Tierra de Vida, our care home in Amagá, is worsening the damage caused by the earthquakes.

These temporary solutions currently enable us to keep in touch and carry on providing our services. However, they place quite a constraint on our day-to-day work. Not having our own premises makes our work more complicated and entails significant logistical challenges for our entire team: transporting equipment, adapting to when other venues are available, and, above all, rebuilding an environment of trust for the people we support.

Rebuilding to protect

We have been working with a geotechnical engineering firm since October 2025, in order to address these significant challenges. Several studies have been carried out to gain a precise understanding of the instability affecting the

ground and to identify sustainable reconstruction solutions.

To date, their assessment leaves no room for doubt: extensive work is required to stabilise the building. It will entail substantial structural repairs, notably strengthening the foundations, in order to ensure the safety and long-term stability of the building.

These measures are essential. However, they represent a significant investment, commensurate with the stakes: to secure a vital living space for the children and families we support.

Your support is vital

Unfortunately, unless this work is carried out, we run the risk of having

to close the shelter in the long run. We are currently continuing to take in children and provide psychosocial support to families and women, whilst constantly adapting the way we operate. However, these solutions are somewhat precarious and cannot be sustained in the long term.

We are therefore appealing for your support to rebuild our centre on solid foundations! So that the shelter can withstand natural shifts in the ground and environmental constraints. So that the children, families and women of Minas will continue to have a place where they can grow up safely and find support.

C.D.



Please show your support!
With your help, these renovations will become a reality.

Please scan with your banking app.

Our programme manager is more than happy to assist you: colombie@sentinelles.org. Thank you very much!

MADAGASCAR

Behind the scenes of a mission

“But what exactly do you do in Madagascar?” It’s a question I’m often asked, and it’s a perfectly valid one! So here, in a few lines, is an overview of what a field mission actually involves for a programme manager.

Every eight to ten months, I head to Antananarivo for three intense weeks at the heart of our Madagascan programmes. These trips are much more than just a whistlestop tour: they are the lifblood of our work in the field and a key moment for strengthening the link between the local teams and Sentinelles’ headquarters.

A talented and committed local team

In Madagascar, Sentinelles relies on a team of over 40 bilingual staff members (Malagasy and French), organised into several complementary hubs: coordination, administration, orthopaedic care, support for detained mothers and minors, our reception centre, medical, legal, education and logistics teams. Each team has a specific mission, and together they form a remarkable human and professional network. The visit of a programme manager goes a long way towards strengthening team cohesion and maintaining dynamic cooperation with head office. These meetings provide an opportunity to listen to feedback from the field, gather suggestions, identify needs and recognise the achievements made in their daily work.

Working closely with the people we support

Accompanying social workers on home visits is a key part of my role. These visits allow us to gain a first-hand understanding of the reality faced by the families we support — sometimes extremely precarious situations, which do not always come across in reports. It is also an opportunity to see first-hand the effort made by our staff: they sometimes have to walk long distances to reach certain families, as the paths are impassable by car, through steep terrain and to neighbourhoods that are difficult to access. This daily commitment commands admiration and deserves to be recognised.

In the prison corridors

A significant portion of my time is devoted to the two prisons where Sentinelles works. I visit them to meet the prison management team, assess the living conditions of the female detainees and make headway on ongoing cases through respectful and constructive dialogue with the authorities. This dialogue is essential to ensure both our presence within the institutions themselves and to maintain the continuity and quality of our support for those in prison.



A friendly meal with the Malagasy Sentinelles team.

Partnerships and representation

My field trips also provide an opportunity to nurture and develop our local partnerships. I meet the organisations we work with, such as the “*Grandir Dignement*” association, and explore new avenues for cooperation with partner institutions and associations. Taking part in major events — such as inaugurations and official meetings — also helps boost Sentinelles’ visibility and credibility in the local area.

A chance for the team to bond

Finally, each mission also provides an opportunity to organise an outdoors day for staff, offering a chance to relax and share experiences around a theme chosen and prepared in advance. These key events play a vital role in team cohesion, the well-being of those involved, and a sense of belonging to a shared mission.

Three weeks to listen, strengthen, build — and leave with a renewed conviction that what is being done in Madagascar is truly worthwhile.

Magali Portillo

INCOME AND EXPENDITURE STATEMENT OF THE SENTINELLES FOUNDATION

From 1 January to 31 December 2025 (in CHF, with comparative figures for the 2024 financial year)

INCOME	2025	2024
Burkina Faso	24 843	51 984
Colombia	50 972	5 100
DR Congo	15 285	978
Madagascar	55 547	86 957
Niger	37 074	13 500
Senegal	17 903	3 630
Other support activities / medical care	990	2 657
Children affected by noma	254 398	263 873
Noma-Hilfe-Schweiz Association	100 000	100 000
Les amis de Sentinelles (LADS)	19 000	-
LADS/Republic and Canton of Geneva	-	75 000
Subtotal	576 012	603 679
Donations	588 887	682 631
Bequests and legacies	158 374	1 435 909
Markets	20	140
Events	8 212	20
Edmond Kaiser book sales	39	-
Contribution to medical costs	2 027	17 062
Interest on current account	13 982	69 817
Subtotal	771 541	2 205 580
TOTAL INCOME	1 347 553	2 809 258
EXPENDITURE		
Burkina Faso	350 267	352 604
Colombia	200 996	170 464
DR Congo	159 934	226 114
Madagascar	425 944	419 239
Niger	468 372	423 185
Senegal	419 435	337 971
Medical care for children operated on in Switzerland	91 319	90 508
Other support activities	52 180	15 522
Subtotal	2 168 447	2 035 607
Expenditure in Switzerland		
Salaries and employer's social security contributions	163 155	138 403
Sentinelles Newspaper	64 584	58 924
Communication materials	256 785	216 242
Administrative costs	39 317	34 250
Other expenses	18 052	9 317
Subtotal	541 893	457 136
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	2 710 340	2 492 743
Change in earmarked funds	-	188 645
Result before change in unearmarked funds	-1 362 787	505 160
Net income for the year	-	-

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Sentinelles does everything in its power to ensure efficient, high-quality operation at the lowest possible cost. The services provided free of charge or at a preferential rate, as well as the collaboration of numerous volunteers, represent annual savings of more than one million Swiss francs (CHF 989 755 in 2025). If the amount of these free services were included in the total expenditure, the Sentinelles budget would come to CHF 3 700 906. The expenses in Switzerland are divided between the various programmes, administration and fundraising.

Audited accounts in accordance with the report dated 20.03.2026 by Fiduciaire DRP SA, Geneva.

SENEGAL

Working with communities:

Dominique Diene's two years of commitment in Mbour



Dominique Diene

Dominique Diene settled in Switzerland in 1994, and has built a life for himself as an inclusive education teacher and father of four in the canton of Vaud. Two years ago, however, he decided to join Sentinelles and return to his country of origin, Senegal, to take charge of operations at our Mbour office. He draws on his thirty years of experience and his personal convictions to support the Senegalese team. As his term comes to an end this summer, Dominique looks back on an experience marked by teamwork and collective commitment.

Can you explain your work as a delegate for the Sentinelles Foundation over the past two years?

My role involves supporting the team working at the Mbour office. I oversee the support provided to children and families and supervise the eight staff members

in carrying out their activities, based on specific objectives. In this context, my visits, particularly to people's homes, are essential for gaining a better understanding of the challenges faced by the team and the people we support.

I also handle the NGO's administrative tasks, accounting checks, logistics, and represent Sentinelles when dealing with Senegal's administrative, health and religious authorities.

In this regard, the Senegal programme manager who is based at the headquarters in Renens (Lausanne) and I work in close collaboration, driven by a strong personal bond. We manage the projects together, which enables us to make decisions that are both rooted in Senegalese realities and aligned with the foundation's vision.

Could you tell us about your background and what led you to get involved with this foundation?

As an inclusive education teacher, I worked for many years with children with disabilities and young people with behavioural disorders. Throughout my career, I have always been guided by a desire to provide personalised support. Sometimes, this meant helping them avoid prison or being admitted to a psychiatric hospital.

After thirty years' experience in specialised institutions in Switzerland, I wanted to see something different. I am of Serer origin, an ethnic group of farmers and fishermen on the Senegalese coast. I felt the need to get involved in a context that connects me directly to my history and my homeland.

So when I saw the job advertisement in the newspaper, I jumped at the chance to apply to Sentinelles. The support provided to talibé children particularly resonated with my own journey. The foundation's mission reflected my convictions, as if all the pieces of a jigsaw had naturally fallen into place.

At that time, the main challenge was leaving my family for a long period; I'd never done that before. This two-year assignment provided extra motivation, as it gave structure to my commitment. Now, my mission is coming to an end: I'm going back to Switzerland to be with my family.

**What has guided you throughout this experience?
What are your main sources of motivation on
a day-to-day basis?**

What guides me every day is the knowledge that I will be able to help someone. I am also inspired by the people I meet; not only those we support, but also those who are familiar with Sentinelles' work and value it in their daily lives. The motivation and professionalism of the staff play just as big a part. My satisfaction lies in the feeling, at the end of the day, of having been useful and of having been able to change someone's life through the foundation.

**Looking back on your two years with the team,
in what way is this programme essential in
addressing the country's current challenges?**

Senegal is developing rapidly, particularly in terms of infrastructure (roads, flyovers, Bus Rapid Transit, Regional Express Train) and social and medical care (Universal Health Coverage, state-of-the-art hospitals). However, inequalities persist, particularly for families living in regions furthest from basic services. When travelling, one often meets parents who need several months to get the financial and logistical means together to take their children to hospital.

Therefore, the foundation's presence in Mbour makes a real difference. Indeed, the authorities never fail to praise our work. For them, our field work provides crucial support across the country.

**What are the priorities to be considered within
the programme for the coming years?**

As mentioned, Sentinelles' work in Mbour and more broadly across Senegal is having a real impact. Our priorities therefore remain the same: to provide personalised support to vulnerable children and their families. In order to maintain this impact and intervene where the needs are greatest, it is essential that the foundation adapts to the country's challenges, which are constantly evolving.



Dominique Diene (far right) visiting a family.

**Can you share a situation or a memorable moment
that illustrates the impact of Sentinelles' work
in Senegal?**

As the delegate, I have had the privilege of combining administrative management with providing personal support. I often find myself supporting families going through truly difficult, sometimes critical, situations. Being able to be there for them at such times is what really motivates my commitment to the foundation, every single day.

It makes me think in particular of a father we met in hospital, sitting by his child who had been in a serious accident and was in a coma. He was deeply distraught and overwhelmed by our arrival. He confided in us that without Sentinelles' financial support, he would not have been able to cover his child's medical costs and would simply have been preparing for the news of his child's death.

Situations like these remind us that support is not limited to a one-off intervention, but is part of a lasting relationship of trust.

We would like to extend our warmest thanks to Dominique for these two years of invaluable commitment. We will remember his enthusiasm, his diligence and his attachment to Senegalese culture, which he shared with us every day. We wish him all the best for the future, alongside his family and in his future endeavours, both professional and personal.

M.V.

Sentinelles

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BIC / Swift BVLCH2LXXX

Swiss francs account: IBAN CH12 0076 7000 5045 9154 0

Euros account: IBAN CH14 0076 7000 7511 2794 9



DONATION



Circulation: 22'000 copies (fr/de/eng)

Subscription: CHF 20.-/year, six editions

Publisher: Sentinelles

© texts and photos: Sentinelles

Layout: Katarina Simmer

Editorial Secretary: Lidiene Quaglia

Newspaper Coordinator: Nicole Emonet

Translations: Volunteers

Printing: PCL Print Conseil Logistique SA

How to unsubscribe: No longer wish to receive our newspaper? Unsubscribe by email: info@sentinelles.org or by phone: +41 21 646 19 46.