

Sentinelles



Healthcare in Switzerland

A-Ranty returns home

Madagascar

Beyond the postcard image

Tribute

Jean Ziegler:
a legacy of
commitment

Editorial

Choosing not to turn our backs

We are at a crossroads. As crises continue to multiply and international funding shrinks, we seem to be forced to make choices. Yet there are situations in which turning our backs is simply not an option.

In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, an Ebola outbreak has struck people already facing the ordeal of armed conflicts and mass displacement. In this context of a “crisis within a crisis”, our team is strengthening disease prevention efforts while, quietly and with the utmost discretion, providing support to women who have endured severe violence – women whose suffering remains unseen and unspoken.

Madagascar’s exceptional geological potential and remarkable biodiversity stand in stark contrast to the economic crisis. Structural poverty and climate shocks have plunged nearly 70% of the population into a daily struggle to meet their basic needs. The lack of essential services turns each day into an exhausting struggle for access to water, food and healthcare. Sentinelles works to bridge these gaps and build a social safety net, providing support where public services are lacking.

In Burkina Faso, our work goes beyond emergency response. It is also a powerful force for rebuilding lives. Seeing internally displaced young women and men infuse the Gambidi Cultural Space in Ouagadougou with dance and theatre demonstrates that resilience can also emerge from art and rediscovering happiness.

The firm belief that no one’s fate should ever be ignored was upheld with rare strength by Jean Ziegler until his passing on 10 June 2026. His voice, which denounced a “cannibalistic world order”, continues to resonate, reminding us that bearing witness to suffering and taking action remain essential.

Today, as resources become increasingly scarce, your continued commitment is our foundation. Thank you for enabling our colleagues – those working on the front lines – to continue transforming hope into something real.



A stylized, handwritten signature in dark ink.

Marlyse Morard
Director



Ebola virus awareness session

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

Sentinelles mobilised to tackle the Ebola outbreak

On 16 May 2026, the World Health Organisation declared a public health emergency of international concern due to the Ebola outbreak in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The deteriorating security situation in the east of the country, mass population displacement, cross-border movement and difficulties in providing humanitarian access are complicating efforts to monitor and contain the disease.

The outbreak is affecting regions that have already been grappling for years with armed conflict, forced displacement and recurring humanitarian crises. Many families struggle to access safe drinking water, healthcare and sufficient food.

The Sentinelles team has stepped up its community awareness-raising activities in a bid to strengthen prevention and reduce the risk of the disease spreading. As part of this, several awareness-raising sessions have been organised at health posts, regularly led by focal points in the areas where we work (key contacts who facilitate communication between communities, partners and the foundation).

M.V.V.

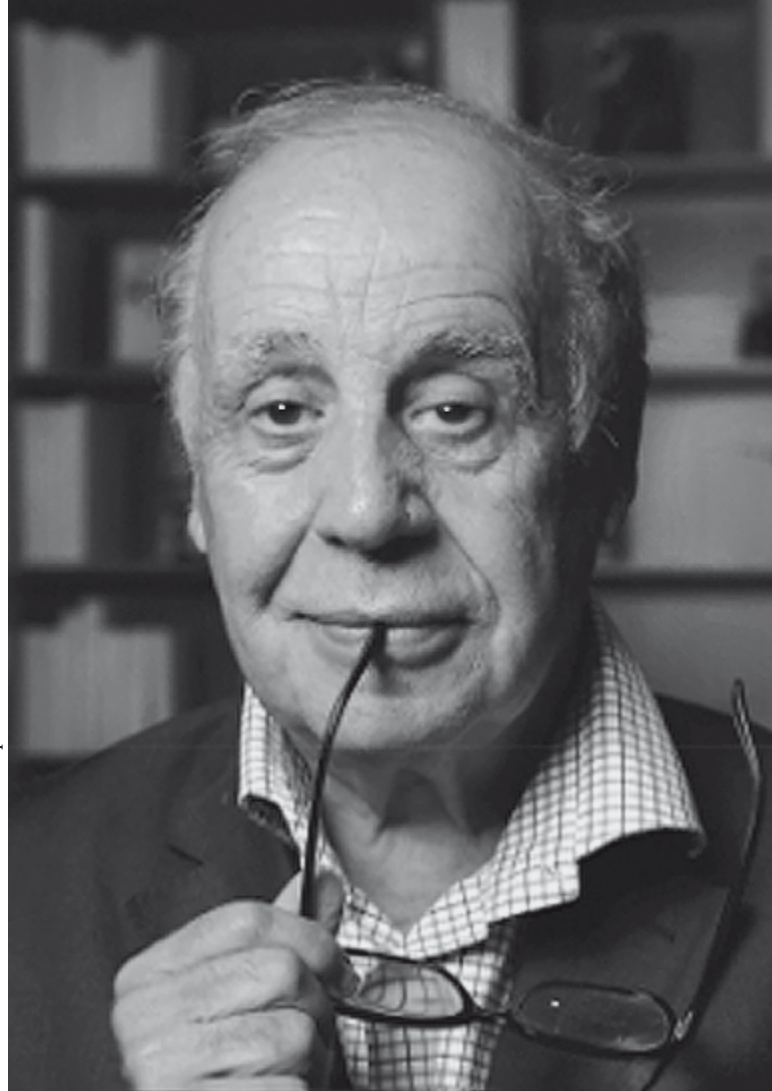
JEAN ZIEGLER

An unwavering commitment to our cause

Whilst his writing denounced a ruthless world order with rare vigour, his support for Sentinelles went far beyond the scope of his impassioned advocacy. For years, he stood by our side, not only through the generosity of his donations, but above all through the wisdom of his invaluable advice. His commitment to raising awareness of the reality of noma and his indignant voice in defence of forgotten children have been key driving forces behind our work. Whilst the text below from 2014, published in Sentinelles' operational activity report, resonates as a call to hope, it also bears witness to a loyal partnership: that of a man who made the fight against indifference and the defence of fundamental rights the very heart of his humanity. Jean Ziegler, who passed away on 10 June 2026 at the age of 92, leaves behind these words, imbued with clarity and respect. May his legacy guide us as we continue our mission to empower those whose lives are disrupted by illness, violence and a lack of access to resources.

Marlyse Morard

Photo credit: author not identified despite our searches



Hope

We live in a cannibalistic world order. Immense wealth is accumulating in the hands of a select few. And in the countries of the global South, every five seconds a child under the age of ten dies of starvation or its immediate consequences. Sentinelles helps these suffering children – who are often isolated, traumatised or cast aside by their own families – by restoring their health and physical well-being, healing the wounds of their souls, and giving them hope and life.

I have the deepest admiration for the staff at Sentinelles. I have seen them at work – efficient, competent and tireless – travelling thousands of kilometres a month through the most inhospitable and dangerous bushlands to reach children suffering from noma. Over the eight years in which I served as the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the right to food, in how many palaces across Africa and Asia did I hear a president coldly declare to me: 'What? Noma? We don't have that disease here', when just the day before, in a village in his own country, I had just visited a Sentinelles treatment centre – modest, bright, and filled with love and efficiency.

Bringing the horror to light, exposing the lies, caring for the victims, and offering love, hope and a chance at life to thousands upon thousands of human beings whose lives have been shattered – this is the daily, steadfast and inspiring work of the Sentinelles teams.

They are a credit to humanity.

May despair, fatigue and weariness never stop them or bring them down!

Their work in the service of those most deeply wounded by this cannibalistic world order is urgently needed.

Jean Ziegler

(English translation of a text published in French in Sentinelles' 2014 operational activity report)



MADAGASCAR

Antananarivo, a day like any other

Testimony

It's half past five in the morning when Miora opens her eyes. No alarm, because the electricity went out again last night, around two o'clock. She knows it even before reaching for her phone – it's pitch black, but last night she still managed to charge it. Ketsia, three years old, is still asleep, curled up against the wall. Winter is harsh in Antananarivo. Her seven-month-old baby, Lova, is starting to squirm.

She gets up in the dark.

The first thing to do is get water. There's no running water... she stopped counting on that long ago. They have to walk to the community distribution point, a fifteen-minute walk away, carrying a twenty-litre jerrycan. She does it with Lova strapped to her back. With no warm clothes to put on her, she bundled her up in a small bathrobe. Ketsia drags her feet behind her mum, her shoes are full of holes and she carefully avoids the muddy puddles. They leave early to avoid the queue, and because in two hours' time, there'll be no water left. That morning, the water smells a bit of iron, but Miora fills the jerrycan anyway.

On the way back, she stops by her mum's, just a couple of alleys down, on the same slope of red earth. Not for coffee, but to see if she can leave Ketsia with her for a few hours. Her mum is sixty and has bad knees, but she says yes, as always. It's her and Miora's brother, Tiana, who plug the gaps. And there are plenty of gaps to plug.

Miora sells *brèdes* – edible plants – at the market three days a week. On the other days, she does ironing for a family in the nearby residential area, a two-hour walk away. When she has the 600 ariary she needs for the fare (0.12 CHF), she takes the taxi-be (shared minibus). But it is often crowded, often breaks down, and is always slow. With an income of around 18 CHF/month to live on,

she calculates everything, always: is the journey worth the money spent? Is the tiredness worth it? Will this bag of rice last until Friday?

The man she's been dating for the past year is kind. Sometimes he stays the weekend. He also has his problems, and his kids to feed too.

What exhausts Miora isn't poverty itself, that's all she has ever known, and she's still standing. What wears her out is the lack of a safety net. Not having someone, a structure, a number to call when Lova has a 39 °C fever at midnight and the pharmacy is closed and no more taxis are running. What the Malagasy call *hanao ahoana ny ampitso?*, "What will tomorrow look like?", It's not a philosophical anxiety. It's a practical question, asked every evening, along with its share of gloomy emotions.

And what about the State? Miora shrugs with a weariness that's not even bitter anymore. Promises have a texture now, like cheap synthetic fabric: they shine a bit at first, then fray quickly. She hasn't voted in ages. Not out of disinterest, but to keep her hopes. Still, she hopes life will be kinder to her daughters, although that hope too is slowly turning bitter and desolate.

Commentary

This story is fictional, but it was created based on a thousand realities that our social workers encounter on a daily basis at Sentinelles. The author herself witnessed some of the scenes described. An article published on 22 May 2026 in the Malagasy media *Diapason* summarised the country's situation in a striking image, that of an inverted iceberg: above the surface what the world sees, vanilla, cloves, cocoa, sapphires, cobalt, graphite, nickel, exceptional biodiversity, a large youth population... but beneath the surface, what the Malagasy people experience: repeated power cuts, roads full of potholes, soaring prices, a government that makes promises but shirks responsibility.



Between these two realities, there's a chain. A value chain for those who extract and export; and a chain of dependence for those who stay (Diapason, 2026). What Miora's testimony reveals beyond material poverty is something we in the West don't instinctively grasp: the cognitive and emotional cost of the lack of basic services. We don't think about water because we just turn on a tap and it flows. In the poorer neighbourhoods of Antananarivo, this can't be taken for granted. According to official data from the Malagasy Ministry of Water, 55.8% of the population has access to drinking water – a figure that's improving, but which still means nearly one in two people are deprived of it (Andrianamelaso, 2025).

And we still need to interpret what “access” really means: according to WHO and UNICEF (2025), anyone whose water source is less than a 30-minute round-trip walk is considered to have access to water. In other words, the statistic includes Miora with her twenty-litre jerrycan, getting up at the crack of dawn, in winter, with Lova on her back. That's not access to water. That's organised survival. And this chore, as UNICEF reminded us in 2023, falls disproportionately on women and girls.

On top of that, there's a deep loneliness, highlighted in a widely discussed 2025 article by The Economist – also picked up by 20 Minutes – that called Madagascar the loneliest place in the world: “The most friendless place on earth”. It's not loneliness in the emotional sense, but the feeling of being abandoned by a system that doesn't see you, protect you, or respond to you. The current political instability just makes an old problem worse. In times of institutional tension, it's always the most vulnerable people who feel the impact first.

Madagascar remains one of the ten poorest countries in the world: around 70% of the population lives on less than \$2.15 a day, the international extreme poverty line defined by the World Bank. This is the reality in which Sentinelles, like other civil society organisations, NGOs and local associations, tries to make a difference. A drop in the ocean. But drops in the ocean, together, sometimes create what the state has failed to build: a safety net. Imperfect, insufficient, but very real. A number to call. A hand reaching out at midnight. It's not charity, it's patching things up while waiting for the foundations to hold. But above all, it's dignity restored.

M.P.

Sources:



Andrianamelaso, L. (2025, 15 April). Statement reported in Eau potable : le taux d'accès à l'eau potable passe de 43 % en 2018 à 55,8 % en 2024. Newsmada.



Diapason. (2026, 22 May). La boucle est bouclée.



WHO & UNICEF. (2025). Progress on household drinking water, sanitation and hygiene 2000-2024: Special focus on inequalities. (JMP report 2025).



The Economist. (2025, 18 December). Unmoored in Madagascar: The most friendless place on earth.



UNICEF. (2023, 5 July). Women and girls bear brunt of water and sanitation crisis [UNICEF-WHO report].

OUR VOLUNTEERS, A VITAL FORCE

Interview with Mathieu Gigon, newsletter distributor

The Sentinelles Foundation strives to devote as much of its financial resources as possible to its programmes. Overheads are brought down by being able to turn to partners who provide certain services free of charge or at preferential rates, as well as through the commitment of many volunteers. The latter enable us to save almost a million francs per year.

Translators, proof-readers, distributors, administrative assistants, accountants, IT experts or even knitters all play a part in our success. We wish to show our appreciation to them, by giving the floor to one of their number, Mathieu Gigon, a volunteer newsletter deliverer in Romandy.

The Newspaper is published every other month in English, French and German, with a print run of over 18,000 copies and is distributed throughout Switzerland. Whilst subscribers receive their copies through the post, around sixty volunteers also pop them through letterboxes.

Could you briefly introduce yourself? I'm Mathieu Gigon, 62 years old, from Lausanne. I have a partner, but no children. I started work as a typographer before joining La Poste. I now live on a disability pension and have been volunteering for the Sentinelles Foundation for six or seven years. Before that, I had worked as a volunteer for Pro Natura and am now also volunteering for Caritas and Terre des Hommes.

How did you find out about Sentinelles and what made you want to become a volunteer newspaper deliverer? Through Bénévolat Vaud. I've got the time, the energy and I love walking.

Could you describe what a delivery day is like? I have a trolley full of newspapers, I choose where to go and then I'm off! I take the bus or the train to get there and I do my round on foot or sometimes by bicycle.

In which areas do you deliver the Newspaper, and how many copies do you deliver on average? Avenue Victor-Ruffy in Lausanne, Pully, Paudex, Lutry, Vevey and Neuchâtel. Around 3,500 French-language copies per edition, delivered in approximately 15 hours, including travel time. Plus occasional special distributions.

How do people generally react when they receive a copy? They are often a bit suspicious at first; they are worried that I'm delivering some sort of advertising despite their "No junk mail" stickers. As soon as they realise that it's the Sentinelles Newspaper, however, they become much more positive and sympathetic.

Have you got any special memories or a funny story? The wheels falling off my trolley... Right at the start of my round a long way from the nearest bus stop!



What does this activity bring you personally? It means that I can go out and about with a purpose, explore neighbourhoods I don't know, their architecture, different streets... The interior design of some of the houses in Neuchâtel and Vevey has taken my breath away.

What changes have you seen in recent years? More stickers saying "no junk mail" or "no free newspapers" and more doors with an access code. It might be harder to reach letterboxes in the future.

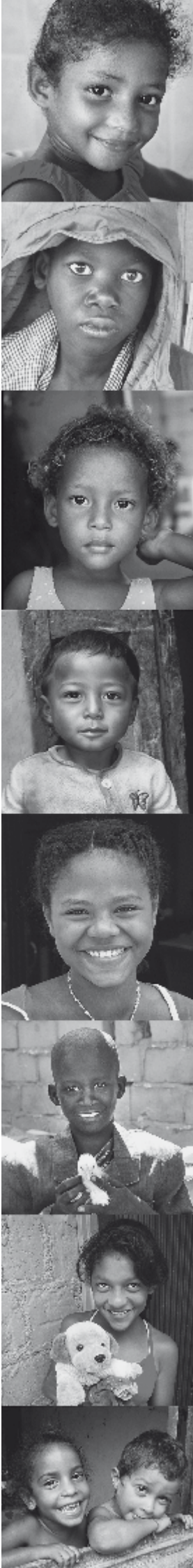
Why do you consider this newspaper to be important? Sentinelles comes to the aid of people who are terribly poor and really vulnerable children in under-privileged countries.

What's the key message you have for readers? The joy of being active, of feeling useful; being outside, meeting people and realising how valuable your time can be. I really feel proud when delivering such a noble newspaper.

What would you say to someone who can't make up their mind whether to volunteer? Volunteering helps older people stay fit, by enabling them to continue being active and involved. As for younger people, it gives them a chance to devote part of their time to a meaningful activity. Volunteering is a way of sharing your skills, creating bonds and giving at your level to a cause you care about.



Feeling inspired by this story? Join our group of volunteers by contacting Ms. Emonet (volunteers coordinator) on: +41 21 646 19 46, info@sentinelles.org. We are currently looking for proofreaders (DE/EN) and people who can drive our children to their medical appointments. Distributors and translators (FR to DE and FR to EN) also welcome!



WHAT IF SOLIDARITY WERE UP TO US?

Over the past few months, there is one phrase which has cropped up time and again in the articles I have read, the conferences I have attended and the discussions I have had with our partners: 'We have to make choices.'

Governments must make choices. International agencies must make choices. Organisations must make choices. Behind this seemingly innocuous statement lies a much more tangible reality: when resources start to dwindle, certain priorities are shelved, some programmes grind to a halt, and certain communities are left to face very real challenges on their own. This thought often crosses my mind when I'm reading the news. Never before have there seemed to be so many needs. Conflicts, climate change, forced displacement, the weakening of healthcare systems: the challenges are mounting and affecting millions of people. And yet, just as needs are rising, funding for international cooperation is falling. Several countries are cutting their budgets. Major international agencies are warning of historic shortfalls. Everywhere, resources are dwindling.

At Sentinelles, we are watching this development with concern.

It is not because we lack projects or determination – quite the opposite, in fact. For over 45 years, we have been working with our partners to develop practical and sustainable solutions. We know that change is possible when commitments are made for the long term. But today, that long-term perspective is being put to the test.

Faced with this situation, I found myself returning to a simple question: why do we give? Not just when our emotions run high or when a disaster hits the headlines. Why do we choose, year after year, to support a cause?

Perhaps because we know that our future is linked to that of others.

Perhaps because we refuse to accept a world which looks the other way as soon as media attention wanes.

Perhaps because solidarity is less a gesture of generosity than a way of affirming the values we believe in and wish to embody.

If Sentinelles is still here after 45 years, it is thanks to this shared belief. It is thanks to you. To your loyalty. To your trust. To your constant commitment – sometimes unobtrusive, but always essential.

Today, we need you more than ever. Because when institutional funding dries up, it is ordinary citizens who keep the spirit of solidarity alive. It is they who ensure that our commitments continue, that our partnerships remain stable, and that the work we have built up over the years can go on.

That is why I would like to make a simple and direct request of you today: if you are able, please make a donation of any amount to Sentinelles. Your support will enable us to continue to be there when needed, to honour the commitments we have made, and to carry on, alongside our partners, the work we have been doing for over four decades. In a world where many are forced to make difficult choices, your donation is a way of saying that solidarity remains a priority.

And for that, thank you.

Fanny Freund

Donor Relations and Institutional Partnerships Manager



BURKINA FASO

The joy of performing on stage at the Gambidi Theatre in Ouagadougou

Young girls and boys from displaced families, living on the outskirts of Ouagadougou, are supported by Sentinelles Burkina Faso on their path to resilience. Our partner, Waga Studio, has been running weekly dance, theatre and plastic recycling activities for nearly two years with a group of around twenty

young people. In June, they had the joy of performing on a real theatre stage at the Gambidi Cultural Centre. They had the opportunity to present their show, which combined theatrical expression with traditional and contemporary dance, on the theme of living together more harmoniously. It was a wonderful experience with an

inspiring result, which we hope to see performed again soon on other stages across the capital.

Sentinelles would like to thank Waga Studio for this wonderful collaboration.

V.E.

HEALTHCARE IN SWITZERLAND

A happy homecoming

A-Ranty, a gentle 8-year-old Madagascan boy, has been reunited with his family after three months of treatment in Switzerland for a condition which could not be treated in his own country.

Suffering from a cyst in the posterior fossa of the brain, he had severe balance problems and difficulty in walking, problems with his eyesight, as well as vomiting and headaches. He underwent a first operation in Madagascar, but it failed to improve his condition in the long term, so we arranged for him to be transferred to Switzerland in order to prevent his condition from worsening and becoming potentially fatal.

A-Ranty was admitted to HUG – to whom we extend our warmest thanks for their dedication and expertise – where he received treatment that enabled him to walk unaided again and see his associated symptoms disappear. He then underwent intensive physiotherapy rehabilitation, initially at the hospital and then at the Maison de Massongex (Terre des hommes Valais), where he was cared for following his hospital stay. New glasses will also help to improve his vision and support his mobility and fine motor skills.

A smiling A-Ranty is now back home with his family. His rehabilitation will continue in Madagascar, where our local team will support him and monitor his progress.



A-Ranty at Geneva University Hospitals (HUG), with his soft toys.

We are delighted to have been able to contribute to his recovery and send him our very best wishes for the future.

J.D.

Sentinelles

Rue du Bugnon 42, CH-1020
Renens/Lausanne (Switzerland)
Tel. +41 21 646 19 46

sentinellesfondation

info@sentinelles.org, www.sentinelles.org

Banque Cantonale Vaudoise,
CH-1001 Lausanne

BIC / Swift BCVLCH2LXXX

Swiss francs account: IBAN CH12 0076 7000 5045 9154 0

Euros account: IBAN CH14 0076 7000 T511 2794 9



DONATION



Circulation: 18'000 copies (fr/de/eng)

Subscription: CHF 20.-/year, six editions

Publisher: Sentinelles

© Texts/photos: Sentinelles, unless otherwise stated

Layout: Katarina Simmer

Editorial Secretary: Lidiane 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.