

# Sentinelles

To the rescue of wounded innocence



## **Madagascar**

Help for the most disadvantaged in Antohomadinika

## **Senegal**

Combating violence against girls and young women

## **Switzerland**

Access to education to reduce inequalities

## Editorial Chasing his dreams

If there is a situation emblematic of the absence of prospects, it is that of Sidi, a young man whose life story is marked by social breakdowns and deprivation, between his native Congo and his adopted country, Senegal. Affected in his health by excessively heavy work, he has to undergo a costly operation on his spine. Unable to pay the hospital bills, he remained bedridden for months, overcome with pain and without any hope of ever walking again. It took the mobilisation of his siblings, a sympathetic neighbourhood and the help of Sentinelles for him to undergo an operation and gradually regain his mobility. Today, he is still too shaken to really believe in his good fortune, but we have no doubt that he will soon be able to smile when he finally goes back to his studies.

Promoting the inclusion and retention of children in school, ensuring that they can progress in their educational process, is essential to their future. Yet poverty, conflict, forced displacement, early marriage and pregnancy deprive them of schooling. Of course, the importance of these factors varies from one country to another, but one thing is certain: education is a lever for the development of societies and a formidable springboard towards autonomy. Sidi, like so many others, is accessing education and pursuing his dreams thanks to your generosity. This support has the power to change lives. It allows entire families to break the cycle of misery.

2022 is coming to an end and it is the right time to express our deepest gratitude for your loyalty and trust, but also to invite you to stay by our side. Our common actions and commitment contribute to a better social dynamic.

The entire Sentinelles team, in Switzerland and overseas, would like to wish you all the best for a happy end to the year, in the spirit of sharing and solidarity.



Marlyse Morard  
Director

## Event Solidarity Christmas Market

Sentinelles is participating for the first time in the Solidarity Christmas Market, which will take place from 15 to 17 December (timetable on <https://www.sentinelles.org>) in the premises of Pôle Sud, Jean-Jacques Mercier 3 in Lausanne. This market is an opportunity to combine gifts and solidarity, and to discover our jewellery, bags, and handmade accessories, which will make beautiful presents for your loved ones. For this occasion, we are looking for volunteers willing to participate in the stand. Interested? Contact us at [events@sentinelles.org](mailto:events@sentinelles.org). Thank you very much and we look forward to seeing you there!

## Urgent We are looking for a volunteer Graphic designer

Main tasks: Create and produce files ready for publication (flyers, brochures, posts for social media in particular) while bringing a creative kick. Please consult this offer on <https://www.sentinelles.org/>

## Niger A roof for Halissa

We are regularly confronted with families in need whose homes are dilapidated, excessively small, subject to the vagaries of the weather or lacking a minimum of security. The donations collected throughout the year are also used to meet some of the housing needs. So Halissa arrived at the Zinder Centre in 2018, at the age of 2, with advanced noma. Fortunately, she is recovering quickly and the hole in her chin left by the disease is gradually healing without a trace. The little girl lives with her mother, brothers and sisters. Her father is dead. During the last visit of our team, the little family's hut is discovered devastated by the wind and the rain. Only half of the walls remain, and the roof has completely collapsed. In emergency cases like this, Sentinelles intervenes and rebuilds a hut at a cost of about CHF 1200.-.

The Sentinelles team thanks you for your trust and reiterates its commitment to meeting the most urgent needs of the beneficiary families.

**Thank you for your support!**





## Columbia Discovering new careers

To enable the young people who were welcomed in the home to consider a career after school, Tierra de Vida (Sentinelles' name in Colombia) offers them a series of visits to businesses and local family enterprises.

The goal is to get them to know different professions through activities such as breeding to the sale of perfume. During these visits, children discover the career

path of professionals, and each participant explains how he managed to live off his/her project.

This exercise allows them to discuss the difficulties that may arise. Little by little, the young people realise that it is also possible for them to develop their little businesses at home. They have often expressed the desire to do so while thinking of involving their mother in the project.

A visit has recently been organised at Mrs. Dora and her companion who restored a farm, which is now used as a home and a local business for the sale of endemic plants and chickens.

Let's hope that these visits will give them the opportunity to consider new horizons.



## Congo The plight of albinos

In the Democratic Republic of Congo, the survival of albinos is a daily struggle. Halfway between denial of humanity and deification, this minority is hunted down because of prejudice linked to the colour of the skin. These "not like the others" blacks suffer exclusion and discrimination within the communities in which they live. The birth of an albino baby can also be a source of conflict. Very often, the women are abandoned by their husbands and find themselves in a very precarious situation. These broken families, without any assistance, face many challenges at the socio-economic, medical, and educational levels.

Sentinelles' support is therefore focused on these different areas. Sun creams for skin protection and medical/sunglasses are given and ophthalmological consultations are organised as albinos have very fragile eyes. School reintegration is ensured for those who have had to leave school due to lack of funds. Socio-economic reintegration is carried out in collaboration with APIA (Association for the Promotion and Inclusion of Albinos), enabling these families to look forward to a better future.

## Madagascar

# New programme in Antohomadinika



This year, a new programme was created in Antohomadinika, one of the most disadvantaged neighbourhoods in the capital Antananarivo, where Sentinelles has built a dispensary that it has been actively supporting since 1992.

In this densely populated area, the majority of the inhabitants live below the poverty line day to day, from low-income informal sector work: street vending, cart pulling, street sweeping, washing clothes and a multitude of other daily jobs. Some families cram more than 5 people into a 5 m<sup>2</sup> room.

Built on former rice fields, Antohomadinika was particularly affected by the bad weather and cyclones that followed one another at the beginning of the year. This new programme was initiated by emergency aid granted in February to some forty disadvantaged families who were victims of the floods. Most of them had not only lost the few possessions they had, but above all the meagre funds generated by their activity, as they were unable to work for many weeks during the cyclone period.

Initially, the aid consisted of providing food for the victims and offering them free access to health care in our dispensary for a defined period of time, so that they could, through small jobs and employment, save money to start a new activity that would generate a higher income.

During this intervention, we realised that many families in this neighbourhood were able to see an improvement in their situation with a little help. Sentinelles has therefore decided to continue its support by setting up a new programme of individual support and psychosocial follow-up. Priority is given to the most vulnerable: single women with children, elderly people, caring for orphans, sick or persons with disabilities, and various types of poor families who cannot provide for their children's basic needs.

**The aim of this assistance is to enable families to eventually meet their basic needs by their own means.**

Situations are examined on a case-by-case basis to meet the specific needs of

each person and it is the beneficiaries who, with the support and advice of our team, reflect on and implement their individual project.

Éveline, Monique and Marie were among the first beneficiaries of this assistance.

**Éveline**, 43 years old, had a stable job as a housekeeper in a wealthy family, but had to leave it when she became pregnant with her last child. After the birth, her husband abandoned the family of 5 children, including 2 daughters who are now adults. As the financial situation became complicated, Éveline and her two older daughters started working as washerwomen.

We gave her food rations so that she could save some of her income from washing clothes. After a few months, Éveline was able to start a small gargote and her whole family can visit the Sentinelles clinic. With this help, she and her family are slowly managing to get by.

**Monique**: her family moved to the neighbourhood in 1970, but when the father abandoned the family, Monique, was taken in by her paternal grandmother, and was only able to attend school briefly.

At the age of 21, she married a local man who made stoves which she sold in the town, both of them trying the best they could to support their 6 children. He died ten years ago, and Monique had to assume the survival of the family alone through various activities. Although she is now 63 years old and her children are grown up, she still has three grandchildren to look after, whose mother cannot because she suffers from a mental disorder.

The family helps each other, but in order to send two of the three children to school, they only eat once a day. The situation worsened with the passage of the cyclones at the beginning of this year and led to a support by Sentinelles. With food aid enabling her to eat properly and free treatment at the clinic, Monique is able to save money to start a retail coal business and treat a long-standing stomach problem.

“My grandchildren’s teachers have told me that they are becoming more focused



and starting to get good marks in school because they are not hungry,” she says. Now Monique manages to improve their living conditions little by little with her daily earnings.

**Marie** was born in Antohomadinika and has lived there for 38 years. She has been a widow since 2020 and the last of her 7 children was only 8 months old when her husband died. Courageous and resourceful, she has several small daily jobs in the neighbourhood in addition to crocheting, but funds she borrowed, she does not make enough profit.

Her eldest daughter, mistreated by her husband, came home with her child after 2 years. Marie makes the effort to send her 3 children of school age to school, but not without sacrifices. Very often, the family does not eat in the evening. As soon as she joi-

ned our programme, Marie was given food rations enabling her family to have 3 meals a day.

Relieved of this burden for a while, Marie was able to buy kitchen utensils and crochet materials. Thanks to her careful work, she is able to sell her work well.

Marie’s youngest child, aged two, had an inguinal hernia and Sentinelles funded the operation. Marie explains: “I had been thinking about saving money to treat my son for a while, but I can’t even get 1 ariary for it. I don’t know how to say thank you to Sentinelles for what they are doing for us, especially for the urgent medical help for my son.”

1 Malagasy currency, 1 Swiss franc is worth about 4,200 ariarys.



## Senegal Helping girls and women victims of violence

In Senegal, violence against girls and young women is a real scourge that destroys the social fabric and disrupts the daily life of the population, despite the prevention measures and strategies put in place in the country. This violence has become an almost commonplace phenomenon, causing multiple damage to the victims. According to the Demographic and Health Survey (2019), 10.4% of women aged 15-49 have experienced physical violence in the previous year. Among girls aged 15-17, 3% were victims of sexual violence. In addition, child marriage, a harmful practice that is still widespread in Senegal, affects nearly one in three girls. Thus, 32.6% of women aged between 20 and 49 had their first union before the age of 18 and 7.6% before the age of 15.

While existing structures provide emergency and punctual assistance to these young mothers and their children, long-term care and overall assistance to the family is lacking.

**The implementation of the new Sentinelles programme started in January 2022. Since then, 12 cases of victims of violence have been treated between Mbour, Dakar and Thiès.**

Among them, 11 girls and young women have been sexually assaulted and become pregnant. Two of them have a disability. One has an autistic disorder and the other has a hearing impairment. Their ages range from 12 to 23 years. The main

characteristics of their families are promiscuity and high levels of poverty. In addition, the strong inequalities between men and women deprive them of most of their rights.

This violence has dramatic consequences on the lives of these girls and young women. In addition to the emotional stress, the daily lack of self-confidence and the stigmatisation, the majority of them end up dropping out of school. They are often left alone to care for their children without means or support. The result is poor health for the new-born and a high rate of abandonment or infanticide. These disastrous consequences require the implementation of an effective approach adapted to the realities of the environment. This is why Sentinelles has developed a systemic approach to deal with them. The victim and his or her family are placed at the heart of its intervention.

### **Famata**

12-year-old Famata (assumed name) was raped by a 60-year-old man. Pregnant, she gave birth by caesarean section and was in intensive care for three days. Sentinelles provided medical care for her and her child. The girl's father is very ill and cannot provide for his family or the children's schooling, forcing them to drop out of school. The parents and their 7 children live in a 20 m<sup>2</sup> room. Initially, medical assistance was provided to the girl's father. X-rays, tests and care were provided. Today, he is gradually regaining his mobility. Secondly, an income-generating activity was offered to Famata's mother so that she could provide for her

family and contribute to the stability of the siblings. And finally, Sentinelles ensured the social and educational reintegration of Famata and her brothers and sisters. But Famata, still shaken by the rape, needs a lot of psychological support, with the listening and benevolence of her relatives and our staff. Ndella, Famata's mother, wrote us this little note: "You dried my tears thanks to your constant and unfailing support. You have supported me from all sides. At the moment, everything is going well, the children's schooling and my business. My husband used to need to be accompanied even to go to the toilet, but now he does it on his own. I thank Sentinelles from the bottom of my heart and may God preserve you from any harm."

### Aya

Aya, a 50-year-old mother of seven, Aya (assumed name) was abused for a long time by her alcoholic husband. She and her children lived in a small shelter, without doors or windows, without access to water or electricity. The family was completely insecure. Moreover, a fire in their shelter deprived them of the little they had. Faced with this dramatic situation, care was set up. In collaboration with the AEMO (Educational Action in Open Spaces) and community actors, the family was rehoused in a house with access to water and electricity and offering better security. School supplies have been provided for the children, who are resuming their education. As always, there is regular follow-up by the social worker at school level, in collaboration with the teaching staff and the administration. The effects are positive as the children's level has already improved significantly. Ndeye, in the fourth grade, had the best average in mathematics and is ranked fifth in her class. The same is true for her brothers and sisters, who have seen an improvement in their averages during the second term. This approach aims at empowering the whole family. If the care is not adequate or adapted to the realities of the environment, these girls and young women can quickly end up in prostitution. Sex tourism is unfortunately still very present in Mbour. The implementation of such a programme is therefore of paramount importance.



# A beautiful Christmas present: the access to education

**“Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.”**

**Nelson Mandela**

During this period favourable to solidarity and generosity, we are suggesting that you offer a very beautiful present to children who are deprived of it: the access to education!

Education is one of the key factors to a brighter future for each and every one of them. It is also, along with health, reintegration, and economic reinforcement, one of the focal points of our interventions. Thanks to the support you allow us to provide, more than 1'000 children are enrolled in a school, and around 200 youths benefit from a professional training.

Here are some examples of the costs:

**Colombia**, accompaniment of children during their school years and professional training.

**CHF 40.-** : cost of meals at the school cafeteria for one child during a month.

**CHF 381.-** : it allows a young person to train for a year (in mechanical, technical, or manual field).

**Madagascar**, educational assistance for children, reintegration assistance, support for students who are considerably behind in their studies or professional training.

**CHF 30.-** : yearly school fees for a child.

**Niger**, enrolment of children in a private institution, school assistance in the shape of holiday classes, monitoring of children during their schooling or professional training.

**CHF 100.-** : it allows a young person to follow professional training in sewing, mechanics, or woodworking.

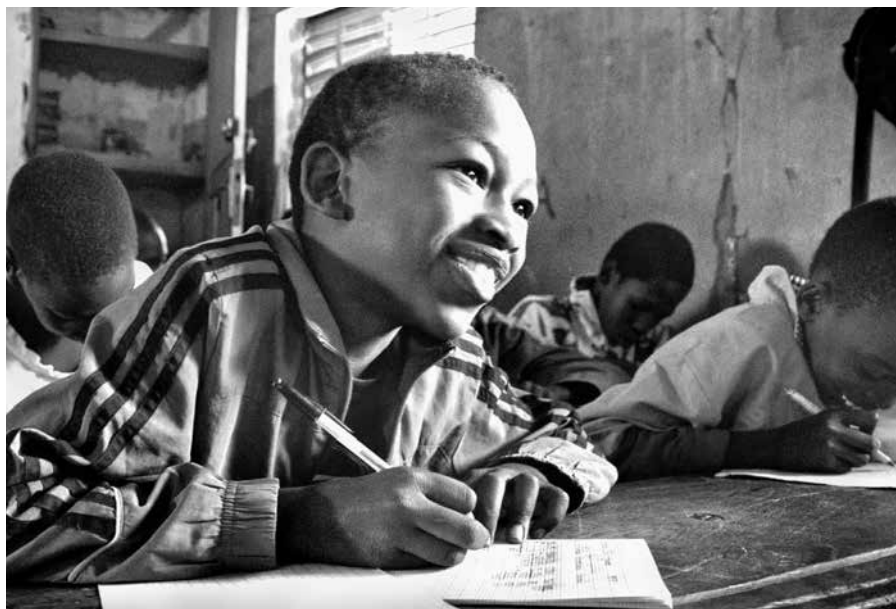
**CHF 250.-** : yearly school fees in a private school.

**Senegal**, literacy courses and follow-up of the Talibés during their schooling, professional training for young adults.

**CHF 18.-** : monthly fee for the training of a hairdresser.

**CHF 45.-** : Registration of a child in secondary school and school supplies for a year.

**Thanks for your support and fidelity**



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MAKE A DONATION



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