

Sentinelles

To the rescue of wounded innocence



World

Inequality of access to education

Madagascar and Niger

Beyond education, pedagogical support

Appeal

A roof for Sentinelles

Editorial

Can you imagine never having been to school? Or leaving shortly after the age of 8?

Of course, we remember dreaming of playing truant, being afraid of tests, exams... But can you imagine being illiterate, unable to read, write or count? Yet this is the tragedy facing hundreds of millions of children and adults.

Because education is a source of progress, social integration and fulfilment, we have made it one of the pillars of our actions. As you will see, in the countries where we operate, we offer support for schooling and/or training, in line with our credo: to provide personalised and reliable assistance, with a view to helping people become self-sufficient.

In Madagascar, for example, 350 children are waiting to receive exercise books, pens, school bags, erasers and slates. Without them, they will not be able to go to school. In Niger, eight young girls suffering from noma will have the chance to join an all-female boarding school. In Burkina Faso, we are setting up art therapy workshops to help children overcome the trauma of the disease.

Thank you for letting yourself be inspired by this newsletter, which in its own way marks the start of the new school year. Thank you, because without you, none of the above will be possible. Happy reading, a privilege whose significance we sometimes forget.

Marlyse Morard, Director

URGENT: Sentinelles needs a new home

The news broke in the middle of the summer, leaving us stunned. But we need to bounce back, and fast! The CHUV, **which has provided us with a free of charge home on the Cery site for the past 25 years** - for which we are extremely grateful - has terminated our lease with them on 31.03.2024.

In order to be able to continue to support women and children who are victims of the major distress that underpins our commitment, we are **urgently** looking for premises or a house of around 250 m², located in the Lausanne area and accessible by public transport.

Today, we're calling on you to support us and share your ideas and advice. Please do not hesitate to contact us by telephone (021 646 19 46), by post or by email at marlyse.morard@sentinelles.org.

**Thank you very much for your help.
Together, we'll make it happen!**

Events

Opération Tartines

On Saturday 9 September, our friends at Sentinelles Fribourg will be leading an «Opération Tartines» through the streets of the city founded by the Dukes of Zähringen. On Saturday 30 September, join us at our stand on rue Saint-Laurent in Lausanne (under the Coop City awning) for a chat and a bite to eat.

The sale of jam sandwiches - at a cost of CHF 1 each - will help fund our initiatives to help children who often don't have the chance to bite into these delicacies that evoke recreation and snacks.

Heading for Pôle Sud

The Centre socioculturel Pôle Sud, in the heart of Lausanne, is opening its doors to us and will be exhibiting Sentinelles' photographs from 4 to 13 October.

The opening of the exhibition will take place on Friday 6 October at 6pm in the Panama Room. It will be followed by a screening of Daniel Grandclément's remarkable documentary *The lost children of Mbour*, which deals with the fate of talibé children entrusted to the care of marabouts, children at the heart of Sentinelles' work in Senegal. This event is open to all, and we invite you to join us for a time of sharing and exchange.

Admission is free, and proceeds from the hat collection will go to Sentinelles and Pôle Sud.

Pôle Sud / Av. Jean-Jacques Mercier 3 / 1003 Lausanne



Concert

Giacomo Puccini concert at Saint-François church in Lausanne

On 1 June, more than 250 people attended a concert in aid of Sentinelles, featuring masterly performances of the *Messa di Gloria* and *Requiem* by the Italian maestro, by the Vevey Symphony Choir, Luc Baghdassarian, piano and conductor, Florence von Burg, violin, Gilles Bersier, tenor and Patrice Berger, baritone. The hat pass raised CHF 5,038.- thanks to the generosity of those present.

Well done and thank you to the artists and the audience!





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EDUCATION

Education is one of Sentinelles' four pillars of intervention, alongside Health, Reintegration and Economic Strengthening. More than any other, it is the pillar that fosters progress and fulfilment, not only for the individual, but also for the community in which he or she lives.

According to the United Nations, education is the key to personal development and to the future of our societies. It opens up opportunities and reduces inequalities. It is the foundation of enlightened and tolerant societies, and one of the main drivers of sustainable development.

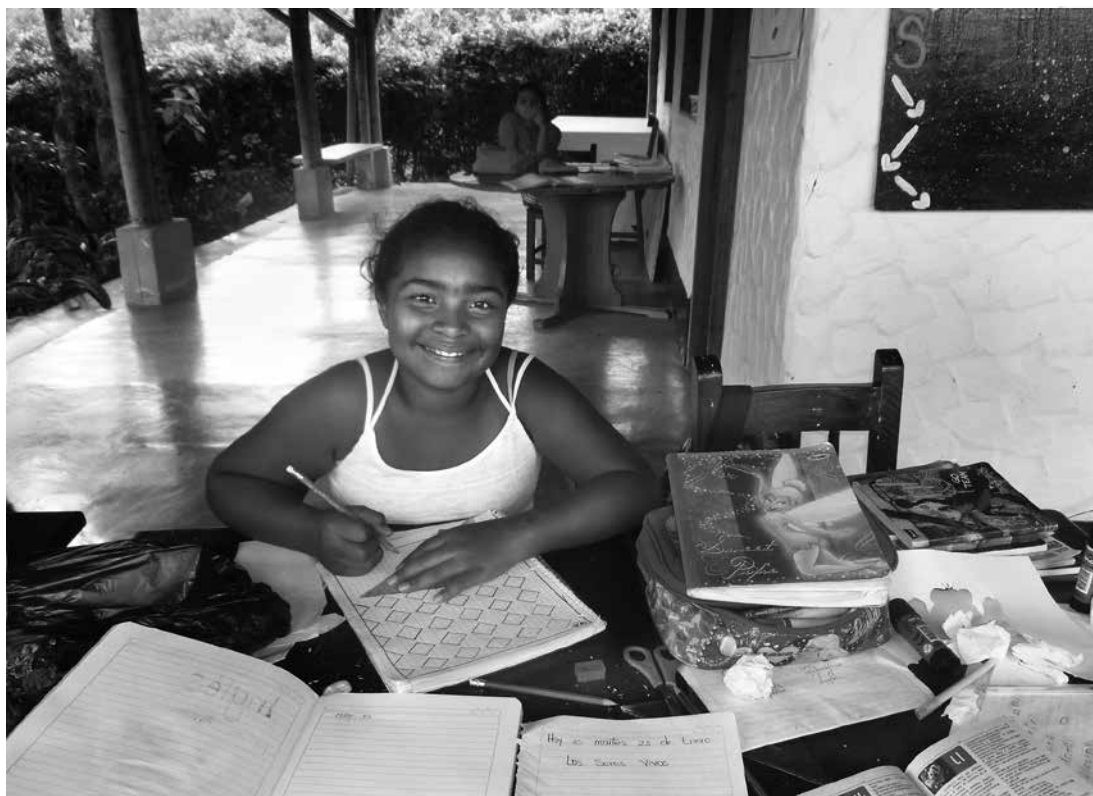
Every year, 40 million pre-school children around the world miss out on the all-important first year of education. And in developing countries, only a quarter of pupils leave secondary school with basic skills.

The Secretary General for the launch of the Guidance Note on Education and COVID-19 underlines in his video message of 4 August 2020 that “we are now facing a catastrophe that affects an entire generation and risks preventing humanity from exploiting an enormous potential, compromising decades of progress and further aggravating stubborn inequalities. The repercussions of this crisis on child nutrition, child marriage and gender equality, among others, are very worrying.”

“Education promotes socio-economic mobility and is a means of escaping poverty. Over the last decade, major progress has been made in improving access to education and increasing enrolment rates at all levels, particularly for girls. Nevertheless, more than 260 million children and adolescents were not in school in 2018, almost a fifth of the world’s population in this age group. In addition, more than half of all children and adolescents in the world do not have the minimum level of competence in reading and mathematics.”¹

This bleak picture does not spare the countries in which we operate, as the figures below show. As part of our overall support for children and young adults, access to education is one of our major concerns. In so doing, these actions support the achievement of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals, and in particular the United Nations’ Goal 4 on Quality Education: **“Ensure equal access to quality education for all, and promote opportunities for lifelong learning”**.

¹ United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 4: *Quality education*.



Intervention contexts and actions

In all the countries where Sentinelles operates, we provide support for schooling and/or vocational training, depending on the needs of each beneficiary. In addition, specific actions are implemented to provide children and young adults with good learning conditions and to develop their skills.

In Madagascar, all of Sentinelles' beneficiaries can join a school if they need to brush up their skills. In Senegal, we run literacy workshops that enable talibé children who have not attended school to acquire the basics of writing, arithmetic and reading. In Colombia, the children of the Tierra de Vida home (the name given to Sentinelles in Colombia) will soon benefit from educational workshops to create a radiostation with the aim of stimulating their ability to express themselves. Another means of expression is also being developed for children suffering from noma in Burkina Faso through art therapy workshops. Children who come to Switzerland for surgery attend the small school at the Maison de Terre des hommes Valais in Massongex, where they often make great progress during the few months of their stay. These non-exhaustive examples of actions carried out in our countries of intervention are part of contexts where inequalities remain high in terms of access to school and training.

Burkina Faso

In March 2023, nearly a quarter of schools in Burkina Faso were closed due to jihadist threats, affecting more than a million pupils. Most of these children have not yet regained access to education, depriving them of their right and seriously compromising their future. Food insecurity, which is hitting the East and Sahel regions particularly hard, is also contributing to school drop-out. Added to this is the fact that in crisis situations, girls are twice as likely as boys to drop out of school.

Niger

Access to education is a national priority in Niger. Despite this, half of all children aged between 7 and 16 do not go to school. Children living in rural areas are the most likely to be out of school, and only 8% of them have acquired sufficient literacy and numeracy skills by the end of primary school.

Colombia

Better off than the African countries in which Sentinelles is active, Colombia has primary school completion rates of 91% for boys and 95% for girls. Despite this, the education system is struggling to halt the drop-out rate, particularly in secondary education. In the Amagá region (near Medellin, where Sentinelles foundation is active), 76% of children complete only basic elementary education (10 years), 70% continue on to secondary school (14 years) and only 37% reach the second cycle (16 years).

Madagascar

In most regions of Madagascar, 8 out of 10 of the poorest children have no access to primary school. Those who do attend school find it very difficult to progress, as less than a quarter of them have acquired basic reading and mathematical skills by the time they reach the halfway stage of primary school. Dropping out of school is also common. It is estimated that over 40% of pupils do not complete their primary education. At secondary level, the rate is over 70%.



Senegal

The primary school completion rate is 44% for boys and 50% for girls. Many children do not have a birth certificate, which prevents them from taking exams and obtaining a diploma. The majority of talibé children sent to daaras do not attend school.

Democratic Republic of Congo

In the DRC, the primary school completion rate is 66%. Legally, primary education is free for all. In practice, however, many schools charge fees, as this is the only way to guarantee teachers a salary.

Switzerland

Switzerland is considered to have one of the best education systems in the world. 97% of children complete lower primary school and 99% of girls complete secondary school. School attendance is compulsory, as it is in all the countries where Sentinelles operates, even if the reality in these countries is often different, as the statistics above sadly show.

Supporting education for all

Although the education situation in Madagascar improved in the 2000s, it deteriorated considerably in the following decade. The COVID-19 pandemic has only exacerbated this state of affairs.

This is a major problem, especially as this is a country with strong demographic growth and a very young population. The under-14s account for almost 40% of the population and those aged between 15 and 24 for 28%. This is the case for Mialy and Ravaka, two sisters aged 12 and 14, patients in our care programme. When we met them, they were illiterate. Now they have joined our small literacy and refresher class. Many other children will be taken out of school by their parents, mainly for financial reasons. The figures vary greatly from region to region and between urban and rural areas, the latter being the most disadvantaged in

terms of education. The primary school completion rate is 58% and the secondary school completion rate is 26%.

Although it is theoretically free, enrolling your child in a state school represents a major expense. While tuition is free, there are numerous registration fees to be paid each term. In addition to enrolment and examination fees, there are also contributions to fund teachers, which the national education system is unable to pay because of its limited resources, travel costs and school supplies (see box) to be provided at the start of the new school year.

This observation about the education sector is clearly evident in Sentinelles' work in Madagascar. The needs of beneficiaries for school aid continue to increase from year to year, and we meet more and more families where several children have had to drop out of school.

When such cases are discovered, we help the parents to (re)enrol their children in a school; they then contribute according to their means, some-

times symbolically. This assistance is intended to be temporary, as the aim of our support is to help families become self-sufficient. Resource-building activities are set up with the parents so that they can eventually take charge of their children's education.

From an annual expenditure of around CHF 3,000 in the 2000s, this has risen to almost CHF 25,000 in 2022. Among the various types of expenditure required, the purchase of school supplies at the start of the new school year is a major expense for parents. Many of our beneficiaries only need this support to be able to send their child(ren) back to school.

This year, we estimate that some 350 children from families benefiting from Sentinelles programmes will need:

- nearly 4,400 exercise books in various formats and uses (writing, drawing, etc.)
- more than 1,300 pens, pencils, chalk and felt-tip pens
- over 500 schoolbag and pencil cases
- nearly 1,500 erasers, rulers, compasses, scissors, pencil sharpeners, slates, compasses, tubes of glue, etc.

For a total cost of more than CHF 5'200.-

Thank you for your support!



1. To make up for the shortage of teachers that the national education system was unable to provide, in the 1990's parents' associations began recruiting and funding teachers. Known as FRAM teachers, after the parents' association, or community teachers, who are often poorly qualified and do not have civil servant status, they now account for the majority of public school teachers (60%), half of whom are now partially subsidised by the State (sources: PASEC 2017, UNICEF 2023).



In Niger, the start of the 2023 school year will mean something new for eight young girls who have suffered from noma. Sentinelles and its partner Yara LNC will be opening an all-female boarding school in Mirriah in the Zinder region.

The aim is to guarantee good learning conditions and educational support for young girls who have not had this opportunity until now. They will attend the state school in Mirriah, the nearest town to their village, and will be supervised at the boarding school by professionals to do their homework and repeat their lessons in the evenings.

The families are involved in this project. The mothers will join the boarding school for a fortnight a year to help with the running of the school, while the fathers will contribute a few millet measures a year. The project is supported by the local authorities, who are well aware

of the importance of educating young girls for the future of their country.

Malika, who arrived at the Sentinelles Centre in May 2022 with a swollen noma, is one of the girls who will be joining the boarding school in October.

This boarding school project costs around CHF 1,500 per girl per year. The girls are provided with food, accommodation, schooling and educational support to ensure that they succeed in their studies.

We need your help to make this project a reality!



Children's personal development

School support and art therapy in Burkina Faso

Balkissa has already been through a lot at the age of 12. Noma took away part of her face and her right eye at the age of 3. After undergoing surgery in Switzerland, Balkissa dared to look other people in the eye without the bandage that had covered up the after-effects of the disease. When she returned to Burkina Faso, the schools in her village had closed because of the insecurity. Her parents found her a host family to enable her to go to school, with our support.

As well as helping children into school or vocational training, Sentinelles aims to encourage their personal development. For the past 3 years, workshops in physical expression, theatrical improvisation and plastic arts have been offered by art therapists, in addition to the educational support provided at our Centre during the summer holidays.

Two weeks of workshops for a group of 15 children, as well as their school supplies, represent a budget of around CHF 1,000.

Radio school in Colombia Learning through play, creation and practice

When he arrived in 2021, Ferlin, a 14-year-old in the Sentinelles home, could neither read nor write. Very aggressive, he had no friends his own age and could not express himself in front of his peers or control his emotions.

Thanks to medical monitoring and diagnosis, we were able to design a psychosocial support programme tailored to his needs. By working with him on his personal development and on managing his emotions, we were able to observe a significant change. Little by little, he learned to read and write.

Today, Ferlin has become an example for the other children in the home. He has self-confidence and expresses himself more easily in front of his friends. He has even put himself forward to become the spokesperson for the children in the home.

Ferlin has come a long way thanks to the music and art workshops offered at the home.

This year, he and his friends will be exploring a new way of communicating. Sentinelles has teamed up with an organisation that specialises in creating radio with children (APLO) and is proposing the creation of a radio school.

The aim is to set up radio programmes focusing on children's rights through a 7-month training course. Each session is designed so that the children take ownership of the theme and can give their point of view to their peers and adults.

A total of 22 children will be involved in creating this new experience.

We are asking for your support to make this training possible:

• Training fee	2'770.-
• School supplies	198.-
• Technical equipment	186.-
- 3 microphones	
- voice recorder	
- 1 portable loudspeaker	

Total budget sought CHF 3'154.-



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Euros account: IBAN CH14 0076 7000 T511 2794 9

Edition: 26'000 copies (fr/de/eng)
Publisher: Sentinelles
Layout: Judith Spinatsch
Translations: Volunteers and PerMondo
Subscription: \$30/year