

# Leo in 10 questions

## 1) What is the Leo Charity Organisation ?

In 1999 in Bamako, Mali, Juliette Soto became aware of the exclusion from society suffered by very young handicapped orphans. In order to support their cause, we created a registered charity in France (under the law of 1901): **Leo**.

Leo is the name of the first orphan the charity took under its wing; his smile became the emblem of the charity. He is now more than 20 years old and has made progress in spite of his serious handicap.



## 2) What are the objectives and goals of the charity ?

- **Support abandoned handicapped orphans** in Bamako, they are doubly excluded by being both orphans and handicapped.
- **Prioritise above all the interests of the children** when seeking solutions in their own country with local partners and the Malian public authorities to their funding requirements and their futures.
- **Put emphasis on their care and activities:** neurological consultations, orthopedic treatment, therapy, schooling, educational activities, teaching, play....

## 3) Where do they live in Bamako ?

Places for handicapped children to live do not exist in Mali. CAPF, otherwise known as the Bamako Children's Home, makes room for them in the absence of an alternative. The oldest child is more than 20 years old....

## 4) Who looks after them ?

Local Malian professionals: doctors, therapists, educators....The charity helps to pay for the

## 5) What are they suffering from ?

There are many different problems: Motor disability handicaps, mental illness, cerebral palsy, autism....

The number of children is growing constantly: there are 40 in 2017 with regular new admissions but also there are deaths due to the frailty of these children and the difficult sanitary conditions. In Mali, 1 child in 5 dies before the age of 5 years old.



## 6) What activities can they do ?

Some of the children are able to enjoy adapted schooling. All of them benefit from care: neurological, psychological, orthopedic, therapy... All of the group participate in educational and teaching activities, in outings: the museum gardens, the park with games, the zoo....



## 7) What are the results ?

Under a partnership agreement with the local ministry guardian, the charity provides **funding to care for them and to educate them**: the children are improving, they do not suffer from malnutrition and they are benefitting from ongoing medical supervision. We have been caring for some of them for more than 17 years, sadly others have short lives.

## 8) Where do the funds come from ?

From the generosity and loyalty over the last 17 years of sponsors, and donations from individuals, associations and businesses.

## 9) Who are the partners ?

**A Bamako** : CAPF, DNPEF, Santé Sud, Centre Bernard Vespieren, CRHP, AMALDEME. CNAOM, Spana.

**En France** : Santé Sud Marseille, Demisenya, Klali Nantes, Le Cœur au Mali Rodez, Blachère Apt, Rencontres des Cultures Saignon, Mairie de Mazan, Malik Nejmi, Local Graphics, Gestonline, Transcopy.

## 10) What are the charity's projects ?

These children are very weak, improvement in their care cannot happen without the permanent involvement of the Malian guardian authorities who determine the methods of intervention and the effectiveness of specific actions linked to the handicap.



Thanks to the generosity of sponsors and donors, the Leo volunteers are able to work to support handicapped orphans in Bamako and continue to seek funds to:

- **Strengthen local competencies** in partnership with the professionals of the Santé Sud Marseille and Bamako NGO.
- Study the feasibility of **family placements**, and professional and **social inclusion** for these children and young adults within the Malian socio-cultural context.
- Participate in the development of a **living space project adapted to the needs** of the growing handicapped children. 60% of them have passed the age limit for the Bamako Children's Home (5 years old) and 3 are now adults.

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