

## At Banganà,

there is a "nomadic school". They call it that because it is frequented by the children of the nomadic Wodaabe herders who spend the dry season there. This project wants to give continuity to a very fragile school but also much loved by the students and their parents.

It was 2011 when, with two small Genoese associations, we managed to create a primary school in Banganà. After years and various vicissitudes, the school is still there and the students as well.

For a school like this, also different from most schools in rural Africa due to the particularity of the students, all children of nomadic herders, this is already a success. But it remains a fragile school due to the geoclimatic context, aggravated by global warming, and the government's lack of interest in public education, especially towards nomadic populations.



In recent years, the Covid-19 pandemic and more recently an unexpected war in Europe, have had and still have serious consequences for the economy and the well-being of all and this also affects the solidarity with others, and even more when the other is distant and totally ignored by the mass media. The students of this school are really far from us, but they have started a path of emancipation that can lead them and their people towards better conditions of life without having to abandon everything and risk their lives, as unfortunately happens for many in Africa and elsewhere.

To carry out this project, we calculated a budget of € 2,835 to cover the entire school year and this is the goal to be achieved with this crowdfunding.

### The budget

Budget items	XOF	€
<i>Cantine scolaire</i> (students' meals)	720.000	1.100
Second teacher salary (60,000 XOF per month for 8 months = 480,000 XOF)	480.000	730
Didactic material (books, chalks, blackboards, mats ...) for 30 students	230.000	350
Supervision (reimbursement of expenses for local facilitator in Dakoro)	200.000	305
Unforeseen events (student healthcare costs and others)	230.000	350
<b>Total</b>	<b>1.860.000</b>	<b>2.835</b>

### The items of the project in detail

This school, which today has [30 students](#) distributed in different classes, apart from the walls and a teacher, has practically nothing of what we are used to find here in primary schools and therefore there is no lack of "permanent" needs.

- Among these, support for the "*cantine scolaire*" (the students' food) is and will remain fundamental. WFP (World Food Program, the United Nations agency dedicated to food) no longer supplies the "*cantine scolaire*" due to the reduction in its budget and pupils, especially those not resident in Banganà, can only attend school if parents are relieved to provide for their own food. It is therefore an indispensable point to which the greater part of the project budget must be devolved.
- For a better functioning of the school in Banganà, entrusted by the government to a single teacher, a second teacher, possibly a woman, is also important. She has to be found among the Wodaabe girls of other villages who have already finished the *collège* (secondary school). The female teacher would be a great facilitation for girls who, although very determined, are used, for cultural reasons, to behave with great discretion and shyness towards strangers, especially males. This teacher, who theoretically should be provided by the government, due to the number of classes, will instead have to be financed by us.
- The budget also includes a small set of teaching tools adapted to a particular context such as that of Banganà. In particular, blackboards and chalks are needed for the students and the books chosen by the teacher from among those available in the small town of Dakoro, at three hours' track from Banganà.



The supervision of the project is entrusted to M. Hassan Aliou (on the phone in the photo), who is also the trusted person who will receive the funds sent periodically for the realization of the project in Banganà and Dakoro, in agreement with COGES (the management committee of the school). M. Aliou has been playing this role since the school was created in 2011.

## The school of Banganà

My relationship with the camp of Banganà began in 2009, during a mission to Dakoro for Doctors Without Borders. From there the creation of the school in 2011 and the subsequent support.



After three years of support from the Ghazala Cultural Association and the Compagnia per le V.E.L.E., the school has become public and continues to exist today, albeit with a thousand difficulties. First of all, those connected with the "extreme" climate of the Sahel (with very scarce and erratic rains) aggravated by climate changes that make droughts more and more frequent and the nomadic breeding of cattle, the means of livelihood for the Wodaabe, increasingly difficult. Food aid for pupils is therefore becoming more and more

pressing. Then there are those connected with the state of public education in the country: lack (or absence) of learning tools and unmotivated and often absent teachers, especially in remote rural areas as is the case of the Banganà school.

What is not lacking, however, is the strong motivation of most families and students, and this is what makes the school still exist, after almost eleven years. The school, in fact, is the tool with which the people of Banganà want to make the Wodaabe and their children count more. They want them to arrive one day in Niamey, the capital, and reach positions that are important to them and their people. Among other things, in this school the girls have always been in the majority and are the most determined to continue, despite the difficulties.

## The localization of the project

The Republic of Niger is in last place in the ranking of the Human Development Index drawn up annually by the UNDP, the United Nations Development Program,

Like many other African states, Niger benefits only marginally from the natural wealth it has, which has always been uranium, of which it is one of the world's largest producers, and recently oil. Both of these

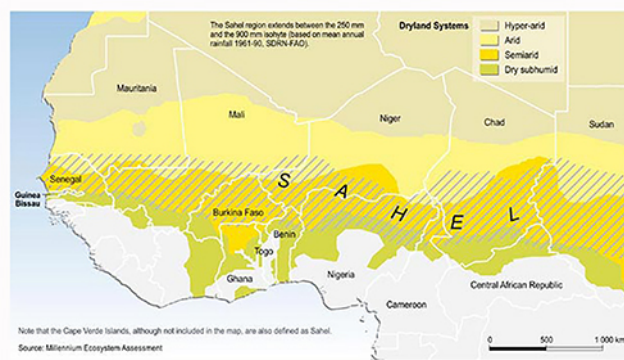
resources are managed by foreign countries, primarily France, the former colonial power. Not even the large influx of European money to combat migratory traffic has improved the situation; indeed it has caused the opposite effect with the resulting increase in prices.

Furthermore, the geographical location of Niger makes it particularly vulnerable from a food point of view: located in the heart of the Sahel, it benefits from scarce, localized and unpredictable rains in

three quarters of its territory, making it one of the countries where child malnutrition is endemic. The dry season lasts nine months, from October to June, and in recent years the rainy seasons have almost always been below expectations and needs.

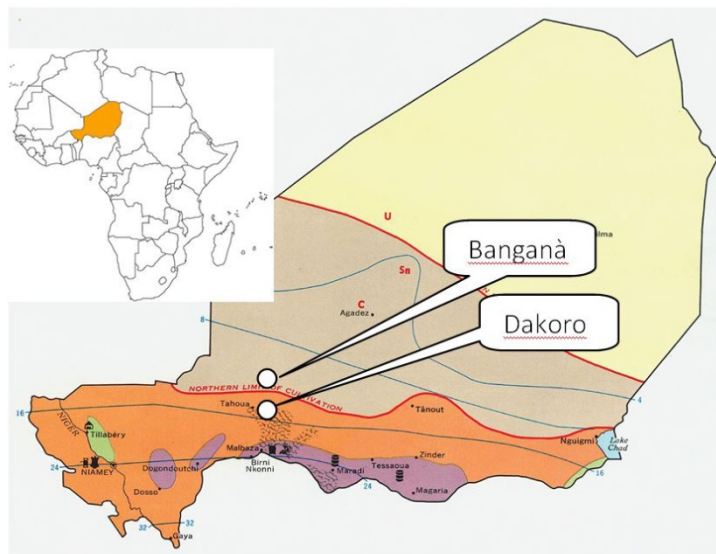
If we consider the extension of the semi-desert or desert territory (desert Sahel and Sahara) it is easy to understand that health and education, which are not a priority for the government, do not reach the entire population. This also happens because the north-center of the country is inhabited by populations of nomadic herders, especially Tuareg and Peul (the group to which the Wodaabe of Banganà belong) who are not taken into account in the allocation of resources by the government, as well as in other countries of the Sahel (Mali, etc.).

Considered unreliable and dangerous by sedentary populations linked to agriculture who are in power everywhere, nomadic herders are ignored precisely under the pretext that they are nomads. Public health deems them unreachable and does not manage the few existing health centers and the government does not open new schools because the children of the farmers would not attend them. The school of Banganà itself could only be created thanks to the support for three years of two Italian associations including Ghazala, partner of this project. All previous requests from the inhabitants had been ignored. Yet the school works. The school year coincides with the dry season and families gather around the permanent well, until the dry



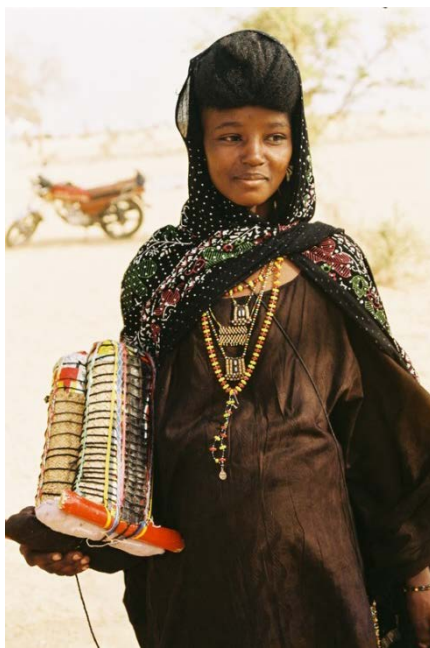
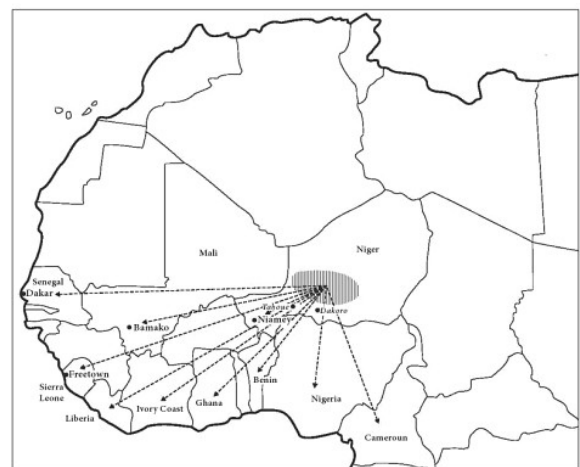


season, when they move 200 km further north where the pastures are located. When the schools opens, the rains have stopped and everyone goes back to Banganà.



The school is located in a region that is beyond the limit of cultivation, a limit established by the government to define the boundaries between the agricultural area and the pastoral area and which is based on annual rainfall, which here is less than 250 mm. Like the other villages/camps of nomadic herders in the region, Banganà also owes its existence to a permanent well that guarantees its inhabitants the opportunity to spend the entire dry season there. In fact, only the older boys travel further south with the livestock (zebus and dromedaries). However, this does not avoid endemic

malnutrition throughout the region which has its peak at the end of the dry season, between May and June. To cope with this, they need to be able to buy millet (the main diet) which inevitably increases in price in the worst period. To have this possibility, the mothers of Banganà leave the camp for one or two months during the dry season and scatter throughout West Africa (in Senegal, Mali, Burkina, as far as southern Nigeria and Cameroon) to sell traditional herbal remedies for which they are highly renowned. It is the married women who emigrate in what they call "exode", taking the youngest children with them. Girls replace them in housework. At the end of May, with the arrival of the first rains, families leave with their cattle for the pastures, 200 km further north, towards Agadez. In Banganà there are only a few elderly people and a few mothers with small children, as well as some young people to ensure security. But in October, with the end of the rains, they are all back, just at the beginning of the school year, and it is precisely this that allowed the establishment of a school.



The village/camp of Banganà is located three hours by track north of the small town of Dakoro (87,068 inhabitants in 2017, located about 700 km from the capital, Niamey), in the Maradi Region. The track that connects it to Dakoro is largely sandy and therefore little traveled. Compared to other Wodaabe camps in the area, Banganà is rather isolated and this is also reflected in the life and habits of its inhabitants. This isolation also excluded Banganà from the small aid and support circuit that allowed other villages in the region to have a school several years earlier. In Banganà, when the school was set up, no one could read or write, neither children nor adults. This certainly does not make it easier to start and manage a project there. Not being

able to count on anything written, nor on an e-mail exchange makes everything more "complicated". Only the mobile phone allows you to communicate, but even in this case the communication is only verbal, because none of the adults is able to read the text of a message. The visits to the school, possible and frequent until October 2012, were suspended following a serious incident: the kidnapping of six local aid workers and the killing of one of them in Dakoro on October 14, 2012.

Since then, the security situation in the area has only worsened. In addition to the danger posed by Malian Islamist organizations that make visits by foreigners virtually impossible without a massive armed escort, growing local banditry makes life difficult also for the Wodaabe. In fact, ambushes of collective transport vehicles leaving the villages on market days or on the slopes at night are increasingly frequent.

In conclusion, the Banganà school is, and will probably remain for a long time, a fragile school.

In this context, we believe that continuing our support and investing, as the pupils' parents and pupils themselves strongly want, in their education becomes extremely important.

## Who proposes the project



I am Francesco Sincich, anthropologist for Doctors Without Borders (MSF) since 2003 with numerous field missions in eight African countries and in Malta. Precisely during one of these missions, in 2009, in Niger, I meet for the first time the families of nomadic Wodaabe herders whom I will continue to frequent over the years (or to follow remotely, when it will no longer be possible to do otherwise), until today. I also had the privilege to participate in the establishment of the school.

In Italy, in Genoa, I am part of the Ghazala Cultural Association ([www.ghazala.cloud](http://www.ghazala.cloud)) and I am in the

board of the AAICA – Associazione Ambulatorio Internazionale “Città Aperta” (<https://cittaperta.jimdofree.com/>), an association that provides basic medical care to those excluded from the National Health Service, such as undocumented migrants. I often deal with immigration issues and I am a member of AFET - Aquilone ([www.afetaquilone.org](http://www.afetaquilone.org)) a non-profit organization that favors encounter and collaboration between people, families and social forces, promoting solidarity for all. I have also been making documentary films since 2009 and the first one, made with a local team, was "*Halima et Absatou*", a short film on childbirth spacing produced for an MSF maternal-child health program in Niger. From the success of the program, the effectiveness of a message conveyed with images in motion was immediately evident and so I continued to make films with the aim of showing people and populations that do not find space or that, when they do, they are subject to colonial stereotypes and clichés. Another aim, consequent to the first one, is to show women and especially young women, the least listened to, trying to offer their point of view on the topics covered. The genre is that of documentary films or docu-fiction, because inside there is always a little story, which serves to better explain the chosen topic.

## Who participates

Comité de Gestion (COGES) de l'école primaire de Banganà. President: Inye Yuguda, Banganà, Bermo District, Niger

Ghazala Cultural Association, Genoa, <http://www.ghazala.cloud>

Paris Global Forum, Paris, <https://www.parisglobalforum.org>

To get to know the context better there are four documentary films  
(to watch the film click on the links)



[LOKKOL. The school. Alwasi and Aikije \(also\) go to school.](#) 2013, 51 min. Shot in their camp and in the pasture area, 200km further north, it tells the story of the school's birth and shows the daily life and traditional celebrations of the Wodaabe.



[LOKKOL 2. Trip to Niamey.](#) 2017, 42 min. Shot in Niamey, it tells the journey of eight students, small and large, from the desert to the capital.



[TOBO. Four wodaabe girls in Niamey.](#) 2018, 27 min. Tobo takes over the travel story and becomes the protagonist of the film.



[Aikije and Hassana speak out.](#) 2019, 15 min. The "remote" interviews with the two older students who tell the difficulties of the school and of the girls in Banganà. For two years, a new teacher has restored the confidence of pupils and parents to the school and so today the interview with Hassana is no longer actual.