



## Circus as Bridge between Europe and Africa

[www.amoukanama.org](http://www.amoukanama.org)





*Once a mind is stretched to a new idea, it never returns to its original dimension (O. Holmes)*

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## Amoukanama! Or *that doesn't break...*

Amoukanama is a Belgian-Guinean adventure that originated in the hearts of Nathalie Vandenabeele and Alseny Sacko.

After their encounter in 2015 at Tagadart, a horse show, their common passion for circus brought them to Guinea, the birthplace of Alseny, to train with the young acrobats.

Without a training space or safe materials and with numerous problems in mind, the perseverance, optimism and generosity of these acrobats was so striking that after returning to Europe, Nathalie succeeded in getting the Wereldhuis in Roeselare excited to support their project: the construction of a real circus school in Guinea!

The first steps have been taken, the first subventions have been received, the land has been bought, a construction model has been designed, a team has been put together ... Now we are searching to make more people warm to help us realize this dream and start the construction proces.

Below we explain why headstands and somersaults can also be important for the development of a country and how this plays a role in the survival of many young people in Guinea. We would like to invite you to become a partner and see how this partnership can also be beneficial for your projects.



## WHO ARE WE

A GROUP of committed, professional artists. Both in Guinea and in Belgium, we can count on people within our team. This project originated in the hearts of many young acrobats in Guinea. Without funds, however, and discouraged by the many corruption, it was almost impossible to start a circus school from their situation. The help of West Flanders and artists from Belgium, brought their idea closer to reality.

The project is now being pulled forward in Guinea by a team of young entrepreneurs from Alseny's circle of friends. We have chosen individuals with the ability to take initiative, who can be trusted and who are hungry to prove themselves in life. In Europe, the project is mainly led by Nathalie, Alseny and Ballamoussa. Three young people from different backgrounds, but who are connected by their motivation and passion for circus. With her background as bio-engineer and internships in many countries, Nathalie has an objective view and ability to translate the story of the acrobats into a project. Alseny and Ballamoussa, raised in Conakry, have with their life experience understanding of how to deal with matters in Guinea and what is really necessary to bring about sustainable change.

The team is strengthened by the knowledge of Engineers Without Borders. They assist us with the technical aspects of the construction process. In addition, Circusplaneet Gent and Topsporthal Izegem helps us to provide a place for the creation of new shows. Shelter Structures becomes the producer and supplier of the first construction type of our circus school. There is still room for many more partnerships, just take a look below to see how you could work with us!



Alseny



Nathalie



Ballamoussa





## WHAT WE DO

Amoukanama works on various subjects, namely circus school, shows and exchange.

Amoukanama's first goal is to establish a professional *circus school* in Guinea. For this purpose it was decided to purchase a geodesic dome at Shelter Structures of 30m diameter and 11.5m height. We are currently working on a truss structure to place in the dome. This structure is necessary for the aerial acrobatics and possibly the lighting for later shows to be held in the dome. We choose to offer a three-year program based on the example of the National Circus School in Montreal. A first year includes the basis of the circus arts, while the next two years the students can specialize. In addition to the circus aspect, the necessary attention will also be given to general education. Everyone must be able to read, write and follow an integration course on Western culture. Themes such as climate change, women's rights and migration will also be discussed.

The school will also work with an international team of management, teachers and students. This is to increase the level and chances of success. Once 'graduated' the artist will be helped to find his first contract. A percentage of that will go back to the school. Once launched, the artist can continue to search for contracts independently.

Second, Amoukanama also works to create *spectacles*. Every year the circus school in Guinea will work on its own creation. In Belgium we already perform with a group of acrobats at different festivals, animations type of performances. We also submitted an application to start working on the creation of a new show with Guinean and Belgian artists at the end of this year. This inspired by 'migration, climate and women' in the frame of the European project Frame! Voice! Report!

Who wants to book us can visit our site.

[www.amoukanama.org](http://www.amoukanama.org)







Finally, we also work a lot concerning *exchange*. For example, we want to organize exchanges between Guinea and Belgium (and later also other countries) to train acrobats from different backgrounds together. Exchange also happens when Guinean acrobats give acrobatics, djembe and African dance workshops in primary schools in Flanders. Or later, when the school is built, and international circus artists come to teach / follow lessons in Guinea. We also want to create dialogue between young people in Africa and in Europe. This is to provide a realistic picture of the situations in both continents and to reduce illegal migration. For example, we are working with the VRT (Flemish Television) on the realization of a documentary for the Vranckx program about the 'face' of the many refugees who are illegally trying to reach Europe.

We also mention that Amoukanama organizes actions to raise the budget for the project. A concert, a walking tour, a yoga event ... Anyone who is motivated to share ideas is always welcome to contact us!

## PRESS

Several newspapers already gave attentions to our project...



# NATHALIE (28) STELT PROJECT VOOR IN HAAR OUDE BASISCHOOL Acrobate bouwt circusschool in Guinee

INGELMUNSTER

**Circusacrobate Nathalie Vandenaabeele (28) wil in het Afrikaanse Guinee een circusschool uit de grond stampen. Volgend jaar start ze met de bouw van de school op een eilandje voor de kust van hoofdstad Konakry. Nathalie stelt deze week het project 'Amoukanama' voor op haar oude basisschool.**

stuk grond aangekocht op het eiland Tamara, voor de kust van de hoofdstad. Bedoeling is dat we met de hulp van Ingenieurs Zonder Grenzen in de tweede helft van 2018 met de bouw beginnen. We twijfelen nog over een lichte koepelstructuur of een duurzame, maar duurzame stalen sporthal.»

## Mensen mondig maken

In de school staat uiteraard acrobatiek op het programma, maar ook andere circus technieken. «Daarnaast willen we de leerlingen ook taal- en rekenen meegeven, want ze worden vaak door hun mazen en schrijven, kunnen ze meer hun mannetje staan. Ook op administratief en computer vlak willen we hen bijscholen. Achteraf moeten ze sterker in het leven staan. Amoukanama is dan ook Guinees voor 'blijft altijd bestaan'».

## Show in Centrumschool

Met sommige acrobaten trekt Nathalie nu al rond om shows te geven. Gisteren keerden ze terug naar haar thuisgemeente Ingelmunster. De acrobaten gaven er een show in de Centrumschool, waar Nathalie nog mama Dine de opvang voor deze week volgen en nog workshops», vertelt ze. Wie het project wil steunen, kan terecht op de site <https://amoukanama.org>.



Nathalie met acrobaten uit Guinee in de Centrumschool. De man met de gele broek is haar vriend Assenic Sacko. JC

VALENTIJN DUMOULEIN

schillende doelgroepen bereiken die zo aan de armoede kunnen ontsnappen. We kunnen hen een opleiding en dus een zeker inkomen en een toekomst geven.»

## Trainen zonder zaal

Nathalie heeft in Guinee al ettelijke maanden getraind met lokale acrobaten, maar ze beurt er in moeilijke omstandigheden, zonder zaal en deffig materiaal. Gelukkig kunnen we rekenen op het doorzettingsvermogen en generositeit van onze acrobaten. Toen we in Europa waren, konden we het Wereldhuis in Roeselare overtuigen om ons te helpen met de bouw van een echte circusschool. De eerste subsidies zijn binnen en we hebben een

Toen Nathalie was afgestudeerd als bio-ingenieur in de medisch-ecologische sector. «Op die manier belandde ik in Costa Rica, waar ik werkte als paardenverzorgster- en begeleidster in een wellnesscentrum», vertelt ze. «Daarna ging ik aan de slag bij Cavalia, een groep die de wereld rondtrekt met acrobatische paardenshows. Gaandeweg besefte ik dat ik mij meer in luchtacroba- paardenshow Tagad'Art leerde ik mijn huidige vriend Assenic Sacko uit Guinee kennen. Via hem kwam ik in Guinee in contact met jongeren die aan acrobatie deden en zo is het idee ge- te starten. Bedoeling is dat we door middel van acrobatie ver-



## Amoukanama krijgt financiële steun

INGELMUNSTER Op de laatste donderdag voor de paasvakantie wandelden alle kinderen van de Sint-Jozefsschool en Centrumschool. De jongste kleuters wandelden 2 km, de oudste kleuters 4 km. De kinderen uit de lagere scholen konden kiezen tussen 5, 7 en 9 km. Hoe meer kilometers ze wandelden, hoe groter de opbrengst was. Wandelen is niet enkel gezond, maar de deelnemers lieten zich ook sponsoren voor die wandeltocht door ouders, grootouders, ooms, tantes, enz. De wandeltocht bracht 2.500 euro op. Dit bedrag werd overhandigd aan Nathalie Vandenaabeele en haar vriend, die een circusschool willen bouwen in Guinée. Directeur Jo Windels overhandigde de bon met het bedrag aan Nathalie en haar vriend, in het bijzijn van heel wat kinderen. (Patrick D. - foto FODI)



You can find out more on our website and through Google with the search word 'Amoukanama'

## PARTNERS

For now, our partners are:

- The province of West-Flanders
- Engineers Without Borders
- GBS Primary School
- Shelter Structures

These partners help us financially, with advice or materials. Maybe you want to join them and help us too?

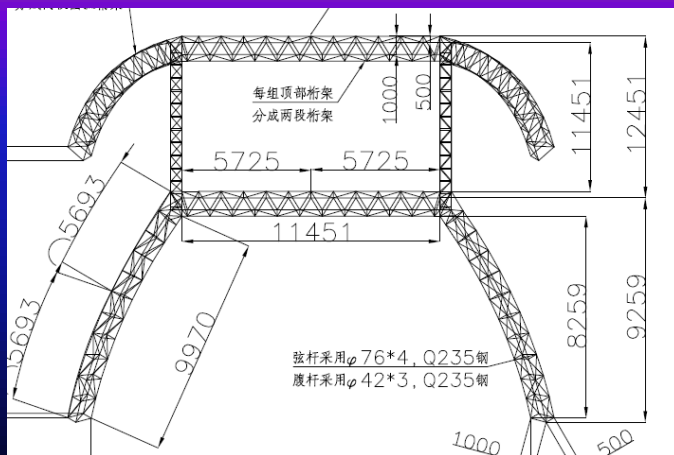




## WHERE DO WE SEARCH SPONSORING FOR?

If you decide to sponsor, this will be used to **build and equip the circus school in Guinea**. We are currently looking for budget for the truss structure and for the foundations. In addition, we will also need budget for the construction itself (manpower, transport materials). And, in addition to second-hand circus materials, we also want to purchase new circus materials, especially for safety reasons. Once you decide to sponsor us, detailed schemes and calculations can be provided.

Truss structure:



Dome:



## WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR YOU?

As a sponsor, your logo ends up on all our publicity. So on flyers, folders, website, facebook page. Depending on the extent of the sponsoring, we can also agree to put your mark on our T-shirts that the acrobats wear during animations at events. We can also print logos on the tent's cover. If you are a sponsor at the time of broadcasting our documentary (on the VRT), we can also have your logo displayed.

As a sponsor you can also use our group to provide animations for your events. Or to organize a different kind of teambuilding activity with African dance or building human pyramids. You are also invited to come and see our performances.

You are also always welcome to visit our circus school in Guinea. And you can get to know the acrobats in a personal way. As a sponsor you also get the satisfaction that you are helping to create something in this world where young people get a chance to work on their future. You help their dream come true.



## NEWS

As a Sponsor you are regularly informed of our activities. You can subscribe to a newsletter, but even without a newsletter we come to you with pictures and messages to show where we are with the project.

If desired, you can always request information or visit one of our activities yourself.





## CONTACT

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