

VILLAGE PRODUCTION PRESENTS

IN CO-PRODUCTION WITH GROUPE SOS

L'ÂGE D'ÊTRE LIBRE

THE AGE OF FREEDOM

A FILM BY
BENJAMIN GÉMINEL
AND ALICE ODIOT

MUSIQUE ORIGINALE : MAREK HUNHAP / IMAGE ET SON : BENJAMIN GÉMINEL / MONTAGE : BENOIT SAUVAGE / ÉTALONNAGE : DAVID BOUHSIRA / MIXAGE : BENOIT FORT ET STANCES STUDIO
PRODUCTION LE VILLAGE PRODUCTION : THOMAS BORNOT, CYRIL MONTANA | LES ÉQUIPES DU GROUPE SOS
ILLUSTRATION : ALISON DEFOORT

L'ÂGE D'ÊTRE LIBRE

**A documentary by
Benjamin Géminel & Alice Odiot,
immersed in Groupe SOS' non profit organisations and facilities**

On the periphery of our vision, men and women live in the gaps of society, falling in the cracks of inequality and exclusion. Invisible to many, they are nevertheless trying to (re)build themselves and find their place.

L'Âge d'être libre (The Age of Freedom) is a portrait of these resilient, but crippled, lives, supported by committed teams on the ground. Through the eyes of Alice Odiot and Benjamin Géminel, the film offers a rare glimpse into the lives of those we no longer see. It sheds light on the daily lives of these invisible people, and bears witness to the actions, commitments and solutions that give them back their hope and dignity.

For over nine months, the camera witnessed their hopes and their quest for freedom. A raw and sensitive immersion into the heart of Groupe SOS' facilities, where the voices of those who are never heard finally take their rightful place.



Carte blanche for two directors

**« Political abandonment has relegated men, women and children to the outskirts of the city. I look for humanity in places like prisons, which are supposed to have erased all traces of them. When Village Production asked me to take a look at the work of Groupe SOS, which has a strong presence in Marseille, among the most invisible of us, I immediately agreed. Benjamin Géminel, photographer and director, co-signed this work. His sensitive eye and his photography have brought out a special light on these faces that we pass in the city but never really see. »
Alice Odiot, Film Director**

Groupe SOS, a leading non-profit organisation founded in Marseille in 1984, is committed to tackling social and environmental challenges in France and abroad. Alice Odiot (winner of the Albert-Londres Prize in 2012 for *Zambie, à qui profite le cuivre?*) and Benjamin Géminel plunged into the heart of this reality, camera in hand, following those who live on the margins of society, as well as those who support them, in shelters, housing facilities, reintegration programs and development aid programs.

For 70 minutes, *L'Âge d'être libre* shed light on life stories, faces and voices that are often forgotten. An immersion into the heart of places where, every day, a future is slowly coming to life.

This carte blanche is part of Groupe SOS 40th anniversary celebrations around the theme "Mobilised for social cohesion, for 40 years and long to come". Rather than focusing on the past, the Group SOS is resolutely looking to the future.

To mark the occasion, Groupe SOS has published the first barometer dedicated to social cohesion with OpinionWay, revealing that 77% of French people consider social cohesion to be essential. Yet more than one in five feel excluded, underlining social fractures.

Groupe SOS has also kicked off a wide-reaching consultation to reimagine the future of our society and pinpoint the crucial fights to undertake for stronger social cohesion.

This documentary is part of a commitment: to raise awareness and mobilise around the realities of exclusion and social support. *L'Âge d'être libre* is not just a documentary, it's a call to change the way we look at things and for collective awareness.

**To those whom many people dare not look at.
To those whom society tends to make invisible.
For those old enough to be free.**

At the heart of the documentary: 6 interwoven stories

Jean-Luc, professional integration with Acta Vista

In the Hautes-Pyrénées, the Abbey of Saint Sever de Rustan is being renovated by Acta Vista. Acta Vista promotes the professional integration of people who are far from employment, by training them in the trades of heritage restoration. The non-profit offers workcamps where teams acquire skills in masonry, stonemasonry or carpentry, while benefiting from support towards employment.



Jean-Luc prepares his professional qualification as a «mason of ancient buildings», and trains in eco-restoration in the 12th-century monastery.

A man sentenced for domestic violence, accompanied by La Cordée in Nîmes



80% of men convicted for domestic violence deny the charges against them. 40% of convicted men re-offend, according to the french High Council for Equality.

CJPP centers (Contrôle Judiciaire avec Placement Probatoire des auteurs de violences) were created in 2020, following the awareness generated by the MeToo movement. These centers accompany perpetrators of domestic violence, offering them follow-up and psychological support, and accommodation if necessary. The aim of CJPPs is to prevent repeat offending, by helping perpetrators become aware of the consequences of their actions and change their behavior.

In Nîmes, La Cordée (Groupe SOS Solidarités) was one of the first centers to support abusive partners. Since its opening in 2020, 200 people have been discharged. Less than 5% of those monitored have re-offended.

Symphonie, a woman with a crack addiction, accompanied by Le Sleep In in Marseille

In Marseille, crack cocaine is available in the city center at all hours and at low prices, fueling a major health crisis. Opened in 1996, the Sleep In Marseille (Groupe SOS Solidarités) is a reception and support center for drug users. The center offers a place to listen, and to be guided towards care and social support.

To limit the transmission of disease, prevent injuries caused by makeshift pipes and reduce violence around the sharing of equipment, Sleep In Marseille has distributed 19,200 crack pipes in 2022. By 2024, 55,000.

Symphonie is 34 years old. She has been followed by the Sleep In since 2020.



This documentary interweaves 6 stories, 6 journeys which, without claiming to be exhaustive, illustrate the diversity of the actions carried out by Groupe SOS' teams, at the heart of our major social challenges.

These stories are about invisible people on the margins of society, and some of the images can be quite disturbing. Please find some information and our convictions on the next page.

Residents of Villa Saint Camille



On the Côte d'Azur, Villa Saint Camille (Groupe SOS Seniors) is a unique place where people from very different backgrounds live together: former homeless people, ex-drug users, retired people and even tourists. This atypical place fosters solidarity and a social mix, far removed from conventional accommodation structures or facilities for the elderly. Rents are adapted to each individual's resources, guaranteeing access to decent housing, and support without distinction.

Lydia and her mother Habiba, hosted and accompanied by La Minoterie

In Marseille, La Minoterie (Groupe SOS Solidarités) provides a home for homeless people. The facility offers accommodation, social support and healthcare services.

Although these places are not specifically designed to welcome people in exile, faced with a lack of solutions and an increasing number of homeless people, we offer them unconditional welcome.

Many of the people welcomed in La Minoterie suffer from pathologies, aggravated by life in the streets, where extreme conditions and lack of care make health issues more frequent and more serious.

Lydia is followed there, accompanied by Habiba, her mother.



Sitraka, accompanied by Santé Sud in Madagascar

Eight women die each day in Madagascar from complications related to pregnancy or childbirth. In Madagascar, the NGO Santé Sud (part of Groupe SOS) is working to improve access to healthcare. Rather than sending in foreign doctors, local health workers are trained and supported. Santé Sud trains midwives and provides the monitoring of practitioners in these community birthing centers. The villages provide the buildings.



Santé Sud has set up 13 Community Birthing Centers in rural areas of Madagascar. In Fifanasoavana, a rural commune in the Haut Plateaux region, there are no cars and no roads. The first health center is 3 hours 30 minutes' walk away. Sitraka can now be treated close to her home.

Since its opening in 2023, the Community Birthing Center has assisted 66 women in childbirth.

In this country, as elsewhere, Donald Trump's decision to dismantle USAID will have serious consequences for populations, especially women.

To find out more : Groupe SOS' commitments

Behind the documentary's images, our teams' actions are fueled by their convictions: combating violence, harm reduction, professional integration, access to housing, right to health, development aid... Groupe SOS has been fighting these battles with conviction since 1984.

For each story presented in the film, we share our guiding values and recommendations, which you can explore in greater detail in our manifestos and position paper.

Explore our advocacy.

Giving everyone a place in society : professional integration at Acta Vista

Our conviction: No one is unemployable. People who are distant from employment – those who, because of a lack of qualifications, experience or personal difficulties, are excluded from the workforce – are at the heart of our commitments.

With *Acta Vista*, they restore monuments and learn heritage skills. With *the Nature Brigades*, they protect and maintain natural areas. With *Traiteur Té*, they gain access to the excellence of the catering professions. By combining high standards and support, we rebuild career paths.

Aging well should not be a privilege:

Our conviction: Isolation and insecurity are increasingly affecting the elderly, exacerbated by the often prohibitive cost of some retirement homes.

At Groupe SOS, our nursing homes are non profit and are open to the local community. We have also introduced a solidarity extra-rent, where everyone pays according to their means, guaranteeing access to housing and support according to their needs for all.

Because ageing well should not be a privilege, we are developing alternative and accessible solutions.

Combating domestic violence : take charge of the perpetrators too

Our conviction: To combat domestic violence, it is essential to support both victims and perpetrators. Groupe SOS is one of the few associations in France to act on the entire cycle of violence against women.

We believe in alternatives to imprisonment, and assert that prevention, empowerment and multidisciplinary support (social, psychological and educational) are crucial to combatting recidivism and strengthening victim protection.

A roof to rebuild : unconditional welcome

Our conviction: Access to accommodation is a fundamental, unconditional right, essential to rebuilding one's life.

It is the foundation on which social, professional and family life, often shattered by years of precariousness, can be rebuilt.

Furthermore, Groupe SOS is convinced that access to healthcare is just as crucial. Life on the streets or in exile weakens profoundly, both physically and mentally. Appropriate and accessible medical care is essential to enable each individual to find the path to recovery.

Harm reduction : a different approach to drugs

Groupe SOS defends an approach based on harm reduction. We advocate a health policy focused on prevention, access to care and support, rather than punishment. In particular, we advocate the decriminalisation of all drug use, as criminalising users stigmatises them and distances them from help structures. What's more, spending on repression is considerable, when it could be reinvested in prevention and care.

Acting without replacing : strengthening local capacities on the international front

Our conviction: To be sustainable, development aid must be localised. It must not create dependency, but rather strengthen local capacities, and local players. Rather than imposing solutions from France, we work with them to build long-term projects adapted to their realities on the ground in the 50 countries where Groupe SOS operates.

Production



Benjamin Géminel

Benjamin Géminel is a photographer and film-maker. Self-taught photographer, he began by working on film with homeless people from Nanterre, then turned his attention to the suburbs and youth. When he became Former French President François Hollande's official photographer during his campaign, he continued to embody the suburbs' view of the future president. He made his first documentary film, *Congo Paradiso* with child soldiers. *Loin des quartiers nord* is an intimate portrait of a young man of Comorian origin. Tiébélé recounts the anguish of villagers surrounded by jihadist groups. He is currently working in West Africa. Benjamin Géminel photographs and films as close to people as possible, choosing to approach all his work as personal research.

LeVillage Production

Le Village Production is a production company created in 2020 after the theatrical release of the film «Cyril contre Goliath», co-produced and co-written by Thomas Bornot and Cyril Montana. They wanted to perpetuate this adventure with a structure that would enable them to continue producing films with social impact. Their first subjects were produced for Arte Journal, and a feature-length documentary deconstructing preconceived ideas about exiles is due to hit cinemas in 2025: «Welcome to Europe».



Alice Odier

Alice Odier has been observing the prison administration's management of delinquency in Marseille for ten years. She co-wrote *Des Hommes* with Jean Robert Viallet (Acid Cannes 2019 selection, best film at the London International Documentary Festival) and *Stups* (scheduled for theatrical release in 2025). She has conducted several investigations for Arte, France Télévision and RTBF. *Made in France*, au service de la guerre, shot between Gaza and Europe, recounts the instruction of the first complaint against a French arms manufacturer for complicity in war crimes. Her first documentary film, *Zambie, à qui profite le cuivre?* won the Albert Londres Prize in 2012.

Technical and artistic data

Title : L'Âge d'être libre
Subtitle : An immersion in the facilities of Groupe SOS
Director : Benjamin Géminel and Alice Odier

Image and sound : Benjamin Géminel
Editing : Benoît Sauvage
Calibration : David Bouhsira
Mixing : Benoît Fort and STANCES Studio
Original score : Marek Hunhap
Co-Production :
Le Village Production :
Thomas Bornot, Cyril Montana
Groupe SOS : Marine Creuzet, Emma Redkine
Genre : Documentary
Running time : 71 minutes
Format : 2:1 – Color – 4k Broadcast
media : DCP, Pro-Res
Country : France
Subtitles : FR/US (provisional)
Audiodescription (planned)

Filming:
July 2024 to January 2025

Shooting locations, in order of appearance: Saint-Sever-de-Rustan (Hautes-Pyrénées), Marseille, Théoule-sur-Mer (Alpes-Maritimes), Nîmes, Fifana-soavana (Madagascar)
Trailer: https://www.youtube.com/watch?_sc=Njc0NzU5NSM3M-zAwNA%3D%3D&v=gyoul47re-KA&feature=youtu.be

Access to the film :
Ask Groupe SOS :
communication@groupe-sos.org
Ask Village Production :
cyril@levillageproduction.com or
thomas@levillageproduction.com

groupe-sos.org/le-documentaire

GroupeSOS

Entrepreneurs for common good

Groupe SOS is a non-profit organisation committed to fostering social cohesion. It develops associations and social enterprises, united by their social and environmental commitments.

Its initiatives are structured around two main priorities:

Managing non-profit facilities dedicated to youth, healthcare, vulnerable individuals, and the elderly.

Preparing for a sustainable and inclusive future through initiatives for ecological transition, regional revitalisation, responsible businesses, and access to culture.

Secular and non-partisan, it promotes a genuine social vision focused on the common good. With 22,000 employees, 2 million beneficiaries each year, and a presence in 50 countries, Groupe SOS demonstrates that large-scale impact is both desirable and achievable in building a fairer and more inclusive future.

**Fonds de dotation
GroupeSOS**
pour le vivre-ensemble



Support Groupe SOS' actions on dons.groupe-sos.org

Groupe SOS has an endowment fund, a tool that collects donations to support project serving the public interest. The purpose of the Endowment Fund for Social Cohesion is to amplify the public-interest initiatives supported by Groupe SOS, by mobilising additional resources to act more closely to needs and encourage innovative solutions to major social and environmental challenges.

Thanks to your donations, Groupe SOS can provide additional resources to its non-profit organisations to reinforce their actions, respond rapidly to emergencies and crises, and support initiatives with a strong social and environmental impact.

For example, the fund has helped improve the reception of Ukrainian refugees and provided emergency relief for people affected by the cyclone in Mayotte in 2025.

Groupe SOS' endowment fund contributes to building a fairer, more sustainable world.

100% of donations received are redistributed to finance public-interest initiatives and support social and environmental causes.

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