



ANNUAL REPORT 2021

Message from our founder, Angélique Kidjo

Dear Friends,

I'm so happy to introduce you to our 2021 Annual report.

Every time I have received information about the team's progress this year my mind has been blown away. Our organisation is on a pathway towards great things, and this report illustrates how we are changing the lives of girls and young women together.

I want to thank all of you for standing behind our collective vision for a stronger and more impactful Batonga. For believing that every adolescent girl and young woman in rural Africa deserves a clean shot at a fulfilling life. For always standing by our team, and giving us your trust and friendship as we do this important work.

As we take in these successes, and as you read through these pages, I hope you feel proud for being part of this journey with us. I am - as always- forever grateful for your support.

I want to thank the team at Batonga who works so hard to make all of this happen .

And as always, my heart belongs to the thousands of smart, brave and fearless girls on my continent who work so hard to shape their futures for the best.

We will continue to be by their side. And we hope you will be by ours!

With gratitude and love,



Angélique Kidjo
Co-Founder and Board member



Message from our Executive Director, Emily Bove

Dear Batonga community,

2021 has been an incredible year for us. Our small but mighty organisation has risen to a new level of impact and professionalism thanks to the amazing hard work of our team. In these pages, you will get to witness what happens when an organisation like ours is given the trust and financial resources it needs to scale. In 2021, we worked hard to:

- secure a new wave of resources that will allow us to scale and expand in 2022
- get our team ready for our expansion in Benin and our launch in Senegal
- pilot our new Young Women's Business Circle project and officially launch our Women's Economic Empowerment program
- fine-tune our radio project and build new audiences of up to 200,000+ people in rural Benin, and
- implement a unique advocacy project with and for hundreds of francophone African advocates and changes makers in over 22 countries

All these accomplishments wouldn't be possible without you. You've continued to cheer us on, support us, make generous donations to our work, and champion Batonga everywhere you go. Myself and the team have been blessed with direct coaching, support and mentoring from some of our donors and friends: this is what makes the Batonga community unique. We move forward together, and we have felt that support in 2021 more than ever. On behalf of myself and the team, thank you for that.

2022 is going to be more than we could ever wish for. I can't wait for you to witness this growth and change by our side. Until then, enjoy this report, and again, from the bottom of my heart, thank you!

With gratitude,



Emily Bove
Executive Director





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Transforming her potential into power

Our mission, values, and vision

The Batonga Foundation envisions a safer, healthier, and more equitable world in which all women and girls can thrive.

The Batonga Foundation's mission is to equip the hardest-to-reach girls and young women with the knowledge and skills they need to be agents of change in their own lives and communities. Girls and young women in rural Africa don't lack potential: they lack opportunity. Singer and Activist Angélique Kidjo founded Batonga in 2006 to help African girls and young women live safe and fulfilling lives, and to become the leaders they can be in their households, community and on the continent. Through our programs in rural Benin, girls can access knowledge, skills and resources when they need it the most. From leadership skills and knowledge about their rights to financial literacy and seed funding to launch a business, Batonga accompanies rural girls and young women from 14 to 30 to ensure none of them are left behind, and that communities - parents, mentors, local leaders- come together to support and celebrate their accomplishments, dreams, and solutions.

In 2021, the Batonga Foundation continued its work to empower the incredible adolescent girl leaders of central Benin, piloted an exciting new program for young women entrepreneurs, and took to the global stage to amplify the voices of African women through our advocacy and thought leadership platforms. Batonga also used 2021 to start planning the expansion of its reach beyond central Benin to the northern province of Atacora as well as the country of Senegal. These expansion efforts will be put into action in 2022.

We are proud to share our 2021 achievements with our supporters who continue to stand with us as we work to transform her potential into power! We thank you!

Our Programs & Projects

Batonga has three programs: the Adolescent Girls Leadership Program (AGL), the Women's Economic Empowerment Program (WEE), and the Advocacy for Gender Equality Program (AGE).

ADOLESCENT GIRLS LEADERSHIP

- Leadership Clubs
- Budding Citizens project
- Radio project

Our AGL Program's objective is to identify and equip the most vulnerable adolescent girls in rural Benin and to provide them with safe spaces in which they can access the life and financial literacy skills they need to live dignified, safe, and independent lives.

WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

- Young Women's Business Circles
- Training Centers

Our WEE program was launched in 2019 to accompany the adolescent girls we had been supporting for several years into adulthood. Its main objective is to support young women in the acquisition of financial literacy and business skills, providing them with mentoring and a supportive network of peers, as well as tailored accompaniment as they launch and grow their businesses to ensure the sustainability of their incomes.

ADVOCACY FOR GENDER EQUALITY

- Conversations For Africa
- Nos Voix Comptent

Our Advocacy for Gender Equality Program aims to ensure that the voices and ideas of African, particularly French-speaking, young women and girls are amplified and listened to at the global level. The program hosts two initiatives: Nos Voix Comptent and Conversations For Africa.



"In the clubs, we learn a lot of things and we discuss. One lesson that touched me and helps me in my life is building self-confidence and self-esteem. Everything we learned in this lesson is for our whole life. Developing confidence and esteem helps us in everything we do for ourselves and our communities. We learned how. I am happy for the sessions we have in the clubs."

**Joséphine, Batonga Leadership Club Member
Covédji village, Savalou, Benin**

Empowering Adolescent Girls

A key activity of Bataonga is empowering adolescent girls to be leaders and agents of change in their own lives and communities through knowledge and skill building, creating solidarity networks between girls, and providing access to local mentors and resources.

Adapting through COVID-19

In 2020, Batonga's Adolescent Girls Leadership Clubs (AGLC) had reconfigured themselves into 173 mini-clubs to decrease the number of girls per group during the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic in Benin. In Q1 of 2021, AGLCs returned to their original configuration with 103 Clubs across 15 communities serving 2,506 active participants girls ages 12-18 years old.

In 2021, Batonga's Adolescent Girls Leadership Clubs:

- **Provided access to weekly girl-only safe spaces** where they gain a local female mentor's support, physical and emotional security, as well as rights, health, and financial literacy knowledge;
- **Built peer networks and social capital** that gave girls a sense of solidarity with their peers and created supportive social networks and safety nets for otherwise socially isolated girls; and
- **Improved the livelihoods, confidence, and wellbeing of girls** by creating opportunities for them to engage in income generating activities and to learn small business management skills.

Our Impact In Numbers

**103 AGLCs
across 15
communities**



**Serving
2,506 girls
ages 12-18**



"I am proud to be involved in raising adolescent girls with Batonga programs. We facilitate several lessons. Take for example the lessons on puberty and its changes. We talk about their bodies, physical changes, menstruation, and the importance of parent-child dialogue. With home visits to the participants as well. We use these sessions to talk about leadership, the fight against violence, the importance of sexual health education. What makes me very proud is to see the positive behavioral changes in the participants as the sessions go on."

**DJETO Mireille, Batonga Mentor Leadership Club Member
TOVIGOME village, Bohicon, Benin**

"Budding Citizens" project

The AGLCs spent the majority of 2021 exploring citizenship, civic engagement, and leadership through our "Budding Citizens" project funded through our partnership with the Open Society Foundation of West Africa. Batonga's program staff worked closely with a local Beninese artist to develop a richly illustrated curriculum module exploring 11 lessons on critical topics around girls' leadership, being an active and engaged citizen, and exploring civic duties in Benin.

Mentors leading the way

Mentors spent the year working through this curriculum module with Girls Clubs in-person as well as via Batonga's Radio Lesson Program. Batonga's Mentors recorded a series of hour-long conversational explorations of the topics covered in the Budding Citizens curriculum which were broadcast on 4 local radio stations in central Benin 48 times in 2021. During each Club session, Mentors asked girls if they had listened to that week's Radio Lesson broadcast and over the course of 2021 there was an average listenership rate of 75% of girls.

Launching a Radio Lesson program

Another key component of our citizenship and civic engagement project in 2021 was the design and implementation of 25 girl-led community service and improvement projects across 15 communities, indirectly impacting over 42,000 residents, including things from community sensitizations around girls rights to the constructions of safety barriers on local roads that had high rates of accidental fatalities.

- **Song Writing Competition:** Girls also participated in a song writing competition in which they wrote educational lyrics about girls' rights and civic duties to local traditional music, the winners of which we performed at the end of year community festivals.
- **Community Festivals:** These 15 community festivals engaged parents, local leaders, and other community members and gave participant girls the opportunity to present their projects, songs, skits, and other learnings and experiences from their year long exploration of citizenship and leadership.

42,000
radio
impact
on residents



25 girl-led
community
service
projects

CURRICULUM

CITOYENNES EN HERBES



"By participating in the Citoyennes en Herbe project, we learned a lot about citizenship. We shared what citizenship is and how to be a good citizen. We saw together that women citizens are aware of the needs of their communities, mobilize and organize themselves together, act and question the authorities. Being a citizen means not to stay out of the changes in your community and for yourself. With this project, we also participated in radio programs with the mentors."

**Héliène, Citoyennes en Herbe project participant,
Batonga Leadership Club Member, Lotcho Village, Benin**

Preparing Young Leaders: The Young Leaders Network

The Young Leaders Network

Batonga also founded a Young Leaders Network, a group of 100 adolescent girls from across the 15 communities in central Benin where Batonga currently operates Girls' Clubs. These girls applied through their Mentors to join the Leaders Network and were chosen based on their motivation and dedication to improving their communities and advocating for the rights of girls and women. The Young Leaders Network has thus far met with local governors to present and share learnings from girl-managed community service projects in their villages and what they see as the highest priority issues facing women and girls in their region. Finally, the impact of this year-long project was documented through a series of videos. A short documentary on the impact of girls' community projects and subsequent explorations of their own leadership skills, as told through the experiences of girls' and their communities, was filmed over the course of project implementation and will be broadcast on local television stations in 2022. Another set of short informational videos, consisting of interviews with girls, their families, mentors and local leaders, explores the meaning of citizenship, leadership, and gender equality. These videos will be accessible to program participants via Android tablets managed by their Mentors.



A Successful Pilot Year For Women's Economic Empowerment

Young Women's Business Circles

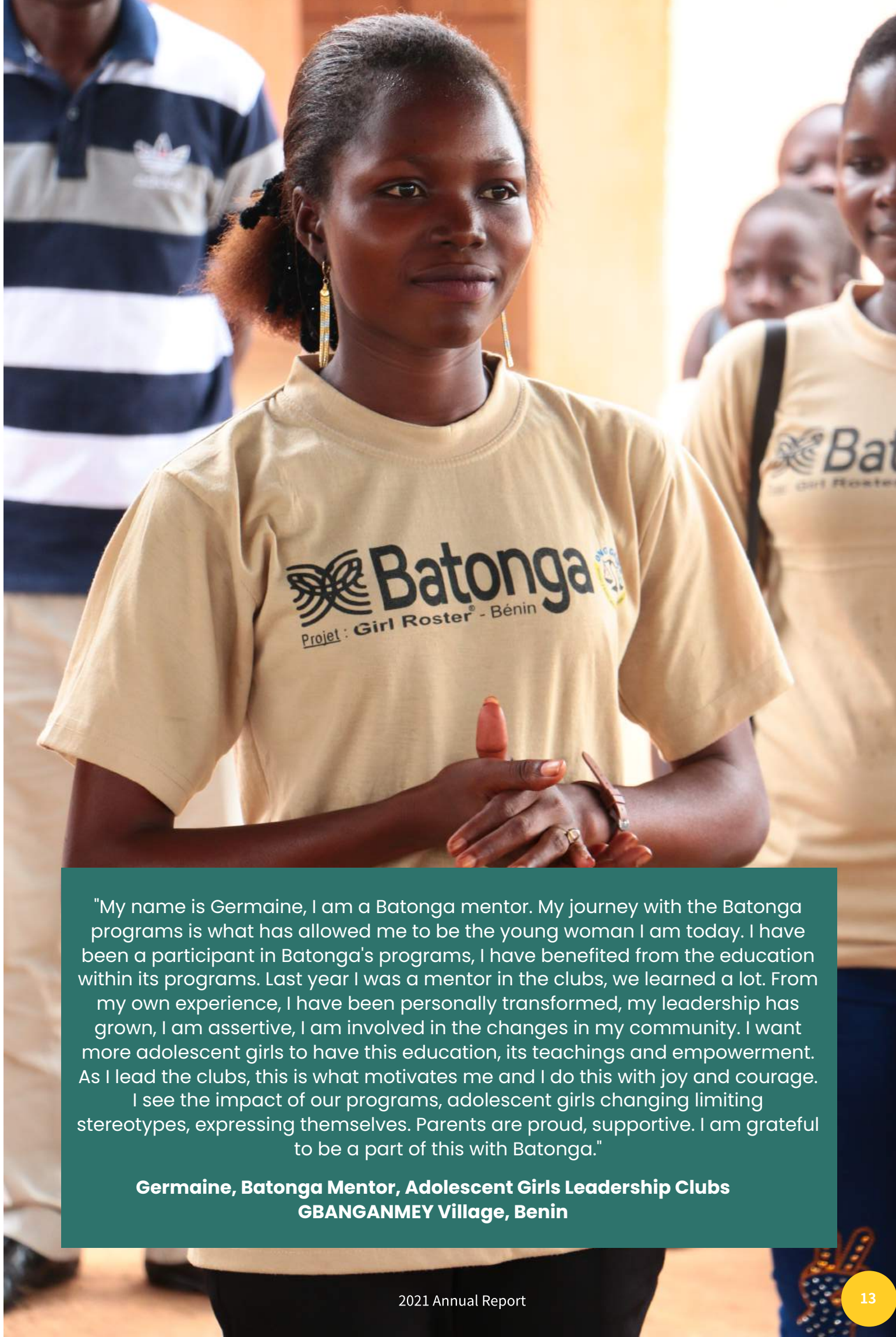
Officially launched at the end of 2020, Batonga's newest program concluded its year-long pilot phase in November of 2021. The aim of this pilot was to test different strategies for engaging and supporting rural women entrepreneurs and professionally active young women in Benin as they journey towards professional and financial independence and self-sufficiency. Batonga launched and facilitated the management of 50 groups called Young Women's Business Circles across our 15 implementation communities and recruited 1,121 young women participants ages 18-30 years old.

Young women who engaged with Batonga's economic empowerment model gained access to safe, women-only spaces in which they can learn together, share experiences with one another, and launch and test small business ventures in a low-risk environment. Through their Circles, participants worked to build their skills and work readiness while generating a more stable and sustainable income of their own.

From the 1,121 YW originally enrolled, 1,090 young women remained actively engaged all year (attending at least one session per month) in the YWBCs with a 97.23% attendance rate at the end of the pilot phase in November 2021. Each of the 50 Business Circles received a small business seed fund (\$200 USD) and worked with their Business Coach to develop individual and/or collective business plans in which to invest their fund. Within a 12 month period, the Circles generated a 65% increase with a total profit of \$6763. In the context of rural Benin, this achievement is significant. This increase in this short time period has proved that the model works for our target group.

The 47 YWBC decided to share their profits at the end of the first year of operation (a total of \$6,551), before starting new activities. The three remaining YWBCs have decided to continue their small businesses further before sharing their profits as they wish to generate more profits. By postponing the sharing of their profits, they hope to gain more seed funding for their individual small businesses after profits sharing.

The **50** YOUNG WOMEN BUSINESS CIRCLES (YWBCs) launched at the end of 2020 generated a total profit of **\$6763** in a 12-month period an increase of **65%** which is significant in rural Benin



"My name is Germaine, I am a Batonga mentor. My journey with the Batonga programs is what has allowed me to be the young woman I am today. I have been a participant in Batonga's programs, I have benefited from the education within its programs. Last year I was a mentor in the clubs, we learned a lot. From my own experience, I have been personally transformed, my leadership has grown, I am assertive, I am involved in the changes in my community. I want more adolescent girls to have this education, its teachings and empowerment. As I lead the clubs, this is what motivates me and I do this with joy and courage. I see the impact of our programs, adolescent girls changing limiting stereotypes, expressing themselves. Parents are proud, supportive. I am grateful to be a part of this with Batonga."

**Germaine, Batonga Mentor, Adolescent Girls Leadership Clubs
GBANGANMEY Village, Benin**

Gaining Skills, Confidence, and Capital

Our Young Women's Business Circles Had Impact

As the pilot year came to a close, we conducted a post-test survey to help us understand the impacts and achievements of our pilot. Notably, the number of women who described their personal incomes as “insufficient to meet their needs” decreased by nearly half from pretest to post-test. While attitudes about income are necessary but not sufficient to bring about economic change in women’s lives, this change in perception denotes progress towards breaking young women out of the cycle of poverty in which they continue to have to make difficult or compromising decisions in order to meet their financial needs. Young women also are integrating these skills into their everyday lives outside of their Circles; 68% of respondents report they are confident in how to keep records of their sales and sustain their small businesses through their business management tools and learnings from the Circle. Their confidence in their skills is clear in their actions as well; 102 young women have taken their share of their income from their Circle business and have invested it in launching their own independent small business. These are 102 young women who were not previously engaged in entrepreneurship but who, through their participation in their Circle, have gained the skills, confidence, and capital to strike out on their own.

Our Impact In Numbers

Launching 50 Young Women Business Circles in October 2020.



Providing 50 Women-led micro and small businesses seed funding to start business activities.

Establishing access to business skills discussion groups to 1,121 young women 18–30 years old in their communities.





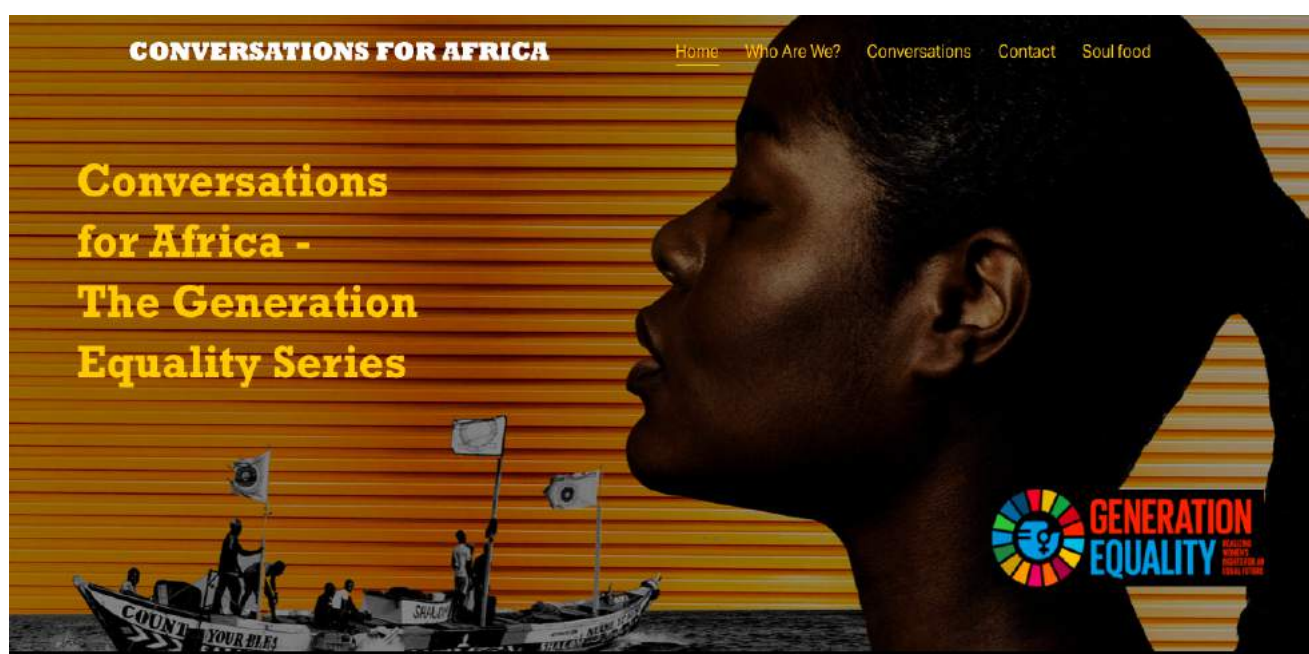
"Being Batonga to mentor to the Circles is a learning process for me and for members of the Young Women Business Circles during the year 2021. First I learned myself. Then I enabled other young women to learn. About savings, money management we learned a lot. My pride is to see many young women become autonomous by participating in the circles. I see that I am participating in Batonga's mission to help empower young women. Very often, young women come to testify about what they are learning in the circles and how they are happy to see the transformations. It makes me proud!"

**Aihou Anicette, Batonga Young Women Business Circle Mentor
SODOHOMEY Village, Benin**

Amplifying African Voices

Conversations For Africa

Conversations for Africa is a high-level video series which brought together African activists, artists and leaders to explore together the most pressing issues facing the continent, particularly as they are experienced by women and girls. Published on Youtube in May 2021, the first Conversation in the series featured Ghanaian hip-hop artist, director, and author Blitz Bazawule and Burundian poet and human rights activist, Ketty Nivyabandi, was moderated by Batonga founder and Grammy-award winning singer/songwriter Angelique Kidjo, and explored sexual and reproductive health and rights in Africa. Conversation 2 was also facilitated by Angelique Kidjo, focused on the topic of gender based violence on the African continent, and featured Ugandan feminist activist, strategist and consultant Jessica Horn, South African lawyer, activist and model, Thando Hopa, and Senegalese former division 1 basketball player turned model and artistic director, Badara Ndiaye. Conversations for Africa's second conversation on Gender-Based Violence was published in late June 2021. The third and final conversation in our Generation Equality Forum series was recorded in October and was published in March 2022. Hosted by Frédérique Leininger, Editor-in-Chief of ELLE magazine in Côte d'Ivoire, Conversation 3 brought together African grassroots youth leaders, Anika Dorothy Jenne, Chanceline Mevowanou & Sylvain Obedi, to discuss how the Generation Equality Forum served African youth and how future events and institutions can effectively make and hold space for African youth.



Conversations For Africa



**"None of us have all the answers, but together, we have the ideas and solutions we need to fast-track gender equality on our continent."
- Angelique Kidjo**



"Our Voices Count"

Nos Voix Comptent

The *Nos Voix Comptent* Initiative, launched in 2020, was designed to ensure that the incredible opportunity to deliver meaningful momentum for and commitments to women, girls and marginalized genders, offered by the Generation Equality Forum did not leave out the priorities and perspectives of francophone African gender advocates and activists.

Our three primary goals for this initiative were:

- To initiate meaningful, virtual public dialogues about the Generation Equality Forum and around gender equality issues important to francophone African women and girls.
- To ensure the voices of hard-to-reach populations of francophone women and girls were heard and included in the overall process, and
- To help hold stakeholders at all levels accountable for the commitments that they make to francophone activists and advocates.

Nos Voix Comptent not only increased awareness of and dialogue around the Generation Equality Forum across francophone Africa but also discovered an incredible demand and desire for an accessible, facilitated network of francophone African gender advocates and activists. Rising to meet this need, Nos Voix Comptent surpassed our initial expectations and transformed into a one-stop source for francophone advocates throughout the Generation Equality Forum process, providing not only information about the Forum itself, but also strategic guidance for those hoping to actively participate in the Forum, as well as platforms and opportunities to collaborate with like-minded advocates locally, nationally and internationally.



Nos Voix Comptent held consultations with over **300** working group registrants after the Generation Equality Forum through the formation of 7 member-led advocacy working groups.

"I am a member and 2021 Ambassador of Nos Voix Comptent. Within the movement, I have participated in activities, consultations and various digital campaigns. Nos Voix Comptent is a platform to raise our voices, participate in the Generation Equality process, be aware of the conversations and be at the heart of the process. The movement allows us to make the priorities of girls and women in French-speaking sub-Saharan Africa visible, to bring them to the forefront, and to ensure that they are taken into account. I am proud to belong to Nos Voix Comptent and to share my experience as a young leader of the Equality Generation action coalition!"

**Diane Ndarbawa, NVC MEMBER
Cameroun**



Advocacy beyond the Forum

Generation Equality Forum

Phase three of the NVC initiative centered around the Generation Equality Forum itself in June 2021 and the advocacy of NVC's members. NVC's leaders and members presented and amplified two advocacy reports, the NVC Consultation Recommendations, and the Digital Inclusion Recommendations for how to ensure that low internet access communities could be more fully engaged in international events such as the forum. NVC partnered with UN WOMEN West Africa to try and engage governments who were still not officially part of the process. As a result, NVC members met with six representatives from six national governments, Benin, Senegal, Cameroon, Burkina Faso, DRC, and France to present these reports. NVC played a facilitation role in three official GEF events as well. Finally, after the Forum, Nos Voix Comptents members formed seven member-led advocacy working groups to enable actions around the advocacy goals outlined by the consultations with over 300 working group registrants.

Our Impact In Numbers

**Launched
Ambassadors
Circle with 30
youth leaders in
18 countries**



**500+ African
social media
accounts
engaged**



**20,796
people reached
by NVC
Ambassadors
during phase 3**





**GÉNÉRATION
ÉGALITÉ**



2021 was the year Nos Voix Comptent conducted online and on-the-ground consultations; published a report on the recommendations and priorities of girls and women in Francophone sub-Saharan Africa for Generation Equality. We have amplified these priorities in the Generation Equality process, through digital campaigns and sessions with various actors. At the request of the members, we have initiated working groups (Governments, Civil Society, Media) to amplify the recommendations to these actors.

**Fabiola Mizero,
Coordanatrice Nos Voix Comptent 2021 , Sénégal**

2021 Financials

Total 2021 Income

Individuals.....	\$178,194
Foundations Grants (unrestricted).....	\$528,158
Foundations Grants (unrestricted).....	\$2,091,749
Total Income.....	\$2,798,101



Individuals (6.37%)
Foundation Grants (restricted) (74.76%)
Foundation Grants (unrestricted) (18.87%)

Total 2021 Expenses

Program.....	\$651,464
Operations.....	\$283,236
Total.....	\$934,700



Program (69.7%) Operating (30.3%)

Expanding our Programs

Our new partnership with the Mastercard Foundation

Batonga joined forces with the Mastercard Foundation in 2021 recognizing a deep alignment with their Young Africa Works initiative, to form a strategic partnership to scale Batonga's economic empowerment and leadership program models. In 2022, our partnership "Getting Young African Women to work: scaling Batonga's economic empowerment and leadership model" will be entering 38 new communities in Central and Northern Benin, while working with local partners to ensure we prioritize reaching adolescent girls who are least likely to have access to resources and education. By late 2022 we will begin expanding our operations to Senegal in collaboration with the Mastercard Foundation in our goal to reach 12,800 adolescent girls and young women aged 14-30 by 2025.



A pilot project to engage boys and young men

In 2022, we will launch a pilot project to engage 2,000 boys and young men in the communities in which we work. The goal is to better understand how men and boys' engagement can boost our mission and support our success in seeing young women live safe and fulfilling lives. We look forward to working in partnership with the Mastercard Foundation on this initiative.



"I want to thank the Mastercard Foundation for partnering with Batonga to help us have an even greater impact and reach many more adolescent girls and young women in rural Africa. Through this partnership, Batonga will expand beyond Central Benin and launch our programs in Northern Benin and Senegal by the end of 2022. We are so excited to be on this journey with the Mastercard Foundation, a partner whose values and mission aligns with our own." – Angélique Kidjo

Special Thank You's

A huge thank you to all of our partners, Board Members, and supporters who helped us make an impact through our programs in Benin in 2021. We look forward to your continued support as we expand to reach more adolescent girls and young women in Senegal. We can't do this transformative and impactful work without you!

Our 2021 Partners



Board Membership

as reflected on December 31, 2021



Angélique Kidjo
Founder



Mary Louise Cohen
Founder



Aleta Williams
Board Vice-Chair



Monica Winsor
Board Chair



Jean Hebrail



Nadia Ahidjo



Karen Richardson



Romuald Hazoumé



Joel H. Samuels



Katrina Sharkey



Colin Clarke

**Thank you for
supporting
our work!**

If you have any questions,
please contact
info@batongafoundation.org