



 **Batonga 2019**  
**ANNUAL REPORT**

[batongafoundation.org](http://batongafoundation.org)



# Message from Angélique Kidjo

As I reflect on the exceptional work that took place over 2019, I can not help but smile. The vision I had when first establishing Batonga of creating a world where young women and girls are respected, listened to, and given equal opportunities to succeed and build their own futures is truly becoming a reality in the villages we serve.

2019 was filled with learning, adaptation, growth, and impact for Batonga. The young women and girls Batonga serves in Benin are truly gaining economic independence. I witnessed this first hand when I visited Batonga's programs on the ground in October of 2019, seeing girls managing their own thriving business and learning new trades in tailoring, hair styling, solar panel maintenance, soap making and beading.

I also noticed during my trip that the girls and young women in Batonga's programs are growing more confident and louder about their needs and priorities. They stand proud, feeling safe and supported, thanks to the Batonga Mentors who stand behind them and make sure that no girl is left behind. The Batonga Mentors are supporting the girls one-on-one, providing them valuable guidance and advice and delivering impactful lessons. These local women Mentors are central to Batonga's work, supporting girls and working with communities to change stereotypes and harmful gender norms.

One of the most exciting parts of 2019 for Batonga was welcoming Emily Bove into our Batonga Family as the organization's new Executive Director. A seasoned executive leader within the global women's rights movement and development community, Emily has set a new direction for the organization: one that sees it deepen its impact and fine-tune its programmatic model, as well as develop new pathways for institutional growth and amplified impact in Benin and beyond. Emily Bove has truly helped Batonga enter into a new phase of growth.

I am so proud of the incredible growth and progress Batonga made in 2019 and can't wait to see the new opportunities that await the women and girls we serve in 2020. Thank you to all of you for believing in us and supporting us on this journey!

With Love,

**Angelique Kidjo**  
Co-Founder and Board member





# Message from Emily Bove

## Executive Director

Dear friends, supporters, and extended Batonga family,

I joined this wonderful organization end of August 2019. My first day on the job, I took a plane to Toronto to join Angélique and meet our strongest partner, the MasterCard Foundation. After an update about our work, Angélique met with folks who work at the foundation during a lunch event. Sitting in my chair, watching Angélique speak, looking around and realizing the impact her words, experience, and wisdom was having on those in the room, I knew I had joined a very special organization.

A few weeks later, I was equally impressed by what I saw on the ground in Benin where I visited our programs alongside Angélique and her husband Jean, also a Batonga Board member. Meeting the Batonga mentors, talking with adolescent girls, and witnessing incredible community support for our work was yet another confirmation that Batonga is an organization worth investing in, and certainly, worth being part of!

From October to December, our team worked tirelessly to look at how we could take this incredible model to the next level. We worked hard to strengthen the work and the organization at every level, working for example with mentors and girls to re-organize our age groups. The energy and dedication of all involved in the Batonga journey is simply amazing and that's why we have the impact we do.

I could not be prouder of leading this organization into a new year.

Thank you to all for your warm welcome - I hope you enjoy this report and get to see how valuable this work and organization is!

Emily Bove



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# BUILDING **ASSETS** OF ADOLESCENT GIRLS AND YOUNG WOMEN

In 2019, Batonga increased the social, personal, cognitive and economic assets of **3,610 adolescent girls and young women** in 15 communities in rural Benin.



## Our **SONAFA** Leadership Clubs

Through its SONAFA Leadership Clubs, Batonga ensures girls are socially included and economically prepared. Through its SONAFA Leadership Clubs Batonga delivers a unique combination of collective and one-on-one asset-building strategies that ensure girls are socially included and economically prepared.

Through tailored lessons, practical activities, and in-person micro-business opportunities, club participants become future-ready. They understand how and have the confidence and capacity to plan their future. Our clubs provide young women and girls access to a weekly girl-only safe space where they gain the support of local women mentors and training on essential life skills, financial education, employability and entrepreneurship. The assets we build include:

**health** assets

**social** and **personal** assets

**cognitive** assets

**economic** assets





# Our **impact** in numbers



**126 SONAFA Leadership Clubs operating weekly.**

Our clubs cater to three age groups for adolescent girls and young women between the ages of 10 and 28.



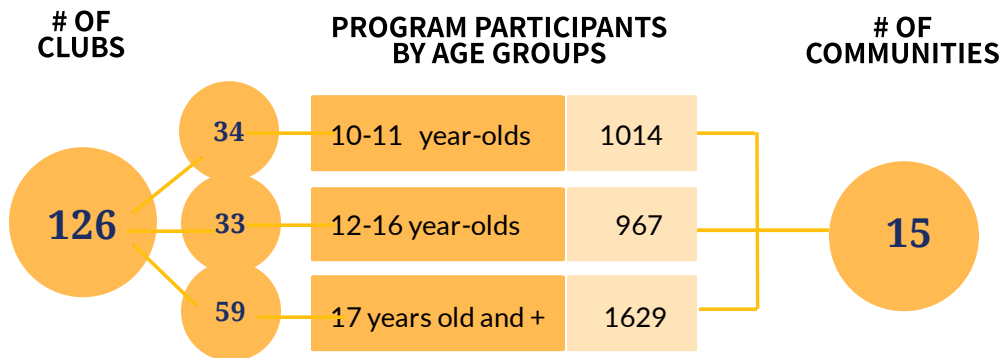
**3,610 Young Women and Adolescent girls served.**

70% of our program participants have never benefited from support from either government services or development organizations.



**90.7% attendance rate**

Batonga' incredible attendance rates show the trust build with girls and young women and their communities in Benin, and also the concrete impact the clubs are having in the girls' lives.



## Our **Exemplary Women Series**

The Exemplary Women Speaker Series brings local, professionally successful women to SONAFA Clubs to speak about their personal career paths and give advice on working as a woman in Benin. In 2019, 9 women from professions ranging from teachers to micro-finance managers visited each club for serving the 10-16 year olds age group.





# Meet one of the Exemplary Women Series' speakers:

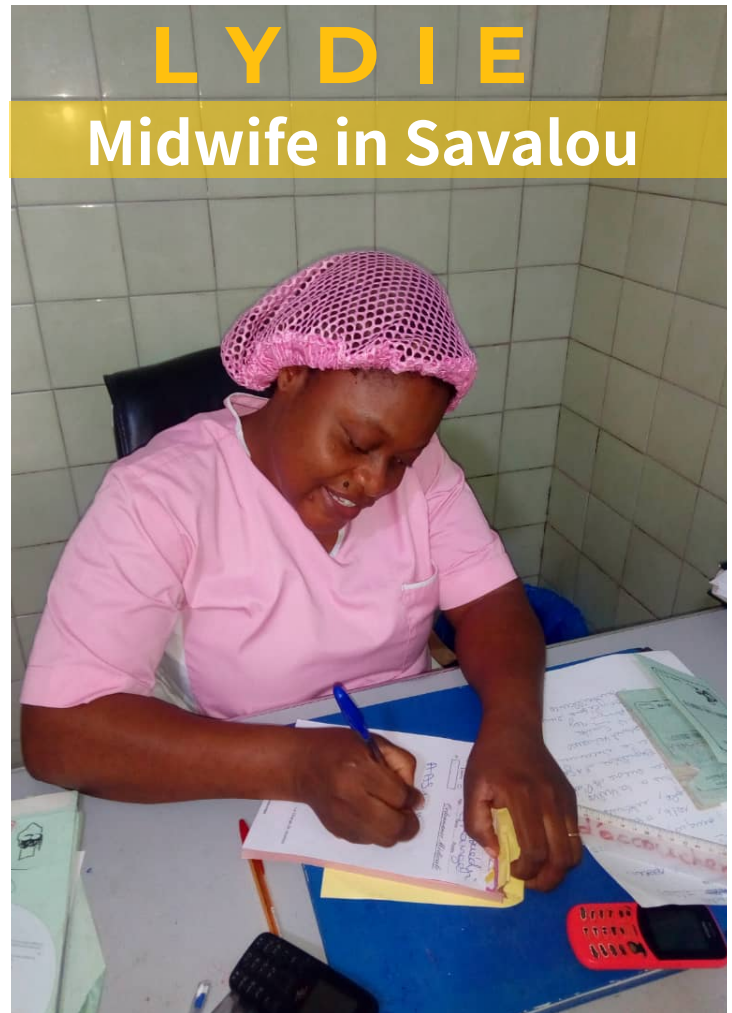
**Could you tell us a bit about yourself and why you decided to come speak to the Batonga girls?**

My name is Lydie, I'm a midwife in Savalou. I was very happy when Batonga asked me to talk to the girls about my experiences. I agreed to come and talk to the girls because I understood that Batonga is an organization that prepares girls to become leaders and independent women before getting married. When I was growing up, I didn't have this opportunity that Batonga offers girls. I find this initiative commendable. I shared with them how they can overcome difficulties, avoid falling into men's traps on their way through life before becoming great women.

**What did you speak about when you presented to the clubs? How did the girls respond?**

I described my journey as a young girl who was just like them. I talked to them about the difficulties I have encountered, the peer pressure, the boys I have experienced. We also talked about menstruation. What behaviors to have when you have your first menstruation, who to confide in, the hygiene measures they should take, etc.

Another discussion centered around how to stay focused on your work and achieving your goals. I gave my own example of how despite growing up in very poor living conditions, I was able to become a midwife.



I also told them that they need to stay strong and be independent. They must not learn to rely on others but rather know how to fight and take care of themselves.

The girls are very smart and were attentive to my presentation, asking a lot of pertinent questions. They asked about my strategies for avoiding pressure coming from boys when I was their age so that I could become a midwife. On this point, I shared many tips with them. I thank Batonga for helping girls become more aware of their value and potential.





“I really like the lessons on confidence and problem solving. Before, I didn’t know how to express myself to those outside my family. I did not even know how to confide in my mom when I had a problem. But now, I know how to approach it. And if she has a problem and calls me, I try to help her too.”

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**Agnes,  
member of a 12-16 year-  
old SONAFA Club**





# DELIVERING MENTORING FOR ADOLESCENT GIRLS AND YOUNG WOMEN

Batonga runs a vibrant Mentors' Network in rural Benin, comprised of 34 mentors and 54 assistant mentors. Mentors deliver tailored social and economic support to adolescent girls and young women in need. They are respected community members, and trusted by our program participants. Here are a few numbers illustrating their accomplishments in 2019.



**1,621 home visits conducted in 15 villages.**

Mentors visit girls in their homes, engage their parents and act as their advocate when necessary.



**1,693 adolescent girls had ongoing access to a mentor.**

Girls at most risk of increased vulnerability and poverty are supported one-on-one by women mentors.



**3 mentor trainings and 2 peer observation trips held in 2019.**

This year, Batonga scaled its peer observation initiative, to allow mentors to learn from each other and exchange best practices and lessons learned through active observation and spending more time together. The objectives of the peer observation initiative are:

- To foster creativity around curriculum content delivery
- To provide the mentors with opportunities to learn new facilitation methods/techniques
- To foster stronger ties between mentors and create a greater sense of organizational unity and community
- To increase Batonga's visibility within our target villages and communes



“My favorite lesson has been on critical thinking. I’ve learned that in order to avoid bad decisions, I must think deeply about the decision before I make it. For example, cutting down a tree may seem like a good decision at first but think about it, if you let it grow, it will provide you shade.”

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Ella, SONAFA Club member

The impact of the mentors' peer observation has been strongly felt in the communities Batonga serves. It includes:

- **Positive impact on girls’ morale:** multiple mentors have said that these visits helped their clubs gain a greater sense of interconnectedness with the larger Batonga network.
- **Creation of a unified organizational culture:** these visits and exchanges also helped develop a relatively unified organizational culture that facilitates bonding/cohesion when mentors come together for training and give the girls in the clubs a sense of larger Batonga/organizational unity across the network of clubs.



“Observing my peers lead their clubs helped me remember that women can easily and capably hold positions of power”.

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Noelie,  
Batonga Mentor



# Meet one of the Batonga Mentors

## What do you like about being a Batonga Mentor?

I love being a Batonga Mentor because I feel that I am valued in the eyes of the girls I teach and also bring value to their lives. When these girls are experiencing difficulty and in rough situations, I often help them find solutions. It not only makes them happy but also their parents. Often, when I am in the village, I receive endless greetings and gratitude from those who pass by.

## What is your favorite lesson to teach?

I really like teaching the lesson on "Going Back To School" because it's close to my heart. Before the arrival of Batonga in Savalou, when the girls got pregnant, they dropped out of classes. Job apprentices also experienced a similar situation. But since the launch of Batonga programs and with the different lessons, especially with this lesson, many girls have returned to school and others have resumed their initial income-generating activities. From this lesson, the girls also understood the importance of participating in an income-generating activity in order to contribute to the home.



## Why did you decide to become a Batonga Mentor?

I decided to be a Mentor because there are many development projects that come to Savalou but none of them focus on the development of women and girls. Batonga stood out to me because of their focus. The SONAFA project was able to make a difference in my community by specifically targeting girls with a different and very interesting approach. Since I too am a woman, I know the realities of these girls or women and wanted to work to help them. This is why I decided to contribute to the empowerment of girls in my locality by becoming a mentor.





“Batonga has changed the village where I work. The girls come home and surprise their parents with all they’ve learned. Because of the lessons on inner beauty, self-confidence they have changed and their parents are seeing it.”

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**Anicette,  
Batonga Mentor**



# SUPPORTING GIRL AND WOMEN LED BUSINESSES

2019 was a big year for Batonga's work with adolescent girls and young women-led businesses in rural Benin. Building on our past successes, we diversified the types of income generating activities run by clubs and expanded our solar technology program, adding 4 new solar freezers to our existing solar equipment. We also launched two new Batonga Professional Professional Training Centers in both Savalou and Bohicon.



## **Launch of 2 new training centers offering professional certificates in tailoring.**

Batonga established two professional training centers in the villages of Covedji and Tovigome and hired 4 trainers to deliver year-long trainings in tailoring to 20 young women. This will result in professional certification upon graduation.



## **183 existing micro-businesses led by adolescent girls and young women.**

To practice the financial literacy skills learned through the SONAFA Clubs, club members design their own business plans and launch their own small scale collective businesses.



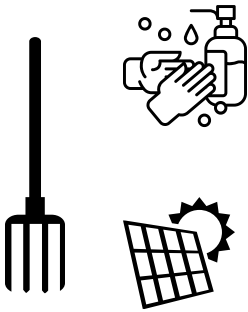
## **3,610 girls and young women engaged in income-generating activities and trainings through their clubs.**

Through their income generating activities, girls and women are able to experience first hand the planning and work that goes into running a small business. All of these young women was also coached on topics such as personal savings and income management and were provided support along with small business advice from the Batonga mentorship network.





Batonga clubs provide income generating opportunities for their members, enabling girls and young women to learn practical skills and also benefit from redistribution of profit made by the group. In 2019, clubs ran the following types of micro-businesses:



- Solar powered freezer businesses
- Soap making
- Beading
- Agricultural product processing (including the production of small street food snacks, the bagging of different agricultural products such as corn and beans, and re-sale of rice sugar)



“ Before I didn't know how to save money. But since Batonga came, the mentors have taught us how to save money. This allowed me to know when I have 100 CFA, I can use 50 CFA and save 50f for it to be beneficial in the future.”

---

Christine, member of a SONAFA club for 17+ year olds.





"Batonga is an NGO that cares for girls. It gives girls the skills to become empowered and enterprising women. Today thanks to Batonga, I know how to plan my expenses; before going to the market, I always determine my purchases in advance... Batonga taught me to prioritize my needs vs my wants (...). I urge parents who doubt or prevent girls from participating in clubs to let them come because these are good practices and skills that they receive to be independent and self-sufficient. "

**Natalie,  
Batonga Mentor**





# AMPLIFYING ADOLESCENT GIRLS AND YOUNG WOMEN'S VOICES

## Local community engagement

Batonga works closely with community members to discuss girls' rights and issues, and build broad support for adolescent girls and young women. In 2019, Batonga held 15 sessions (one per village) with 1,578 community members (1,226 women and 352 men).

Batonga also engages local religious, social, and economic leaders through its community leaders' sessions. In 2019, we directly engaged 32 local leaders representing 15 villages (14 leaders, representing all 8 villages in Bohicon, and 18 leaders, representing all 7 villages in Savalou). The subjects covered include Batonga's SONAFA Leadership Clubs and their curriculum of life skills and financial literacy, the expansion of Batonga's solar technology businesses, and the results from Batonga's Baseline Survey conducted in January 2019 across 4 of their villages

## International advocacy for AGYW

In October 2019, Angélique Kidjo was nominated to the United Nations' Steering Committee for the upcoming Generation Equality Forum.



Our founder Angelique Kidjo also carried the voices and priorities of AGYW to the G7, calling for the investment of resources for African women entrepreneurs, and the end of harmful lending practices that target women on the continent.





"At first I did not understand much about Batonga, but I noticed my daughter started to become more and more successful selling things in the market and saving money. I wondered where she suddenly got this ability. I learned from her sisters and her mother that her success is thanks to Batonga "

**Mr. ADONOU Azouassi**  
**Father in Hellou village**

"My daughters have changed a lot thanks to their participation in the Clubs. My biggest surprise is seeing my daughters active in the market selling everything and seeing them come back with all their money intact. This has motivated me more in my business and I thank Batonga for that"

**Mme BATONON**  
**Pierrette**  
**Mother in Hellou village**





# 2019 PARTNERSHIPS



**NoVo  
Foundation**

In partnership with NoVo Foundation in 2019, Batonga was able to introduce new forms of support networks for young women and girls in Benin and advance learnings through piloting new innovative technology.



Thanks to our generous partners at Mastercard Foundation, Batonga was able in 2019 to collect critical new information about the factors that affect adolescent girls' and young women's employment and income generation in Benin.



The William H. Donner Foundation's partnership in 2019 enabled Batonga to deliver greater impact in building the social and economic assets of young women and girls and promote African girls priorities and needs through our advocacy initiative.



Since partnering with Aflatoun, we have created a skills-based curriculum that takes an open, girl-centered, and participatory approach towards teaching. In 2019, Batonga staff attended Aflatoun's Global Social and Financial Skills Conference.



Since 2015, the Population Council has imparted in-depth knowledge through numerous fora and has graciously shared a series of critical information collecting tools to support the process of intentional program design in Benin.



In 2019, Batonga and TOMS partnered to deliver over 20,000 pairs of shoes to 15 communities in Benin. Each young woman and girl we serve received a pair of shoes for themselves and pairs for their family members.

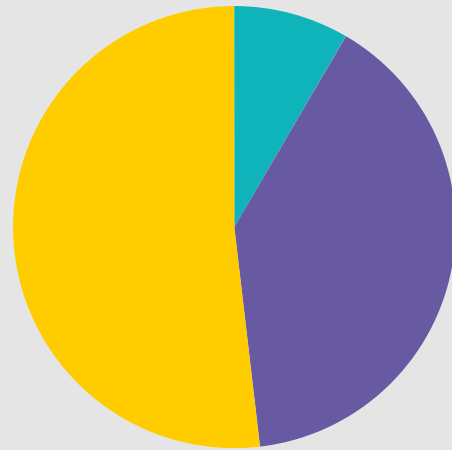




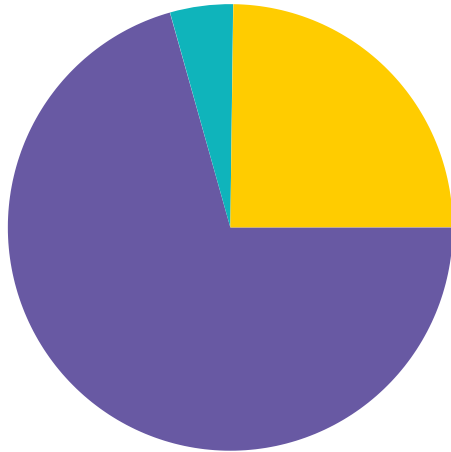
# 2019 FINANCIALS

## Total 2019 Income

Individuals.....	\$25,698
Fundraising.....	\$158,200
Events.....	\$121,223
<b>Total Income.....</b>	<b>\$305,121</b>



■ Individuals (8.42%)   ■ Events (39.73%)  
 ■ Foundation Grants (51.85%)



■ Program (70.63%)   ■ Fundraising (4.59%)  
 ■ Operating (24.78%)

## Total 2019 Expenses

Program.....	\$575,754
Fundraising.....	\$37,433
Operations.....	\$201,958
<b>Total.....</b>	<b>\$815,145</b>

Our 2019 expenses are higher than our income because of a multi-year grant received in 2018 but budgeted for 2019. Batonga is a debt-free organization.



"I ask all supporters of Batonga to do their utmost to ensure that their teachings never disappear. Batonga's work is essential because it contributes to the evolution of girls and the development of our country."

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Monique,  
 Member of a 12-16 year  
 old SONAFA Club





**Transforming her potential into power**



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