

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Angélique Kidjo's Batonga Foundation expands its programs to Senegal to reach more adolescent girls and young women

Dakar, SENEGAL, May 18, 2023 — The Batonga Foundation, in partnership with the Mastercard Foundation, is proud to announce the expansion of its programs for adolescent girls and young women to Senegal, beginning with the rural communities of Kolda and Sedhiou.

Founded in 2006 by five-time Grammy Award winner and international superstar Angélique Kidjo with the purpose of transforming the lives of the most vulnerable adolescent girls in Africa, Batonga builds the social, emotional, financial, health, civic, and cognitive skills of young women and adolescent girls through leadership, entrepreneurship, and employability training.

Batonga first joined forces with the Mastercard Foundation in 2016 to expand its proven model and program in Benin. Their Adolescent Girls Leadership (AGL) and Women's Economic Empowerment (WEE) programs, which will now be extended to Senegal, equip young women and adolescent girls with the assets and skills necessary to realize their potential and contribute to the social and economic development of their communities. Today 7,362 women and girls have been reached, with 3,940 jobs and employment opportunities created.

To celebrate this milestone, Angélique Kidjo, this year's recipient of the prestigious Polar Music Prize, will host an intimate evening reception on May 29 at renowned artist Kehinde Wiley's Black Rock Senegal, a multi-disciplinary artist-in-residence studio space that brings together international artists to live and work in Dakar.

The evening will also see the Batonga Foundation's team and key partners share insights from their projects for women and adolescent girls' empowerment in Benin and Senegal, and a unique live performance by Angélique Kidjo.

"We are excited to introduce Batonga to Senegal with a special evening at Black Rock. This is an opportunity to share our mission to equip the hardest-to-reach girls and young women with safe spaces to access the knowledge and skills they need to be agents of change in their own lives and communities. Girls and young women in rural Africa do not lack potential: they lack opportunity. Teaming up with the Mastercard Foundation, a partner whose values and mission align with ours, allows us to open up opportunities and extend the reach of our programs and amplify our impact across the African continent," said Angélique Kidjo, Founder of the Batonga Foundation.

An official launch ceremony will be held at the King Fahd Palace Hotel on May 30. Invitees include dignitaries and key non-governmental organizations. Angélique Kidjo, Batonga's board members and team, along with a special introduction and discussion from two participants, will share insight into how Batonga is transforming potential into power.

The Batonga Foundation currently supports 7,362 adolescent girls and young women aged 14-30 in Central and Northern Benin. With support from its partners, the Batonga Foundation grew exponentially in 2022 to operate more than 160 leadership clubs and 150 Young Women Business Circles by adapting to the needs of the regions.

The Adolescent Girls Leadership (AGL) program offers access to safe spaces and mentorship for the hardest-to-reach girls with the goal of supporting a new generation of girl leaders and transforming community norms and beliefs that hold girls back from achieving their full potential. The partnership with the Mastercard Foundation will enable Batonga to support 2,560 adolescent girls in Kolda and Sedhiou.

"In 2016, Batonga Foundation launched a leadership program for adolescent girls. It allowed me to become a mentor to the participants in my village. The money I was paid for mentoring allowed me to enroll in the Human Resources Management program in Bohicon. With the continued support of Batonga and working as a mentor, I was able to get a master's degree in entrepreneurship and project management. I have since been promoted from mentor to community facilitator, which is my current role," said Germaine, a Batonga Community Facilitator in Zou, Benin.

Batonga's Women's Economic Empowerment (WEE) program builds sustained economic empowerment and income-generating models for young women aged 18 to 30 years old in rural communities. By offering access to safe spaces, peer groups, role models and mentors, the program supports young women in building and maintaining their economic well-being and leadership in local economies. The WEE program will empower 3,000 young women in Kolda and Sedhiou.

"The launch of Batonga is a unique opportunity to showcase the work the organization does to promote the rights, leadership, and economic power of girls and women. We will be particularly delighted to share our ambitions with the partners and allies with whom we plan to work for a positive impact on the lives of thousands of girls and women, especially those from the most rural areas," said Aida Gueye Seydi, Senegal Country Manager of the Batonga Foundation.

"Increasing access to skills that adolescent girls and young women need to be agents of social and economic transformation in their families and communities is at the heart of our Young Africa Works strategy. We are delighted to see the expansion of Batonga Foundation's

programs to Senegal,” said Serge-Auguste Kouakou, Mastercard Foundation Country Director for WAEMU.

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About the Batonga Foundation

Batonga empowers young women and girls to discover their limitless, untapped potential and transform it into social and economic power. We envision a safer, healthier, and more equitable world in which all girls and women can thrive.

About the Mastercard Foundation

The Mastercard Foundation works with visionary organizations to enable young people in Africa and in Indigenous communities in Canada to access dignified and fulfilling work. It is one of the largest private foundations in the world with a mission to advance learning and promote financial inclusion to create an inclusive and equitable world. It was established in 2006 through the generosity of Mastercard when it became a public company. The Foundation is an independent organization, and its policies, operations, and program decisions are determined by its own Board of Directors and senior leadership team. It is a registered Canadian charity with offices in Toronto, Kigali, Accra, Nairobi, Kampala, Lagos, Dakar, and Addis Ababa.

For more information on the Foundation, please visit: www.mastercardfdn.org.

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