



# Batonga



## QUARTERLY IMPACT REPORT

March - June 2020



Washington D.C., June 2020

Dear friends,

Another quarter has passed, and with it, our team and programs have grown stronger and more resilient. This Quarterly Impact Report showcases some of the incredible work done by Batonga since COVID-19 disrupted our lives, and the lives of the girls and young women we serve in Benin.

But really, this Quarterly Impact Report is a celebration of Batonga's mentors, the women who are leading our COVID19 response work every single day. As you will read in these pages, Batonga mentors are ensuring that not a single girl is left behind or forgotten about in these difficult times. They have become radio hosts, have increased their home visits, and have supported girls as they produced soaps for their families and communities. They are also managing our Batonga hand-washing stations in 15 villages, ensuring the stations are safe and well used by all. They have raised awareness in their villages and worked with a wide range of local leaders to prepare everyone for this pandemic. We are in awe of their commitment, hard work, and resiliency.

Our team has also shown us how creative and resilient they are, by re-designing our programs to fit the safety needs of those we serve. Our SONAFA Clubs have become mini-clubs, and our team is drafting weekly radio lessons that are now reaching more girls than ever before (and their family members listen in as well!). They are providing daily support to mentors via our Batonga Mentor hotline, and ensuring all remain safe by enforcing and monitoring our strict safety and health guidelines.

These past four months have been challenging - but that's why we exist. Adolescent girls and young women's lives contain a series of challenges, and together, we help them overcome them, one at a time.

I couldn't be more proud of this incredible hard-working team and to lead this organization. Thank you for supporting us, and helping us deliver for the girls in Benin.

Sincerely,

Emily Bove, Executive Director



# COVID-19 Timeline of Impact on Programs

When the COVID-19 virus first hit Benin in March, Batonga staff were ready with a response plan to prepare the communities we serve with the knowledge and tools they need to stay safe.

March 2020

**Monday March 16**

First documented case of COVID-19 confirmed in Benin



**Tuesday March 17**

Batonga staff created an informational packet for Mentors and Facilitators containing critical information about COVID-19, as well as a series of informational graphics intended to distribute in target communities describing the transmission and prevention of COVID-19

**Monday March 23 - Wednesday March 25**

Cotonou staff traveled to Bohicon and Savalou to train facilitators and Mentors on the COVID-19 resources.

**Wednesday March 25**

Facilitators and Mentors begin public community sensitizations on COVID-19 transmission and prevention

**Thursday March 26**

Batonga staff returning to Cotonou and begin working from home. All work travel within Benin is discontinued.



**Wednesday March 25 & Saturday March 28**

SONAFA Clubs meet to discuss COVID-19 transmission and prevention as well as proper handwashing techniques.

**Monday March 30th**

SONAFA Club activities temporarily suspended due to rapid spread of COVID-19.



# KEY MILESTONES (March - June 2020)

## Developing & recording weekly radio lessons to continue delivering critical lessons to women and girls.

Due to the temporary suspension of formal SONAFA Leadership Club sessions in March 2020 and the closure of Benin's schools for the remainder of the school year, girls were left with limited or no access to learning and educational opportunities. In response to this need, Batonga began in April to record weekly 30-40-minute lessons to be broadcast at the same time that Batonga's SONAFA Clubs normally meet in person on four different radio stations across the two communes where Batonga works.



The broadcasts each feature three or four Batonga Mentors who record the lessons and replicate the participatory classroom environment. Eleven lessons have been broadcasted since April 18th, covering a range of topics from health & hygiene during COVID-19 to financial management to violence in households. The lessons have generated great feedback from those we serve with an average listen rate of 79% per week from SONAFA Club Members.

*"These radio programs make many people in the community more aware of Batonga's activities. From the very first radio broadcasts, some parents came to see us and continue to call us to integrate their daughters who aren't currently in Batonga's programs and testify that indeed the girls are well looked after and are more knowledgeable after these lessons. We thank you."*

**- Victoire, Mentor in Savalou**

**Average listen rate per week** of radio broadcasts from SONAFA Leadership Club girls and young women

**79%**



## Continuing Access To Income Generating Activities During COVID-19

As COVID-19 began to spread in Benin, essential commodities to prevent transmission of the virus, such as soap and face masks, began to become scarce. Batonga's network of trained women entrepreneurs stepped up to mass produce soap and face masks to address this need in their communities. Since April, 4,400 bars of soap have been produced and distributed by girls and their Mentors. In addition, 160 protective face masks were produced by Batonga girls in May through Batonga's tailoring workshops and are being distributed to selected girls and vulnerable community members in June.



With the COVID-19 crisis shedding light on the vulnerabilities and needs of the most marginalized girls in Africa and around the world, Batonga is faced with an opportunity to work with women-led networks and entrepreneurs to ensure the crisis is contained as much as possible, and that women-led small and medium-sized businesses can continue to exist, if not strengthen throughout this time.

## Installing two handwashing stations to be placed in the highest traffic locations in each of the 15 villages we serve.



Understanding that none of Batonga's target communities have access to running water, Batonga installed two foot-pump operated handwashing stations in each of our 15 partner communities since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Following their installation, Mentors led trainings on how to properly use the foot-pump-operated handwashing stations for girls and other community leaders, who were present for the handwashing stations' installation. They have also been working daily to keep all the newly installed handwashing stations equipped with soap (produced by the girls we serve) and water.

## Delivering COVID-19 support to households via home visits

Batonga's local female Mentors have visited every program participant's home in the past two months and they will continue to perform multiple home visits every week moving forward. During these visits, Mentors bring with them soap and informational flyers for each household and provide girls and their families with critical advice on COVID-19 transmission and prevention. Mentors have also used these visits to explain the changes to Batonga's programming (i.e. the temporary pause of full SONAFA club meetings).

Mentors have conducted approximately 3,738 home visits since the beginning of the COVID-19 outbreak in Benin. Mentors follow strict health and safety guidelines during these home visits to avoid inter-household transmission.



## Hosting mini-clubs to continue to provide access to a supportive peer group

The temporary suspension of SONAFA Leadership Clubs (which usually hosted up to thirty girls in public school classrooms) led Batonga to reorganize existing SONAFA Leadership Clubs into "mini-clubs" in each village, in order to continue to provide opportunities for young women and girls to have access to supportive peer groups. Mini Clubs are hosted by Batonga Mentors and are much smaller, and typically shorter (30-40 minutes vs. 1 hour) gatherings than traditional SONAFA Clubs, with up to 10 girls in each club. These mini-clubs are held outdoors and participants sit in a circle, each two meters apart with the Mentor in the center leading the discussion and activities. The sessions discussions focus on clarifying and internalizing the information taught in the weekly radio lesson.

**173**  
Mini Clubs

**2068**  
Adolescent  
Girls Served

**88.7%**  
Average  
Attendance  
Rate



# MEET OUR MENTORS!

Our mentors are at the heart of the trust and impact we have built in the communities we serve. They are on the frontlines, and work hard everyday to support the girls and young women we work with! They are incredible women and we want you to know them! This quarter, meet Anicette e and Honorine!

## Meet Anicette, Mentor in Sodohome village, Bohicon



"My name is Anicette and I am a Batonga Mentor from Sodohome Bohicon. Growing up, I didn't have a mentor and made a lot of mistakes. I wanted to be a Mentor because I wanted to help the girls in my community avoid making the same mistakes as me and prevent them from falling into the many traps that that lie on the path of adolescence. such as early pregnancies and dropping out of school. I have so much energy and determination to ensure the women and girls in my community grow up to feel safe, supported, and secure.

Even though COVID-19 has brought many restrictions to my community, I am so happy that I can continue to give the girls and young women in my clubs advice and life skills through the mini clubs and radio lessons. My favorite lesson to teach the girls over this quarter was on entrepreneurship and how to set up a savings system. I find this lesson essential to ensuring the girls can have brighter and more successful futures."

## Meet Honorine, Mentor in Lokozoun village, Bohicon

"I am very happy that the radio program exists. The broadcasts are appreciated by the community because many people were not sure if the disease actually exists but because of the radio broadcasts many people became aware of the disease and took action. During visits to the girls home to check in on them, many parents testified on the change of habits of the girls because of the radio lessons. They have become more conscious of their hygiene and taking care of their cleanliness."



We hope you enjoyed this Impact Report. If you have any questions about our work or impact, please contact [emilybove@batongafoundation.org](mailto:emilybove@batongafoundation.org).

Thank you for supporting our work!

