



Batonga



QUARTERLY IMPACT REPORT

July - September 2020



Washington D.C., October 2020

Dear friends,

Another quarter has gone by in which we all continue to adapt to the COVID-19 pandemic. Batonga has been taking its responsibilities very seriously: responsibility to inform and protect its program participants and their communities, but also responsibility to sustain quality programs, and maybe even to do more than ever before. These responsibilities are essential to ensure that girls and young women don't get trapped in the consequences COVID-19 is having in so many places: social isolation and economic distress.

In our effort to do more, and to ensure every single girl and young woman we serve can continue to thrive during this time, we have launched two new projects that put them in the driving seat of local leadership. Through our song and community project competitions, girls and young women get to be trusted with resources and support to lead their own projects, but also to be a voice heard by all (literally!) through prevention songs that will be aired on local radios.

We're also continuing all of our other programs: offering safe spaces to girls through our leadership clubs, and also working with our new in-house expert to run our Young Women's Business Circles (more on that next quarter!).

I am so proud of our team, and especially of our Batonga mentors who have made this quarter incredibly impactful, but also (and it's important!) very fun and creative for the girls.

We have big plans for the next few months, and I can't wait to keep you posted as we continue to make our way to a stronger, more impactful version of Batonga!

Sincerely



Emily Bove, Executive Director

KEY MILESTONES (July - September 2020)

Launching the first Batonga Song Competition to help girls and young women create awareness about COVID-19 in their communities.

Our first song competition kicked off in July. Small groups of girls, 249 girls in total, wrote and submitted their songs about COVID-19 prevention and transmission. Three winning groups were chosen from each commune, for a total of six winning singing groups that included a total of 58 individual girls (winners were chosen by a panel of mentors and Batonga staff). Winners received small school supplies kits as part of their prizes and the top winner from each commune received a small cash prize. The audio versions of the songs will also be played on local radio stations in Bohicon and Savalou!

Check out some of the videos of the winning songs on our social media & Youtube accounts!



Launching our Community Service Projects Competition



This second new project aims at seeing girls feel confident - and recognized - as community leaders in their own right. Groups of girls design community service projects, taking into account their communities' greatest needs as well as the relative sustainability/durability of their project idea. A total of 62 various projects were submitted by girls from each of Batonga's 15 villages. Projects ranged from supporting girls attending school during the pandemic to planting new trees in the community and to providing safe drinking water to community members! One project from each village has been chosen for funding and implementation support. The projects will be guided and led by the girls themselves.



Re-designing programs to ensure uninterrupted support for those we serve

In July Batonga's Mentors came together for their first mentor training since COVID-19 arrived in Benin. Batonga's quarterly training, which normally brings together at least 30 individuals, was adapted to ensure the safety and health of all Mentors. Batonga held a total of four trainings, two in Bohicon and two in Savalou, with a maximum of 15 total participants (trainers and trainees) at each. Mask use was mandatory for the entirety of the training, seating was arranged so that all participants were seated 6 feet apart, windows were opened to provide ventilation, and participants were given frequent breaks to go outside.



Though Mentors reported that they missed seeing their peers that they would normally have shared the training with, it was a welcome return to near normalcy for them and an opportunity to share with one another and with their supervisors all that they had learned in these last incredibly challenging months.

Themes covered during July mentor training sessions:

- 1** *The economic consequences of COVID-19*
- 2** *The emotional and psychological consequences of COVID-19*
- 3** *Violence and conflicts within households due to COVID-19*
- 4** *Synthesis Session: COVID-19, economic, emotions, and violence*
- 5** *Conflict resolution and de-escalation strategies*
- 6** *Basics of Health and Hygiene*

Scaling up income-generating activities & taking on new business opportunities

The Batonga small businesses have identified new opportunities to scale their business such as mass production of antibacterial soap to sell to other local NGOs. In July, The Couffo Collaborative, a local NGO in Benin placed an order for 2,000 bars of soap to be distributed to their team members and 660 women in their Women's Entrepreneurship Program. In September, they chose to order again from the Batonga small businesses, placing an order for 3,000 additional bars of soap. The proceeds from these expanded businesses have been providing the young women Batonga serves with stable sources of income during this crisis.

Girl with some of the soap produced, and delivery day with Couffo Collaborative!



Using radio as a powerful outreach and learning tool for girls and their families

Since April, Radio Lessons have been recorded by Batonga Mentors and broadcast weekly to ensure that the adolescent girls and young women participants in Batonga's programs continue to have access to critical life skills, health, and financial literacy information, despite the potential restrictions to their movement outside the home resulting from COVID-19. The lessons have generated great feedback from those we serve with an average listen rate this quarter of 81% per week from SONAFA Club Members.

Radio Lesson Topics Covered In Quarter 3

- How to set up a savings system
- How do we look for opportunities or sources of income in our communities or elsewhere?
- Changes in puberty and how to deal with them
- Accepting differences and diversity
- Our skills and talents: how to reach our full potential
- How to be confident in one's self
- Rights and Citizenship: What are a girl's rights in her community?

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

82%



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 Maguérîte and Honorine!

Meet Marguérîte, Mentor in Aglamidjodji village, Savalou



“My name is Marguérîte, mentor in Aglamidjodji, Savalou. I have 4 clubs of 101 beneficiary girls. What inspired me to be a mentor was that in my childhood and youth, I couldn't find anyone to guide me. As a result I was easily influenced and it is in view of all this that I decided to be a guide for the teenage girls of my village so that they do not fall into the same traps as me. In my village, we are still in a rural environment and our daughters are unaware of many things. This is why my favorite lesson to teach through the radio lessons this quarter has

been on 'How to set up a savings system'. This lesson is very important from my point of view and I teach it in particular to my clubs so that the girls know how to better manage their personal funds. They know that they should not spend all of it to satisfy unnecessary desires. They must be able to save well in order to achieve their goals and dreams, especially in this period of COVID-19.”

Meet Josiane, Mentor in Tchogodo village, Savalou

"My name is Josiane, I am a mentor in Tchogodo and in charge of 5 clubs with 125 members. During this quarter, us Mentors have quickly adapted. For instance, we are working with girls in safe spaces with less than 10 girls. We have also been increasing the number of home visits we make in order to raise awareness of preventive measures against COVID-19 in our communities. Our work continues on the airwaves through the radio broadcasts we do. This allows parents and the whole community to follow our teachings and better understand the work of Batonga.

