

# Impact Report



**Batonga**

2022  
Q2





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# Introduction

Dear Friends,

It is an honor to share this report with you, and to once again have the opportunity to guide the Batonga Foundation through an exciting period of learning, growth, and impact.

When I left my role as Executive Director at Batonga in late 2019, I was confident that the organization was in wonderful, capable hands. Under Emily Bove's leadership, our programs expanded within Benin and to Senegal, a strong advocacy platform for gender equality was built, and an enduring culture of care was established within the organization as our team grew. We currently reach 8,405 young women and girls through Batonga Leadership Clubs and Young Women Business Circles, 1,042 of whom engage in meaningful and dignified work.

Stepping back in as Interim Executive Director, I have been blown away- not only by the increased impact that our programs have achieved over the past few years- but also by the hard work, dedication, and infectious passion for women and girls' equality that each and every one of Batonga's team members exudes. This work would not be possible without them. With each new person we have brought on, we have gained a strategic thinker, advocate, and true team player. It has been a pleasure to meet them, learn their stories, hear about their work and witness the growth we are undergoing as an organization, especially given my history at Batonga through its early formative years.

I have never been more confident in our future and the role Batonga is playing in creating a safer, healthier, and more equitable world in which all girls and women can thrive. Some of the things that I am most proud to highlight this quarter are:

1. Batonga's ongoing commitment to systematic information-gathering to inform our work, including the development of several data reports and the use of tools like the Girl Roster;
2. Welcoming several new key team members including Merry Niang, Global Director of Services Support, Aida Seydi, Senegal Country Manager, Ella Wama, Benin Country Manager, and Florence Bio Idrissou, Program Manager for Adolescent Girls Leadership, Benin;
3. Our continual adaptation of content to meet the needs and realities of women and girls (read more about our curriculum work and radio programs in this report); and
4. The resilience of our team and the young women and girls we support despite internal transitions, rising inflation, and the rainy season.

As we move forward into Quarter 3, I am committed to continuing to increase our impact and strengthen our institutional capacity, laying the groundwork for the success of Batonga's future permanent Executive Director. I look forward to sharing more updates with you in the Fall.

With gratitude,

Stephanie Lord  
Interim Executive Director



## Recruiting and Training in the Rainy Season

### Recruitment of Regional Managers

Batonga was pleased to receive over 100 applications for regional manager and facilitators positions in our 38 new communities in northern Benin. We feel this is a positive indication not only of the importance of our work to empower young women and girls, but also of the support that these new communities will have for Batonga and its programs.

### Onboarding and Training the Facilitators, Business Coaches & Mentors

94 new mentors and business coaches from the new Batonga communities of Cana II, Sodohomey, Passagon and Gnidjazoun in Bohicon and the districts of Kpataba, Attakè, Monkpa and Lahotan in Savalou came onboard in April, adding new names and faces to the wonderful team that runs our Adolescent Girls Leadership Clubs and Young Women's Business Circles.

In June, our new regional managers and facilitators came together in Cotonou to exchange thoughts, receive training and bond as a team.

The rainy season started in April, sending most women into the fields during the week to replenish food reserves.

This obligation negatively affected Young Women's Business Circle attendance.

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Despite this busy period for the women, the 50 circles still managed to increase their profits, month after month.





"Since we started giving lessons to the teenage girls who are members of the clubs, I have noticed that there have been many changes in them. At the beginning, the teenagers were shy and were ashamed to speak. But now, thanks to the club activities, they are no longer afraid to speak in public. They find it easier to express themselves during the sessions and even outside the clubs, in front of their peers and even adults. They have also acquired new knowledge about their rights and their health."

- Germaine Adadja, Mentor in Bohicon







## Building our Team in Q2

### Several key positions came on board in Q2!

To support the forthcoming expansion into 38 new communities this year, Batonga hired Ella Wama, our new Benin Country Manager and Florence Bio Idrissou, our new Adolescent Girls Leadership Program Manager in May.

In June, Aida Gueye Seydi joined as the Senegal Country Manager and Merry Niang came onboard as our new Global Director of Support Services, both based in Dakar.

The experience and expertise of our newest team members will ensure a successful launch into Northern Benin and Senegal in the months to come.

"Reaching girls and young women in the most remote parts of Benin and helping them discover their potential is the noble option chosen by the Batonga Foundation. We want to build awareness of our programs and build fruitful partnerships for the betterment of girls and women. Every girl and every woman in Benin is a leader who contributes to the socio-economic development of the country,"

- Ella Wama, Benin Country Manager, Batonga Foundation.

# Adolescent Girls Leadership

## Developing a new curriculum and radio partnerships

During the second quarter, the AGL program focused on developing new curriculum content. While finalizing this new curriculum, the Clubs have implemented a transitional education plan where they revisit lessons that were the most challenging from the last two years. Batonga also rebroadcast civic education lessons through local radio stations.

In coordination with the opening of Batonga's new satellite office in Benin's northern region of Atacora, we established partnerships with two new local radio stations (Dinaba FM in Boukombé and Nanto FM in Natitingou). The first radio lessons are set to air on these stations in July.

## Here's an update on the Leadership Clubs' activities this quarter

### April

- There were 47 Mentors for the 103 active Adolescent Girls Leadership Clubs
- 1,272 girls (14-18) attended at least one session during April (93%)
- 86% listened to radio lessons
- Themes of the lessons taught in the Clubs:
  - "Choosing my friends"
  - "Accepting our differences and our diversity"
  - "My life goals"
- Mentors conducted 777 home visits to check-in on adolescent girls and their families
- Girl Roster survey completed

### May

- 1,293 girls attended at least one session during May (94%)
- 78% listened to radio lessons
- Themes of the lessons taught in Clubs this month:
  - "Civil Rights"
  - "Dealing with stressful moments"
  - "Staying healthy"
  - "Making our choices known and respected"
- Mentors conducted 667 home visits to check-in on adolescent girls and their families

### June

- 1,288 girls attended at least one session during June (94%)
- 77% listened to radio lessons
- Themes of the lessons taught in Clubs this month:
  - "Make our choices known and respected"
  - "Choosing my friends"
  - "Apprenticeships, Jobs and Careers"
- Mentors conducted 643 home visits to check-in on adolescent girls and their families

**2,945**

Adolescent girls recruited in 34 new communities in central and northern Benin (Atacora, Collines, and Zou).

# Women's Economic Empowerment

**The Young Women's Business Circles continue to see profits as we begin to recruit new participants!**

## April

- All 50 of the Young Women's Business Circles are up and running as normal
- 912 young women (81%) out of the 1,121 recruited participated in at least one Business Circle session
  - Subjects covered in Circle Sessions this month: Rural Marketing
- Circle businesses had total expenses of \$11,152
- Circle businesses had total sales of \$11,095
- **Circle businesses made a total profit of \$1,191 in April**

April marked a huge milestone: the end of the pilot phase of our Young Women's Business Circles program. To gain further insight into the program's impact, we conducted a survey and held four working sessions between our Business Coaches and the Women's Economic Empowerment Program Manager. These sessions allowed for meaningful discussion of the difficulties encountered this year and how we can improve the monitoring and evaluation of income-generating activities.

**3,972**

Number of women identified to join YWBC in the new communities in central and Northern Benin!

## May

- 1,005 young women (81%) out of the 1,121 recruited participated in at least one Business Circle session
  - Subjects covered in Circle Sessions this month: Rural Marketing Strategies
- Circle businesses had total expenses of \$11,154
- Circle businesses had total sales of \$12,421
- **Circle businesses made a total profit of \$1,254 in May**



# Women's Economic Empowerment

## June

- 1,041 young women (93%) participated in at least one Business Circle session
- Circle businesses had total expenses of \$11,277
- Circle businesses had total sales of \$13,033
- **Circle businesses made a total profit of \$1,259 in June**

To gain more insight into the needs of the communities in the north, eight investigators and two supervisors (all women) interviewed and collected pre-test data in Atacora from 140 young women in the communes of Natitingou and Boukombé. This information will help Batonga understand the socio-cultural, professional and economic realities and norms in the communities where we plan to expand our work so that we can adapt our programs accordingly. This process began in June and continued into July.



**"In our circle, we have challenged ourselves to double, even triple our profits from last year because by achieving this goal, it will strengthen our individual businesses because we take the profits generated by our circle's income generating activities to also invest in our individual activities."**

**- Elisabeth Ayena, YWBC member in Ouesse**



# Stories of Impact

## Collaboration among the Young Women's Business Circles

Natacha Agbahoungba, WEE Program Manager Benin

Many of the Young Women's Business Circles engage in activities that represent different stages in local supply chains for food, agricultural products, and household items. As a result, several of the businesses have formed links and cooperative agreements. For example, many of the young women in the circles of Covedji, in the commune of Savalou, transform cassava into "gari," a type of cassava flour. Their processing businesses rely on the agricultural production of cassava, which they source from another circle in Aglamidjodji.

Nearby, the women in the Tovigome Circle in Savalou are producing antiseptic and laundry soaps. Initially, they had to travel long distances to obtain the raw materials needed to produce their soaps. To overcome this obstacle, they conducted a small market study and discovered that another circle located in Tchogodo could sell them the vegetable oils, soda, and perfumes that were needed for their businesses.

This cooperation not only diversifies supply chains but also increases the ability to obtain quality, locally made products at market price and ultimately enhance the overall sustainability of the Business Circles.



Young women from the Circle that grows cassava and sells it to another Circle



# Stories of Impact



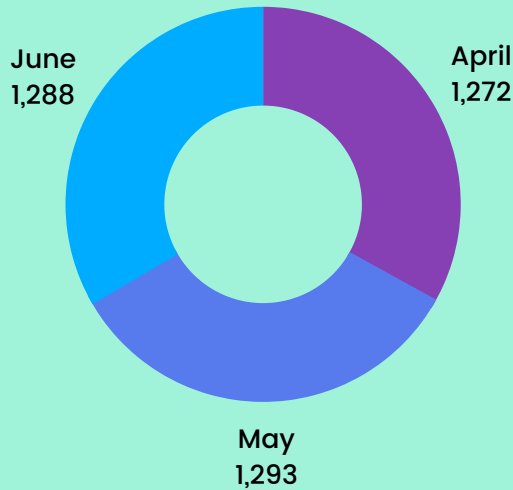
Young women from the circle buying cassava while peeling cassava



Making cassava flour after the peeling process and others

# Attendance and Profits

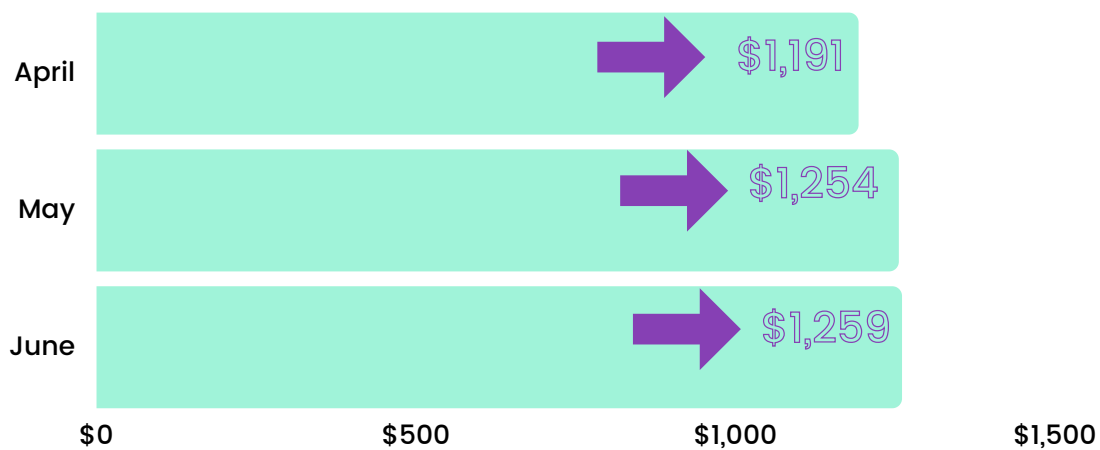
## Adolescent Girls Leadership Club Session Attendance



**Steady level of participation in the Adolescent Girls Leadership Clubs in Q2**

## Women's Economic Empowerment

The 50 Circles show a total profit increase month after month



**Circle businesses profit increases monthly in Q2**



# Advocacy for Gender Equality



In April, Nos Voix Comptent (NVC) relaunched its monthly virtual webinar series to amplify voices in francophone Africa and support activists and movements in its 22 member countries. These sessions tackle a wide variety of topics and provide space for members and participants to exchange ideas in their own language.

Erin Williams, Former Program Director, Sexual and Reproductive Justice, at the Global Fund For Women, joined the first webinar to discuss accountability in monitoring and in coalitions of action. Two Nexus representatives joined as guests in the May installment: Katie Tobin, Senior Program Manager at WEDO and Adriana Lopez, Women's Working Group on Financing for Development. Their discussion highlighted various opportunities to advocate for economic and climate justice globally, alongside Generation Equality. Viewers and participants in these sessions are steadily increasing each month, with more than 100 registrants attending the last session.

In April, Teslanik Houndegnon, our NVC Coordinator, also hosted a conversation on women's economic empowerment in Africa as part of the Conversation for Africa Generation Equality Forum series. Special guest Diane Ndarbawa, NVC Member and Ambassador, and Natacha Agbahoungba, WEE Program Manager also joined the conversation on Instagram live.

**Nos Voix Comptent** is a feminist movement to amplify the voices of Francophone African women implemented in partnership with Global Fund For Women and supported by the XOESE Fund for Francophone Women.

When we announced the re-launch of the Our Voices Matter webinars on our social media channels, Dab Khibunda from the DRC commented on Facebook, "It's so great that the webinars are back! I've been missing these moments, I can't wait. Long live the Our Voices Matter movement!"

# Acknowledgements

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This report is made possible with contributions of our team members who work tirelessly on our programs and inform us on the progress of all ongoing projects.

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Thank you for your continued support of our programs.

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