



Quarterly Impact Report

January – March 2021



batongafoundation.org

Washington D.C., March 2021

Dear friends,

Can you believe a first quarter has passed for this new year already! At Batonga, we marched head high into 2021 after what was a difficult 2020 with the start of the pandemic, and the toll it took on the lives of our program participants and our team. But I am so proud of where we landed after months of adaptation, planning, and incredible dedication and commitment to those we serve.

Truth is, the team never paused, quite the contrary. This first quarter shows the continuation of all the new activities we launched under the pandemic, from the radio lessons to the girl-led community projects and to the new ways of staying safe, informed, and rooted in solidarity. We also launched a new project around citizenship engagement and girls' civic participation. It's an exciting new partnership and we are integrating this topic into our existing curriculum. Our team in Benin is on the frontlines of this incredible work, and this impact report is about their strength and the resilience of the young women and adolescent girls we support.

But in 2021, Batonga is also about more than our programs in Benin. Through our "Nos Voix Comptent" initiative, we are strengthening the women and girls' right movement in francophone Africa, and amplifying the voices of rural and marginalized young women from over 22 countries. You'll get to see in this report some of this incredible work, and I hope you feel as excited about it as we are.

Finally, this quarter has been a blessing because of YOU! Our supporters have showed up and are standing strongly by our side: thank you for your contributions in our last fundraising campaigns, but also your support and messages throughout the quarter. We are so honored to have your trust, and can't wait to go through this year by your side.

With gratitude,
Emily



Emily Bove
Executive Director



KEY MILESTONES

(January– March 2021)

Launching a Citizenship and Rights Program for adolescent girls and young women



Leadership Club session this quarter



Mentor Germaine recording a radio lesson

This quarter, Batonga launched The Project for Education and Civic Engagement of Rural Adolescent Girls and Young Women, with support from The Open Society Institute of West Africa (OSIWA). This project aims at helping rural adolescent girls and young women in Benin gain knowledge, resources, and skills to be able to demand and benefit from their civic rights. It will also help them understand the opportunities that active citizenship and social and civic leadership. Through mentoring, community engagement, and girl-led activities around civic education and engagement, this project will contribute to the development of civic dispositions for a social group that is often left behind in such affairs (adolescent girls and young women aged 12–28) and enhance their civic knowledge and skills.

In March, the first radio lesson as a part of this program titled "What are our Civic Rights and Duties as Citizens" was recorded and broadcasted on radio stations across two districts in Benin (Bohicon and Savalou). Here is a small excerpt of what was broadcasted from Batonga Mentor, Suzanne:

"Every citizen regardless of their gender, race, skin color, religion, etc. has the right to life, health, education, and freedom of expression. These rights are defined exhaustively in many legal instruments including the Constitution of Benin which states that any person who violates these human rights can be penalized."

Batonga Leadership Clubs scaled up their efforts to combat COVID-19 in their communities

In January, 8000 reusable cloth face masks manufactured by Batonga's tailoring training workshops were distributed to girls, their families, and other community members. Additionally, 4000 masks donated by Vlisco Fabrics were distributed to the girls and young women of Batonga's programs.

In addition, 3200 bars of antiseptic soaps were produced this quarter by Batonga's Leadership Clubs and then distributed by Batonga's Mentors. This constituted the fifth round of free soap distribution organized by Batonga.


8,000

 face masks
manufactured

3,200

 soaps produced
& distributed


Batonga Mentors visited each other's programs to learn from one another.



Mentors learning from one another during Peer Observation

This quarter, Batonga Mentors had their first opportunity to visit and observe one another since the start of the pandemic in March 2020. While abiding by strict COVID-19 safety protocols, a small cohort of business expert Mentors was able to travel to their neighboring commune to visit and observe their peers in action this February.

Mentors were also accompanied by the elected young women leaders of their YWBCs. This was the first opportunity for program participants themselves to participate in a peer observation trip. **A total of 22 participants including 12 mentors and 10 YWBC leaders took part in this activity.**

Our Young Women Business Circles began launching their own businesses



Agricultural processing business operated by a YWBC member

This January, Batonga officially granted small business seed funding to all 50 of our Young Women Business Circles (YWBCs), following an extensive review and feedback process for Circles' business plans. Currently, **each of the 50 YWBCs have received their seed funding of \$200 per circle** to launch their collective small businesses. In an effort to further expand the funding that YWBCs have access to, Batonga Mentors and staff are also helping YWBCs to apply to the Tony Elumelu Entrepreneurship Program, which offers young African entrepreneurs the opportunity to fund newly established small businesses.

Since the launch of their income generating activities at the start of the year, **total sales of \$9,692 have been realized with an \$805 profit margin (total for all 50 small businesses)**. The most pressing challenges to business growth and success have been identified and solutions for improving performance are being implemented.

Over
\$9,600
Generated by
YWBCs in Q1 2021

Batonga Mentors celebrated International Women's Day in their communities.

Batonga's Mentors took part in a day-long workshop for exchange and co-creation on March 8th for International Women's Day. The workshop's theme was Women's Leadership for an Egalitarian Future in a Post-COVID-19 World. During this day of reflection, the Batonga mentors took stock of their communities' progress in terms of women's rights and leadership. Mentors

explored together what makes a leader and how to build the leadership skills and experience of the girls and young women in their programs. Also discussed were the difficulties encountered during the Covid-19 pandemic; Mentors explored how to work together to build a better future without gender-based violence within their communities.



Mentors attending IWD celebration

Collecting and sharing the priorities and recommendations of thousands of francophone African young women

Last year, Batonga launched "Nos Voix Comptent", an initiative in partnership with the Global Fund for Women and the the Francophone Women's Fund XOESE. Our objective is to amplify the voices of francophone young women and girls in the Generation Equality Forum process, an international gathering led by the United Nations and the government of France and Mexico to set a five year gender equality agenda for the world in 2021.

Since January, we have worked with ten local partners in three countries to collect data from rural young women. This led to a set of recommendations that were presented to our partners and will be shared with governments, media, and other civil society members between now and June 2021 (when the Forum will take place in Paris, France). **We collected priorities and recommendations from 1628 young women and women in 3 countries: Benin, Cameroon and Senegal.**

1628

young women
consulted

3

countries
Benin, Senegal,
Cameroon



Nos Voix Comptent members in Northern Cameroon participating in a data collection session in January 2021

Did you know?
"Nos Voix Comptent" means
Our Voices Count in French.
To learn more about the
initiative, visit
nosvoixcomptent.org.



MEET OUR MENTORS

Get to know **Gilberte and Mireille!**

Meet Gilberte, Mentor in Covedji village, Savalou Benin



"My name is Gilberte and I am a mentor in Covedji. My favorite part of being a Mentor has been to teach the Leadership Clubs lessons using games and songs to help them better absorb the material. Over the past quarter, my favorite lesson to teach in my clubs has been on how to use a cash journal. This helps each young women in my clubs looking to set up a small business to better control her expenses, her profits, and to better manage her stock of goods. I'm proud to be a Batonga Mentor because thanks to Batonga's teachings, young women and girls in my Clubs are better able to express their emotions, needs, desires, and to make good choices for their own future which also plays a big role in shaping the beliefs of those around them and how they view the role of women and girls in their communities."

Meet Mireille, Mentor in Tovigomin village, Bohicon

"My name is Mireille and I am a Mentor in Tovigomin. This past quarter, some of the most important activities I have carried out include coordinating and supervising income-generating activities in the Clubs and YWBC's (such as selling oils, corn, and soybeans) as well as conducting home visits. I have found my home visits to be very important in helping to raise the awareness of girl's families about how to prevent the spread of COVID-19 as well as on violence and forced/early marriages of adolescent girls. As a mentor, I notify parents of the harmful consequences these practices have on the lives of the girls and help them to change their perspective."



**Thank you for
supporting
our work!**

If you have any questions,
please contact
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