



Batonga



**ANNUAL REPORT
2020**

Message from our founder, Angélique Kidjo

Dear Batonga family,

I think it's fair to say none of us were ready for what 2020 had in store for us. The pandemic showed us the worst of what could be, but also brought out the very best in so many of us. During those difficult months and times, when we were all uncertain of what was to come, we rallied around those who needed us the most, even from behind a screen.

At Batonga, despite the disruption, we stayed our course. Our focus remained the adolescent girls and young women we support. Rather than pausing our work, we amplified it. Rather than doing business as usual, we transformed our model. I was amazed to see our Batonga team take on the challenge of the pandemic and work hard to ensure that our services and work would not only not be interrupted, but also evolve and adapt to the needs and demands of this unique moment.

I saw and followed in awe as our Batonga mentors took on new roles and stepped it up to protect their communities and our program participants. They were the first ones to raise awareness around the pandemic and organize prevention campaigns in their communities. They also become radio hosts to continue to share important information, knowledge and skills to the girls and young women when they couldn't meet in person. They supported adolescents and young women as they designed and implemented community projects through our COVID emergency fund.

As for the incredible adolescent girls and young women we support, they showed us that they are already the leaders we knew they could become. They came together to support one another, and took on new responsibilities, designing and implementing community projects that could help those around them. Alongside their mentors, they showed they understood the power of solidarity, and knew how to get things done.

We launched two new programs in 2020: the Young Women Business Circles, and the "Nos Voix Comptent" initiative. You'll be introduced to this new work in this report. We've also got some exciting plans for 2021, much of them being already in the making by the time you will read this. We can't wait to share them with you.

Thank you for being part of our Batonga family. None of this would be possible without you!

With Love,
Angélique Kidjo
Co-Founder and Board member



Message from our Executive Director, Emily Bove

Dear Friends,

When the year started in 2020, the team and I were excited to implement some new ideas and programs. Little did we know we would have to rapidly adapt and evolve our model to support girls and young women through a global pandemic that would affect all of us, from Benin to the United States.

In 2020, the Batonga team showed what it meant to be adaptive, resilient, and creative in the light of disruption. Over twelve months, we:

- paused our in-person leadership clubs and launched a new radio program to replace them;
- equipped local women with all they needed to be leaders when it came to prevention and awareness-raising around COVID-19 (including prevention posters, hand-washing stations, and the very first masks in those communities);
- launched our community projects to give girls the power to decide how to use resources to support their communities throughout the pandemic;
- helped women-led businesses, launched with Batonga's support, to mass produce soap and sell it to new markets beyond their immediate communities increased our home visits to make sure no girl was left behind (following safe health guidelines for all involved)
- launched our Young Women Business Circles to boost economic activity and mitigate the economic impacts of the pandemic on women-led businesses

This annual report is about sharing the work accomplished, but it is also proof that our organization is ready to scale and do even more. This year showed us just how strong our programmatic model is, and how deep our impact goes. We are ready for what comes next!

Sincerely

Emily Bove
Executive Director



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Our mission, values, and vision

Transforming her potential into power.

Founded in 2006 by fearless gender equality advocate and celebrated Beninese singer-songwriter Angélique Kidjo, the Batonga Foundation addresses the pressing issues faced by adolescent girls and young women most in-need on the African continent. We focus on dismantling the norms and barriers holding them back, and help them transform their potential into the power to lead healthy, independent, safe, and fulfilling lives.

In 2020, our work helped to improve the lives of thousands of young women and girls in Africa and protect them and their communities from the COVID-19 pandemic. Our Leadership Clubs, Young Women Business Circles, Batonga Mentors, and Nos Voix Comptent initiative worked to equip over 4,000 young women in girls across the continent with the knowledge and skills they need to be agents of change in their own lives and communities.

We are enormously grateful to our supporters who stand with us as we fight to create a safer, healthier, and more equitable world in which all girls and women can thrive. Thank you!

Our Project Pillars

Our three project pillars are based on the needs and priorities of the hardest to reach adolescent girls and young women on the continent:

We equip adolescent girls' with mentors and safe spaces to help them learn critical life skills, gain self-confidence, understand their rights, and plan their own economic future.

ADOLESCENT GIRLS' LEADERSHIP

BATONGA MENTORS

We accompany young women as they imagine, build, and implement their income generating plans and professional development strategies to reach economic resilience and independence.

YOUNG WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

BATONGA MENTORS

AMPLIFYING AFRICAN VOICES FOR GENDER EQUALITY

We advocate for transformations on the continent, and help strengthen movements of activists, leaders and change-makers who are challenging the status quo and working towards equality.

BATONGA MENTORS

The Batonga mentors are the backbone of our work and impact in the communities we serve. They form a network of local women leaders that stretches across fifteen communities. They host radio shows, lead our clubs and circles, and work closely with community leaders and families in support of adolescent girls and young women's rights, empowerment, and opportunity.

2020 By The Numbers

Batonga operated **173** SOCIALLY DISTANCED
MINI-LEADERSHIP CLUBS
which served **2,068** adolescent girls aged 10-18
and had an average attendance rate of **88%**



We established **50** YOUNG WOMEN BUSINESS
CIRCLES (YWBCs)
serving just over **1,100** young women aged 18-30
and helped them launch **50** SMALL BUSINESSES



We held GBV awareness events attended by **1,000** COMMUNITY
MEMBERS
and broadcasted over **30** educational radio lessons
heard by over **200,000** COMMUNITY
MEMBERS



We launched Nos Voix Comptent, serving over **600** ACTIVE
MEMBERS
and consulting over **2,490** women from **18** countries
to deliver their recommendations to the Generation Equality Forum.

Supporting Girls Leadership During COVID-19

Batonga's Girls' Leadership Clubs have always been spaces where girls could work together to overcome challenges and grow in the face of adversity. In the face of the COVID-19 pandemic, the adolescent girls in our Leadership Clubs found solidarity and purpose in helping lead and improve their communities. Some of their accomplishments include:

Launching a Radio Lesson program

Adolescent girls and mentors used their voices to record a series of radio messages explaining COVID-19 transmission and prevention that were broadcast across the region, proving that girl leaders can be a powerful guiding force for good

Hosting a series of COVID-19 prevention competitions

A series of competitions helped to cement girls' role as leaders in their own right, as well as the community's perception of them.

- **Song Competition:** Batonga's song and sketch competitions resulted in over a half-dozen informative and engaging songs about COVID-19 prevention, written and recorded by the girls themselves, which were played on local radio stations in dozens of communities.
- **Community Service Project Competition:** The community service projects designed and managed by girls, for which they received Batonga seed-funding, gave them valuable new experiences, such as interacting with local leaders, providing much-needed services to their peers and neighbors, and managing a project budget.

Producing soaps and face masks

Club members and their mentors produced antibacterial soaps for sale and for free distribution in their community and across the region. Batonga's tailoring training workshops produced cloth face masks for Batonga participants and their families.

Our Impact In Numbers



17,280
radio lessons



30
hand-washing
stations built



7,200
soaps and masks
made & distributed



"Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the limited number of gatherings in markets and the like, our parents lost their businesses, commerce stopped working, all products became very expensive, and we all spent most of our days in our homes. These factors have all led to increased violence and lack of self-control in our homes. But through Batonga's radio broadcasts, a lot of lessons were developed on how to best address these difficult situations that the community in general was going through which allowed them to be resilient and to believe in other opportunities after COVID-19. The Batonga Mentors, through the radio lessons, have shown my community how we can approach all situations calmly and go through them better.

I am so grateful to Batonga for helping me gain a network of friends that I can turn to, helping me get past certain situations I've experienced in my life, and for teaching me skills that help me to stay in better health. I thank Batonga very much for his incredible work in my village. We have all changed for the better."

**Pulchérie, Batonga Leadership Club Member
Sodohome Village, Benin**

Creating New Opportunities For Women's Economic Empowerment

After three years in Batonga's leadership clubs, a cohort of nearly 1,500 young women found themselves ready for the next step in their growth. Some expressed interest in continuing to work with Batonga while others were choosing to continue their education or professional development outside of the village, while still others moved away for family or after marrying. As our club curriculum wrapped up and these Batonga trained young women graduated from the clubs, we began work on what would become Batonga's newest program: **"The Young Women's Business Circle" (YWBC) initiative**, a new approach for young women aged 18 to 30 to better support their professional development and employment.

In the largely informal economies of our implementation communities, entrepreneurship can be the best way to generate an income. But entrepreneurship comes with significant risk and isn't accessible to all. The Young Women's Business Circles are an investment in women's collective entrepreneurship; YWBCs create safe, low risk spaces for new business women to collaborate, learn, test ideas, try, fail and try again, all with the guidance and support of a Batonga Mentor and their peers.

Our Impact In Numbers

Launching 50 Young Women Business Circles in October 2020.



Providing 50 Women-led micro and small businesses seed funding to start business activities.

Establishing access to business skills discussion groups to 1,121 young women 18-30 years old in their communities.





"Prior to joining the Young Women Business Circles, I was a Leadership Club member. I wanted to join the YWBC's because I had heard that it would allow us to put into practice, at a larger scale, all that we had learned in the Clubs and to acquire new skills in business management with my peers. Since being a part of the YWBC's, I've learned how to both work better collaboratively as a team while also how to be autonomous. What I mean by this is that I have learned the benefits of networking with my peers, which I do often, but have also acquired the skills to now go off and start my own small business. I feel good knowing that I have my peers as a support system as I go off and begin my business. I've even helped my mother with her business, teaching her the skills I've learned to help her better plan and manager her income!"

**Lucrèce, Batonga Young Women Business Circle Member
Alikpa Village, Benin**

Mentors Making A Difference

Batonga Mentors are always a critical part of our program's success. In 2020, more so than ever before, Batonga Mentors claimed their role as community leaders. At every step of the process, from the moment that Batonga began to develop its COVID-19 response strategy to today, Batonga Mentors have risen to the occasion with enthusiasm, bravery, and empathy. **Some of our Batonga Mentors accomplishments include:**

Accompanying

To ensure that all girls, even those unable to regularly attend Clubs, are safe, healthy, and happy, Mentors have also been conducting regular home visits to personally check in on girls and their families.

Equipping

During each home visit, Batonga Mentors brought with them a free bar of soap to give to girls' families, to ensure that all households, regardless of their income, have the materials they need to prevent COVID-19 transmission. Mentors conducted brief handwashing lessons for girls and their families during these visits as well. However, understanding that none of these households 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

Informing

In mid-March, as soon as Benin had its first confirmed case of COVID-19, Batonga Mentors, equipped with informational guides and flyers, lept into action, conducting widespread community information sessions about COVID-19 transmission and prevention, as well as hand washing lessons for all Batonga girls. Batonga Mentors also recorded radio lessons to be broadcasted at local radio stations when their Clubs could not meet in-person.

Our Impact In Numbers





"I have been a Batonga Mentor for two years. I chose to become a Batonga Mentor because I saw how Batonga had been helping young girls in my community to develop and succeed in life and I wanted to be a part of this change. As a Mentor now, I have even acquired more knowledge that I can apply in my own life! I've seen many changes over the past two years within the girls that I mentor. Initially, they were shy and not very responsive. Nowadays, they react quickly and enthusiastically without fear, they're dancing, and they are confident. This makes me so happy to see.

Us Mentors worked tirelessly during the pandemic to make sure that our community was better informed about the disease in the face of rumors and disinformation noted everywhere in Benin. We helped to make girls, and their parents more aware of their hygiene through soap distribution, radio broadcasts, hosting mini clubs, and home visits. I am very proud of this work!"

**Amina, Batonga Mentor
Logbo Village, Benin**

Renewed Commitment to Community Engagement

The COVID-19 pandemic made it clearer than ever that no one person or community operates completely in a vacuum and that for real impact and change to occur communities need to work together towards the same purpose. That is why we have taken this year to renew our commitment to community engagement and norms change. Activities for girls and mentors are not limited to the Club sessions themselves, but instead are woven into the fabric of the larger community, engaging leaders, families, businesses and neighbors. Some of our accomplishments include:

Funding Women and Girl- Led Community Service Projects

15
girl-led
community
projects funded

In 2020, Batonga funded 15 community service projects designed and led by girls themselves. Projects aim to improve communities' wellbeing and give girls the opportunity to positively engage with their local leaders and neighbors while publicly making an impact. From now on, opportunities to apply their newly learned knowledge and skills to the most pressing issues facing their communities.

Broadcasting Weekly Radio Programming

Launched in response to physical distancing needs of the COVID-19 pandemic, Batonga's radio lesson programming offers both an opportunity for girls unable to attend Club sessions to stay up to date and community members the opportunity to better understand, and even benefit from, the informational content of Batonga's programs. Due to its widespread positive reception, weekly radio shows have been integrated into Batonga's overall model.

200,000
community
members heard
our radio
broadcasts

Hosting Community Engagement Events

4
community
engagement
events hosted

Held quarterly in each village, community engagement events are co-led by mentors and girls. These events allow Club participants and mentors to share their learnings and achievements with friends, families and neighbors. Co-leading community events helps girls practice new public speaking and leadership skills and creates unique opportunities for community members to listen to and learn from adolescent girls



"Participating in Batonga's community engagement events has brought me great joy. These events have allowed me to increase our knowledge of how to deal with various social situations and have raised awareness around important topics related to how to better the the well-being of our daughters. For example, our most recent community engagement session discussed the topic of forced child marriages. We received information on how these kinds of marriages can be avoided and the negative impacts that these arrangements can have on our society as a whole.

I also thank Batonga for their awareness raising on COVID-19 in my community. They distributed face masks to us all , including parents and children, while also teaching us behavior to adopt in order to avoid contracting the disease like regulary washing our hands with soap and water, keeping our distance from others, etc."

**Marie, Village Leader
Gbangnanme Village, Benin**

Amplifying African Voices

To ensure that the voices and ideas of African, particularly French-speaking women, young women and girls are amplified and listened to at the global level, Batonga launched the initiative Nos Voix Comptent (Our Voices Count) in 2020.

Nos Voix Comptent is a partnership between Batonga, the XOESE Fund for Francophone Women, and the Global Fund for Women that aims to ensure that the voices of women and girls from Francophone sub-Saharan Africa are heard at the Generation Equality Forum. Our goal is the improved inclusion and participation of Francophone African women's rights activists, organizations, and movements in the Generation Equality Forum. Some of our accomplishments include:

Building awareness about the Generation Equality Forum

We worked with national and local media to bring the GEF process into public knowledge. Generation Equality was discussed on public television and radio in Senegal, on public television in Benin, and on local radios in Benin.

Collecting data to amplify women and young women's needs and priorities

Nos Voix Comptent worked with 10 women and youth rights groups to organize in person consultations of 1,628 women and young women in three countries: Senegal (270), Benin (758), and Cameroon (600). We also launched an online survey which was filled by 800 women and young women. The priorities and recommendations collected through this survey will be shared with the Generation Equality Forum organizers and Action Coalition leaders in March 2021.

Our Impact In Numbers

270
activists
attended our
webinars.



600
active NVC
members.



2,490
women and
young women
consulted in three
countries
(Senegal, Benin,
Cameroon).





"As a member of the Nos Voix Comptent network and for having taken part in its work throughout 2020, I can truly testify to the impact of its actions which have been for me inspiring, decisive, revolutionary, innovative, and inclusive.

I've witnessed real commitments made by various stakeholders on the continent to advance the lives of women and girls from this work. I've also seen the unleashing of a revolutionary and inclusive new dynamic among young women and girls in my county. This work and its impact continues to inspire and amaze me. I am excited to see the changes NVC will bring in 2021!"

**Wilhelmine Ntakebuka, NVC MEMBER
Democratic Republic of Congo**

2020 Financials

Total 2020 Income

Individuals.....\$123,826
Foundations.....\$813,724
Total Income.....**\$937,550**



■ Individuals (13.21%)
■ Foundation Grants (86.79%)



■ Program (58.27%)
■ Operating (41.73%)

Total 2020 Expenses

Program.....\$378,314
Operations.....\$270,982
Total.....**\$649,296**

Operations include our Amplifying African voices portfolio work

"What Batonga has done for us is huge. Batonga has supported us and our families throughout the COVID-19 pandemic by teaching us things like how to properly wash our hands, social distance, and donating to us soaps and masks. This has helped my community to stay healthy. My community has now emerged from ignorance about COVID-19, become resilient, and remains hopeful for a better future after COVID-19."

**Auriane, Batonga Leadership Club Member
Covèdji Village, Benin**



Plans For Growth: 2021 & Beyond

Taking our work to scale

In 2021, we will be taking our work to scale. We have big dreams: to reach 25,000 adolescent girls and young women by 2025. We're hoping to reach a first step of 15,000 program participants by the end of 2022, both in Benin and a new country. In 2021, we will build the expansion strategies and partnerships we need to make this happen. We will work with Batonga mentors and program participants to identify the way we can address the most pressing needs in the lives of rural young women and adolescent girls, through a girl-centered and locally-rooted social change model that is collaborative and authentic.



Supporting the Francophone African women's rights movement

In 2021, our work will focus on the Generation Equality Forum, and making sure the francophone women's rights and youth movements are fully engaged in the process. We will work with partners to build trust and mobilize advocates in over 22 francophone african countries. We will collect data with local women and girls to be able to share their experiences and priorities with decision-makers about to commit to funding gender equality work. We will be active defenders of linguistic inclusion and representation in all international gender equality focused processes.



Special Thank You's

We'd like to extend our sincerest gratitude to all of our partners, Board Members, and supporters like you who have made the accomplishments laid out in this report possible. We couldn't do this transformative and impactful work without you! We are so excited to share with you all our continued impact for many years to come.

Our 2020 Partners



Our Board



Angélique Kidjo
Founder



Mary Louise Cohen
Founder



Aleta Williams
Board Vice-Chair



Monica Winsor
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Nadia Ahidjo



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Romuald Hazoumé



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Katrina Sharkey



Colin Clarke

**Thank you for
supporting
our work!**

If you have any questions,
please contact
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