



# Batonga



## QUARTERLY IMPACT REPORT

January - March 2020



Washington D.C., March 2020

Dear friends,

Since March 15th, Batonga has been actively preparing for the moment Benin is hit by the COVID-19 virus. Unfortunately, that moment has arrived. But thanks to the dedication of our team in Benin, the communities we serve are now better equipped to face this pandemic. As you'll read in this report, we have acted swiftly to produce toolkits, posters, and other informational products for local leaders, communities, and young women and girls. We are also actively working to ensure an important commodity- antibacterial soap - is massively produced and distributed in the communities we serve. We will be monitoring the situation on the ground daily, and know that our incredible Batonga mentors will continue to care for the girls and young women in our programs, even as we are forced to close some of our clubs. We will continue to keep you all updated in the next few weeks.

On another note, this first quarter of 2020 has been marked by incredible achievements for Batonga. Our team, our mentors, and the girls themselves have gone above and beyond to deliver impactful programming and services! Hundreds of girls graduated from their clubs, as we wrapped up the 2019-2020 lesson plan and launched a new one that is better tailored to the needs of those we serve (check out our new age groups!). We're also excited to have built an entirely new program for young women, one focused on their specific needs and priorities. Quarter 2 will see this new program, the Young Women Business Circles, go from theory to practice, and we can't wait!

Our mentors have also received their quarterly training, and we couldn't be more proud of this unbelievable group of women. Their passion and commitment towards girls is an inspiration to us all.

Finally, there isn't enough space here to share everything we do, but we hope you will read this and see how impactful this organization is, in small and big ways!

Thank you for supporting us. Enjoy our quarterly impact report!

Sincerely,

Emily Bove, Executive Director



# TAKING ACTION TO TACKLE THE COVID-19 CRISIS

Even before Benin's first cases were confirmed, Batonga put together an organizational crisis plan to ensure our Batonga family's safety and to step up our preventive and protective measures on the ground.

Our focus has been on two levels:

**1. Ensuring that girls, young women, their families, and their communities have accurate and trustworthy information about COVID-19 such as how to prevent it and what to do if sick.** This will happen through:

- the distribution of a COVID-19 Handbook to all our mentors on the ground, providing them with information and tools to support their leadership on the issue at the local level.
- the distribution of laminated prevention posters for all villages in which we work. The team will distribute to local leaders and mentors.
- the creation of local radio content to support the spread of information on the local level in local languages and dialects.

**2. Promoting the production of antibacterial soap by women-led businesses supported by Batonga.** Last year, we trained thousands of women and girls on how to make soap, and will be buying supplies for those who have established businesses producing this local soap.

Examples of posters printed, laminated, and distributed in the 15 communities we serve:



# KEY MILESTONES (January - March 2020)

## Equipping Girls with Skills

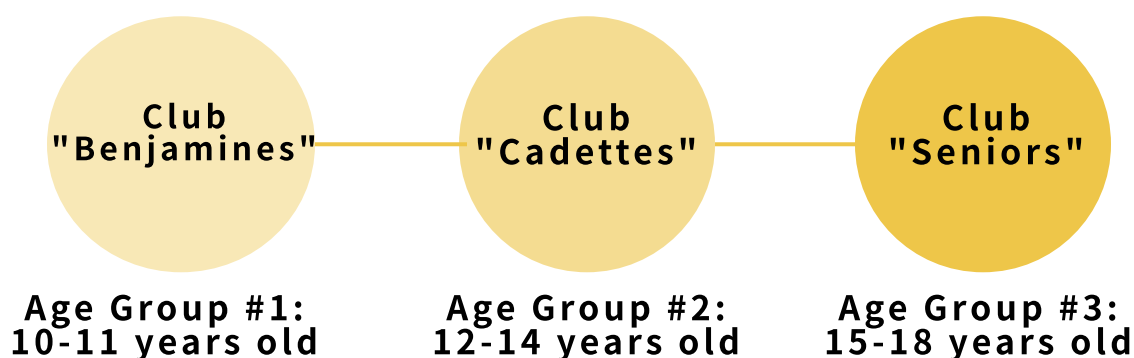
Batonga's SONAFA Leadership Clubs for girls spent this quarter wrapping up their 2019-2020 education plans. Here's what they covered:

- **10 to 11 year-olds:** This age group had its first formal introduction to a number of complex subjects that will be expounded on when they transition to the next age group. Subjects include gender equality, the physical and emotional changes that occur during puberty, and the basics of financial literacy.
- **12 to 16 years-old:** Girls in this middle adolescence age group dove into the same three subjects as their younger peers- gender, reproductive health, and financial literacy- but in greater detail. Lessons covering HIV/AIDS, how to set and stick to a household budget, and gender discrimination in the workplace were among those taught during this time period.
- **17 to 27 year-olds:** Batonga's oldest and longest running SONAFA Clubs wrapped up their third and final year of SONAFA Club programming with a series of detailed and high-level entrepreneurship and small business management lessons. Lessons included delegating roles and responsibilities to team members, understanding customer demand, and accounting for small businesses.

## Reorganizing our SONAFA Leadership Clubs into new age groups...

In January and February, the Batonga team conducted extensive analysis of the best practices surrounding the developmental needs of adolescent girls as well as the knowledge and skills that would best serve adolescent girls of different ages in rural Benin.

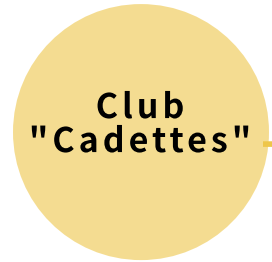
We have built a new structure for our SONAFA Leadership Clubs program based on some of this research, global best practices, and feedback from our mentors on the ground. After the current education plans finish in early March, the SONAFA program will reorganize into three new age segments (and the names of these segments were chosen by the girls themselves!).





**Late Childhood during which the social and emotional soft-skills that will be most critical to the girls' future employment must be learned.** Focus will be given to skills such as listening, self-motivation, teamwork, and self-confidence. Another focus will be on getting the girls ready for puberty, which usually begins around age 12.

**Age Group #1:  
10-11 years old**



**Early Adolescence during which most adolescents experience puberty and require significant health interventions and health management skills.** Focus will be on providing knowledge about health, body, and rights, as well as developing their first concrete business skills, and a deepened focus on financial literacy and management.

**Age Group #2:  
12-14 years old**

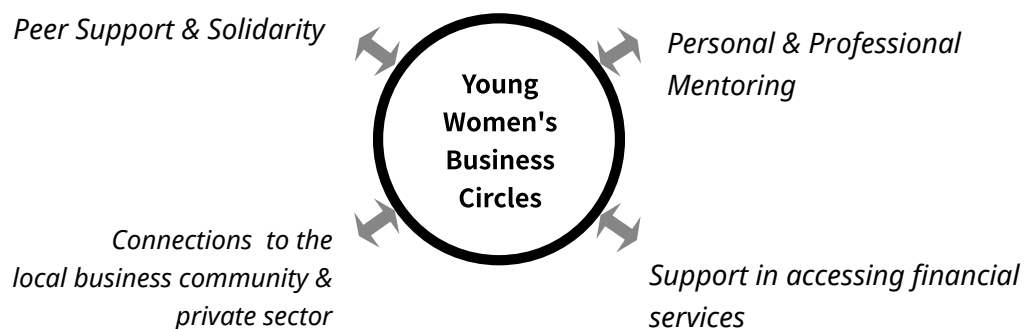


**Late Adolescence when the development of higher-level abstract reasoning skills allows girls to learn more complex financial literacy and entrepreneurship skills and gain a greater understanding of the political, economic, and sociological context in which they live.** Focus will be on safety, preventing child marriage & early pregnancies, negotiating with families for safe choices, economic independence, and plans for the future.

**Age Group #3:  
15-18 years old**

## ...and building a new program for young women (18 to 28)

We're proud to have built a new program for young women: the Young Women Business Circles Program, targeting young women between 18 and 28 years old. Based on our previous attendance rates for this age group as well as feedback from mentors and program participants, we realized that the club's model was not the most effective use of their time, nor the most efficient way of building social, economic, and health assets. We designed the Circles as a community of support and peers for young women already economically active, or aspiring to be. This is what it will look like:



## Building our mentors' skills and capacities

Batonga brings together its Mentors and Assistant Mentors once every quarter to reinforce their teaching and facilitation skills as well as to give them the opportunity to build their relationships with fellow Mentors and share their experiences from the field with their peers.

The last training took place on March 2-6 in Savalou, Benin. Themes developed during this training included:

- Reviewing new pedagogical techniques for each specific age group
- Adding new lessons from the Girl Shine curriculum created by the IRC (International Rescue Committee) to Batonga's curriculum content. Two of these lessons related to Social and Emotional Skills were reviewed and discussed by Mentors during this training: "Listening Skills" and "How to Express and Manage Emotions."



Batonga mentors at our quarterly training, March 4, 2020

## Delivering Holiday Packages for those most in need

Feast and holiday periods, like the month of December, are particularly dangerous for poor families in Benin as people feel significant pressure to put the expected amount of food on the table and have enough money for the holiday celebrations. Sometimes this can lead to families making compromising decisions like giving their daughters away in early marriage or sending their daughters away to work as domestic workers. By helping to support families around this time, Batonga hopes to relieve some of that pressure from the women and girls in our clubs.

For the second year in a row Batonga has distributed a holiday care package to every adolescent girl and young woman in the SONAFA Leadership Clubs. These packages included various basic food stuffs such as rice, oil, bouillon cubes, and cans of sardines as well as a Batonga t-shirt for each girl and three pairs of TOMS Shoes, one pair for girls themselves and two for their family members. About 12,000 shoes were distributed to girls and communities. Parents were so grateful and excited after the Christmas packages that many parents are walking their daughters to Club meetings. That level of enthusiasm and support from parents is unprecedented.

# 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 Madeleine and Colette!

## Meet Madeleine, Mentor in Azokangoudo village, Savalou



"My name is Madeleine, Mentor from Azokangoudo, Savalou. I lead two clubs (...) Parents often tell us about the positive changes they observed in their children such as creativity, entrepreneurship, especially their new high ambitions.

What also caught my attention this quarter was the home visits; this activity is one of the many that differentiates SONAFA Clubs from what happens in schools. When the children miss classes, none of the teachers go to the girls' house to ask about the reasons for their absence.

But in SONAFA clubs, when a girl misses the clubs, the mentors visit her to check about why she is absent from the club; this leads the parents to have good relationships with mentors and understand their daughters needs more. Some parents, when I visit their homes, refer to girls as "our daughters", as if I am also their mother."

## Meet Odette, Mentor in Azokangoudo village, Savalou

"We received so much positive feedback recently from parents about the holiday packages. Many were over the moon about it during the holiday season. There is one girl in my club whose parents' cotton field caught fire in November and after they suffered a lot. They were among those who received the holiday package. This gift positively impacted the girls parents so much, since they did not know how they would provide for their children this Christmas season. Having received the gifts, they cried and thanked us.



These moments of family support have enhanced the reputation of Batonga and made our communities even more grateful".

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!

