



Quarterly Impact Report (January–March 2023)

 **Batonga**

batongafoundation.org

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Introduction

Dear Friends,

I am delighted to present to you Batonga's Q1 2023 Impact Report. The pages to follow outline our progress and achievements as well as the key activities and outcomes we have been working on so far this year.

One of the major milestones I'm most proud to share is the launch of our work in Senegal, where we have made significant progress in preparing for program implementation. We have conducted the Girl Roster and Community Resource Scan, allowing us to tailor our interventions and ensure that we are reaching the most off-track young women with access to vital resources and assets.

We have also partnered with two implementing organizations that are dedicated to promoting gender equality and empowering women in various aspects of society. These partners bring extensive experience and expertise to our programs, ensuring their effective implementation and monitoring.

Additionally, to better measure the impact of our programs, we have enhanced our monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL) infrastructure. This report highlights the four pillars of impact at Batonga: 1)cognitive, intellectual and practical skills, 2)social, emotional and behavioral skills, 3)quality of life of participants, and 4)community support for gender equality. These pillars serve as guiding principles for measuring the positive change we are making, and we provide more information on the indicators associated with each one.

Finally, the report delves into the progress and outcomes of our Adolescent Girls Leadership and Women's Economic Empowerment programs. It also touches on the expansion of our radio broadcast coverage to reach more regions and our partnership with new radio stations to further amplify our messages.

We are proud of the progress we have made in Q1 2023, and we are committed to continuing our efforts to empower adolescent girls and women in Benin, Senegal, and beyond. We hope that this report provides valuable insights into our work and inspires you to continue to support us in our mission.

Thank you for your continued support and interest in Batonga's programs.

With gratitude,



Stephanie Lord
Interim Executive Director

Defining and Visualizing Impact at Batonga

At Batonga, impact is built upon four pillars, each representing a specific area of focus: 1)cognitive, intellectual and practical skills, 2)social, emotional and behavioral skills, 3)quality of life of participants, and 4)community support for gender equality. These pillars serve as guiding principles for measuring the positive change we are making. In future impact reports, Batonga will delve deeper into these pillars and provide more information on the indicators associated with each one.

Batonga is actively working to improve its MEL infrastructure in order to measure progress in these four areas. Recently, a comprehensive MEL manual has been developed providing an overview of the entire MEL strategy and tools used. It also outlines the learning process at Batonga to continuously enhance its approach and strategy.

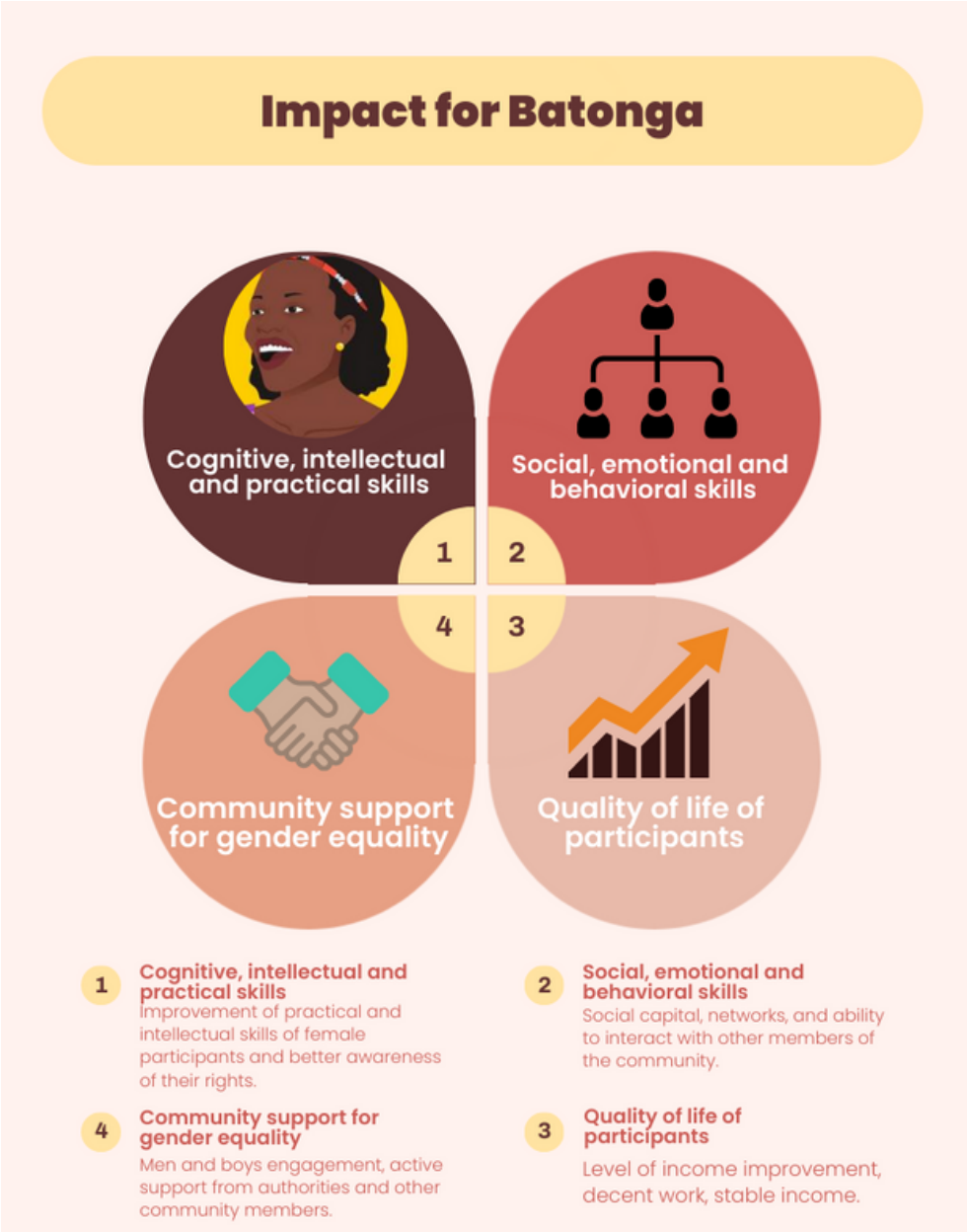


Figure: Four pillars of impact at Batonga

Preparing for the launch in Senegal

We have made significant progress in preparing for the launch of our Adolescent Girls' Leadership and Women's Economic Empowerment programs in Senegal. Here are the key activities we have been working on:

- Recruitment of implementing partners: Organisation de Formation et d'Appui au Développement/Training and Development Support Organization (OFAD) and Comité d'Appui et de Soutien Au Développement Economique et Sociales (CASADES) are the implementing partners of Batonga in Kolda and Sedhiou. They will contribute to recruiting, training and monitoring the work done by facilitators, business coaches and mentors. Both partners have extensive experience in advancing gender equality and empowering women all aspects of society.
- The team canvassed 1,414 households in the communities of Kolda and Sedhiou using the Girl Roster and Community Resource Scan* tools to help better understand and elicit information. This will allow Batonga to link adolescent girls - especially the most marginalized - to the vital resources, facilities, and services to which they are entitled but often have limited or no access.



*Tools designed by the Population Council

Radio and Podcasts: Ways to reach more communities

Developing skills in Radio

As a learning organization always striving to improve, Batonga held a two-day training program with 36 participants, a mix of mentors, business coaches, community facilitators, regional office members, and core team members. The main objectives were to build upon their technical skills in radio hosting as well as how to use local languages effectively to share this knowledge with program participants and community members.



Participants during the training session

More regions, more listeners

Batonga Foundation extended its radio broadcast coverage to additional regions in Benin, adding seven new radio station partners. The radio broadcasts currently cover 9 of the 12 regions.

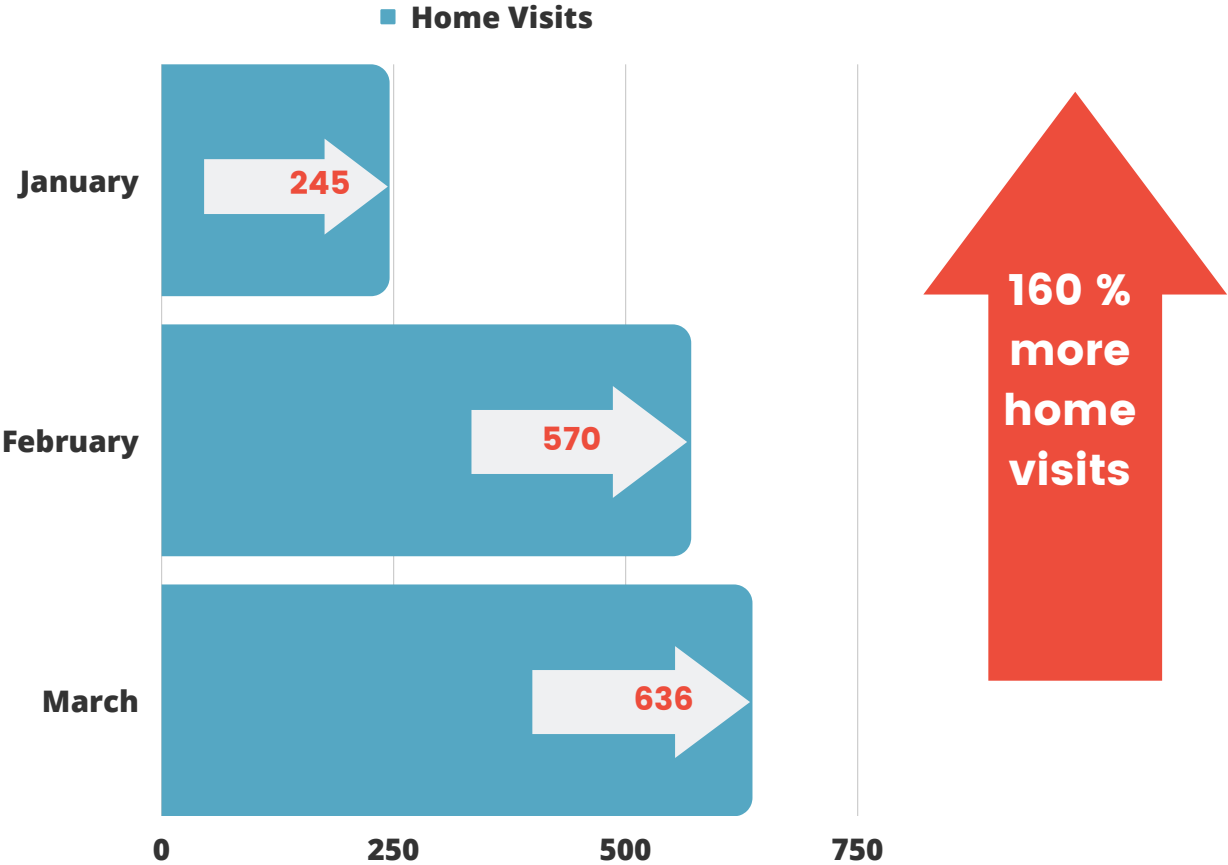
A Podcast in Production

In March, production started on the "Stories for Equality" podcast episodes, led by adolescent girls and young women. They undergo training to learn to create podcast content. They use digital tools of this medium with the aim of expressing themselves and advocating for their rights through story-telling.

Adolescent Girls Leadership

Connecting to the families

While almost 3,200 girls attend lessons in the Leadership Clubs on their rights, about 70% listen to the radio broadcasts in their home environments. Some even have the opportunity to record these radio programs and deliver messages of awareness to their communities. Batonga mentors are able to reinforce their connection with the girls by engaging their parents in conversations about the topics that are broadcast during the monthly home visits. These home visits allow Batonga's mentors to be valued and seen as allies to the families and strengthen the trust established through the Leadership Clubs.



Adolescent Girls Leadership

IN HER OWN WORDS

"At first, my mother didn't want me to participate in the clubs' activities. She didn't understand the importance of what we were doing there with the mentors and other girls like me. I often stayed at home, didn't go out, and had no friends. I was often sad. But that didn't discourage me. I often insisted to my mother to let me go. Eventually, she agreed. Since I started participating in the club's activities with the other girls more than a year ago, I have been very happy and feel fulfilled. During the sessions, we have lessons with the mentor and also have a lot of fun. But what I loved most is that I now have many friends. All the other teenage girls in my club are now friends, and I trust them. I can say that in my club, I now have trustworthy friends, and I can count on them."

-Félicienne, participant in the leadership club in Savalou.



Women's Economic Empowerment

The Transformative Power of Financial Empowerment

The pilot initiative in digital savings is revolutionizing women's financial management. By providing comprehensive training on modern tools and apps, 165 women now have the ability to take charge of their money and income. This transformation is evident as they embrace digital saving and experience the empowering effects of financial independence.

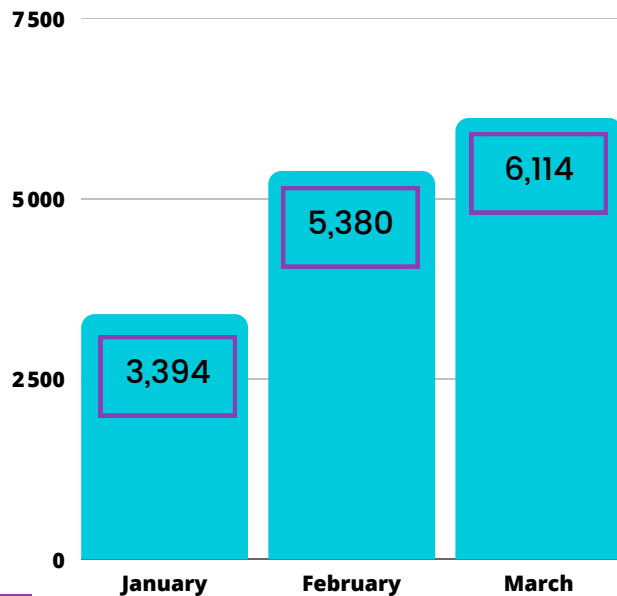
With seed funding allocated to 30 out of 39 new circles, we are making significant progress in supporting initiatives led by women. However, our efforts extend beyond funding. By connecting established circles with new ones, we facilitate a dynamic exchange of knowledge that enhances fund management practices for all participants. This collaborative approach not only amplifies their impact but also cultivates a movement of empowered women who shape their financial futures and foster stronger communities.

The combination of digital savings tools and a collaborative approach have resulted in the Young Women Business Circles consistently increasing their profits.



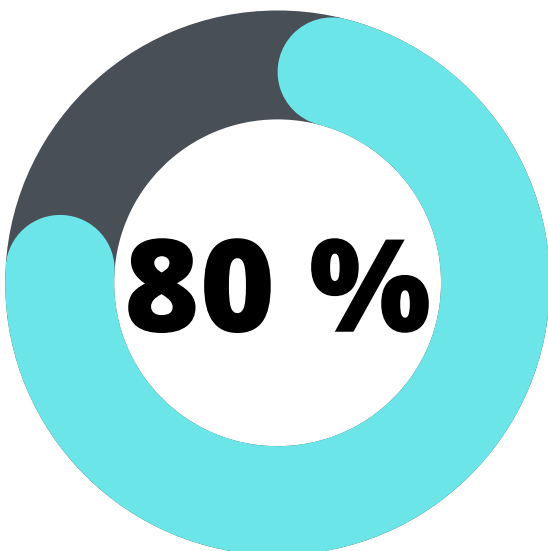
Women's Economic Empowerment

Circles' monthly profits (\$)



Sharing the profit increases other women's interest in joining the circles.

Quarterly Profit Increase



“After we’ve shared the circles’ benefits between participants, there are more young women from these communities who have expressed their interest in joining the circles; the Community Facilitators have created a waiting list updated by business coaches. In some communities, they even gather as groups of future WEE program participants.”

-WEE Program Manager

Circles experienced an 80% increase of their profits between January and March 2023.

Women's Economic Empowerment

Demonstrating a commitment to transparency and accountability, Batonga organized a restitution workshop in Benin, engaging key stakeholders including state institutions. The workshop garnered participation from four ministries, the National Institute for Women, the African Development Bank, and the Mastercard Foundation. Attendees were impressed by the valuable insights and lessons derived from the pilot phase of the "Young Women Business Circles" initiative, leading to fruitful discussions and connections. Additionally, the workshop served as a platform for young women to showcase their products, highlighting the tangible achievements of the initiative.



IN HER OWN WORDS

"In the beginning, we had difficulties in mobilizing and managing funds; some of our businesses were running almost at a loss; but with reinforcements in management, we have been able to adapt our offers according to the needs and demands of the community. Starting from that time, we have had more profits and our activities are increasingly diversified according to the community needs. We even find ourselves running out of input capital because orders are increasing in number and instead of sharing all our profits, we keep a substantial part and invest it in the business to generate even more profits."

-Clarisse, from Covedji

Women's Economic Empowerment

Engaging Men and Boys in the Celebration of International Women's Day

Batonga's International Women's Day celebration held in Bohicon, Benin involved over fifty attendees, including officials, leaders, mentors, coaches, and Batonga staff. A notable aspect of this celebration was the active involvement of men and boys, which played a crucial role in strengthening advocacy messages and community interventions to combat gender inequality. The event facilitated the sharing of ideas and collaborative efforts among male allies, community leaders, and political authorities towards achieving gender equality.



WHAT WE LEARNED

Adapting community engagement to socio-cultural contexts

Through our initiatives in Northern Benin, we discovered that involving men in activities traditionally assigned to women can have a profound impact on shifting societal attitudes. By demonstrating and promoting the idea of husbands supporting their wives in household chores, we witnessed a significant change in mindsets, particularly among the younger generation. The positive reactions from the community revealed a newfound understanding that men taking their fair share of domestic chores is not only possible but also beneficial. This important lesson underscores the necessity of tailoring our community engagement activities to the specific socio-cultural contexts we operate in, enabling us to challenge patriarchal norms and foster positive change.

Advocacy and Thought Leadership



Nos Voix Comptent (NVC) "Our Voices Count" is a feminist movement to amplify the voices of Francophone African women. To date, the NVC program has 24 Ambassadors in 16 Francophone African countries, young leaders who support the initiative and help advocate for gender equality in their respective countries.

- Batonga participated in the Generation Equality Forum, from 25 to 28 January in Cambodia. The main theme was: Feminist Responsibility, a GEF process. Global South feminist organizations were represented by 27 participants, including Ella Wama, Benin Country Manager.
- Under the leadership of Ella Wama, the Nos Voix Comptent network recently conducted an online presentation on the topic of Gender-Based Violence (GBV) and the importance of empowering women. The presentation garnered engagement from approximately 50 individuals across 22 countries, including our NVC ambassadors, facilitators, and members of the Generation Equality Forum.
- Facilitators play a crucial role within the NVC network, leading the focus of three thematic and technical working groups (WG): WG1 focuses on Coalitions for Action, WG2 on Monitoring and Accountability, and WG3 on Digital and Linguistic Inclusion. These working groups align with the conclusions of the Generation Equality Forum and contribute to the implementation of the new Feminist Accountability Framework.
- Additionally, the NVC network commemorated the International Day of Education by organizing online publications and events across various social media platforms.

Acknowledgements

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Thank you for your continued support of our programs.

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