

Impact Report



Batonga

2022

Q4



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Introduction

Dear Friends,

As I share this report from the sidelines of the sixty-seventh session of the Commission on the Status of Women at the United Nations in New York, I am simultaneously filled with great optimism and urgency when it comes to empowering women and girls in West Africa and around the world.

In a speech on Monday, UN Secretary General António Guterres warned that global progress toward gender equality is “vanishing before our eyes.” If we continue to move at the current pace, we will not reach full gender equality for another 300 years. The exclusion of women in economic, educational, digital, physical, and social spaces comes at a high cost- one that we cannot afford to pay if we want to tackle today’s challenges and overcome those the world will face in the future.

Despite this crisis outlined by the Secretary General, I feel an undeniable sense of optimism. In the fourth quarter of 2022, I had the opportunity to visit Batonga’s newly launched programs in the northern Atacora region of Benin. While the availability of basic social services in the region is noticeably scarce and the statistics on education, health and standards of living are among some of the most dire in the world, the young women and adolescent girls there met us with incredible energy, determination, and potential. It gives me immense hope to know that Batonga is meeting them where they are with real opportunities to shape their own futures.

Additional progress that gives me confidence:

- A total of 3,330 young women started their own business in 2022, using their training and savings from Batonga’s Business Circle activities to fund the start-up costs.
- 3,495 adolescent girls were given access to lessons on critical topics in Q4 including consent, and choices/alternatives to child marriage.
- Our radio programs continue to have incredible reach- an estimated 1M households- and this past quarter showed that the program also increases the knowledge and self esteem of the female mentors who participate in producing the broadcasts.

Gender-focused investments and targeted initiatives like Batonga’s are essential to closing the gender divide and shortening the nearly 3 centuries that the world will miss out on the full contributions of half of its human population. I look forward to sharing more of our encouraging progress with you in this report and at the same time, I urge you to remain determined, impatient, and unwavering when it comes to creating a safer, healthier and more equitable future- one in which every woman and girl can thrive.

With gratitude,

Stephanie Lord
Interim Executive Director



Planting the seeds in Senegal

Building the Team

Batonga Senegal's Adolescent Girls Leadership (AGL) and Women's Economic Empowerment (WEE) Program Managers came on board in October and began laying the groundwork for the successful implementation of the two programs, which will build the social, emotional, financial, and cognitive assets of young women and adolescent girls.

Oumou Mbaye, AGL Program Manager and a lawyer by training, is passionate about children's rights issues, women's and girls' rights, and promoting the deconstruction of negative social norms that prevent their leadership and development.

Ndeye Absa Gueye Ndiaye, WEE Program Manager, joins the Senegal team Development Project Manager with 10 years of experience in community development and microfinance. She is deeply motivated by Women's Empowerment and the effect it has on poverty alleviation.



Oumou Mbaye,
AGL Program Manager

*"By joining the Batonga team I would like to help amplify the voice and leadership of the **most vulnerable girls in Senegal**, and equip them with the knowledge and skills **to create change for themselves and their communities.**" – Oumou Mbaye*



Ndeye Absa Gueye
WEE Program Manager

*"My motivation for joining Batonga is to support the promotion of women's leadership and empowerment for the development of their potential. **When women lead, the world succeeds.**" –Ndeye Absa Gueye*



Partnering in Kolda and Sédhiou

Building Strong Relationships and Selecting Partners

With Batonga's Senegal team in place, the group was excited to begin information-gathering visits with key stakeholders and potential partners in the targeted, historically underserved regions of Kolda and Sédhiou.

Discussions with municipal authorities, International and local NGOs, United Nations agencies, state institutions, the media, youth and women's organizations, among others, gave the team a better understanding of its planned interventions as well as potential risks and challenges.

The team also utilized the Building Assets Toolkit, designed by the Population Council, to define common-sense targets for specific subpopulations of girls. This activity along with the information gathered during the visits to Kolda and Sédhiou provided a strong basis to move forward with the next step in planning programming and implementation in Senegal.





International Day of the Girl

10 Years of Celebrating Girls' Rights

On the 10th anniversary of the International Day of the Girl, Batonga recognized the major advances made toward a more equitable world for girls and noted the challenges that have yet to be overcome.

The day was also an opportunity for Batonga to give girls from the hardest-to-reach communities the chance to make their voices heard mobilize their communities around their rights.

Batonga hosted an official celebration ceremony in Benin accompanied by ten days of online advocacy, an art competition in 22 French-speaking African countries, a webinar, and several community activities broadcast by local media and social media. Participants included Plan International Benin, UNICEF, UNFPA, SWEDD Benin, Association des Conseils d'enfants du Bénin, among others.

Batonga increased visibility for women and girls' rights at the national and international level and forged collaborative links that will continue to advance the development and well-being of women and adolescent girls.



Adolescent Girls Leadership

WHAT WE LEARNED

A Participatory Approach to Curriculum Development

Batonga is in the process of developing a new, inclusive, dynamic and participatory curriculum, tailored to the realities of adolescent girls in Benin and Senegal. This modular curriculum will be updated as needed in the future, to reflect the girls' ever changing world.

This quarter, Batonga's team focused on gathering and incorporating feedback on module drafts from mentors. In addition to helping fine-tune our lessons, this inclusive approach allows mentors, regional managers, and community facilitators to take strong ownership of the content and to teach more effectively.

In the next phase of development, input from the participants will be taken into account to further improve and fine tune the curriculum.

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

October

- 60 new Girls Clubs were added in new communities in the departments of Zou and Collines
- With a total of 163 clubs operational, Batonga has 3,495 participants and 82 mentors to facilitate sessions
- 92.30% attendance
- Mentors conducted 245 home visits
- Lessons taught this month:
 - Consent
 - Child Marriage: Choices and Possibilities
 - Models that inspire

Why are home visits important?

Weekly visits by mentors to the homes of the girls they are mentoring, provides an opportunity to engage parents and families on issues related to their well-being.

Attendance is defined as participating in at least one full session per month.

Adolescent Girls Leadership

November

- 90.71% attendance
- Mentors conducted 430 home visits
- Quarterly training for regional managers, community facilitators and new mentors
- Lessons topics for this month:
 - Leadership
 - Career Paths

December

- 87.24% attendance
- 95.73% listened to the courses on radio
 - These radio programs are broadcast at least twice a week to help reach a wider audience
- Lessons taught this month:
 - Safe Space
 - Non-verbal communication



Women's Economic Empowerment

WHAT WE LEARNED

The Importance of Tailored Teaching and Learning

The expansion of the Young Women Business Circles to new communities helped Batonga better understand how to tailor lessons to meet the specific needs of the various circle participants and overcome the diverse challenges that arise.

Adapting when and how the topics are presented in the various regions, allows Batonga to account for the realities for each individual community. For example, a concept such as cost analysis easily understood in the central region may require more dedicated time in northern areas where education and schooling levels vary.

Young Women Business Circles Growth

October

- 150 Business Circles are active and running.
- Initial 50 Business Circles increased their profit from \$1,248 to \$1,399
- 95.09% participation
- Quarterly training

The circles were trained on business management tools especially the cash book (journal used to track business transactions) to monitor cash flows such as bank deposits, withdrawals and receipts.



Women's Economic Empowerment

Young Women Business Circles Growth

November

- 3,827 women participated in at least one session in the 150 circles that are active and running.
- 91.48% participation (a decrease explained by the fact that most women are busy preparing the end-of-year celebrations)
- The 50 YWBC currently exerting IGAs made a profit of \$1,150 in November
- 61 new circles received their \$200 seed funding to start Income-Generating Activities (IGAs)



December

- 3,330 women (87%) have created their own business this year, investing their profits from their activities within the circles. This is a concrete sign of their empowerment beyond the limits of Batonga activities.
- A Gender Analysis was done to clarify the division of labor and power between women and men in households; to highlight the economic, cultural and social limits and obstacles to women's participation in the market system, including aspects related to access to resources; and to identify the perception that men and women have of each other's needs in the context of economic development.

3,330 women (87% of participants) have created their own business this year by using their Business Circle savings to fund their start-up costs!

Women's Economic Empowerment

Increasing Access to Markets

The International Forum on Local Consumption and Free Enterprise (FORINCLE) presented an opportunity for Young Women Business Circles participants to showcase their products to hundreds of attendees in Cotonou at during the launch of the “Local Consumption” month. There, industry stakeholders focused on product quality and analyzed progress and challenges hindering the competitiveness of the brand “made in Benin.”

An outdoor pop-up market for the International Day of the Girl celebration in Savalou also gave the Young Women Business Circles and clubs a chance to highlight their work. In November, many of the handmade items and products were on display and auctioned during the Fundraising Event in New York City to allow individual donors to see the businesses and contribute directly to their success.

These were moments of great visibility for the products of the Business Circles, allowing access to new markets with diverse preferences, standards, and demands.



Handmade items and products were on display and auctioned at the November Fundraising Event in New York City

Stories of Impact

Radio programs changing lives in our communities and beyond

Brice Ahogonvi, Radio Program Manager Benin

A recent evaluation of Batonga's radio programs showed that its impact goes far beyond delivering relevant information to participants and mentors, but that it also has positive effects on soft skills such as self-esteem and leadership, as well as ripple effects in communities located outside of the current implementation areas of Batonga's WEE and AGL programs.

For the girls chosen to present the radio spots and announcements, participation has improved their ability to express themselves, both in French and in local languages. Moreover, they have become well-known and are seen as role models and agents of change in their communities. The respect they've gained has improved their levels of confidence in their relationships with their peers and elders and has helped them master the topics covered, which has improved their delivery and confidence as teachers for the Adolescent Girls Leadership Clubs.

"The radio shows have changed me. By translating the script into my mother tongue, it allowed me to enrich my vocabulary. In terms of citizenship, I also learned a lot of things, in particular the behavior of a good citizen in a democracy, the duty to vote during an election period. Before, I did not give much importance to voting. But today, thanks to the radio broadcasts, I understand that by my vote I contribute to the decision-making for the development of my community at the local and national level."

- Germaine, Batonga mentor, Bohicon, radio show host and community facilitator



Radio hosting session

Stories of Impact



"The radio programs have enabled our listeners to strengthen their leadership skills. Many of them have been able to integrate the characteristic traits of a good leader such as patience, humility, good listening, open-mindedness emphasizing the necessity of taking into consideration others' point of view while designing any initiative. With the training I received, I understood that being a leader does not mean being the boss and leaving the work to be done to others."

- Bénédicte, Batonga mentor and radio host, Savalou



Advocacy for Gender Equality



Nos Voix Comptent 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. Here is an update of the activities implemented during the third quarter:

October

- 35 new members added
- 89 participants in a monthly webinar held in collaboration with the Global Fund for Women on the International Day of the Girl: Girls' rights at the heart of Generation Equality
- Participation in the second edition of the Dialogue on Safe Abortion in Francophone Africa organized by IPAS Francophone Africa and the ODAS Center, from October 24 to 26

November

- 110 new members added
- New website launched at nosvoixcomptent.org
- Virtual gathering of Nos Voix Comptent on the challenges of gender equality with 360 registrants.
- 16 Days of Activism against Gender-based Violence digital campaign that amplified the voices of our Ambassadors on violence against women and girls in their respective countries.
- 107 participants on a webinar on "Safe abortion in Francophone sub-Saharan Africa: the issues and challenges for Generation Equality"
- Six new Ambassadors selected in four new countries

Acknowledgements

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Writers & Concept Contributors:

Constant Odounfa
Lakisha Sullivan
Stephanie Lord

Program Facilitation:
Natacha Agbahoungba

Florence Bio Idrissou
Wenceslas Djokpé
Brice Ahognonvi
Ella Wama
Aida Seydi

Thank you for your continued support of our programs.

Contact

Batonga Foundation
2202 18th St. NW #123
Washington DC 20009 USA

www.batongafoundation.org
info@batongafoundation.org

