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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Batonga statement on Benin's COVID-19 outbreak

Press release

Cotonou, Benin, 3 April 2020 — Yesterday, the first case of COVID-19 was identified in the region of Savalou, Benin, where Batonga Foundation currently operates its SONAFA Leadership Clubs. This marks the 17th case of COVID-19 reported in Benin.

Given this update and the current COVID-19 situation in Benin, Batonga has made the difficult decision to temporarily suspend the operations of its SONAFA Leadership Clubs throughout the 15 communities it works with in Benin.

Although operations of the SONAFA Club program are suspended, Batonga's work to ensure the health and safety of the girls and communities it works with in Benin will not end. Since the COVID-19 pandemic began, Batonga has been preparing the mentors, young women, girls, and communities it works with in Benin for the virus, knowing that it could spread to their communities at any time.

Batonga has acted swiftly to produce a response strategy to the COVID-19 pandemic and are prepared to take the following actions to ensure that the young women and girls in its programs, along with their communities and families are well-protected:

1. Continuing lessons taught to the girls and young women currently in the SONAFA Clubs through weekly radio lessons conducted by their mentors.
2. Promoting the production of antibacterial soap by women-led businesses supported by Batonga. Last year, Batonga 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 and facilitating training on how to make this essential commodity to others in the community.
3. Establishing a Batonga hotline for mentors to support one another and share resources.
4. Continuing the conduction of individual home visits by mentors, in accordance with the health and safety guidelines Batonga has provided.
5. Designing public radio announcements focused on knowledge sharing and prevention measures that will be shared by local leaders.

Batonga will continue to monitor the COVID-19 pandemic in Benin and make adjustments to its program as necessary in order to continue to ensure the health and well-being of the communities it serves.

About Batonga — Batonga empowers young women and girls to discover their limitless, untapped potential and transform it into social and economic power. We envision a safer, healthier and more equitable world in which all girls and women can thrive.

