

Batonga



Interim Report for Dining for Women January 2019

1. Organizational Information

- a. Organization Name: The Batonga Foundation
- b. Project Title: The Future Leaders Project
- c. Grant Amount: \$48,099
- d. Contact Person: Stephanie Lord
- e. Address: 1140 3rd Street NE, 2nd Floor, Washington, D.C. 20002

2. Recap briefly what outcomes the project was designed to achieve.

Batonga aims to empower young women and girls in Benin with the knowledge and skills they need to be agents of change in their own lives and communities. **We envision a safer, healthier and more equitable world in which all girls and women can thrive.**

The Future Leaders Project, generously funded by Dining for Women, aims to empower the most vulnerable young woman and girls in Benin to lift themselves, their families and their communities out of poverty. Through providing access to a weekly girl-only safe space, support from a local, female mentor, training on business and life skills and access to tools to start a small business, the project is designed to:

- Maximize excluded and at-risk girls' access to and completion of secondary schooling;
- Reduce instances of child marriage, HIV infection, child pregnancies and births;
- Reduce social isolation and marginalization of poorest, most vulnerable girls; and
- Increase girls' financial inclusion, youth learning and fair share of available resources.



The secondary goal of the project is to increase community and national support for evidence-based programming for adolescent girls. In other words, this project aims to build the foundation for a national movement. Batonga strives to be a platform for sharing and learning best practices in mapping communities and recruiting marginalized girls, and developing more robust national partnerships. We are pleased to report our progress on these objectives in this report!

3. Has funding changed for this project? For example, have you received unexpected funding from another source?

We are delighted to report that funding for our project has increased modestly since we submitted our application to Dining for Women in June 2017. Since then, we have received a second Management Grant from the Mastercard Foundation, which will support our work in Benin through January of 2020. Additionally, in June 2018, we received a new small grant from the Nexans Foundation to support the introduction of solar technology as a tool for small businesses, for example, solar-powered cell phone charging stations. These funds will supplement those provided by Dining for Women and provide additional entrepreneurship and income-generating opportunities to the young women and girls in the clubs. We remain in great standing with the NoVo Foundation, who also supports this project through a three year grant, which we hope to renew this year.

4. Is your organization or project situation different than presented in the approved proposal? For example, new Executive Director, significant project staffing changes or NGO affiliation, loss of large funding, or other significant changes?

Since Batonga's DFW proposal was approved, we have undergone a period of exciting and thoughtful growth. While our core team has not changed, we have added several new members to our team in both the U.S. and Benin. Batonga's Benin headquarters in Cotonou grew by two new staff members this year: Cherifatou Gounou, Batonga's full time Program Assistant for Gender Inclusion and Innovation, and Ashley Guy, a third-year Peace Corps volunteer who will be working with Batonga through August 2019. Cherifatou and Ashley have already proven themselves to be valuable, thoughtful, passionate additions to our staff. The Peace Corps would like to extend the opportunity to work with Batonga to third year volunteers moving forward, which means that this will be a permanent position that rotates each year. Batonga's Washington DC office also had the pleasure of bringing on Emily Strange as our Marketing and Development Officer.

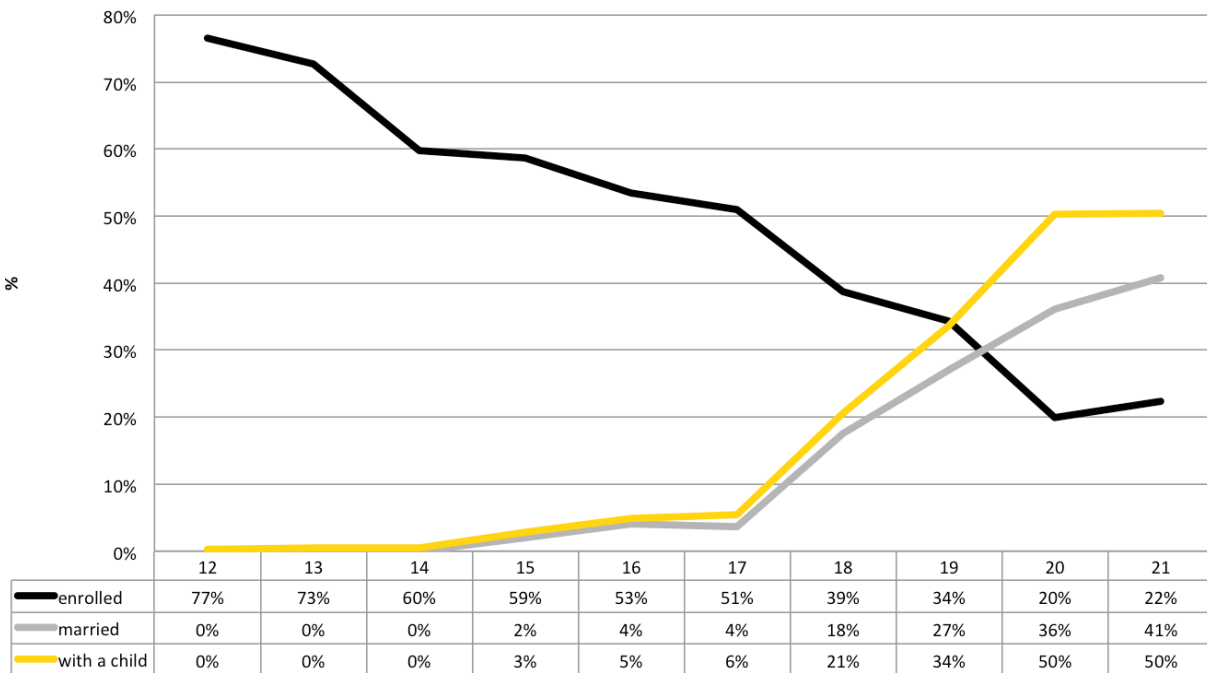
Batonga's part-time field staff also grew this year. Due to the expansion of the size and reach of our programs over the past few months, we decided to expand our Girls Club management staff to include 57 part-time Assistant Mentors. Two girls were selected from each of our 60 existing Clubs for girls 16-25 to be considered for the Assistant Mentor positions. The girls nominated were all dynamic role models who had exhibited exemplary motivation, determination and potential. Since these young women have limited formal employment opportunities outside of

Batonga, coupled with limited opportunities to take on leadership roles in their communities, this opportunity has been transformative in their lives. By engaging them as Assistant Mentors, we are including them not only in the formal employment sector but also in the national movement we have started to empower young women and girls. This will also serve to provide crucial support our existing team of mentors.

5. Have the number of beneficiaries changed?

We have dramatically increased our total number of beneficiaries, in line with what we estimated in our original DFW proposal. Until 2018, Batonga’s Girls Clubs served young women aged 15 to 24 years old. However, the data we have collected since launching our evidence-based approach in 2016 shows that some of the greatest obstacles for adolescent girls can present themselves at a much younger age. In our target communities, we found that school dropout rates begin to increase at 10 years old and rates of marriage and childbearing start to rise as early as 14 (see chart below). By the time girls in these communities reach the age of 17, about half of them have already dropped out of school. Marriage and childbearing rates skyrocket from age 17 to 19. School enrollment rates skyrocket from age 17 to 19.

School enrollment relative to marriage and child bearing status of girls 12-24 in 21 villages in Zou and Collines, Benin



In the fourth quarter of 2018, we dramatically expanded the size and reach of our programming to include girls as young as 10 years old, an age just before the critical moment of puberty, which can be the most precarious time in a girl’s life. For many girls, puberty and early adolescence can be a dangerous chasm between childhood and adulthood. Social and financial

literacy education as well as strong mentorship and connection to income generating activities are essentially the tools that help her build a bridge across this divide.

Over the past few months, through targeted door-to-door recruitment we reached 1,562 of the most off-track and vulnerable girls between 10-15 years old in our target communities. We subsequently launched nearly 68 new clubs for these girls, segmented by age (clubs for 10-11 year olds and clubs for 12-15 year olds). This expansion doubles the size of our program reach, increasing our total number of clubs from 60 clubs to 128 and the total number of participants from 1,629 young women and girls to 3,191.



6. What challenges are you facing as you move forward with this project? How are you approaching these challenges?

We are carefully addressing unanticipated challenges, applied lessons learned and are growing with intent. Some of the challenges we have faced during this period have been:

Lack of assessment tools for measuring transferable skills. Measuring improvements in skills such as leadership, self-esteem, communication and collaboration can be difficult. Furthermore, tracking progress in student-centered pedagogy is time consuming and requires continual training, practice, and feedback from mentors and participants. Batonga is exploring how to best address these challenges. One potential solution is that we are discussing with the Population

Council is the possibility of developing a mobile-based monitoring tool that will allow mentors to monitor progress in real time. It will capture quantitative data such as attendance rates and session facilitation information, but also qualitative data such as journal notes. The tool will also create opportunities for follow-up, for example, if a girl does not show up to meetings, the tool will generate a reminder for the mentor to visit the girl's home and follow-up with her. Batonga is exploring this tool in hopes of developing innovative ways of tracking progress in transferable skills in real time.

Understanding the unique vulnerabilities and needs of women and girls in polygamous families. Batonga is addressing this challenge by contextualizing the Girl Roster™ and conducting a process evaluation study to determine the effect polygamy had on the success of the program.

Attendance rates. We have noticed some fluctuation in our attendance rates, ranging from 80%-98%. We would like to maintain high attendance. Batonga is addressing this challenge by deepening our student-centered, participatory approach, implementing personalized follow-up home visits and providing incentives such as shoes for the girls.

7. Have you revised your original objective since the project began? If so, why? What are your new objectives?

We have not revised our original objective since launching our project. Our objective has been, and continues to be, to equip the hardest-to-reach girls and young women in Benin with the knowledge and skills they need to be agents of change in their communities and in their own lives. We have, however, expanded our reach to include even more of Benin's hardest-to-reach girls, as young as 10 years old. By reaching even younger girls, we feel that we have a better chance at making a difference in their lives and helping them become agents of change in their communities.

8. What progress have you made toward achieving your objectives? Please address each stated objective.

Objective 1: Identify at-risk adolescent girls and young women to target for recruitment

Through targeted door-to-door recruitment in the late summer and early fall of 2018, Batonga has identified 1,562 of the most off-track and vulnerable girls between 10-15 years old in fifteen communities located in the communes of Savaloe and Bohicon, in the Collines and Zou regions of Benin.

In the second quarter of 2019, we will be using the Girl Roster™ digital tool to map and collect the data needed to identify the most marginalized girls and community resources in additional (new) target villages, to which we plan to expand in 2020.

Objective 2: Increase targeted girls' social, cognitive and personal assets

Armed with the data we collected, in November 2018, we launched nearly 68 new clubs for these girls, segmented by age (10-11 year olds and 12-15 year olds). This expansion doubles the size of our program reach, increasing our total number of clubs from 60 clubs to 128 and the total number of participants from 1,629 young women and girls to 3,191.

In November 2018, Batonga convened a workshop to contextualize and adapt our curricula for these young women. Following this workshop, education plans for each age segment were agreed upon and Contextualization Guides were drafted for mentors and supervisors.



Batonga's mentors are essential to our progress toward this objective. In order to ensure that they are well prepared to deliver our curriculum of life and financial literacy skills, we have conducted ongoing quarterly trainings and have also launched a Mentor Peer Observation program to offer an opportunity for professional development. For many of our mentors, their work with Batonga is the first time they have been formally employed. As such, their opportunities for professional development and skill-building have been limited. This program allows mentors to observe their fellow mentors across different villages and regions and learn from their peers.

We are also proud to report the launch of our Exemplary Women Speaker Series in the third quarter of 2018. We initiated this ongoing series in an effort to supplement our curriculum by offering girls exposure to diverse role models. To date, Batonga's Cotonou team has recruited 11 women (5 from Bohicon and 6 from Savalou) to participate in this speaker series. These women were chosen for their professional success as well as for their respected status in their respective communities. The women all come from diverse professional sectors including but not limited to: education, commerce, finance, local government, and health. These women visit individual clubs to speak about their professional and personal achievements. For most of the girls in Batonga's Girls Clubs, their mentor may be the only woman in their life who is formally employed. As such, they may never be exposed to the the kind of career role models that we often take for granted in the US. This speaker series provides Batonga's Girls Clubs with a variety of professional and personal role models for the girls to learn from and connect with.

We could not be more confident that this program is harnessing the unique potential of women and girls, giving them a voice and changing the world for the better. We are currently conducting a Baseline Survey to help us measure the impact of Batonga Club participation on the knowledge and attitudes of these new younger girls and we look forward to sharing the results with Dining for Women.

We would like to share some quotes from a few Batonga Girls Club members:

"We know we have a future because you care for us."

"The way we walk and hold ourselves is because of you. You have given us a voice."

"I can't thank you enough for teaching me to believe in myself."

"I don't have the words to thank Batonga enough. I know that my life would be very different today if it weren't for Batonga. Because of all you have done, I am committed to achieving even more than you ever could have expected from me."

Objective 3: Increase community and national support for evidence-based programming for adolescent girls

Batonga has convened and led ongoing Learning Circle meetings in Benin to share data and best practices and coordinate efforts to ensure all young women and girls are being reached and empowered. Our next meeting is planned for March 2019. Through these regular meetings, Batonga has built a community of practice that advocates for national support for evidence-based programming for adolescent girls.

We have also expanded our partnership with Peace Corps Benin in an effort to help integrate their Scholarship Girls Program more closely into Batonga's mission and methodology (to ensure that the girls most in need are not being left behind).

Finally, Batonga has strengthened our long standing partnership with TOMS shoes and will be conducting a TOMS shoe distribution in partnership with UNICEF Benin in September 2019.

9. Do you anticipate any difficulties in completing your project in the timeframe outlined in your proposal?

We do not anticipate any difficulties in completing our project in the timeframe outlined in our proposal. Our clubs have been established, they are currently operational and meetings are ongoing. As stated above, we could not be more confident that this program is harnessing the unique potential of women and girls, giving them a voice and changing the world for the better. This is in large part thanks to the support of Dining for Women. We have currently spent \$41,598 of the total grant of \$48,099 and are on track to reach the full amount in the coming months. We look forward to keeping Dining for Women informed of our progress!

Several high resolution photos:





Our Message to DFW members about the impact the grant is having on those being served and/or Batonga and its mission:

Dear Dining for Women members,

Words cannot do justice to describe the gratitude our team here at The Batonga Foundation feels towards Dining for Women. Your support has been incredibly impactful in leading us to become one giant step closer to fulfilling our mission of empowering every single vulnerable young woman and girl in Benin with the tools and resources she needs to create change in her own life and her community. For that, we are forever grateful for your support.

As you may know, Batonga has been through many changes over the past few years. When Batonga was first founded in 2006, we set out to focus exclusively on adolescent girls in Benin, Ethiopia, Mali, Sierra Leone and Cameroon and to support them through the formal education system. We offered these girls scholarships, school supplies, meals, mentoring, and in-kind support. Over time, however, it became clear to us that many girls in vulnerable situations such as orphans, teenage mothers, and child-brides were facing too many barriers in their attempts to reach secondary school that lead them to fall off track and become invisible to the organizations attempting to serve them. Some of the most vulnerable girls were being left behind by the formal education system and we had to change this.

Given this realization, we developed a new approach that moved away from this focus on the formal education system and instead focused on learning about and serving the most excluded girls in Benin, the home country of our founder, Angelique Kidjo. We set out to understand the unique challenges vulnerable girls face and to equip them with the assets, tools, and technologies necessary to transform their lives.

In order to accomplish this goal, we worked with The Population Council to develop a targeted, data-driven approach that would locate, recruit, and empower the most vulnerable girls in Benin. Our new approach begins by taking the time to learn about the girls we serve and the communities in which they live. We use the Girl Roster™, an innovative Android-based cell phone application to map villages, survey households, and locate young women and girls to see the full universe of young women and girls in target communities. We then analyze and utilize this information to ensure we are finding and recruiting the hardest to reach, most vulnerable young women and girls in each community to join our SONAFA Girls Clubs.

Once recruited, Batonga's SONAFA clubs then provide these young women and girls with access to a weekly girl-only safe space in their own community, where they gain the support of a local female mentor, physical and emotional security, technical and life skills, opportunities to start their own small business, as well as a sense of importance and belonging to their community. The new skills acquired through our clubs enable young, vulnerable girls to lead healthy, financially independent, and empowered lives.

Dining for Women's support has been instrumental in helping Batonga solidify this new approach and ensure that the most vulnerable girls are brought into the light and that their unique potential is finally realized. Now, thanks to your support, our programs have expanded beyond our wildest dreams. One of our biggest accomplishments since partnering with Dining for Women is that we have nearly doubled the size of our programs! We expanded from focusing exclusively on girls aged 15-24 in our programs to now incorporating over 1,500 off-track girls as young as ten years old into our Girls Clubs and adding 68 new Girls Clubs to accommodate this expansion. Your support has effectively doubled Batonga's impact on the lives of vulnerable women in Benin.

We are so grateful for each and every one of Dining For Women's incredible members and we are very proud to call ourselves your partner.

With gratitude,

The Batonga Team

Detailed list of all expenses incurred during the reporting period which have been paid for by DFW

The total amount spent during this reporting period is \$41,598, out of a total grant of \$48,099. The specific costs are detailed below.

As outlined in our original budget, the four categories of funding covered by this grant are:

- Mentors and Supervisors (\$21,125)
- Monitoring and Evaluation (\$4,353)
- Community Involvement Efforts and Activities (\$623)
- Supplies for the Girls Clubs (\$15,496)

TOTAL: \$41,598

BATONGA FOUNDATION		ACTUAL					
Future Leaders - Adolescent Girls in Benin BUDGET October 2017-October 2018		USD	Aug-18	Sep-18	Oct-18	Subtotal	Var.
1	MENTORS AND SUPERVISORS IN 8 VILLAGES						(= Col N - Col H)
	Mentor evaluation and training	\$ 500		\$ 1,117.99		1,117.99	617.99
	Salary for mentors	\$ 8,000	\$ 2,861.45	\$ 2,889.11	\$ 2,855.20	8,605.77	605.77
	Salary for supervisors	\$ 3,000	\$ 1,317.82	\$ 1,330.56	\$ 1,319.67	3,968.06	968.06
	Transportation to communities (mentors)	\$ 4,000	\$ 1,688.64	\$ 1,704.96	\$ 1,765.14	5,158.74	1,158.74
	Transportation to communities (supervisors)	\$ 1,000	\$ 290.24	\$ 293.04	\$ 289.08	872.36	(127.65)
	Communication expenses mentors and supervisors (phone credit, etc)	\$ 1,080	\$ 459.80	\$ 464.25	\$ 477.95	1,401.99	321.99
	Total Mentors and Supervisors	\$17,580	\$ 6,618	\$ 7,800	\$ 6,707	21,124.90	3,544.90
			Mentors & Supervisors Subtotal		\$ 21,125		
2	MONITORING AND EVALUATION OF 8 VILLAGES						
	Transport for monitoring activities (program manager and 1 local coordinator)	\$ 1,000	\$ 492.52	\$ 319.68	\$ 630.72	1,442.92	442.92
	Breakfast (program manager and 1 local coordinator)	\$ 267	\$ 70.36	\$ 278.83	\$ 77.09	426.28	159.61
	Lunch (program manager and 1 local coordinator)	\$ 533	\$ 140.72	\$ 688.20	\$ 154.18	983.10	449.76
	Accommodation (program manager and 1 local coordinator)	\$ 1,333	\$ 263.85	\$ 550.56	\$ 227.76	1,042.17	(291.16)
	Dinner (program manager and 1 local coordinator)	\$ 533	\$ 131.93	\$ 213.12	\$ 113.88	458.93	(74.41)
	Total Monitoring and Evaluation	\$ 3,667	\$ 1,099	\$ 2,050	\$ 1,204	4,353.39	686.72
			Monitoring & Evaluation Subtotal		\$ 4,353		
3	COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT IN ADDITIONAL 8 VILLAGES (COMMUNITY AGREEMENTS AND MEETINGS)						
	Transportation for Community Leaders (2 per village for a total of 16)	\$ 85		\$ 623.38		623.38	538.04
	Pause café for participants	\$ 100				-	(100.00)
	Total Community Involvement	\$ 185	\$ -	\$ 623	\$ -	623.38	438.04
			Community Involvement Subtotal		\$ 623		
4	SUPPLIES FOR THE GIRL CLUBS IN 8 VILLAGES						
	Supplies for the girls (handcrafts, small business supplies for 1,600 girls)	\$24,000	\$ 2,952.02	\$ 5,735.81	\$ 2,925.71	11,613.54	(12,386.46)
	Curriculum exercise sheets for girls	\$ 2,667		\$ 94.13	\$ 3,788.17	3,882.30	1,215.64
	Total Supplies for Girls Clubs	\$26,667	\$ 2,952	\$ 5,830	\$ 6,714	15,495.84	(11,170.83)
			Supplies for Girls Clubs Subtotal		\$ 15,496		
	DINING FOR WOMEN TOTAL	\$48,099	DINING FOR WOMEN TOTAL		\$ 41,598		
			Remaining Funds		\$ 6,501	<i>To be reported in August 2019</i>	