

The Batonga Foundation

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Angelique Kidjo

West African singer, songwriter and UNICEF International Goodwill Ambassador

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What We Do

Grant scholarships for girls to attend existing secondary schools (grades 7 to 12) and provide continued support as they progress through university, vocational school or other skill-based adult learning activities.

Build secondary schools in select communities that can guarantee that a minimum of half the students will be girls and where the school, once built, will be operated through ongoing government and community support.

Increase enrollment of girls in existing schools by providing clean water and separate bathroom facilities as well as housing in cases where the distance from school to home is too great.

Provide school supplies in the form of textbooks, library books, pencils and other basic items which are often non-existent or in short supply.

Support mentor programs for female students that link them with older women who can serve as guides and elder 'protectors' as the girls face challenges during the course of their education.

Explore alternative education models such as mobile secondary schools and radio-based distance learning for remote communities or for families with cultural restrictions on girls being sent away from home for schooling.

Advocate for community awareness to promote and support girls' education by addressing the gender prejudice and cultural traditions that restrict the empowerment of women in general, and their access to education in particular.

Where We're Going

Batonga's goal is to strengthen and develop initiatives currently in place while expanding our programs and presence in other African countries. Through identifying, supporting and learning from the most successful, cost effective programs in place, we hope ultimately to help them become replicable and self-sustainable.

The average American family spends more on back-to-school supplies than it would cost for Batonga to send a girl to school in Sierra Leone for one year.



Reine, Benin

"I was so happy to see my mother. I saw her and said, 'Mama, I'm saved.'"

Reine was removed from primary school and forced to move away when her parents could no longer support her. After being beaten and mistreated, she escaped and returned home. Her family had been unaware of the consequences of sending her away, and when the director of her school asked her to re-enroll, her mother was relieved. A Batonga Girl Scholarship will allow girls like Reine to continue their education in secondary school, providing tuition their parents could never afford.

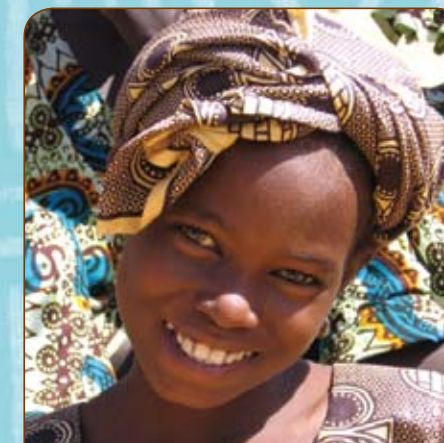


Angelique Kidjo

Angelique Kidjo, founder of Batonga, Grammy Award-winning West African singer, songwriter, and UNICEF International Goodwill Ambassador, made up the word "batonga." At a time when education for girls was not socially acceptable in her native country of Benin, Angelique invented the word as a response to taunts on the playground. The word stuck with her long after her playground days, and Angelique internalized it as an assertion of girls' right to education.



Although some members of Angelique's extended family argued that only boys should be educated, Angelique's mother, who had been educated herself, fought for her daughter's right to attend school. Angelique, in turn, has ensured that her daughter receives an education. Angelique has experienced firsthand how educating one girl leads to a whole lot more—it initiates a cycle of education, and a current of change.



BATONGA

GIRLS CHANGING AFRICA



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