2022: A year of celebration, reflection and preparation

2022 has been an exciting and productive year for Tostan. The ongoing implementation of our Community Empowerment Program (CEP) continues to generate meaningful change for thousands in some of the most resource-poor areas of West Africa. Communities are developing their visions, engaging with local government, planning new income-generating activities, starting transformational conversations about harmful social norms. They are building, and then achieving, their own visions of community well-being.

Tostan has celebrated 30 years of existence and seized this opportunity to consult with key strategic stakeholders and deeply engage in the development of its new strategy, an ambitious roadmap towards 2030. Over the coming 8 years, Tostan will grow its impact by expanding into new clusters of communities, amplify the range of the Tostan approach by working in new countries, and above all emphasize partnership in all that we do. We will work with stakeholders at all levels, from communities, to civil society, to governments and institutions, to promote our vision of dignity for all.

We closed the process of strategy development by sharing our illustrated strategic vision in Soudiane, a partner community since 1998. Marième Bamba, a leader for social change recognized by the Government of Senegal, proudly accepted the role of the “godmother” of the new strategy, helping to launch and share the strategy at the community level alongside Soudiane’s own community vision board. Tostan will soon share a new video that summarizes the Strategy to 2030 including the launch at Soudiane.

Image - Marième Bamba (pictured, in green) presents the illustrated strategic vision alongside Tostan partners and leaders in Soudiane, Senegal in November 2022.
Our results in a snapshot

Tostan continues to monitor and assess the impact of our work in communities, and 2022 has seen exciting progress across a range of different activity areas. Below is a brief summary of some of the key successes that we are grateful our work achieved.

Expanding Empowering Education and supporting community-led transformation

The Community Empowerment Program remains Tostan’s flagship activity. It is one of the most significant ways Tostan fosters greater autonomy, agency, and community well-being, through a participatory non-formal education approach.

This year, the CEP reached a total of 24,010 participants, across 330 communities in 4 countries in West Africa. This included 120 CEPs in Senegal, 60 in the Gambia, 30 in Mali, and 120 in Guinea-Bissau. 78% of these participants are women.

Among a range of community-led results, Tostan was particularly excited to see continued momentum for locally-led social change: in 2022, 327 villages in Senegal, The Gambia, and Mali participated in 6 public declarations for the abandonment of female genital cutting, child marriage and other forms of violence.

Image - Public declaration hosted in Sansamba, Senegal, 4 December 2022 - where 38 communities declared their abandonment of harmful practices
**Strengthening the democratic space and civic engagement**

One of the most important support structures communities can draw on are their local government representatives. Tostan works directly with governments at the local, district, and regional level so that they better understand the needs of communities, and their responsibilities towards them. Even more importantly, Tostan works to link communities with their local government, extending and strengthening the supportive network they can rely on to sustain their development.

In 2022, Tostan conducted training with 666 local officials in Senegal, 42 in the Gambia, 83 in Guinea-Bissau reinforcing their understanding of their roles and responsibilities with regards to the communities they serve.

**Improving our Reinforcing Parental Practices intervention**

The RPP module supports parents and other family and community members to work together to create an environment that strengthens children’s mental and physical development. This module, which builds on the knowledge learned in the CEP, helps equip communities to promote quality parent-child interactions, facilitate young children’s brain development, guarantee that children's rights are respected, reduce corporal punishment of children and help children to enter school much better prepared to learn and succeed.

In 2022, the RPP work was further improved by introducing a technology based innovation across 30 communities in the Kolda region of Senegal. Tostan, in partnership with Vroom, has recently used Amplio’s Talking Book devices to record Early Child Development content, allowing participants in RPP partner communities to continually review the content together not only in class, but also with other family and community members. Our operational reports show that implementation is going well, and we look forward to sharing the impact stories of what this work has accomplished in upcoming reports.

**Reducing Conflict and Promoting Peace and Security**

Our partner communities have reported that improved inter-personal relations, peace, and conflict resolution are among the most appreciated outcomes of the CEP. Tostan’s Peace and Security module builds upon the CEP to further support communities in reducing conflict and increasing harmony.

In 2022, Tostan implemented the Peace and Security module in 80 communities in Mali, and in 32 communities in Guinea. Tostan-trained community peace commissions in these communities led local conflict prevention and resolution interventions, supporting the peaceful prevention and resolution of hundreds of cases. For example, between July and September alone, commissions in the zones of Koulikoro and Banamba in Mali proactively addressed 300 potential conflicts and intervened to resolve more than 60 reported conflicts.
Innovating our training model for Nigeria and beyond

For many years Tostan has trained local and international partners on key aspects of its model to support their efforts to improve community well-being.

Due to an overwhelming demand from TTC alumni from Nigeria, in March 2022 Tostan carried out, for the first time, a “training-of-trainers” for Nigerian civil society organizations and religious leaders. This unique training equipped Tostan alumni with the tools and skills required to deliver seminars on the principles of the Tostan model to organizations and networks in their own country.

Between May and June 2022, the 16 Nigerian trained facilitators convened members of their organizations and networks, and led twelve 5-day step-down seminars across 7 states in Nigeria. This model allowed learnings to be disseminated exponentially and reached over 150 Nigerian CSOs and religious leader organizations.

This exciting expansion in Nigeria joins our other training offerings - through which Tostan reached an additional 364 participants from organizations across the world in 2022.

Supporting dignity and human rights in the prisons of Senegal

Tostan has also continued its work in 9 prisons across Senegal. Focused on women and youth prisoners, Tostan’s program provides education alongside additional mediation, skills training, and where possible, encourages greater legal support. In 2022 Tostan, in addition to providing hundreds of empowering education sessions for inmates, Tostan also advanced its skills training efforts and supported a total of 1,665 mediations between prisoners and families. 86% of these were reported as successful.

Thank you for your support – and all you made possible in 2022

Tostan’s transformational work would not be possible without the support and passion of our many friends, donors, allies, and partners, who work with us every day, providing resources and insight, asking questions, connecting us to new partners, and sharing our successes.

As we look towards a bright future for Tostan and the communities we work with, we are deeply grateful for all that you have helped us achieve together. Please reach out directly to the Tostan team if you have any questions or would like more information.