

August 10, 2017

UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres
Every Woman Every Child
Executive Office of the UN Secretary-General
Room SA-1B-17A
New York, NY 10017

Dear Secretary General Guterres,

I am writing to affirm Tostan's support of the Global Strategy for Women's, Children's and Adolescents' Health (2016-2030) and offer the enclosed commitment to join this global effort through scaling up our critical programs and impacts across West Africa.

During Tostan's 26 years in Africa, we have seen that empowering education at the community level is a fundamental, dynamic driver for enhancing human development and improving health - especially for women and children.

Our community empowerment model - a proven grassroots education program - has led to results in a wide range of development areas affecting girls and women, including more than 8,000 communities' commitment to end female genital cutting and child marriage since 1997.

Tostan's three-year commitment seeks to contribute directly to the EWEC strategy and help deliver the SDGs by scaling up our Community Empowerment Program to engage and empower entire social networks in West Africa toward unprecedented human rights results.

We commit to working directly with 150 new communities and their interconnected social networks in four West African countries, reaching a total of 7,500 people directly and tens of thousands more indirectly, extending the powerful grassroots movement for human rights that has been building in recent years.

Every community will establish a local governance and leadership body, with over 50% women members. Most will become Community Based Organizations, creating an often-missing, sustainable element of local-level civil society capable of engaging and coordinating with a range of local and regional actors.

Our leading-edge community monitoring & evaluation framework, developed in partnership with the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, will document results over the three-year project timeline, and enhance catalytic learning with other NGOs and development experts at the Tostan Training Center in Thies, Senegal. Among many anticipated impacts, we estimate that 95% of participant communities will decide to abandon female genital cutting (FGC) within three years, the proportion of participants with daughters at FGC age who have cut their daughters in the last 12 months will

reduce to 2% by 2020, and 80% of participants will take an informed decision to practice birth spacing by 2020.

In time, we hope that by delivering a human rights based education and uncovering the agency of potential leaders that previously did not have a voice in their communities, our growing community networks will be uniquely suited to facilitate local dialogue around the SDGs and be at the forefront of their fulfilment.

Mr. Secretary, while we have indeed seen progress in global development, these impacts have not been distributed equally. There is a growing risk that we will not reach - indeed, that we will leave behind entirely - those women and children at the grassroots who most need and who can most directly contribute to the next wave of global progress.

I am honored to write you today to offer the efforts of everyone here at Tostan to do all we can to seed the blossoming of human potential where it is most needed here in West Africa. We do so in the hope that we see the day when every community and every region is united for every woman and every child.

Sincerely yours,



Molly Melching
Founder and CEO
Tostan

