

Project Title: Understanding COVID-19 Knowledge, Attitude and Practices as well as the effectiveness of COVID-19 communications channels in West Africa

Client: TOSTAN

Location: Senegal, Mali, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau

Sector: Public Health

Dates of service: May-August 2020

IDinsight service: Remote surveys

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Status: Complete

Context:

Tostan's goal is to empower communities to develop their vision for a future that leads to dignity for all. In particular, Tostan's flagship Community Empowerment Program (CEP) assigns a trained facilitator to live and provide classes in each CEP village for three years. In February 2020, just before COVID-19 lockdowns went into effect, Tostan had ongoing CEPs in hundreds of villages across The Gambia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, and Senegal. As new restrictions started to be enforced across these countries in March 2020, Tostan pivoted to supporting the COVID-19 response in and beyond CEP communities. Specifically, Tostan was aiming to deliver COVID-19 information via radio, WhatsApp, and two booklets to CEP communities as the lockdown began.

Evidence Needs:

To inform adapting Tostan's support to CEP communities during the COVID-19 pandemic to best meet their needs, IDinsight conducted an initial phone survey across four countries. The goal of this first round was to assess the levels of key COVID-19-related knowledge, attitudes toward the disease, individual and community-level preventative practices, and hardships faced that Tostan's Covid-19 communication plan hoped to improve.

IDinsight Service:

IDinsight conducted phone surveys in seven different languages: Wolof, Mandinka, Pulaar and French in Senegal; Bamanankan in Mali; French and Maninka in Guinea; and Créole and Fula in Guinea-Bissau. Our final sample included 245 respondents across 160 Tostan partner communities. Because our goal was to obtain a village-level view of challenges and precautionary measures taken during the pandemic: Our team spoke with village leaders, CMC Coordinators, religious leaders, and health workers, with the underlying assumption that these individuals are more connected and better informed than the rest of the village population, providing a reliable upper bound on the average result within a village.

Results:

- The restrictions imposed during the pandemic in each country affected respondents differently across countries. Overall, the inability to work, restrictions on movement, and distance to health centers were cited as the most challenging aspects of the new restrictions. Across countries, households reported facing more challenges procuring enough food than usual ;
- Radio was largely the main medium through which respondents were getting their information about COVID-19. Respondents overall appeared to trust the information they were receiving about the COVID-19 across all media and awareness around fake news seemed lacking ;

- While most respondents knew the main transmission pathways for COVID-19, there seemed to be a knowledge gap around the possibility of asymptomatic cases, and around some specific symptoms (such as loss of taste and smell) ;
- Respondents in the average village had adapted greetings to limit physical contact. In Mali and Guinea-Bissau, most people reported being able to wash their hands frequently. In Senegal and Guinea, although washing hands is reported as a protection measure, most respondents (in the average village) reported not having the means to do so frequently ;
- Across countries, in the average village respondents generally had knowledge of and ability to wear masks or other face coverings, but many households lacked the ability to isolate a sick member ;
- Ability to access essential health services during this period varied widely between countries. Most respondents indicated they would report a COVID-19 case to the health services, in most countries, respondents also reported a fear of being discovered as infected with COVID-19.