

Tostan's Community Empowerment Program and the Sustainable Development Goals

Tostan's Community Empowerment Program (CEP) supports communities in achieving their vision for a brighter future. That vision aligns with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In 2017 Tostan gathered and analyzed results from its 2013-2016 CEP implemented across 150 communities. This data is providing an exciting window into the impact that Tostan's model and community-led efforts are having on a wide range of globally significant issues.



Results of Generational Change in 3 Years

From 2013 to 2016, Tostan implemented its transformational development model, the three-year CEP, in 150 new communities in some of the most challenging regions of Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Mali, and Mauritania; countries with a high prevalence of female genital cutting (FGC) and child marriage. The goal of this four-country initiative, called 'Generational Change in Three Years', was to empower girls and women and significantly expand the movement for positive social norms change through the abandonment of these harmful traditional practices. It represented the first time Tostan had invited multiple funding partners to invest in its at-scale, holistic model, to more effectively spark and measure social norms change.

Tostan participants and whole communities demonstrated significant improvements in multiple issue areas from baseline to the final evaluation in 2017. This provides a snapshot of the results of the internal evaluation Tostan designed and carried out with the support of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. The qualitative results, gathered through interviews with Community Management Committee (CMC) focus group members, corroborate the quantitative survey results.

In 2017, Tostan launched a second phase of this initiative, implementing the CEP in 150 new communities in The Gambia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, and Mali. The standard way that Tostan now works is through strategic, large-scale implementation of programs, with multi-issue monitoring and evaluation. The organization's long-term vision is that its rigorous internal monitoring and evaluation system will provide a foundation for more external evaluation partnerships that can document and better understand the full impact of the holistic model across these issues. This would enable further program improvements and also contribute to demonstrating the full potential of empowering education and community-led development.

GOVERNANCE

- » The proportion of participants who now know their human rights multiplied by 5 from 13% to 70%.
- » There were significant increases in joint decision-making between husband and wife in all four countries.
- » 90% of survey respondents stated that Community Management Committees (CMCs) satisfy community needs.
- » CMC focus group members stated that they had helped resolve conflicts and their communities became more peaceful with fewer, even no conflicts.

"Women now dare to make public speeches and defend their opinions in mixed meetings. As we are currently doing here, sitting with a man who is a stranger; before we did not dare to do it." – GUINEA-BISSAU

**Contributes to achievement of SDG 16:
Building Peaceful and Inclusive Societies**

EDUCATION

- » Across all four countries, increase in the proportion of respondents who believe that there is no age that is acceptable to withdraw a child from school, with this proportion growing three times larger in Guinea-Bissau (from 15% to 58%)

"This quest for knowledge projects us forward because we now know how to read and write, and all this contributes to seeing forward." – MAURITANIA

**Contributes to achievement of SDG 4:
Inclusive and Quality Equitable Education**

ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

- » 54% increase in proportion of women participants practicing an income generating activity (on average by country)

**Contributes to SDG 8:
Sustained, Inclusive Economic Growth**

HEALTH

More than doubled:

- » % of women who discuss family planning with their husbands
- » # of respondents whose children receive vaccinations
- » % of respondents who used oral rehydration solution

"We have a health center here...; now when a child gets sick, we bring him to the health center. That is because of the teaching Tostan gave us." – MALI

**Contributes to achievement of SDG 3:
Good Health and Well-Being for People**

ENVIRONMENT

- » Significant increase in village cleanups (average 14 public cleanups per village over six months in Guinea-Bissau)

"They are important changes because, for example, with the garden, we eat well and in addition we earn money... With the compost, your garbage is [not] blowing around everywhere [causing] diseases; you water from time to time, you turn it into manure that you bring in your field and it reduces the amount of chemical fertilizer you use and your field gives good yield. It's so beneficial! Where we planted trees, so far no trees have died; within three years we will have a forest. It is we who benefit, not Tostan!" – MALI

Contributes to achievement of SDG 6: Clean Water and Sanitation; And Goal 2: Zero Hunger

WOMEN'S CONFIDENCE AS A CRITICAL AXIS OF CHANGE

- » Both at home and in public, women's voices and participation in decision-making helped transform attitudes and beliefs around deeply entrenched social norms. Women became more confident speaking up and actively participating in decision-making related to education, family planning, child marriage and FGC.

A total of 358 communities participated in 6 public declarations for the abandonment of FGC and child marriage, organized by 150 Community Management Committees.

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