



31 July 2012

Dear Tostan Friends and Supporters,

Today we are honoring the life of a remarkable woman: Maimouna Traoré. Maimouna was one of the first pioneers of the movement to abandon [female genital cutting](#) (FGC) in Senegal. She helped make [the first public declaration of abandonment](#) possible 15 years ago today in Malicounda Bambara, western Senegal, and her dedication has inspired countless women and men to work toward FGC abandonment in their own communities.

Maimouna passed away last week, but she will always be remembered for her work in igniting public dialogue in Senegal around FGC abandonment. [Please take the time to read more about this incredible woman.](#)



Maimouna Traoré and Molly Melching at the tenth anniversary of the Malicounda Bambara declaration.

We see the impact of Maimouna's work and the work of the women of Malicounda Bambara every day. We saw it most recently in this month's declaration in Somaliland—the region's largest public declaration to date. [Twenty-eight communities in the Maroodi Jeex region came together in Hargeisa, Somaliland to declare their decision to abandon FGC in their communities.](#)

This declaration is a reminder of what we work for every day: sustainable, community-led social change built on a deep understanding of human rights. Today, on the 15th anniversary of the Malicounda Bambara declaration, we are proud to have played a role in working toward an FGC-free Senegal. We will continue to do so as long as we are needed.

What began as a commitment by Maimouna Traoré and a small group of women in Malicounda Bambara has grown into an international movement in eight countries. We hope, with your

continued support, to work with many more African communities as they choose positive social change.

Read on to learn more about recent developments in the movement to abandon FGC.

Warm wishes,



Molly Melching

Executive Director

Kolda, Senegal Stands Up for Human Rights



CEP participants from 60 villages in Senegal met with community and religious leaders to discuss ways to end violence and discrimination in their communities. They agreed that FGC and child/forced marriage put the health of women and children at risk, and that continuing these practices was incompatible with their commitment to respecting basic human rights.

[Read more about the Kolda workshop on our blog.](#)

Huffington Post Highlights Malicounda Bambara's 15th Anniversary

On July 31, 1997, the women of Malicounda Bambara publicly declared their decision to abandon FGC. Today, on the 15th anniversary of that day, over 5,000 communities in Senegal have joined them in this commitment, and we are closer than ever to achieving the goal of an FGC-free Senegal. [Read Molly Melching's article about this important anniversary in the Huffington Post.](#)

You can help us build momentum for this movement. Support our work to promote FGC abandonment by donating to our [Malicounda Bambara fundraising campaign.](#)

DONATE NOW

Tostan Featured by Half the Sky

Melinda Gates visits Tostan Community of Kolma Peulh, Senegal



Our partners at Half the Sky are featuring Tostan this month for our work to end

gender-based violence and promote women's equality. Through our program, communities build consensus on the importance of human rights and equality for all people, leading them to take action to end gender-based violence in their communities.

[Visit the Half the Sky Movement website to learn more about this campaign.](#)



On July 8, the community of Kolma Peulh in Senegal welcomed a visit from Melinda Gates of the [Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation](#). The visit came ahead of Ms. Gates' visit to

London, where she opened the 2012 Family Planning Summit.

[Read about her visit to Kolma Peulh on our blog.](#)



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Tostan is a US 501(c)(3) nongovernmental organization based in Senegal, West Africa.

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