

Electronic monitoring tools:

Tostan using innovative monitoring technology for Early Childhood Development (ECD)

Tostan

Dignity for All



“Kobo Collect” is an open source software designed to make data collection more efficient and more reliable. Tostan’s Reinforcement of Parental Practices (RPP) program began using this new technology to gather information and monitor activities in the field.

Ensuring the continuous monitoring and reliable evaluation of a program is a constant challenge for NGOs, which can become a point of contention especially when collaborating with scientific institutions such as universities. Aware of this dilemma, Tostan is in the process of revamping its monitoring and evaluating system by developing electronic monitoring tools for the **Reinforcement of Parental Practices (RPP)** program with the support of the William & Flora Hewlett Foundation. The RPP team and the **Monitoring, Evaluation, Research, and Learning (MERL)** department have joined together to ensure the long-term sustainability of this system.

The Joint RPP-MERL team provided 42 of its supervisors with a Samsung Galaxy Note 10.1 an Android-based tablet computer, which offers a complete range of functions including: an audio recorder, a camera/video recorder with a maximum resolution of 5 megapixels, Internet access, and a new application introduced by the team called “**Kobo Collect**”.

The electronic monitoring tools developed by the Joint RPP-MERL team are compatible

with the tablets, and are able to monitor home teaching sessions and its immediate effects on parental practices. The data collected will allow the team to continue the development of practical content and the elaboration of implementation strategies for the RPP. The final version of the monitoring tools, which will be expanded to cover all aspects of the RPP program, completed in 2014 -2015.

Following the progressive development of the tools, activities have been organized and are currently being organized by the Joint MERL-RPP team to ensure the appropriate use of the electronic tools by Tostan supervisors.

From April 15-18, 2014, a training session for supervisors was held at the Center for Capacity Building and Sustainable Development in Thiès, Senegal. The aim was to help the supervisors gain a sense of ownership of the tools and electronic materials, and to ensure that data coming from activities in the 200 participating communities in the RPP program, is efficiently collected and transferred.

The specific objectives and learning points set by the joint RPP-MERL team for the training included:

- To reinforce the theoretical and practical expertise of supervisors in the area of monitoring the activities of the RPP program and other programs in general
- To differentiate between the tasks of the supervisors from that of the facilitators. Facilitators understand the concepts and possess the necessary practical skills with regards to the cognitive stimulation of children from ages of zero to six. Supervisors are trained to monitor the indicators and collect data on the implementation, progress, and general cohesion of the implementation of the RPP in the communities of their respective zones. This helps to reduce, even mitigate, risks of conflict of leadership associated with the high possibility of finding a facilitator with a greater understanding of RPP activities in the field than their supervisor.

Kobo Collect: An Electronic Monitoring Tool

- To highlight the negative impact of paper usage on the environment by encouraging supervisors to progressively replace paper with electronic formats. This action would result in reducing the environmental cost of monitoring the RPP program to almost zero

- To encourage recordings of parent-infant interactions and store it as video-data, which will lead to the creation of a video database system, available for internal and external use. The recordings will also help the supervisors to submit objectively-written reports

- To save time and improve the quality of data collection and transfer from the field

- To increase the effectiveness of monitoring by the supervisors. The Kobo tool has an integrated GPS component that can provide the satellite coordinates of the community and also locate where the data is being collected. The GPS data precision can be within one meter (1 m)

- To standardize and systematize the practices of **Early Childhood Development (ECD)** activities in the RPP communities

RPP and MERL Department Objectives

- Collect data on each of the home visit sessions
- Learn to use video-data of parent-infant interactions to develop a system of coding and analysis of behaviors
- Develop the necessary tools to monitor the three other components of the RPP program which are; social mobilization activities, class sessions on the theory of brain development, and strategic activities to ensure the sustainability of the RPP program
- To be prepared to receive mass amounts of highly precise data gathered by the supervisors and to organize it in a methodical manner
- Decide on and implement an operational platform for the RPP-MERL team, whose main activity for 2014-2015 will consist in coding and analyzing the electronic data and promptly providing feedback to the field staff

- To enable Tostan to take the lead on implementing the electronic monitoring tools, but to also take the lead in the field of monitoring and evaluating ECD activities and programs in general

In the meantime three, joint RPP-MERL team are currently on missions in the regional coordinations offices to ensure the proper use of the electronic material and tools. Despite facing new challenges, the scope for innovation is endless and there will be unprecedented changes. The

training in Thiès was a chance to highlight the quality and the importance of the Joint MERL-RPP collaboration and laid the foundation for a new era in data collection for Tostan's programs. Tostan was able to learn a lot from this initiative; opening a new page in our history and joining a small group of organizations that implement and monitor ECD programs with precision.



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