

Tostan's Sustainable Impact in West Africa to Date

Tostan Dignity for All



Tostan's nonformal, human rights-based education program, the **Community Empowerment Program (CEP)**, has impacted more than 200,000 participants directly as well as millions of others indirectly through its organized diffusion model.

External evaluations and internal program analysis provide a strong evidence base for Tostan's success in the following major impact areas:

Abandonment of female genital cutting (FGC) and child marriage

To date, more than 7,700 communities in eight countries (Djibouti, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Mauritania, Senegal, Somalia and The Gambia) have publicly declared their abandonment of FGC and child/forced marriage.

A 2008 UNICEF-funded evaluation by Macro International¹ confirmed the power of these declarations: in Tostan communities that participated in public declarations between 1998 and 2000, FGC prevalence dropped by 77 percent (in the 0-10 age group) over the course of ten years.

Increased grassroots democracy

To date, more than 2,000 democratically functioning Community

Management Committees (CMCs) have been created through Tostan's program. In all of these, women form the majority of the membership. An internal study in 2009 showed that hundreds of these CMCs had gained formal Civil Society Organization (CSO) status, and over 500 CMCs have joined together to create Regional Federations in Guinea and Senegal. In addition, internal monitoring on several major civic engagement-focused projects have shown large numbers of birth registrations, marriage certificates, national identity cards, and school registrations taking place during the program.

Empowerment of women

According to 2009 data collected by Tostan, women coordinate over 80 percent of Tostan-trained CMCs. These women gain leadership experience, and Tostan has testimonials from many women that this experience has helped them secure elected roles in local councils and regional federations or

associations. Tostan also has a large body of anecdotal evidence about changes in attitudes regarding sexual discrimination, violence against women, and women's perception of their ability to improve their situation.

Improved maternal and child health

Internal project monitoring efforts have shown increased vaccination rates due to the CEP in Tostan partner communities. As noted by a 2004 Population Council study: "The utilization of health services, antenatal care, family planning and child health has significantly increased."² Tostan has also seen many communities start their own community-led health centers, although Tostan has not found resources to collect data on the impact of these centers. The same Population Council evaluation noted more hygienic behavior at the community level: "The communities now [...] hold regular clean-up activities for improving public hygiene."

¹ UNICEF (2008), "Long-term evaluation of the Tostan Programme in Senegal: Kolda, Thiès and Fatick Regions," UNICEF Section of Statistics and Monitoring, Division of Policy and Practice, New York, NY.

² Nafissatou J. Diop, Djingri Ouoba, Zakari Congo, Molly Melching, Baya Banza, Georges Guiella, and Inge Baumgarten (2004), "Experience from a community-based education program in Burkina Faso: The Tostan program," FRONTIERS Final Report, Population Council, Washington, DC.



Increased literacy and technology skills

Tostan participants learn to read and write in their local languages and to use SMS text messaging. The first phase of Tostan's Mobile Phone for Literacy and Development project was evaluated in a UNICEF-commissioned study by the Center of Evaluation for Global Action in 2010³ with promising results in text, numeric, and phone literacy, and in closing the gender gap in phone use

and access. After just four months, 73 percent of the total sample reported being able to read the text messages they receive – up from nine percent at the baseline.

Increased protection of children's rights:

Internal project evaluations repeatedly show that Tostan's program has increased primary school enrollment and retention rates, especially for

girls. One of the main activities CMCs undertake is the enrollment of girls and boys in school.

Improvements in Peace and Security

Tostan has anecdotal evidence to suggest its programs have positive local and regional impacts on political stability, mediation, and conflict resolution.

³ Theresa Beltramo and David I. Levine (2010), "Do SMS Text Messaging and SMS Community Forums Improve Outcomes of Adult and Adolescent Literacy Programs? Evidence from the Jokko Initiative in Senegal," UNICEF and the Center of Evaluation for Global Action (CEGA) at the University of California, Berkeley.

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