On July 2, 2018 my son Damiano, my husband Paolo and I welcomed a new addition to our family. Gioacchino Daouda was born at 4 kilograms, with all of us happy and healthy.

Experiencing the birth of my second child while at Tostan is a joy. Not only because of the wonderful messages and visits I have been receiving from across the organization and the global Tostan family, but also because of what it is like to be able to welcome a new life into the world while working for an organization committed to improving the lives of so many.

Our children, our families, our communities, these are among the greatest gifts we are given. They are the fundamental resources we have as humans living on this planet. And the deep love and care we feel and show for our children and our extended families and communities are an incredible starting point for working effectively - so often something forgotten in a development world that seeks solutions and impacts and takes for granted the people who will experience them.

As I sit here with Gioacchino in my arms, I feel so blessed, knowing how lucky he is, how lucky I am. I also feel so thankful to read here so many of the exciting developments that took place in the past months.

Thank you for supporting our longtime work to help so many future generations to have the chance at different lives, and to help their families and communities become engaged in ways that will sustain and grow positive change for years to come. Together we are building a model that can shape this world - our children’s world - for the better.

Elena Bonometti
CEO, Tostan
Programmatic Updates

Breakthrough Generation

Empowering girls, women, and communities to take the lead in the movement for human rights and sustainable development across West Africa

The Breakthrough Generation, our at-scale implementation of the Community Empowerment Program (CEP) in 150 partner communities across The Gambia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau and Mali, has been underway since October 2017. Partner communities have completed the Kobi 1 module, in which they envisioned their common goals for the future and engaged in dialogue on human rights, responsibilities, democracy and collective problem solving. Currently, 12,834 class participants are engaged in the Kobi 2 module on health and hygiene.

After the 45 Kobi 2 sessions, class participants and their adopted learners will be equipped with knowledge that will help them to improve their living conditions at home and in the community. At the end of the module, they will be able to explain the human rights related to hygiene and health, the anatomy of the body and physical development, including puberty, menstruation, pregnancy, childbirth and menopause. They will also learn how to prevent illnesses through adoption of better hygiene practices, such as handwashing to prevent the transmission of germs, and clearing stagnant water so as not to encourage mosquitoes.

The Kobi 2 is a vital part of the CEP through which participants bring together their new knowledge of reproductive health with a stronger understanding of their rights to make positive behavioral changes, notably with regards to harmful practices such as female genital cutting, child marriage, violence against women, artificial skin lightening and smoking. Learning about the importance of national and international laws for the protection of girls and women brings an awareness of the consequences of these harmful practices and encourages communities to take collective, positive action for abandonment.
Voice from The Gambia: Mr. Kemo Ngansa Touray of Kuwonkunding community

“I was born in Kuwonkunding 68 years ago. For 32 years I traveled, and learned in the school of life. I saw a lot, heard a lot and learned a lot. When I finally came back to my village, I thought that I had a lot of knowledge. Tostan came to my village about 8 months ago, and I decided to join the class with my wife. I confess that what I learned during this small time in Tostan’s class is superior and more important than my 32 years of learning in the school of life. The knowledge I received in Tostan’s program in such a short time allowed me to know the true foundation of human rights, democracy, my duty to my society, group life, and how to define a vision for the future.”

To promote the long-term sustainability of the positive changes sparked through the CEP, Community Management Committees (CMCs) are established in all partner communities by local community members.

Guinea-Bissau: CMCs leading the movement for community-led development

Throughout the program, the 17 CMC members are trained with the necessary management skills to lead social mobilization activities, implement development projects, manage micro lending programs and partner with other NGOs or governmental agencies. They take the lead in working with the community to identify their needs and build an action plan of activities to achieve community goals. Leading by example, their activities positively influence the attitude and behavior of community members and create a dynamism of change from the grassroots.

The 40 CMCs in Guinea-Bissau count 680 members, half of whom are female. In this quarter, these CMCs led social mobilization activities and advocacy campaigns related to the importance of education for girls and keeping children in school during the cashew nut harvest. Thanks to their advocacy, 35 children were enrolled in school and 37 children were registered at the civil registry. The CMC of Colimessecunda community is now in the process of obtaining legal documents to open a school. CMCs opened bank accounts and created community funds with financial contributions from class participants. These funds, amounting to a total of around $2,755, are used for revolving loan funds and income-generating activities, such as the co-operative sorrel garden pictured above.

In addition to classes, partner communities held organized diffusion activities designed to encourage the sharing of new information and ideas with their friends, families and neighbors, and thus increase the scope of change in the wider social network. Class participants ‘adopted’ 9,211 fellow community members with whom they regularly share their new knowledge. The 150 Community Management Committees (CMCs) organized activities with their neighboring communities - including inter-village and inter-generational meetings, sharing seminars and radio programs - which represented key moments to promote dialogue around human rights issues between community members of all ages and religious or traditional leaders from their communities and beyond.

To promote the long-term sustainability of the positive changes sparked through the CEP, Community Management Committees (CMCs) are established in all partner communities by local community members.
Promoting the dignity of prisoners in Senegal

Tostan’s prison project is a modified version of the CEP which empowers detainees to claim their rights, strengthens their life skills and supports their reintegration through family reconciliation and training on income-generating activities.

Learning and mediation within prisons

The Wallace Research Foundation supports project activities inside six prisons in Senegal. During the last quarter, more than 260 detainees learned about democracy, problem solving and human rights. Tostan led 22 awareness-raising sessions on health, hygiene and maintaining peace in detention with prison staff and detainees - often at the request of the prison administration. Telephone and in-person mediations between detainees and their families continued to bring families together.

In Dakar, Tostan staff met a detainee who had served 10 years without any visit or contact with his family. They didn’t even know where he was serving time. Thanks to Tostan’s support he was finally reunited with his wife and children. Tostan conducted in-person mediations with his family who live in the Kolda region, southern Senegal, supported by religious and cultural village leaders. The whole community was ecstatic to learn where he was after a decade of not hearing from him. Today, his family keeps in regular contact with him and Tostan, and the community is advocating for the implementation of the project in Kolda's prison.

On June 19th, Tostan celebrated the International Day of the African Child with 100 young people at the Fort B minors prison in Dakar. It was a great opportunity for the young detainees to have fun and celebrate what they have learned through the project. They presented a skit about the inmate-led management committee, wherein different candidates campaigned by presenting to the audience their future vision for the prison.

Reintegration of former detainees

With the support of the US Embassy in Dakar, Tostan continues to support former detainees upon release, as they reintegrate into society.

In June, Tostan trained 10 female former detainees on fabric dyeing, human rights and project management at the purpose-built Reinsertion Center in Diourbel. Tostan followed up with financial support for participants who had been trained in the processing of fruits, vegetables and local cereals in March 2018, to help them launch their own businesses.

Ivonne Diouf is a former detainee now living in Dakar, who has suffered from rejection by her family and community. Thanks to the family mediation support and training she received from Tostan, Ivonne was able to start her own cereal processing activity to earn an income. She is now more accepted and involved in her community as the women’s group asked her to share with them her new practical skills.

Training on fabric dyeing, June 2018, Diourbel
Engaging Civil Society for Peace in the Casamance

Since February 2018, Tostan has been working in coalition with Partners Global, Partners West Africa and la Plateforme des Femmes pour la Paix en Casamance, with funding from USAID, on the project 'USAID UNAAM KAYRAAY'.

This region, along with neighboring communities in The Gambia and Guinea-Bissau, has suffered from low-level conflict since the 1950s. The project aims to strengthen the resilience of civil society, particularly women, in using nonviolent means to resolve conflicts in the region.

Between mid-April through June, 2,138 women, men, girls and boys across 30 communities in southern Senegal and 10 in The Gambia were trained on peace, human security, human rights, mediation methods and the participation of women in peace processes. At least 70% of the participants were women and girls, giving them a unique opportunity to get involved in peace processes and decision-making affecting their own security and wellbeing.

These communities established Peace Committees (PCs) made up of women, men and youth who were trained by Tostan on conflict management and resolution methods, to be able to conduct peaceful conflict mediations. In Guinea-Bissau, 30 communities who had previously established PCs through an earlier Tostan project, prepared to lead social mobilization activities. All 70 PCs successfully resolved more than 100 conflicts, such as domestic disagreements and land disputes, contributing to the promotion of human security and peace from the grassroots upwards.

In order to spread new knowledge and skills across the extended social network, the CMCs and PCs organized a total of 137 awareness-raising activities themed around human security, conflict resolution, and human rights. They also addressed the important issues of overexploitation and mismanagement of natural resources, and illegal trafficking of goods and people, which are among the main sources of insecurity in the region.

The village chief speaks during an inter-village meeting in the Sibidianto community, May 28th, which gathered 60 people (24 women, 36 men) from 12 communities. Those present included village chiefs, imams, CMC and Peace Committee members, class participants and the local mayor. They used this opportunity to discuss how their communities could work together to promote peace and security in the region. During the meeting the imams stressed the importance of fostering a culture of peace between communities and urged the participants to take the lead in promoting peace in the Casamance.
In April, the TTC welcomed 22 participants from 10 different countries and 18 different organizations for the ‘Promoting Community Wellbeing’ training. Over 10 days, participants learned about Tostan’s CEP, its participatory methodologies, best practices for monitoring and evaluating social norms change, and the underlying theories that inform and steer Tostan’s work, including community wellbeing and the ‘capacity to aspire’. They also exchanged with Tostan partner communities and their CMCs on two field visits.

In June, we hosted the first of three 12-day trainings with the Carter Center in Atlanta, Georgia, USA, with whom we have collaborated since 2015. This year the trainings were customized to be 12 days, to include sessions on grant writing and fundraising and to allow more time for individual action planning. For the first training, the Carter Center worked with the National Chief Imam’s office in Ghana to invite 20 religious leaders, chiefs, and community organizers from Ghana to come and learn about Tostan’s work.

Thank you to all of those who have sponsored scholarships, allowing grassroots activists access to the training, including Girls Not Brides, Norad, the Orchid Project, Segal Family Foundation, and Our Circle Book Club in San Clemente, California.

Upcoming trainings will take place on November 20-29th in French, and December 4-13th in English. See our website for more details.

---

FEEDBACK FROM PARTICIPANTS

“It was great experience, a rare and critical opportunity to reflect and focus on doing community-led empowerment programing authentically.”

“I learned in 10 days what I wouldn’t and haven’t learned in 10 years. It was really holistic and started from small to big. Awesome!”

“12 days with Tostan have changed my 36 years of thought, in relation to women, children, approaching people, as well as my understanding of the Koranic text.”
On May 13th, 50 communities came together in Diongto in northern Senegal to publicly declare their intention to abandon the harmful practices of female genital cutting, child marriage and forced marriage. Around 800 people witnessed this historic moment, including local authorities, elected officials, school principals, representatives from our partners (The Orchid Project, UNICEF and UNFPA), health practitioners, local press and guests from neighbouring communities in Mauritania. Highlights include a sketch about FGC performed by local teenagers, a congratulatory speech by the Governor, and the signing of commitment sheets by the heads of all 50 communities.

Molly Melching commented: "I think back to over 10 years ago when I brought a visiting delegation to meet with classes in this same area. The religious leaders and followers burned tires in front of our hotel and threatened us if we went out. Things CAN change! Patience and perseverance! Love and trust... Amazing facilitators and social mobilization agents brought this change!"

TTC Participant Profile: Lale Labuko, Omo Child Foundation, Ethiopia

Lale Labuko is the Co-Founder of OMO Child Foundation, an organization in southwest Ethiopia dedicated to rescuing and caring for children considered cursed (“mingi”) in their home communities. Lale started the organization after witnessing the forcible removal of a child from its mother by village elders. The child, he was told, would be abandoned and left to die because it was considered “mingi” and thus a bearer of ill fortune for the community. A child was said to be “mingi” if it was born to an unmarried mother, if its parents had not asked the village elders for permission to have a child, or if its top front teeth grew before the bottom ones. The OMO Child Foundation now takes care of around 50 children, and Lale and his colleagues work to encourage communities to abandon the “mingi” practice. Lale plans to use his learnings from the Tostan course - particularly the social norm theory - to inform his future efforts with these communities.
On May 13th, 50 communities came together in Diongto in northern Senegal to publicly declare their intention to abandon the harmful practices of female genital cutting, child marriage and forced marriage. Around 800 people witnessed this historic moment, including local authorities, elected officials, school principals, representatives from our partners (The Orchid Project, UNICEF and UNFPA), health practitioners, local press and guests from neighbouring communities in Mauritania. Highlights include a sketch about FGC performed by local teenagers, a congratulatory speech by the Governor, and the signing of commitment sheets by the heads of all 50 communities. Molly Melching commented: “I think back to over 10 years ago when I brought a visiting delegation to meet with classes in this same area. The religious leaders and followers burned tires in front of our hotel and threatened us if we went out. Things CAN change! Patience and perseverance! Love and trust... Amazing facilitators and social mobilization agents brought this change!”

Organizational Updates

Girls Not Brides Global Meeting
Suzanne Bowles, Global Partnerships Specialist, and Yussuf Sane, Program Manager in Guinea-Bissau, joined thousands of advocates, activists and changemakers for three inspiring days at the Girls Not Brides global meeting in Kuala Lumpur June 25-27th. Along with partners Orchid Project, Population Council, Amref Health Africa, Equilibres & Populations and The Girl Generation, they took part in workshops and shared about the importance of a social norms approach in the movement to bring an end to child marriage.

Strategic Council Meeting
Staff from our National Coordinations, Regional Coordinations and Tostan International gathered in Dakar June 25-29th for the Strategic Council meeting. We worked together to build capacity, share news and finalize a first draft of organizational scaling plans and Key Performance Indicators. It was a great opportunity to unite all staff in the mission for sustainable and transformational change that Tostan is working toward in the years to come.

Deedo Partnership
We are thrilled to be working in partnership with Deedo, the first Pan-African focused global music streaming platform. Through Deedo, subscribers can discover new African artists, such as Senegalese co-founder Nix, while supporting one of three local charity causes. Deedo has offered a complimentary subscription to all members of the Leadership Circle. Please contact us if you are interested in becoming a subscriber.
Engagement Opportunities

WRITE FOR TOSTAN’S BLOG

Through Tostan Stories on Medium, we invite you to share about your transformational journey as a Global Mobilizer. Be inspired by this beautiful article from Leadership Circle member and TTC participant Karen Mercaldo and get in touch with your blog ideas.

SHARE OUR SPECIAL STORY

Have you had a chance to think about the philanthropists and changemakers who may be inspired to join the movement?

Share their names HERE to invite them to receive a copy of the special edition of However Long the Night featuring a glowing foreword from Melinda and Bill Gates.

LEARN WITH TOSTAN STAFF

On Monday September 10th, 4-5pm UTC (12-1pm ETC), we invite you to join a learning webinar with our CEO Elena Bonometti, Founder and Creative Director Molly Melching and Senior Program Manager Dame Guèye, entitled 'After the CEP: Civil Society, Sustainable Development and Global Impact.' More details to follow by email.

SLEEP FOR WELLBEING

Long-time Global Mobilizer Diane Gillespie’s new book ‘Stories for Getting Back to Sleep’ is designed to help readers forget the day’s stresses and fall soundly to sleep. Available online or in bookstores, all proceeds of the book go to Tostan. A perfect gift, contributing to your wellbeing and that of communities across West Africa!

CONNECT WITH US AT AN EVENT

We would love to connect with you or anyone in your network at the following upcoming events:

- **Women Moving Millions Summit**, Seattle, USA, Sep 13-15
- **Segal Family Foundation Annual Meeting**, Nairobi, Kenya, Oct 4-5
- **Opportunity Collaboration Summit**, Cancun, Mexico, Oct 14-19
- **Hilton Prize Symposium**, Los Angeles, USA, October 19

VISIT THE COMMUNITIES

We are currently planning two fantastic opportunities for you to come to West Africa and meet the women, children and men making change happen in their communities. Dates in January and February 2019 to be confirmed.