



## STRATEGIC ENGAGEMENT PLAN (SEP) 2016-2022

## What is the SEP 2016-2022?

This Strategic Engagement Plan (SEP) is Tostan's strategic roadmap, designed to guide our organization in making concrete, mission-focused progress over the next 7 years.

## What is included in Tostan's SEP?

The SEP is carefully built upon our Organizational Framework which includes Tostan's mission, vision, beliefs, values and norms.

The SEP itself sets one Core Strategic Focus on empowering education, as a guide for all of Tostan's work. It then articulates 3 main components:

- **Ultimate Impact Objectives**

Our Strategic Engagement Plan seeks to fulfill our mission. In creating this plan, we began by thinking not only about the next 7 years, but beyond to the next 7 generations, challenging ourselves to come up with far-reaching objectives that we feel can actually meet the goal our mission defines. We will use these Ultimate Impact Objectives to work towards—and always keep in mind—the biggest transformational opportunities we have.

- **7 Year Aspirational Targets**

Based on our Ultimate Impact Objectives, we have set 7-year as well as annual targets against which to track our core progress.

- **Strategic Goals and Objectives**

We have created a clear framework for what steps we need to take as an organization to achieve those targets and make the most of those opportunities.

## Why Strategic Engagement Plan?

Engaging our teams and partners is central to our success to date. It has been central to the creation of this plan, and will be the only way we can navigate successfully. One of the major opportunities we identified in reviewing past strategic plans was to more proactively use a system that aligned all of our organizational systems into one single framework. Our commitment in publishing this document is not only to the plan itself, but to continue engaging strategically throughout the plan's duration.

## Why 7 Years?

Tostan's previous plans have been roughly 5 years in length. Tostan has chosen an approach to planning that allows the organization to think longer-term about its impacts. This is especially relevant given the typical operations of Tostan's core education model, the Community Empowerment Program. This program, which represents the main factor for planning our operations and is connected to 2 of the 3 main programmatic growth areas emphasized in this plan, lasts a minimum of 3 years. It will also last longer with additional envisioned programs integrated, and our Post-CEP work extends beyond the end of the CEP. Thus the 7-year strategic time-frame has allowed us to plan based on multiple phases of the current 3-year CEP, integrating new modules, and welcoming post-program modules.

## Why 7 Generations?

The 7-Generation perspective we have used is taken from a Native American tradition that considers the consequences of any decision by thinking of its impact for the next 7 generations. This perspective has helped us to challenge ourselves to think deeply about the world we want and our role in nurturing it and how to bridge our actions in the next 7 years directly to the "mission-level" possible in the coming generations. This longer-term horizon has helped us think well beyond our current reality, and capture our most exciting opportunities and deepest aspirations.

## How did Tostan develop this plan?

Beginning in the fall of 2014 we started to assess our strategic plan from 2010-2015: what we did well, and what didn't work. We also looked at how we had managed strategically during that period. In 2015 and early 2016, we gathered our staff repeatedly and at various levels to shape the document you are now reading. We are thankful to Restorative Leadership Institute for their process, reference documents, and guidance within their framework. We are also deeply indebted to Tostan's partners and donors, especially an anonymous donor that made this strategic planning work possible, and to the Tostan staff, volunteers, Board, and so many others who contributed in countless ways and made time in spite of already busy schedules. This document would not exist without this collective effort.

## How will Tostan use this plan?

This plan has been designed to be used. Each of the main components of the SEP have corresponding processes and tools that will help us ensure our progress. Our annual budgeting and planning processes will begin with, and work from, this strategic framework and its corresponding tools. It will be how we hold ourselves accountable, how we assess what is working and what isn't, and how we adjust course as we go. Each year, several times a year, we will gather members of our leadership to assess how we are doing, chart our progress, and adjust. Once a year, we will assess our progress against our Ultimate Impact Objectives and Strategic Goals and Objectives. We will report on our progress, be transparent about our challenges and any adjustments we've made, and always remain open to feedback. Beginning in Year 6 (2021) we will begin taking stock of our progress and using the 7th year for both strong completion of remaining items, and planning for our next strategic period.

## Tostan at 25 Years: Celebrating Success, Looking Ahead

Tostan has accomplished much in its first 25 years. We have worked with hundreds of thousands of people and reached millions. We have witnessed historic social movements and countless individual transformations. We are proud to have been a part of impacts made in ending harmful traditional practices that have persisted for thousands of years. We are proud of our award-winning literacy program, and the countless program innovations over the years, such as our recently proven approach to improving early childhood development through reinforcing parental practices.

Most of all, we are proud to have provided a basic education program in national languages to hundreds of thousands of people, especially women and girls, who had been excluded from formal education, and to have trained and partnered with thousands of local communities to better lead their own development efforts. With demand from communities, partners, and donors alike, we experience more acutely each day the need to extend our programs—to not only scale up impacts on specific issues and social movements but to support the scale-up more broadly of empowering education and community led development for millions more.

### **Our Core Strategic Focus:**

**Expand Community Transformation & Education Programs that Drive Positive Change**

All of the successes of the past 25 years emerged from within Tostan's core approach to working with communities at the grassroots to develop and deliver responsive, effective programs. We haven't created a range of separate, individual projects and programs. Instead, we have remained committed to a core educational process, and we always work building off this core.

**As proud as we are of community-led results in single issue areas, including those going to large scale, we do not see any one issue alone as our biggest strategic opportunity. Rather, our most profound opportunity is to bring the core of our work to scale, and see the full potential of transformational education at a time when the world truly needs it.**

We envision a day when tens of millions of people—and their families and communities—have had access to an empowering education and can make positive change on whichever issues they face.

### **Ultimate Impact Objectives**

**Our big-picture vision for what we can contribute to the world in the next 7 Generations**

At the heart of Tostan's work is a belief first and foremost in building the capacity of people. We have created 6 objectives that for us represent in concrete terms our biggest hopes for the world. These are very long-term objectives and are intentionally ambitious, as they respond to the question:

***What would the world look like if Tostan's mission was achieved?***

#### **Indirect Objectives:**

- All communities in the world have access to human rights-based, participatory education programs that enable them to realize their visions for well-being.
- The global community values and invests in holistically integrated approaches that catalyze human potential.
- Well-being on the African continent has inspired global peace.

#### **Direct Objectives:**

- **Community agency:** All communities that have been through Tostan empowerment programs have the capacity to sustainably organize for well-being with their networks, partners, and government.
- **Individual agency:** All people who have participated in Tostan empowerment programs are able to advocate effectively at all levels for their own and others' human rights.
- **Individual agency:** All people who have participated in Tostan empowerment programs are able to envision and mobilize for a high quality of life for themselves, their families and their communities.

## Our 7 Year Aspirational Targets

We have set 7-year targets to measure our progress towards the above objectives. We have created targets for all 3 of our direct objectives, and 1 of our indirect objectives.

**All communities in the world have access to human rights-based participatory education programs that enable them to realize their visions for well-being.**

**CEP: 2,012** African communities reached through new implementations of the CEP and 304 communities and prison populations reached through modified CEP implementations

**Post-CEP: 3,228** previously-CEP-trained African communities reached through post-CEP programs and partnerships

**Training: 2,406** individuals & their communities reached through Tostan Training Center empowerment programs

**A total of 6,350 communities of all types reached directly through 7,646 implementations of Tostan empowerment programs**

**All communities that have been through Tostan empowerment programs have the capacity to sustainably organize for well-being with their networks and government.**

**CMCs and Federations:**

**4,014** Community Management Committees and 130 Federations of CMCs in rural African communities are taking action to achieve their aspirations, and actively contributing to the SDGs or their own local progress standards

**All people who have participated in Tostan empowerment programs are able to advocate effectively at all levels for their own and others' human rights.**

**CEP Participants:**

**170,108** empowerment program participants undertaking awareness-raising activities within their community as well as in other communities and events

**All people who have participated in Tostan empowerment programs are able to envision and mobilize for a high quality of life for themselves, their families & their communities.**

**CEP Participants:**

**159,133** Community Empowerment Program participants self-report that they are able to make meaningful change in their lives

<sup>1</sup> Tostan's Post-CEP programs necessarily work after the CEP, thus operate in the very same communities. In calculating this grand total, we sought to prevent counting the same communities twice in the grand total number. Roughly half of the communities tracked in C will have already been counted in A, and have been excluded from the grand total.

## **Our Strategic Goals and Objectives:**

### **How we plan to reach our Ultimate Impact Objectives and Aspirational Targets**

We have set the following Goals and Objectives for the coming 7 years.

**Strategic Goal 1: Extend Tostan's programs to do the greatest good for the greatest number of people as efficiently and sustainably as possible.**

## **Objectives**

### **1. Develop effective scaling models for three main scaling platforms**

- Innovate scaling model(s) for direct CEP implementation
- Expand model and improve reach of Post-CEP programs and partnerships
- Finalize Phase One model for TTC and related Training programs

### **2. Evolve Tostan's programming priorities process to elevate 3-Year transformational opportunities and coordinate efforts across main programs.**

- Illustrative examples: *Social norms and the abandonment of FGC, child marriage, and all forms of violence; Women's Leadership and Empowerment*

### **3. Build upon organizational structures to support scale and sustainability**

- Explore reinforcement and expansion of National Coordinations' role
- Evolve Tostan's international support teams to best support coordinated strategy and scale
- Develop methods for ensuring gender-sensitive approaches taken across the Tostan organization
- Define organizational vision for key field staff positions, especially facilitators

### **4. Build team capacity to support sustained impact**

- Evolve staff training and development systems
- Evolve staff onboarding and training systems to include more programs training

### **5. Engage with partners to resource the scaling initiative**

- Create a resource development strategy and plan to support main phases of scaling and ongoing organizational health, including exploration of common tools like endowments, planned giving, etc.
- Build intentional partnerships to drive expansion growth

**Strategic Goal 2: Expand Tostan's capacities to ensure the quality, effectiveness, and reach of its programs**

**Objectives**

- 1. Evolve our monitoring and evaluation and organizational management systems to guide program quality and unlock the deepest and broadest potential of Tostan's programs**
- 2. Develop systems for evolving our empowerment programs to respond with agility to changing conditions**
  - Adapt versions of Tostan's core curricula for relevance within various contexts
  - Standardize Tostan's capacity to design, develop, and deliver programs
- 3. Explore increased research opportunities through a research center and/or research partnerships**

**Strategic Goal 3: Participate actively in a global exchange of mission-aligned resources, knowledge and ideas to enrich the movement for empowering education and inclusive community-led development**

**Objectives**

- 1. Develop a Communications Strategy and Action Plan to support Tostan's goals**
- 2. Explore, develop and join platforms through which Tostan's wisdom can be shared, replicated, and join that of the broader global community**
- 3. Optimize the global reach of the TTC**
- 4. Build organizational capacity for thought leadership and influence**
- 5. Drawing from Tostan's scaling experiences and M&E systems, make a compelling case for Empowering Education and Community-Led Development**

**Our Strategic Goals and Objectives:**

**How we plan to reach our Ultimate Impact Objectives and Aspirational Targets**

The 7-Year targets we have set will tell us how our core work—empowering education—is progressing in and of itself. Yet of most interest to Tostan, communities, and our partners, is what that empowering education then leads to—the ways communities use what they learn to catalyze a bright constellation of positive changes. Our monitoring and evaluation systems have been designed to give us an ever-stronger sense of this change as it is happening. Currently we monitor outcomes at individual and community level, in Governance, Education, Health, Economic Growth, and the Environment, as well as a range of other issues that sit within, among, and beyond these areas. We also seek research studies and external evaluations that can help us understand even more about our work and its impact.

Given our core strategic focus to “Expand community transformation & education programs that drive positive change,” a corresponding core strategic opportunity across our organization and all of our programs and projects is **to demonstrate the complete contribution our programs are making to communities, and the impacts communities create.**

Following this key strategic priority will drive better programming at scale by helping us understand our biggest opportunities to contribute to community success, both during and after the CEP. It will align internal resources towards program effectiveness. Perhaps most importantly, it will be a foundation for growing a community of partners, donors, and friends, helping empowering education reach the full scale it deserves—not only in the countries where we work, but across Africa and around the world.

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## Assumptions, Risks, and Risk Mitigation

This Strategic Engagement Plan is based on a number of assumptions and takes calculated risks. Inherent in this SEP is an assumption that Tostan's programs will continue to be effective, relevant, and requested by local and international communities and partners. Our 25 years of success constantly adapting our program bodes well for continued program effectiveness, however we cannot take the relevance of our model as a given, especially in an ever-changing, globalized context. We mitigate this risk through the Plan's focus on adaptation and program quality, and the commitment to programming that benefits communities.

Similarly, our plan assumes continued supportive relationships with other partners at all levels, and especially with local, regional and national governments. This includes political will to follow up on action plans, continued supportive legislation related to the issues and areas we work on, and our organizational ability to maintain our legal status in the country. We mitigate these risks by maintaining healthy relationships with government at all levels.

Risks also exist in terms of our organizational human resources and systems. We assume that we will continue to be able to recruit, train, and retain excellent staff at all levels, and especially that our ability to recruit local

facilitators when needed will continue; that transitions to retirement and new staff members and roles at all levels will support rather than detract from our goals; that our management practices will continue to evolve. Many of our strategic goals are directly designed to improve our organization and mitigate these potential effects and updating them as new realities emerge will be key to their effectiveness. Our decision to utilize a strategic planning approach that emphasizes engagement and coherence across planning tools will be essential to mitigating these risks.

Another significant assumption made is that the organization will find the financial and other resources it needs to carry out the work mandated. This risk is made stark by the fact that our previous strategic period did not obtain the planned funding. The risk is mitigated by a wide range of emerging opportunity we see, including recent interest from major foundations, private philanthropists, and regional donor networks.

This risk is also mitigated by the Plan's specific mandates for demonstrating the impact of Tostan's work, developing compelling partnerships with donors building upon recent successes, and engaging the global community. However, the international community's continued interest in supporting holistic, multi-impact models such as



Tostan's, and/or specific issue areas such as women's empowerment, education, etc. is not a given and represents a noteworthy risk.

A related risk is that significant global economic or geopolitical shifts might affect one or more of Tostan's revenue streams, such as happened during the 2008 recession. A similar risk is that major geopolitical changes, such as the recent major shift of funding by certain donors away from development programs and towards the refugee crisis, will reduce the number of potential funders and/or the amount of funds available to Tostan and its partners. We acknowledge the significant and unpredictable threats present in the contexts in which we work, including:

- Governmental instability (coup d'états, ministerial turnover, etc.)
- National or regional conflict
- Loss of credibility for NGOs and civil society organizations
- State and/or individual terrorism
- Natural disasters
- Epidemics
- Climate change

We also note that factors like the advent of technology and internet access in previously disconnected areas, and trends like migration and urbanization, are neither inherently positive or negative, but bring a complex range of implications to our work and the populations we engage with.

In acknowledging these global trends and threats, we do not see ourselves as simply passive; in fact, we see a specific role for our education programs to play in helping to create individual, community and global resilience against these factors.

To this extent, they are also major opportunities for Tostan to contribute positively to the world, and we can play a small role in mitigating them through delivering our strategic goals. However, these types of risks often lie far beyond a single organization's control and thus also represent a significant risk to programming and our staff and organization. Tostan will continue to mitigate them through a range of programmatic and organizational approaches taken at all levels and based on our long experiences working in truly challenging contexts.



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