Dear Global Mobilizers,

As I arrived to Tostan as a new leader this year, I began looking for things that were not just working but working well. Where were Tostan’s strongest capacities? What were the systems we could easily bet on, build upon?

Among the many wonderful people I've met and incredible programs I've discovered in these past seven months, I must say it has truly been a joy to discover the Breakthrough Generation model and community. This mix of holistic, community-centered programming and learning, collaborative planning, reporting and funding is truly, as we say in Italian, a “jewel” for Tostan. The relevance of this model only continues to grow. As I shared in an interview with the Board this fall, I see three key themes for Tostan to consider at this time of transition and opportunity: Sustainability, Impact, and Scale. Breakthrough Generation is driving our best work across all three themes.

With your partnership we have gone from completing the first CEP cycle to showcasing how we can do Post-CEP programs in a sustainable, scaled way. At the same time, Breakthrough Generation has continued to drive our best monitoring systems and evaluation potential. And this month, what is perhaps the most significant piece, with your support we are able to launch an entirely new CEP cycle—showing the world that this wasn’t just a one-off. This is something we can repeat, at scale. Along the way, so many of you have been supportive of Tostan’s unique approach to this CEO transition and the “Table for Two” model in which Molly is able to stay on in a new role. In other words, beyond Tostan’s programs, this model is also deeply supportive of the organization’s greatest needs.

I have actually come to believe in recent months that I have joined Tostan at a truly historic moment. The progress we make this year and in 2018 will define Tostan for years to come. Thank you so much for your leadership and vision in bringing this model to where it is. In this new phase of work and far beyond I offer you my deepest commitment to taking this model—and Tostan—to its full potential.

Elena Bonometti
CEO, Tostan
120 communities in Guinea, Guinea Bissau and Mali successfully completed Tostan’s Peace and Security project.

The Peace and Security Project, part of Tostan’s Post-Community Empowerment Program, was implemented over a six-month period in 120 communities across Guinea, Guinea Bissau and Mali. Community members had already completed the CEP in December 2016.

Through this project, members of 120 communities learned how to create a culture of peace at the community level, how to build community consensus on the importance of peace and human security for sustainable development, and what steps can be taken to promote these. These community members - both men and women - are now equipped for conflict prevention, management and resolution, as well as peacebuilding. The final evaluation of this short project, carried out in June 2017, measured the level of knowledge gained by class participants, the effectiveness of the peace committees' actions for conflict prevention and also the involvement of women in these processes.

Gender inclusion in conflict prevention

5,285 women and girls gained knowledge and practical techniques for engaging in conflict prevention and resolution in their communities, through the peace committees or as ordinary citizens.

6,864 participants, among whom 77% were women and girls, completed the 21 sessions of the Peace and Security module. These participants learned about human rights, the importance of peace and human security, techniques for conflict prevention, management and resolution, and the beneficial role of women in mediation. Women constituted the majority of class participants as they tend to stay in the communities for domestic work while men traditionally go away to work in the field or other towns.
Promoting youth participation in conflict resolution

Inclusion of youth in the programme is essential as they are a vulnerable group that could easily fall prey to criminal organisations. Building their capacity and involving them in conflict prevention and resolution processes allows them to become actors of peace within their community and beyond, as they develop mediation skills and promote dialogue to resolve conflicts. 1,798 of class participants (23%) were youth: 1,068 (41%) in Guinea Bissau, and 683 (29%) in Mali. Guinea was the exception with only 44 youth participants (2%), as most of the youth in the Faranah region are involved in vocational training centers in cities.

Key results
The final evaluation showed that participants increased their knowledge on governance, conflict prevention, conflict management and resolution. The 120 communities also actively participated in organised diffusion activities such as radio programs, inter-village meetings, and awareness-raising activities.

Understanding democracy
Guinea, Guinea Bissau and Mali have in common the fragility of their States, which are regularly destabilized by political or institutional crises that affect the lives of their population. Democracy is differently perceived by citizens and is influenced by the environment in which their communities evolve. At the end of the program, participants in the three countries cited the same three essential criteria defining a democratic country: free and transparent elections, a constitution and the possibility of freely expressing one’s opinion.

Increased women’s participation in conflict prevention, management and resolution
The Peace and Security project has shown that women in Guinea, Guinea Bissau and Mali are generally involved in the conflict resolution process. In Guinea and Guinea Bissau, the average number of respondents who confirmed that women are involved in conflict resolution processes remained stable (Guinea: Baseline 57% - Final evaluation 59%, Guinea Bissau: Baseline 70% - Final Evaluation 72%). In Mali a significant rise in the women’s participation was noted; as this rate went from 41% to 69% between the baseline study and the final evaluation. Throughout the project women and girls constituted the majority of class participants (77%) and were also members of Peace Committees established in all 120 communities. 600 members, including 295 women (49%), were trained to understand, prevent, analyze and manage conflicts, and were empowered with practical mediation techniques. With the knowledge gained through classes and training received in these Peace Committees, women especially were equipped to prevent and manage conflicts within their community and beyond, which will contribute to further embedding a sustainable culture of peace at the community level.
Dynamism of the Peace Committees

Peace Committees are encouraged, during meetings, to form subgroups to strengthen the knowledge of Peace and Security in their communities.

- 120 Peace Committees established and active.
- 600 Peace Committee members (295 women) trained to understand, prevent, analyze and manage conflicts; and in practical mediation techniques.
- 600 awareness-raising meetings organized by Peace Committees on human rights, the importance of peace, conflict analysis, the importance of dialogue, the role of women in conflict prevention and resolution and the seven dimensions of human security.
- 503 conflicts identified.
- Types of conflicts identified: between breeders and farmers, between farmers, between heirs on the management of land, and between spouses.
- 443 conflicts resolved; representing 88% of conflicts identified.

Effectiveness of Peace Committees’ actions for conflict prevention
Moussa KOUROUMA, Deputy Coordinator of the Kankomariya (Guinea) Community Management Committee

“When my half-brother and I inherited three fields from our parents, my half-brother felt aggrieved with his share and decided to file a complaint against me in Faranah’s court. He was then not satisfied with the decision of the court and decided to appeal. I was forced to sell one of my cows to cover the legal costs. In 2017, having participated in the Peace and Security module, I contacted the Peace Committee to settle this conflict with my brother. The Peace Committee brought my brother and me together and conducted various mediation sessions to find a solution that would satisfy us both. Persevering, the Committee helped us to find a solution and we redistributed the land to satisfy all parties. My brother later decided to withdraw his complaint and our relationship went back to normal.”

Breakthrough Generation: Launch of the new phase of the CEP in 150 communities

At the beginning of October, Tostan launched the Community Empowerment Program (CEP) in 150 communities in four countries: Mali, The Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, Guinea. This program will indirectly reach over 60,000 people and directly reach 7,500 class participants (75% girls and women, 25% boys and men) and 2,550 appointed Community Management Committee members (over 50% women). From October 2017 to September 2020, this new phase of the CEP will continue to build community-led development in West Africa, reduce violence against women and girls, and contribute to the growing movement for the abandonment of Female Genital Cutting (FGC) in the region.
The Prison Project in Senegal

Tostan continues to expand its support to detainees in their efforts to reintegrate into society through the Prison Project. Two new donors have now committed to support our activities with actual and ex-detainees, including the Wallace Research Foundation. Activities will resume again in November 2017. In the meantime, Tostan has improved its program by expanding mediation between ex-detainees and their relatives in order to resolve disputes and damaged relations linked to social shaming of families with an incarcerated relative in Senegal. Helping ex-detainees to re-engage with and maintain strong support networks ensures that they are in the best position possible to start rebuilding their lives, and return to being productive and happy members of society.

In addition, ex-detainees who have already found success and stability thanks to Project support, will be involved in training other ex-detainees in income-generating activities. This training will be held in a dedicated space in Diourbel, Senegal. As well as expanding the practical skillsets of ex-detainees to earn money to support themselves and their families, these sessions also reinforce lessons learned through CEP classes in prisons, and provide information to those ex-detainees who have not yet participated. Participants will continue to further develop their knowledge of human rights and responsibilities, democracy, problem solving and project management to transform their attitude towards others, their sense of personal responsibility and their ability to change their lives.

Protecting Children in Senegal

Talibés are boys sent by their families to Koranic schools known as daaras to learn the tenets of Islam from a marabout or Koranic teacher. Begging was once a part of a talibe’s education in order to teach humility, but in urban centers and towns, these young students often are required to spend more time on the street begging than in the classroom. Talibés are at times exposed to harsh living environments and are aged on average from 5 to 16, and in rare cases they are as young as three. For a number of years Tostan’s Child Protection project has supported efforts to protect talibés, particularly in the context of a new law aiming to regulate daaras in Senegal. The aims of this project include: encouraging daaras registered under the new law to put an end to forced begging and to improve the living conditions, educational standards and autonomy of talibés; help closing down daaras that only aim to exploit talibés through the new regulation system; and ensure that key stakeholders at the local, national and international levels understand, approve and take action to support the reform of the daara system. This project continues to have significant impact in ensuring the improvement of living conditions and prospects of talibés across Senegal. In June 2017, after one year of implementation of the project’s second phase, Tostan estimates that 3,060 talibés have stopped begging and 4,102 talibés have significantly reduced child begging. The project continues to involve and inform communities and families in their work with daaras and marabouts.

“Our girls were going to secondary schools in other villages but some were coming back pregnant. So the CMC asked the mayor and local authorities to support us to have a secondary school in our village. With the funds from the CMC we managed to build the school, and after two years of request to the local authorities, three teachers were finally allocated to our secondary school. On the first year, 300 students were registered in this school and now every year at least five go to university”.

Soudiane Community
Tostan Training Center

Trainings
So far in 2017, the TTC has hosted three trainings on the Tostan approach and methodology. The centre has also been a key space for exchange and learning among Tostan staff. At the beginning of October, Tostan’s National Coordinators came together in Thies to officially launch the second phase of Breakthrough Generation and discuss Tostan’s vision for the future as we undergo institutional reform: three themes were central: Sustainability, Impact and Scale.

The TTC is on its way of becoming self-sufficient!
In 2018, the TTC will exponentially expand its reach and is planning to hold eight 10-day trainings on the Tostan approach and methodology. The revenue generated should cover the total operating expenses of the TTC. With this in view for 2018, the center could be completely self-sufficient starting in 2019!

Organizational Updates

We are overwhelmed with gratitude for Molly's courageous and innovative leadership over the years and look forward to what the future will bring under Elena’s visionary direction!

Community Of Support and End Of Year
Tostan has been coming and going from the West Coast to build a base there! In October, Molly Melching was in Los Angeles for the annual Conrad N. Hilton Prize Symposium, where she was invited to speak on a panel with two other women who are making major strides in an effort to end the harmful practice of female genital cutting. Please follow this link to see more footage at 1:10:25. Molly was also interviewed on the California radio station KPCC, sharing hers and Tostan’s story. Listen to Molly in her own words here.

After formally committing Tostan to the Sustainable Development Goals through the Every Woman Every Child Commitment, Tostan’s Senior Leadership team met with the Women Deliver campaign to discuss possible ways to partner on SDG achievements in Senegal. In the meantime, Tostan was invited to a second round of consideration for Global Innovation Fund, which will hopefully catapult us to the next round of consideration for scaling the Tostan model.

In addition, thanks to your advocacy and our sister organization’s efforts to bring new visibility to Tostan’s mission, we have been approached by potential new funders and partners that are very interested in supporting Tostan’s work.

Tostan is thankful for your support to the organization’s continuous growth and contributing to the fulfillment of its vision for human dignity for all.

CEO Handover
On October 3rd 2017, the Tostan family gathered at the TTC to celebrate a monumental chapter in the life of our organization: the CEO handover from Founder Molly Melching to Elena Bonometti. The highlights of the ceremony included many touching testimonies from Tostan staff and others who have worked with Molly, and testified of the great impact that Tostan’s work has had throughout communities in West Africa.