In March 2020, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Tostan made the difficult decision to suspend all field activities in its five focus countries (The Gambia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Senegal) for the duration of the emergency. All field staff had to leave the partner communities where they were living and return home. Tostan rapidly implemented a COVID-19 response contingency plan aimed at providing community members with life-saving information on the virus, delivered in the local languages and in a culturally appropriate manner. The ultimate goal of the contingency plan was to curb the virus spread and to protect lives through the measures outlined below:

1. **Developed and distributed COVID-19 informational brochures in 13 languages**
   Tostan developed two brochures with key COVID-19 prevention messages. Illustrations depicted local housing, practices, and dress and advice was tailored to address any social norms that may be affected by the virus. One brochure offers culturally relevant information and illustrations about the virus transmission and prevention; and one discussing an Islamic perspective on the virus. Both versions of the brochures have been widely distributed to partner communities and are also available free to download from Tostan's website.

2. **Broadcasted radio programs to inform Tostan partner communities**
   In addition to providing basic information on coronavirus transmission and prevention, Tostan radio programs covered topics such as community-government collaboration during the pandemic, religious texts that reinforce public health measures, and education in the time of COVID.

3. **Collected data to inform programming**
   Working with IDinsight, a global analytics organization, Tostan gathered data to better understand the knowledge, attitudes, and practices around COVID in the areas where Tostan is working. This information will inform future work and also help in better understanding what makes communities resilient.

4. **Pivoted the entire Tostan organization to working remotely**
   COVID-19 is reshaping the way the world works. Although field operations were paused, Tostan staff continued to work effectively using digital tools. We were able to keep all of our staff fully employed.

5. **Continued to convene thought leaders on timely topics**
   Tostan actively engaged new audiences and strengthened the organization’s position as a key thought leader in prominent online speaking events such as the World Skoll Forum, WISE Up Series, World Humanitarian Forum Hybrid Summit, and African Philanthropy Forum. Tostan’s CEO, Elena Bonometti, also hosted a three part webinar series featuring systems change in the face of COVID, including the strategies Tostan implemented in the field.
Outreach by Country (April–August 2020)

THE GAMBIA
Delivered 86 radio programs in three languages
Distributed 9,200 brochures in four languages
Provided 4,800 masks along with other health and hygiene supplies

GUINEA
Delivered 76 radio programs in seven languages
Distributed 4,715 brochures in two languages
Provided 90 health and hygiene kits for communities

GUINEA-BISSAU
Delivered 62 radio programs
Distributed 10,243 brochures in four languages
Provided 722 masks and hundreds of health and hygiene supplies

MALI
Delivered 106 radio broadcasts on 10 stations
Distributed 12,347 brochures distributed in two languages
Provided hundreds of health and hygiene supplies

SENEGAL
Delivered 72 radio programs in four languages
Distributed 35,470 brochures in five languages
Provided 1,200 masks along with health and hygiene supplies to 333 communities, 9 prisons, and 102 daaras
Testimonials from the Field

We’ve received many messages of thanks from partners in the field using the COVID-19 materials. Here are just a few examples:

“We are planning to start a series of seminars to target groups and community influencers/mobilizers within the next week and these booklets will make an excellent addition to the training kit. We have found the content expertly written, easily adaptable and transferable to our audience in Mombasa.”

– Project Manager | Mombasa, Kenya

“You brought us books here that will help us and we are happy because we can read and share with everyone in the village. We are studying what coronavirus is, how it is transmitted and how we can prevent the illness which is so important. Everyone is reading the booklets.”

– Marieme B. | Community Management Committee, Village of Soudiane, Senegal

“One of my national partners who helps run women’s savings groups in the villages is also a teacher in the school system—and he has used this to teach the teachers at his school as well as his class. He is so proud that his students (ages 7-8) are able now to understand and speak about COVID-19 fluently: symptoms, how to avoid transmission, and how to wash hands! This has been an excellent resource and those with whom I work love the photos and the information—well done!”

– Program Staff | Niamey, Niger

Already 59,500 printed brochures have been distributed in five countries and an additional 11,500 will be printed and distributed with support from the Mastercard Foundation.

As Tostan resumes in the face of the pandemic, we are eternally grateful and appreciative of our many partners whose proud support enables us to achieve our mission to empower communities to achieve their vision for the future and to inspire movements leading to Dignity for All.

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