

COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT AND CHILD MARRIAGE

Ben Cislighi, Tufts U and Tostan, bcislighi@icloud.com

Diane Gillespie, U Washington Bothell, dianegillespie@gmail.com

Gerry Mackie, U California San Diego, gmackie@ucsd.edu

Shifting
community
members'
discourse on
children

TOSTAN: AN OVERVIEW

- International NGO founded in 1991, registered as a US 501(c)(3)
- Began and based in Senegal
- Mission: To empower African communities to bring about sustainable development and positive social transformation based on the respect for human rights.
- Tostan's staff: over 99% African



© Tostan

TOSTAN: THE COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT PROGRAM (CEP)

- Non-formal education program developed over the past 25 years
- Human-rights based
- Program implemented in
 - Senegal: 481 communities
 - Guinea: 106 communities
 - The Gambia: 103 communities in the Upper River Region
 - Guinea Bissau: 69 communities
 - Mauritania: 60 communities
 - Mali: 78 communities
 - Somalia/Somaliland: 42 communities
 - Djibouti: 33 communities
- Versions of the program have also been implemented in Burkina Faso and Sudan
- Program implemented in 22 national languages



Since 1991, Tostan has brought its program to over 3,000 villages in ten countries, reaching more than 200,000 direct beneficiaries and more than two million indirect beneficiaries.

© Tostan

TOSTAN: THE COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT PROGRAM (CEP)

APPROACH

Based on human rights and responsibilities

STRATEGY

Facilitator, Classes, CMCs, Federations ECN, Organized Diffusion

CONTENT

Kobi 1 + Kobi 2, Aawde, Peace and Security, RPP

METHODOLOGY

Participative, Problem-posing, use of cultural elements

NON-FORMAL EDUCATION CLASSES

- Carefully sequenced and inter-related (for example, health follows human rights)
- Last 2-3 hours every other day
- Participants decide upon class arrangements and rules (meeting times)
- 1 facilitator teaches 2 classes in each village, with 25 participants per class (average 50/community)
- Participants responsible for providing learning space and lodging and food for facilitator



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



- In addition to class activities, Tostan trains Community Management Committees (CMCs)
- CMCs have 17 members representing all groups in the community including men and women, elders and youth, all castes and ethnic groups, etc.
- CMC members reinforce class activities and work in the community on critical areas including education, health and hygiene, the environment, and other areas.

A VARIETY OF RESULTS

Numeracy
Community economic projects *Literacy* *Knowledge of human rights*
Village cleanups *Women's community leadership*
Reduction in GBV *Perinatal consultations* *Community partnerships with other NGOs*
Women's participation in public deliberation *Better hygiene*
Better ECD practices *School enrolment and follow-up*
Creation of associations with legal status *Birth registration*
Lobbying local government authorities *Reduction in FGC*
Income generating activities

THE STUDY - PURPOSE

- Very little known about the change process in the communities;
- In particular, very little known about what in the human rights education classes changed participant's attitudes towards their children;

METHODOLOGY 1/2

- Grounded theory, a qualitative method to:
 - Collect and analyze descriptive data systematically
 - Construct a model of the conceptual structure of processes from the data
 - Generate mid-level theories from those structures.

- Grounded theory studies “focu[s] on problems and issues that have to do with people’s substantive activities, interactions, sense-making, and locatedness within particular settings” Henwood and Pidgeon (2003).

METHODOLOGY 2/2

- 3 Communities in central Senegal
- Data sources:
 - 24 videotapes of Tostan's classes
 - 250 semi-structured interviews (Local interviewers, 3 men, 3 women)
- Data collection:
 - Three data sets
 - 1) before the Tostan program (early 2010)
 - 2) at the end of the first six months (mid 2010)
 - 3) at the end of the program (late 2011).
- Data analysis:
 - Open coding (breaking data into segments)
 - Axial coding (putting similar codes together into categories)
 - Collaborative work – three researchers

BEFORE – EARLY 2010

- Practice of child marriage, dangerous child labor, and lack of access to medical services for children well spread but not mentioned in this first set of data (mentioned in later data).
- Existing values of love for children:
 - “A mother or father...wants the best for their child” (10: W, B, 1).
 - “I disobeyed my father and refused to marry my suitor because I could not leave my children behind” (10: W, B, 14).
- Taking care of children is limited to “feeding” and “bathing”.
- Child protection and children do not emerge in the data as a strong theme in this first set. Analysis shows that participants did not identify ECD and child protection practices as critical or relevant. Their aspirations for their children is becoming what parents are.

THE PROGRAM IN ACTION

- “Today I was surprised to see a theater about someone marrying a young girl. The father agreed to the marriage but the mother did not. There was lots of arguing but people got together and they talked about it until they came to understanding. A theater about this was really surprising” (10: M, B, 17).
- Participants views of the world are renegotiated through participative human rights education. They might still haven’t changed their minds, but individuals begin to question the status quo and discuss about that with others.
 - “Today we learned about parents taking their daughters out of school early to be married. The children are too young to be married; this ruins their education and ruins their bodies because they end up getting pregnant when they are at such young ages where their bodies have not fully grown. If you have a daughter you should leave her in school and allow her to get an education and let her choose when and where to marry. It’s important to treat all of your children equally.” (10: W, A, 17)
 - “I learned today that to marry off young girls while they are in school is not good. We should not marry them off at such a young age; it ruins their future. We should allow them to keep going to school until they can make their own decision about who they want to marry” (10: W, B, 13).
- Participants began to explore new ways of embodying traditional values into new practices.

IN THE MIDDLE – LATE 2010

CHANGE IN INTENTIONS

- Participants became more aware of harmful practices affecting children and more active in stating their views about new ways to care for them. We didn't ask questions about child protection practices but respondents brought them up.
 - “We Fulbe were the ones who would not put their daughters through school, or if we did, we put them in school and took them out early to marry them off” (10: W, A, 17).
 - “You should let them choose who they marry and when they marry” (10: M, B, 7).
 - “I learned it is better to let girls grow up and make their own decisions” (10: M, B, 16).
 - “I will make sure not to marry off my daughters so young. I will make sure to let them grow up” (10: W, C, 16).
 - Another woman lamented her own early marriage, “If I knew the benefit of an education before, I would not have gotten married after only four years of school” (10: W, A, 17).
- Letting girls “grow up” amends the definition of caretaking to include a new kind of protection, the protection of their capabilities to grow into adults who can function independently and thus contribute more to their families and communities.
 - “I have a daughter in her third year of school. If someone comes here and wants to marry my daughter, I will tell them to go somewhere else because I will not ruin my daughter's education” (10: W, B, 17).

AT THE END – LATE 2011

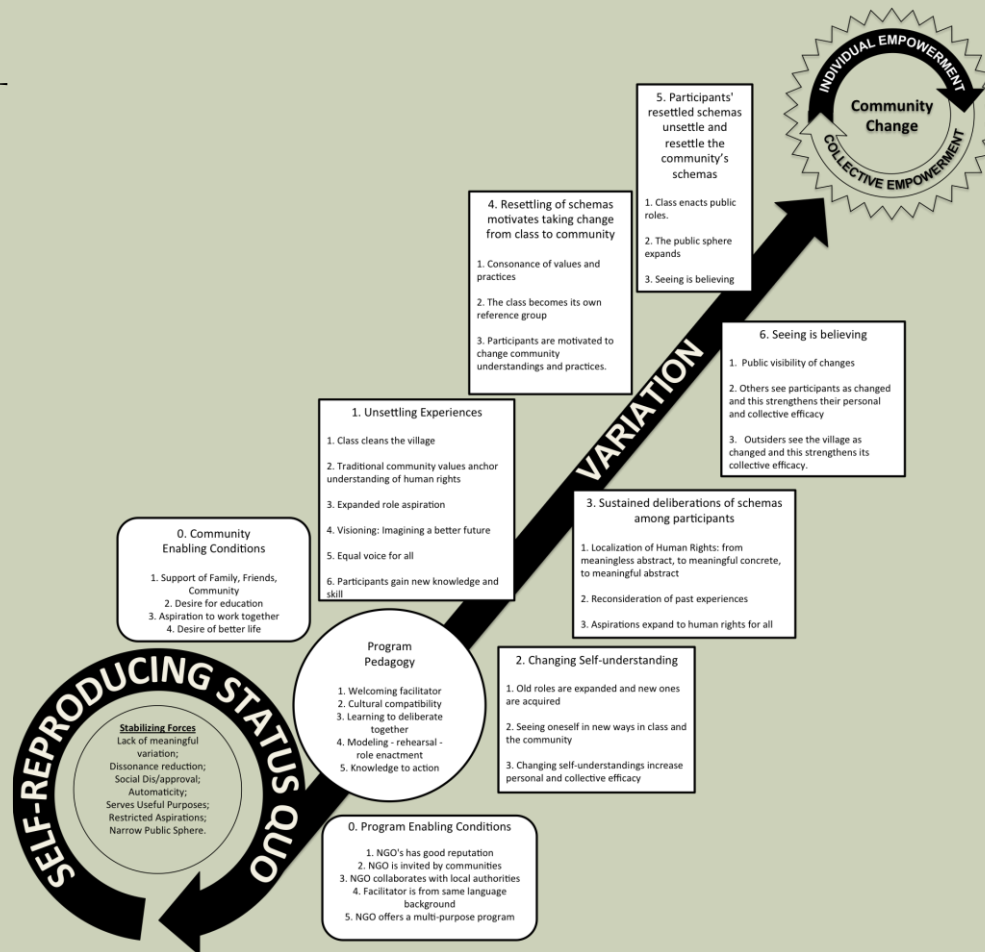
CHANGE IN PRACTICES

- A year and half later, respondents described how they were keeping girls in school and how this influenced the practice of early marriage.
 - “Now in each home everyone knows his or her rights. There are many males and females that are not married in homes now and they are going to school and getting an education. Before girls would get married at a young age but that has changed. It doesn't if you are a man or a woman everyone has the right to get an education.” (11: M, A, FG)
 - “Now you will not hear about someone marrying off their child at age 13 or 14; if your daughter is not 18 years of age you will not dare to marry them to someone” (11: M, C, FG).

USING GROUNDED THEORY IN EVALUATIONS

- A method that is useful to create a theory of how change happens, when very little is known about the process
- Requires good understanding of qualitative research
- Researchers do not interpret data, they only identify patterns in participants' responses and group those patterns into categories
- Allows participants to tell the story of change from their perspective, without brushing it for positive effects

AN EXAMPLE OF A THEORY OF CHANGE CREATED USING GROUNDED THEORY METHODS



FURTHER INFORMATION

- On Tostan:
 - www.tostan.org
 - Gillespie, Diane and Molly Melching. 2010. “The Transformative Power of Democracy and Human Rights in Nonformal Education: The Case of Tostan.” *Adult Education Quarterly* 60 (5):477T498.
- On Grounded Theory:
 - Henwood, K.L. and Pidgeon, N.F. 2003. “Grounded Theory in Psychology.” In *Qualitative Research in Psychology: Expanding Perspectives in Methodology and Design*, edited by Paul M. Camic, Jean E. Rhodes and Lucy Yardley, 131T 155. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association Press.
- On the theory of change obtained with this study:
 - Cislighi B, Gillespie D, Mackie G (forthcoming). *Values Deliberations and Collective Action: Community Empowerment in Rural Senegal*. London: Palgrave.

COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT AND CHILD MARRIAGE

Shifting
community
members'
discourse on
children