



**Author Series**  
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**Molly Melching**  
Founder and Executive Director of Tostan

***However Long the Night: Molly Melching's Journey to Help  
Millions of African Women and Girls Triumph***

**Patricia Ellis:** Good afternoon and welcome, everyone. And thank you all so much for coming for the WFPG Author Series event with Molly Melching, founder and executive director of Tostan. Also, this is in conjunction with the release of the new book about her called—there it is. [*Laughter.*] It's for sale here too—*However Long the Night: Molly Melching's Journey to Help Millions of African Women and Girls Triumph*. The turnout today is great. It's a real tribute to our speaker and definitely shows the interest in the work that she has done to empower African women, starting in Senegal, and to transform their lives and their communities.

I'm Patricia Ellis. I'm president of the Women's Foreign Policy Group. We promote women's leadership and women's voices on pressing international issues of the day. Most recently we have dealt with women, women's rights, and women's leadership in Afghanistan. We had a woman Member of Parliament speak to us. And most recently, we had someone who is working on the ground on women's issues, who gave us kind of a status report on how women are preparing for 2014, with the big election there and the departure of troops. So I just wanted to mention one of our upcoming programs. We cover all different international issues, [a] mixture of issues on women's rights and also foreign policy. Our next event is actually next Monday night. It's part of our Embassy Series; it's going to be at the Embassy of Indonesia. The Ambassador will be speaking and we hope that you can all join us. Before I give you a few highlights of Molly's early career, because she's going to be talking about her work with Tostan, I just wanted to recognize two of our board members here: Theresa Loar and Dawn Calabia.

And now on to Molly. She started her career in Senegal in 1974 as an exchange student. Then she went on to become a Peace Corps volunteer working in Dakar. She then founded a radio program in Wolof, and she also worked for AID. I didn't cover every single thing that she's done. [*Laughter.*] But that's quite a bit, because the organization she founded was founded in 1991. But I just wanted to mention two other things. She and the organization are the recipient of numerous awards. And I'll just highlight two. One is the Swedish Anna Lindh Prize for human rights, and the other one was the Conrad Hilton Humanitarian Prize. That was in 2007. After Molly speaks, I'll open it up with a couple of questions, and then we'll go to the audience and I know there'll be lots of questions. So I'll just ask everybody to say their name, keep the questions brief, and then we can try to get to everyone and have a great conversation. Please join me in welcoming Molly Melching. [*Applause.*]

**Melching:** Thank you very much. It is such a pleasure to be here today with all of you. I just arrived from Senegal. And you should know that this is the first event on the book tour. It is exciting for me. I've never done this before, as you can imagine, because I've never done a book before. I have no idea what it's going to be like. You can give me feedback afterwards. [*Laughter.*] Also, I see so many familiar faces. How nice of you to come out on this rainy day. It's great to see you all. I haven't been to Washington for quite a while. I haven't really been in contact with you for some time, but there are so many people here who have supported Tostan, who have supported me personally, so that I can do the work that we're doing. When I come to Washington, I have to thank you all so much for being here

today. I particularly want to thank the Women's Foreign Policy Group for having invited me and having invited all of you. It's just a very special day for me.

I want to talk a little bit about the book, of course, and what's in the book, and to let you know that tomorrow is the first day it will be released. So it is a book about, mostly, my life and it's the movement to end female genital cutting that is really highlighted in the book—even though our organization, Tostan, has a holistic education program that covers many, many more subjects. But in doing the program, there was an amazing event that happened in July of 1997. It was the women of Malicounda Bambara who had gone through the Tostan program and who had learned human rights for the very first time. They learned they had the right to health and the responsibility to be sure that their family, their daughters, were in good health. They learned they had the right to be free from all forms of violence and discrimination. Perhaps most importantly of all, they learned that they had the right to speak out and express their opinions—opinions that sometimes might be controversial but that they believed in—and this deeply affected them. They also, in the module they were going through, learned for the first time about the harmful consequences of the practice of female genital cutting. They were very touched to learn about what exactly the medical and scientific reasons were that caused these negative consequences. I just wanted to read a section of the book from—when Ourèye Sall, who was a cutter in the program, was in the classroom, and when she learned, she says—this is Aimee writing, Aimee Molloy, who wrote the book—“Ourèye had sat as still as stone, feeling the blood drain from her face, as Fatimata [the Tostan facilitator] told the class about the decision the women of Malicounda Bambara had made and then spoke about the potential problems associated with the tradition. When Fatimata finished her presentation, Ourèye took in a long, slow drink of dusty air, trying to recover her breath. The other women in the class were quiet at first, stewing in their dismay and disbelief. Some eventually spoke up, voicing their anger and confusion, but Ourèye remained silent. She understood. What Fatimata spoke about was exactly what had happened to her daughter so many years ago. She had hemorrhaged, and her wound had become infected. That was why she had suffered; why, throughout her life, she'd always had problems. *It was me*, Ourèye though. *It was because of what I did.*”

So the women of Malicounda Bambara actually stood up and decided in front of 20 journalists to abandon female genital cutting, after they had gone through this program. At first they did it in class, and they went out to the village and convinced the other villagers to abandon [it] with them. They went to the religious leaders and made sure that this was not an Islamic practice. But, when they actually made this announcement in front of the 20 journalists, the reaction they received was really unexpected. We were very surprised, and the women of Malicounda were very surprised, because the relatives and the other neighboring villages around Malicounda Bambara were outraged by what they had done. These women had dared not only to question and speak out about a practice that was never talked about—it was totally taboo—but to publically renounce this established group norm that had lasted for centuries. They just couldn't imagine it. And, therefore, the action led to real disruption in the extended social network. I must tell you, it was a painful and difficult period to go through. I felt particularly saddened and upset because I thought, “I'm the one who encouraged them to speak to the journalists about the decision they had made,” and then to have this reaction and to be—they were called revolutionaries. We're not revolutionaries. We're trying to bring about positive change, so I felt very mixed about this decision, even though I greatly admired what they had decided to do.

Fortunately, the wisdom of an elder religious leader in a nearby village—his name was Demba Diawara. I often say he has his doctorate in transformation and in wisdom, because he explained to us that the problems that arose—the outrage, the anger of all the people in the extended family—it was not because of the decision they had made. It was not because they had ended the practice. Rather, it was the process that they had used in ending the practice. Because female genital cutting is a social norm, it involves shared expectations of compliance by all members of the practicing group, and it carries very harsh sanctions. I don't know how much you know about it, but if a woman was not cut, she could no longer participate in most of the activities of the women's group. For example, she could not serve food or water to men. If she walked into a room, often the women would get up and leave. Or, if

she washed clothes, someone else would rewash them because she was considered impure and dirty. So, he was saying that because of these harsh sanctions, it really is not possible for one person, or even one family, or even one community, to stand up alone without facing this anger, the condemnation, the marginalization by other members of the social network to which they belong. But Demba, who, as I said, is very smart—he had a solution. If new and trustworthy information would be spread by the people themselves—the people who actually practiced—and then discussed with the rest of their social network, including all those who mattered most to them, then an end to the practice would be possible without disrupting the social cohesion of the community and the extended family.

He then—Demba then—as he always said, “I put on my shoes and I started walking.” And he literally walked from village to village. I asked him once, “Demba, where did you—how did you decide where to go?” And he said, “Well, I first went to the blood of my father.” So he went to all his father’s relatives in 10 villages. He spent months going around discussing this. He met with lots of confrontation and anger at first. But, eventually, on February 14, 1998, the women, men, and children of 13 villages came together and declared, because of Demba’s work, an end to the practice. It was the first collective public declaration for FGC abandonment in Africa. Since that time, more than 5,000 villages have declared an end to the practice in Senegal. And not just in Senegal, but in Gambia, where we have done the program, in Mauritania, in Guinea-Bissau now.

I just came back from Guinea-Bissau recently. I was thrilled to go there. When we first went to Guinea-Bissau, people told me, “If you ever even mention female genital cutting—you know, the last woman who did that here, she actually died. So you know what that means.” And I said, “Well, since our program is not to force people or to impose ending female genital cutting, I’m not too worried.” But I was a little worried. [*Laughter.*]

39 communities went through the program, but 157—because of the outreach, the organized diffusion, reaching out to other communities where they had intermarrying family, there were 157, and it was very joyful. I actually said to some of the women, “I can’t believe that you did the program and after three years only, you decided to abandon this practice for the first time in Guinea-Bissau.” And I said, “Why was this decision quicker than in other places?” And they said, “Well, our relatives were abandoning in Senegal. We saw them on TV. [*Laughter.*] We heard them on the radio. They were speaking our language. These are our relatives. They were abandoning, so all of a sudden this became a possibility. This was an alternative to us that we never knew we had.” And so it really helped to have Senegal, then Guinea-Bissau. [In] Guinea, also, we had many communities abandon. And even now we are preparing for many, many more this year: in Mali for the first time, many more declarations in Mauritania, and even in Somalia and Djibouti, where we brought the program five years ago.

It’s been an amazing movement, and I know many of you are working on these issues of behavior change, and I think you realize how hard behavior change is. Imagine: a deeply entrenched social norm makes behavior change all the more difficult. And so the consequences of these efforts have often been very, very difficult. They’ve led to anger, to resistance, to defensiveness—or worse, total blockages of people’s efforts to initiate change. So, of course, change is necessary. As one villager told me—she said, “Molly, Africa is not a museum. We want to learn and we want to move forward. That involves, sometimes, changing the way we do things.” But we realized that, instead of being aggressive and confrontational, coming in from the outside and imposing, if, instead, the changes could be organized from within, by the people themselves, done in a respectful way, then everyone in the social network, everyone who matters to the people who are involved, they all feel engaged and it can be much more effective—but, most of all, it can be sustainable. In fact, once a critical mass is reached, the change will no longer be viewed as disruptive. It will become a new and a positive social norm.

So I’ll just briefly tell you what Demba’s strategy was, and how he reached out. He started with the most conservative religious and traditional leaders. He always went to see them first, and he said, “We have decided to make you the leaders of this movement. Because we know that, as religious leaders, you are for health and for the promotion of wellbeing and good things in the community, and so we know

this to be something that will lead to peace and wellbeing and health.” And they were honored by this role as being the leaders, and they almost all happily accepted. Really, he got a lot of people involved by making them be part of the leadership movement, and it was amazing. It doesn’t mean that he had an easy time. Again, there were many difficult times. He ended up walking to 348 communities who eventually abandoned the practice. Of course he wasn’t alone; he went with a team of very engaged men and women. Often, [these were] people—I found when I dug deeper: “Why are you doing this, why are you walking from village to village,” [with] no salary, [though] we helped pay [for] transportation—these were all people who cared deeply about ending the practice. And often these were parents who had lost their daughters to the practice, who had either died or had hemorrhaged and had suffered the consequences for many years.

So afterwards we learned a great deal from Demba and the way he did things. He was our constant reference, and the other community members who were on this mission as they went from community to community. I can summarize it by saying that first, we started in the classroom. I cannot emphasize enough the importance of education—not just any education, but empowering education. Human rights: the moment we put that in our program—after we’d done it for almost six to eight years, but when we put human rights education into the program, and we work in 22 African languages—that was the turning point. When people learned they have these human rights, and then they can discuss them, when you give them the space to discuss, to talk among themselves: “Does this go along with our deeper values? And are the practices we are doing—do they help us achieve the deeper goals of health and wellbeing in the community?” And, really, they have changed many other practices, also. Everyone emphasizes the FGC. They have ended child marriage. I just came from a village—when I left Senegal—and they said, “We are now marrying between castes for the first time.” And I said, “Wow, that is pretty deep.” They said, “We learned that we have the right to be free from all sorts of discrimination. That is discrimination, and so we don’t do that anymore. And, also, that goes along with what our religion says. So we believe that this is important to do. We had never been together to discuss these important issues; we had never had this opportunity. And now everybody thinks that’s the right thing to do.” So the classroom is critical, the information, the education. Unfortunately, there is not enough informal education. Anyway, I’ll get back to that.

After the discussions in class, we ask the participants to share with someone in the village—it may be their husband, it may be a co-wife, it may be a sister-in-law, and many of them adopt their children—and they relate what happened in the class, the discussions, what they learned. Then they hold community-wide events. They invite the whole community to participate, to learn. And that’s when they really share what their decisions were, and ask the community to join them in many of the decisions. Then they form these social mobilization teams, the participants themselves, and they go to different villages where they have relatives, where they have the people who really matter to them, and talk to them about their wanting to do this. And they tell them, “We don’t want to end this without you being on board.” They have even done films, and sent them off to France and to the United States, because they have relatives living here. And those relatives were actually coming back and saying, “We want those traditions in place, like we left here.” And so it constituted a blockage to them being able to abandon. So now they do a lot of outreach work, even to the diaspora. And then we have inter-village meetings, where representatives from all those communities come together, and as a united group decide to abandon FGC, and most often now, they also decide to stop child marriage—by child marriage I mean under 18—and they make these the new social norms: “we will no longer do this and there will be sanctions for those who decide to continue despite our group decision.” And then the public declaration is a very critical moment. You may have heard of these public declarations where people come together. At first people thought, “Oh, well, this is just publicity,” or “People are just saying this, but it’s not real.” But our evaluations have shown that, really, 70% of those villages that made these declarations, who went through the program, really did abandon. And we think we can explain the others that did not. They may have belonged to other ethnic groups that were not able to reach out to their connected intermarrying group. But we know that these public declarations are critical. It’s the moment when people say, “As of tomorrow, we are no longer going to do this. We’ve decided this together.”

And I can only ask you to think of: if you had some tradition in your family that everybody did. You know: you gave gifts at a certain time, and then some people thought, “Why are we spending all this money on these gifts, and maybe we should use our money otherwise.” And you say, “Well, I hesitate to do it, people will think that we don’t love them, or we don’t care about our family.” So you try to find something else that would show that you really care about the family. But you’re not going to give these gifts anymore, but you need to announce that, so that—you know, some people come with gifts, some don’t and there’s confusion. So you say, “As of this day, we’re not going to do that anymore,” and it’s sort of that idea. And the public declaration—there have been many, and they’re in all the countries, they are joyful celebrations, where people say: it’s not about blame and shame, “Oh we did this awful, horrible thing.” It’s about, “We have decided to go towards human rights and health, and we are proud of our decision.” And they invite health workers and religious leaders who speak of the importance of this not being associated with Islam. So, to conclude, I just want to say that the learnings we have from all of this over the past 15–16 years, since the movement started in 1997, have really informed us about changing other social norms. I’d like to invite you to think of all those issues that you hear about, that you’re working on.

We, for example—I’ll give you an example of how we now have used this. We were asked by a foundation to start working on helping children in school because the results of reading and schools in Senegal—I have to be very frank: they are really dismal. In fact, when I learned that, in 2010, an evaluation was done and showed that only 7% of girls and 11% of boys in Senegal, at 10 years old, after three years in school, could do a minimum of reading, this, to me—I was just stunned when I learned this in 2010. And the foundation I was talking to said, “Molly, you work on social norms. Is there something going on here that we’re not understanding? We’ve done curriculum reform, we’ve done teacher trainings, hundreds of schools have been built. Why are we having these results?” So I said, “Okay, well, let’s look at what we’ve done with FGC. What are the social norms?” Very briefly, because we don’t have that much time. We did participatory research; we looked into children zero to six, what is going on before that child goes into school. And what we learned is that there are some very deep social norms around parenting that actually—from the new scientific information we have on brain development, we now know—can actually hinder a child from learning. And this is due to belief in mystical forces; you do not talk to your baby, particularly zero to two months old. This is really very dangerous. To protect your baby from evil spirits, you avoid talking that much to children; you avoid interaction with your babies and young children. There are some very strict parenting rules around bringing them up in order to protect them from—if you show too much favor, the evil spirits may be jealous. And all this is all done out of love and protection for their children—this is what you must understand. This is not about not wanting their children to grow and develop and be happy. It’s about these beliefs that they’ve had, that their parents have given them, that their ancestors have told them. It is very, very deep. And it’s across ethnic groups. And I remember going to Mali, and I was talking to the USAID director and I was telling her this, and she said, “It’s not like that here in Mali.” And in front was her program director, Diko, and the driver. And Diko, who is a university-educated person, says, “Molly is right. We do not talk to our children. This is not done. This is to protect our children.” And the driver said, “Oh, I’ve never talked to my children. I wouldn’t even know how to talk to a baby; we don’t do that.”

And so we started really realizing that this could maybe help. Of course, traditionally, African parents sang and talked to their children; there was a lot more interaction with babies because there wasn’t television, but, now, people watch television a lot. And, also, remember that African babies are on the back for many hours during the day, so they get no eye contact. We now know—we’ve been working with Stanford University neuroscientists on all the latest brain development information. So we decided: that’s what we’re going to do, is give all of this brain development information to the villagers. This is exactly what we did with FGC. We didn’t make any judgments. “Of course,” we said, “you do this out of love, you do this to protect your babies. You’re not bad parents. The same thing happened in America. We’re learning this in America. I see a lot of articles on it now, but we had to learn this too.” So they’re very open. We did a pilot program; they were very, very open to talking to their babies. We went to the

religious leaders, asked them to be the first, to hold the babies. It literally took days to get them to talk to those babies. They said, "I have five grandchildren, but I've never talked to my baby before. What do you expect me to say?" [*Laughter.*] So we did a lot of practice with them, and home visits. So they are now—it's really exciting—they are now talking to their babies, doing cognitive stimulation to help them. We're doing lots of books. I brought several of the books to show you. We've done 20 children's books. Things like this, very simple books that are very inexpensive. This is in Wolof. We did them in the three national languages. They're on the computer; it would be very easy to translate this. They're very inexpensive, and as you see, they're kind of—a lot of the books we were using before were often used to cook dinner at night. But these are a little bit hard to use. And the reaction has been amazing. We have children four, five, six years old who are fluently reading these books, and the parents are reading to their children, they're talking to their children, they're interacting, playing, they're making toys now. We don't, unfortunately, have money to buy toys, because we're in 200 villages currently. It's very exciting to see the children so actively involved, so engaged. It's really been an amazing experience.

So I just want to invite you to also keep this in mind when you are working on other social norms that have been identified as being ones that everyone practices, that are interdependent, and that cannot be changed unless you reach out to the entire social network. This is what we're doing. Not just going to a family or to a village, but to everyone who's involved, who matters to them, and teaching them this talking to babies and cognitive stimulation also—so that then the mother-in-law doesn't come and say, "Oh, stop, don't do that, that's terrible," because she would have to stop then. So it's very exciting. These [*pointing at books*] are our human rights [*books*], so that people can share with others. This is for children, and these are for the human rights for adults. And these are for teaching basic counting for the children, so they're learning some math also. So I would just conclude, again, by saying the important thing is education, information in national languages, in people's own language. Using methods we use: poetry, theater, song—things that people love to do already. Using strategies that are based on African sociology—the realities of where we work, anyway, in Western Africa—but it's even worked in Somalia and Djibouti, also, where people themselves are reaching out to others to teach them, and become empowered, engaged, and are leading to really deep social transformation. Thank you. [*Applause.*]

**Ellis:** Thank you. I'm just going to open it up with a few questions. I was just wondering, when you got started, how did you start engaging these women? How did you win over their confidence? Because it seems to me that you have to keep doing that when you go to new places. And how key—you talked about Demba—how key was, and is, the involvement of men and religious leaders? So if you could start with that?

**Melching:** Good questions. Our program is very different from many other literacy programs because there's lots of singing and dancing and theater. And so at first everybody was kind of wary: "Is this a child's program? These are things children do." But they soon saw that they were learning very quickly with these methods, and it was fun, and when they came in from a hard day's work in the field later in the afternoon, that it was fun to be there, and the conversations were so interesting to them. One thing we don't do is start right away with literacy. We start the whole first program with the oral tradition. It's all about community conversation and dialogue and things that people enjoy doing. The women have a real problem in the beginning: they do not speak out so easily as the men did. In fact, we do separate the classes sometimes. Sometimes we would have a class with two men and 30 women, and the men would do all the talking. But then, after a couple of months, with the human rights work, the women really started speaking out, not only speaking out in class but in front of the village—it's amazing to see the transformation. So they're excited about this, and people see, in other communities, what's going on in the village: what they're doing. They're doing a lot of lobbying with the government. They lobby for health services. We teach them all this: how to demand accountability, we teach democracy and human rights, they learn what taxes are. People are always so shocked: they say, "You mean that's what taxes are supposed to be used for? Oh, my gosh." And so they go right to their local authorities and say, "We want to be sure that you're using our taxes for the services that we need the most." Actually, it's been exciting because the local authorities have responded to this too. Because they'd say, "We built a

health hut or a school; we now need a teacher. You must provide us with a teacher.” There’s this kind of thing going on. So people are excited when they see this.

**Ellis:** And you spoke the languages when you started this?

**Melching:** Yes, I speak Wolof, but don’t forget that I’m not the one doing the teaching. We have maybe 1,300 employees at Tostan, most of which—99%—are African. And all of the facilitators and all the supervisors, and even the coordinators—I was the only American in the organization for many years. Still, the teachers in the field, the people that are most closely involved, are all people from the area where we are teaching the classes, so that’s very important. And most of the facilitators don’t have a high school education. We do a lot of training. These are young people who otherwise would not have jobs, and suddenly, they have a very respected job as a community development agent; they’re not just teachers, they’re facilitators of knowledge. But they really become very actively involved in the community development efforts.

And your talk about the men is critical. We made lots of mistakes—I always say that. One of the criticisms of the books—one of the reviews [that] came out said that there was too much good stuff. Where’s the bad stuff? [*Laughter.*] We had every problem you could possibly have. I mean, really, but that’s how you learn. Luckily, the whole staff was open to making mistakes; I think that was critical. One of them was that we did women’s rights in the beginning, and it was a big mistake, and you can imagine why. Suddenly, the men became very suspicious: “What is this, this women’s rights class?” It was ’96 that we did this; by 2000, centers had been closed and there was general outcry: you know, “what about our rights?” And we had even done children’s rights, and then the parents said, “What about our rights? You shouldn’t be teaching children...” We decided, “Okay, we made a mistake. We should be talking about human rights. We should have been talking about all people’s rights: men, women, children.” That was a big change, and we actually—this was a module that came later in the program, the human rights. We put it at the very foundation of our program. Now, democracy and human rights is really the very foundation of the program upon which all other subjects come afterwards, because we’re always referring to these human rights, referring to the decisions made around democratic participation in the very first module.

And when we started with the human rights—amazing, the change that came about. Men said, “Oh, we have rights too. Wow.” And I can even give an example. When one of the classes in southeastern Senegal—a man beat up his wife. And the women decided to march. They knew their rights, they knew they had a right to be free from all forms of violence. They decided on the march, and they called in journalists, and they marched from the marketplace with their pots and pans and they sang, “No more violence in the land of the Mandinkas.” And it was on the radio, and the next day UNICEF called me and said, “What is this? The Tostan class is marching.” And the interesting thing is that one of the women said, “We are not marching against men. We are marching against violence, and we are marching peacefully against violence. We want the men to know that. We want them to know that if something happens to them, we will march for them too. We will defend them.” So that was very powerful. And I think it really changed men’s attitude. That same village—they really helped the women to organize a big declaration to abandon FGC.

**Ellis:** So, lastly, I just asked you about the religious leaders. Then we’ll open it up to questions, so raise your hand and I’ll try to get to everybody.

**Melching:** Right, so religious leaders—of course we’ve had many, many problems. A lot of you have been to Senegal and know that there are some very conservative religious leaders. But then there are some very open and progressive religious leaders who really do look at that side of the—health in the Koran is really critical for women, and [they] defend that. So we start with those religious leaders. We even have an Islamic rights specialist on our staff, who goes to all the different areas of Senegal speaking in Arabic—which is impressive to everyone—and who explains why this is not a religious practice. There are several who really have defended that FGC is demanded by the Koran. That has

always been a problem up north in the Futa, where we have received threats, where we have often had to have the police to defend our office because we were accused, when they put people in prison. There was a law passed [against FGC] in 1999, but very few arrests. But when there were arrests, people blamed Tostan, even though that is not our strategy. We believe it's important to have a law in place as a deterrent, but when everybody practices, and you put one person in jail, it's very difficult. And we got huge resistance; it set us back literally by six months, because they closed the centers. Again, wonderful collaboration, and even so many religious leaders going out village to village like Demba Diawara. So it's a process. In Somaliland and Djibouti, we've had the support of a lot of religious leaders. They've been fantastic going out, so it all just depends. I think with time, as the critical mass grows, as that is their power base, the religious leaders will be fully on board. And in Senegal, we really believe that most people will abandon in three years, really.

**Question:** Molly, great to meet you in the flesh, after hearing about your work for so long. Theresa Loar. In 1996 we had a meeting at the State Department, which some of the people around the table here may have been at, in which we discussed female genital cutting for the first time in a sort of open meeting at the State Department, and Nahid Toubia, from Sudan, was there, and others. And the consensus from the African participants in this meeting was that we should not be using the words "human rights," or "women's rights." We were actually quite criticized for that. There had been some legislation passed that required the US government to vote in the World Bank and other IFIs [international financial institutions] against loans to any countries where this was practiced and there were no education programs, and the women felt that the US was getting in the middle of their own dynamics in their own communities, and that by using the "human rights" and "women's rights" language, we were pushing that. So when you mentioned that, six years later, you were using the "human rights" language—so did the world change, or what happened that allowed that to be more of an integral part of bringing about change?

**Question:** I'm Barbara Rose with Aid for Africa. My question is: do you envision—and I know a lot of people have said this—taking your model to East Africa, or other countries that are not necessarily Islamic, too, but have their own religious issues? And, obviously, some of these women's issues are universal throughout sub-Saharan Africa. So is it possible? Are you thinking that way?

**Question:** Paula Lynch from the State Department. I work on foreign assistance budgeting and one of the things that we're always looking for is the sustainability of something. And I'm just curious if you could comment a little bit on the sustainability of Tostan. You've certainly emphasized the need to work with communities to get change from the inside, but, about the organization itself: how much has the government taken the concepts that you've been promoting, and built it in already to their own education system or their own social services system, or other things like that?

**Melching:** The use of "human rights": to tell you the truth, when all this happened, I had very little contact with what was going on in the US or even in the world of FGC. I had no idea. In fact, when the women first stood up to abandon FGC—and I say "FGC" only because the villagers asked me not to use the word "mutilation." And some people get angry with me for that; they say, "You should be using 'mutilation,' that's what it is," and I just know that the villagers asked us to not use that. It's very judgmental. "Mutilation," the definition is to cut with the intention of harming. And what they said is, "We did not intend to harm, we do this because we have no choice. If our daughters are not cut, how will they marry?" etc., etc. So all of that is politically incorrect or whatever—I don't know. I was not following what was happening on an international level; I was more following what people in the field that we worked with for many years were telling me.

And we started—the reason we started using "human rights" is because one of our team staff, a woman, actually gave birth, and the doctor had told her she was going to die if she had any more children, that it was very serious. She had a caesarean. She went through that operation and then the doctor went out and asked her husband to sign the consent form, and he refused to do so. And she woke up realizing that he didn't want her to use any family planning either. So we were shocked by that.



And so we thought, “What can we do, what can a woman do when faced with something like this?” I didn’t know anything about human rights; I grew up in the US, we never learned about human rights in school. But I was looking for something, anything, and I just happened to be friends with a lawyer who was the head of the human rights organization in Senegal, and we talked and talked and talked. And he says, “Take the CEDAW [Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women] and go over to the hospital, and tell them that you know that this is a right of women over their own bodies, and that it’s ratified by the government.” And we thought, “Oh, what will that do?” And so the three—I think there were four of us, I think—we sort of marched over there and thought, “Well, we’ll see,” and we were a little nervous. And he said, “Oh, my gosh”—the director said— “We had no idea. We’re sorry. We will never do this again. It’s a tradition, we have a habit of asking the husbands to sign, but you’re right. Please don’t do anything about this. Please. We promise we will never ask the husband again.” And we left there like—you know—the word “empowered.” We thought, “Wow, this is something we can use.” And we decided: women didn’t know they had the human right to health—we found so many problems related to human rights that we thought, maybe this can help.

So that’s why we put women’s rights into the health module. And we realized soon, how can you do health information without first doing human rights? Women—there are so many things they can’t do unless they know that they have this right to speak out, to have their own opinions, to do these things. So it was very critical to that whole movement. I don’t know what people were saying on the international level. I really made a decision to follow the people I was working with, and follow what seemed to make sense. And they seemed to know so well. They knew exactly where to go, who to talk to, what to say. And I said, “Look, we’re here,” and UNICEF was very much supportive of us at the time, and the American Jewish World Service had actually funded that module on women’s health. And we told them what was happening, and they said, “We support you,” and we just said, “We’re going to let the people lead on this,” and we followed their lead, and I think we did the right thing.

The second thing, Barbara: we are looking into—we’ve been asked by many countries for our program, and we are very open. It took us a long time. Our program is constantly evolving. So everybody always says, “Give me what you have,” and I said, “We have to change this and this and this because we just learned that it’s much better if you do this [rather] than that.” And it’s a very big program. It’s three years. So we’re talking about many sessions, which are all written out because we felt that facilitators who have very little experience needed that information, needed participatory methods and activities that we would suggest. We’re just now finalizing the most recent version we have. And, as I said, we’re doing it in 22 languages. We’re working on a training institute where people would do different things. If you want to learn the approach, the strategies, the content, what’s happened, go visit villages, you can come for 10 days and be exposed to the program and the results that we’ve had. And our main results are in governance, in education, in health, the environment, and economic growth.

So I just came back from a wonderful village, and I have to tell you this because it really was moving to me. I went to a village called Ndene Ndao, and we were sitting around, and a woman got up and she said, “When we started our classes, the women got together and decided we should put our *own* money together, anything we had. And we decided what we could afford each was 25 francs,” which is about 10 cents. And she said, “So we got our money together and we had \$5, and we started loaning that out, so we loaned out a dollar to each woman for 10 days.” And she was very proud of this, and I went, “A dollar for 10 days!” [*Laughs.*] And then she gave back the loan at \$1.10. And she said, “Slowly, slowly, we grew our fund, and it grew and grew, and then Tostan came in”—we give community grants, because that’s part of our economic growth. And we teach management skills, and we teach microcredit, loans, and so they’re trained. We’re not a microcredit institute or a finance institute; we just train them on how they can then use this, and help get them into contact. And she said, “We are now at 3 million francs”—that is \$6,000—“and we’re doing loans of \$70 to each woman.” And I said, “Wow, that is just amazing!” It’s just very moving to me that they started doing loans of a dollar, you know? But anyways, that kind of thing, for people to see how the community is organizing, how they’re doing. They’re building their schools. They’re not sophisticated, beautiful schools, but they’re working for the

people, and they're getting teachers because they've built them, and health centers. And so I think it's a different model, it's an interesting model, and I think if people see that...

And then the other part of the training institute is for people who actually want the whole program. And that would be longer. And we're really working on this now, because we've gotten requests from Haiti, and from Eastern Europe, from the Congo, from Sierra Leone, from other countries. And we think, we're not the ones who should be going there, we should be training other NGOs who could then use the program if we give them a solid enough training. Because we have trained NGOs who've taken the program, they've gone, and our four-month, five-month health module for women—we've had NGOs take it and do it in three days. And we say, "Oh, no, that's not—we're not going to have the same results." So we sort of want to do quality control. So we're looking at that. And if any of you have any ideas, we'd be most open to that because we're really working on it now. We do have a training center already built in Thiès, and so we have done lots of training, for a lot of different countries. And they use it in different ways, but we're definitely going to start the trainings by next December.

The sustainability of Tostan: Paula, we have the same problems that other NGOs have. In terms of funding, for a long time we prided ourselves on being very low-cost, but as we went to different countries, suddenly you're confronted with the need to do monitoring, evaluation, on a much higher level. Audits—that sometimes requires US auditors to come in for certain agencies, like USAID, for example. So your overhead goes up and it makes it a whole different ball game. We still get funding; we are doing a campaign for reaching out to 1,000 villages over the next three years. The campaign is called "Generational Change in Three Years." And that is because when you end FGC and child marriage, and girls are going to school, you really see—if you come and visit, which you are all invited to do—you will see that, between the grandmother and the granddaughter, there really is generational change. That girl is not cut, she will not be married, she is doing her homework, she is not asked to do all the work of the house anymore, or the boys are also participating in the work. And so this is what we're trying to do to build that critical mass. We're very, very excited about ending FGC in West Africa right now, and if you've got any ideas we're very open to how we can make our organization more sustainable.

**Question:** Hi, it's great to see you, Molly. My name is Marilyn Merritt, I'm a linguistic anthropologist who's worked both in education, both in international development contexts—and in classroom research. And it was my great privilege to be in Senegal for a couple of years, and I got to visit Tostan, so I can really vouch for how great the program is. My question is—or what I would suggest might be useful to discuss—is the fact that you've always had these modules, and have been very good at documenting what you were doing. Because a lot of people go out to the field, and they're trying all kinds of things, and they're very good, but then when they get finished, they don't necessarily know what they've done. And I know the other thing which you hinted at, which is not true only when these women had to confront the journalists, but just in the day-to-day initial states, you had to work with—you were empowering some of these trainers, these facilitators, so they suddenly have more status, but then you have to deal with the fact that those people suddenly have a lot of status vis-à-vis the traditional elders. I'm sure that your ability to manage that in the field without creating [friction] is a big part of it. And, thirdly, I just want to say, the fact that you're working in so many languages is so important, and could you also just say the meaning—where *Tostan*, the name, came from?

**Question:** Judith Kaufmann, I'm an independent consultant, and also had the privilege of knowing Molly years ago in Senegal, so I've known Tostan and Molly for a long time. And you challenged us to think about other ways some of the lessons could be applied, and I have done that, having heard you speak before. And one of the things that I get pushback on when I talk about the Tostan model, or have talked about it, is that it is a three-year program. It is very complicated. It takes a lot of time, labor and money, quite frankly, and if you're talking about how you get people to adopt bed nets for their kids, or change behavior for HIV prevention, or get routine immunization, the question for me is: how do you apply Tostan's lessons about community involvement, getting leaders involved, but in, perhaps, a less time consuming and—quite frankly—quicker way?

**Question:** Katherine Marshall. I'm at Georgetown University now. First a comment: I use FGC a lot in teaching and I think it's both a good and a bad thing. It's something that really can capture the imagination of people and students. On the other hand it has all the disadvantages that go with that. But I'm curious: we've been looking a lot for data on what's happening at an aggregate level either in Senegal or in the Sahel, in terms of FGC, and it's remarkably difficult. Do you have a sense of—if it's going down, which it must be, how fast it's going down, and how well do you know that? How knowable is it, to get a sense of the real pace and direction of change, and where it's taking place and where it's not?

**Melching:** Marilyn, you asked about modules and are we documenting? We do. The way we're working is that we have—at the community level, if there are 50 villages in a zone, we may choose 10 villages where we work and then there will be a facilitator in each village, and then a supervisor who goes around and makes sure that, administratively and pedagogically, things are going well. And the facilitator will give a monthly report to the supervisor. The supervisor then looks at those reports and, having been in the villages, worked with the facilitator, he knows what the problems are, what the lessons learned are, what things that might need to be changed are. The supervisors then meet with the regional coordinator, and they then write down the lessons learned, and all the things that we need to know in order to maintain or to change things that are in the program. And that's happened a lot. We've made lots and lots of changes in the program over the years based on the feedback that we get from having implemented the program in the field. And then, from the regional coordinator, that goes to the national coordinator, and then—we're now in the international office, and this is fairly new, [for] three years we've had an international office because we're in eight countries—so that comes back to us, and as we're working on adapting it to other countries and other settings, we look at all of this and decide exactly what we're going to use, and go back out to the field if necessary, to verify and to see what changes need to be made. So we *do* do a lot of documenting; we're probably going to be doing more because we've never had the money for doing real monitoring, evaluation, documenting, learning, as much as we'd like to. But we're probably going to be doing a lot more of that in the next years to come.

You ask about the status of the facilitators. One of the things that is most important about the human rights is the right to equality, that everyone has a role to play. What we find now is that children are involved in decision making; women, for the first time—they're very active. And we've always tried to honor the traditional chiefs, and said, "You are there," but they're like the honorary members. And the other people who are more competent, if they.... And we're dealing with many issues, many levels, like the caste thing, and social order—there are many things that are involved here. So I think doing human rights was huge in changing the dynamics of the community interactions. And we see that the facilitator is highly respected. They are very polite, they are very modest, this is all part of the Tostan—the Tostanians, as they call themselves now—way, that you are there to learn just as much as you are there to teach, to be respectful of everybody and not go in and say you're going to change everything, but rather give the information, and lead the discussions, and use your mind. Demba always says there are three things when you go into any community and want to work on these issues. You go in with, first of all, courage, because people, he says, will give you nasty looks; you have to be very courageous. Secondly, intelligence—you have to really use your mind—and the third is respect and diplomacy. There is a way to approach people around behavior change that is critical. We teach that, of course, to the facilitators, and I think that helps a lot.

And we do think it's critical that everything be in national languages. Because, for people to go to school in French—no one speaks French in their home. It's Senegal and Gambia; that is so important. It vehicles the culture, the worldview. It is just so important, I think, that, if you want to make change, that it really is important to do it in national languages. Tostan is a Wolof word that is, literally, the hatching of an egg. It's the idea: the hen having a chick, and the chick becoming a hen, and it's the spread of knowledge, and I explain it in the book. I got that from my very respected professor, who was my mentor, who was Cheikh Anta Diop, and I explain how he gave me that name. The name of our

program is—the first part is the *Kobi*, it's a Mandinka word, and it means to prepare the field for planting. And the *Aawde*, which is the literacy and project management part of the program, it means to plant the seed. And the center we're building now is a Dioula word, *kaylumack*; it means the place where people come to make decisions and to discuss. It was like the traditional under-the-tree, but it's a Dioula word, so we're trying to use different African languages. And of course we adopt those words, not *Tostan*, but other words, when we go to other countries.

Judy, yes, we've always been told that our program is *three years*, it's too long and too complicated, it costs too much money. But it's expensive in relation to what? Because when you see—we are not siloed, and we have always refused to be. In fact we were approached about doing a project on family planning. And we said, "But to do family planning in a sustainable way, women need to know democracy, and human rights, and problem solving, and project management." So they come and say, "Well, you need to do malaria." And for that you need to know democracy, and human rights and problem solving and project management; otherwise you're going to start a project and it's going to—and I lived that. For years I lived in a small village and saw a cemetery of projects. It's time that women receive the education they deserve. You think three years? These are women who have never been to school! And I can't quite understand—I'm very passionate about this, I'm sorry [*Laughter*].—I cannot believe that people would say that three years is too long for education for women who are the mothers of their children, and the grandmothers. It just amazes me because, again, the results are in governance. We have community management committees that are formed during the program. We have 738 that have become JIEs; they're community-based organizations who now have bank accounts, who are doing projects. There were 58 last year; now there are 73 projects funded directly to them—not through *Tostan*. They are autonomous. We are talking about real development from the inside out. And I think that if you look at all the results from the program, in that [they're] more sustainable, because of the community management committees...

In Ndene Ndao, where I just came from, they said to me, "We have our community management committee. We meet once a month. We have 3 million in our account. But we formed a federation. We have the eight other villages around here, and we put our money together and we're getting even bigger projects, and bigger microcredit funds." So people are organizing, they're lobbying. They said, "We constitute a force in this area now. When we go to local government, there are eight of us, and we say we want schools." And they're a strong voice. And there is a woman who is the head of that. There are men in it, but the woman is the head of the federation. It's amazing. So I say, is it that expensive compared to—if you look at the price of school? It's maybe a third the price of a year in school, and for six years of school, to get the results we're getting, and the results that we have, from the formal school... I would say—I'm not against formal school, of course, but I am against—I think schools should be reformed. But I don't think it's expensive when you compare them, so I very much am passionate about that, that education is going to change the game for development in Africa, and it will be, then, development from within, rather than bringing in, "Well, we're going to do this on family planning, we're going to do this on malaria." I think it will really change the way things are done.

Data on what is happening: The DHS [Demographic and Health Survey] studies just came out a year ago. And they—of course, you see the prevalence. You saw prevalence in Senegal at 28% in 2005. In 2010, prevalence was 26%. So you think, "Oh dear, that's only a 2% decrease." But the thing is, the women who were cut in 2005, of course, are still cut in 2010. So you are not going to see, even if everyone abandoned, and there was real abandonment—you would not see that until even—what? 50 years from now. But what we did see a difference [in] is in the women who said they would cut their daughters, or not cut their daughters. And of those women who were cut, in the DHS study 60% said they would not cut their daughters. Now that's all over Senegal. So those are places where *Tostan* has not been. In our communities, we had that around 70%. In the villages that had abandoned, it was 77%. So we have had very in-depth evaluations that have shown this is working. We've had evaluations in Somalia, we've had evaluations in Gambia, we've had evaluations in Mauritania and Guinea, and they've all shown that people really are abandoning. And, if you think about it, it really makes sense. I asked Demba that question: I said, "Some people say you didn't really abandon." And he said to me,

“Well, why would they say that? For years, anybody who told us to abandon FGC, we would all get out and march and say, ‘Who do you think you are?’ and protest, and now we’re up there, standing up there saying we have decided, as a community—why would we do that?” He also said, “Look around here. You see, in my village, this is a Bambara village. Next door, not 15 meters away, is a Wolof village. We’ve been together side by side for 100 years and we’ve never intermarried because the Wolof don’t practice FGC.” He said, “Today you see husbands and wives, Wolofs, Serer, people who don’t practice.” He said, “That is proof. We would never have married someone who does not practice FGC. It was unthinkable. And today, people are intermarrying, the different ethnic groups, so just tell them to look and see.”

**Question:** My name is Diane White and I’m with Africare. I was struck when you were talking about the children, the illiteracy in Senegal, and you said that, “I shared the cognitive science around babies needing to be engaged.” What struck me is that—I think sometimes we make assumptions about what poor people can understand. And you said that “I’m sharing the science”—I think a couple of times that you made that point, and I wanted you to speak more to that.

**Question:** I’m Sally Epstein with Pathfinder International. And I’m wondering, when you bring people from different countries and different languages into your training center, the ones that are going to go back and be the teachers, how do you manage a sort of multicultural, multi-language group, to teach them?

**Question:** I’m Judy Smith, and I’m with the Smithsonian National Museum of African Art right now, but knew Molly 1996–99 when my husband and I were there as the Ambassador. And Molly was the first person that I was taken to, to meet, because people knew I was interested in women’s affairs, and I was so happy to have her friendship and to work with her during those three years. We tried—I don’t know if you remember, Molly, but I persuaded the International Women’s Club to try a city group for Tostan, to fund a program in the city. So I have a question as to whether the success—I know that most of your work is in rural areas. Is all of it in the rural areas? Have you done any continuing work in the cities, or do you find that it’s just not necessary in the cities? And then my other question is about Sudan, because we lived in Sudan for three years too, and I worked with women there, teaching, and was wondering—I know you were there—have you seen progress in Sudan?

**Question:** Hi, Jeff Pratley, working on a PhD in women’s empowerment in sub-Saharan Africa, looking at health outcomes using the DHS data sets that were just mentioned. Two small questions. The first one is about unintended outcomes. So you mentioned this unsiloed, multidisciplinary, fantastic approach that had all these great outcomes. What are some of the other unintended outcomes that you’ve seen out of this women’s empowerment in different dimensions? Specifically related to health? And secondly, a question about the institutional character of the organization: how have you been able to sustain this growth? And you mentioned some mistakes that were made, or some growth pains along the way. Sort of being able to fund a project that does not neatly fit into these silos, and these disciplinary constraints that we see that are plaguing our development business?

**Melching:** Thank you. Diane, thanks. I worked a lot with Africare when I first started. You funded my children’s center; Africare funded it in Dakar when I first started out, when I was 26 years old. What we’ve found about the talking to babies is—just ordinary language, but adult language. What we’ve learned from the neuroscientists and people we’re working with is that it is really important for adults to speak like adults to children, using full sentences, and just their normal language and national languages. But right now, what we found adults saying to babies and young children were mostly commands: “do this,” “don’t do this,” “stop crying,” “go there,” “get me this,” and they’re very good at following commands. And we understand—we spent a lot of time thinking about this. It’s a culture of survival in the villages where we’re working. We’re in the most marginalized areas of the country. Conditions are very harsh. Children are expected to grow up to go help their parents, girls for domestic labor in the house and boys in the field, and they have to follow orders, and they have to belong to a

very well-organized and hierarchical society, where there are different rules for your different age groups.

The villagers are so smart. Unfortunately, they're not seen as smart because they don't speak French. As I say, Demba—he is the doctorate, I mean, really. His theories were then—and I'll tell you what happened. The UNICEF director, when we talked to him about public declaration, he said, "I don't know about this, I'm not sure we can—what is this? Molly, you don't have your doctorate, and Demba is a villager. What about him saying that?" And then when Gerry Mackie, whom Sally introduced me to, who is a doctorate and who was at Oxford—he wrote a paper on this with the same theory that Demba Diawara had. Exactly. And when the UNICEF director saw that, he said, "Oh, of course, this is wonderful, this is what we will do!" I understand he was somewhat hesitant, but I was like, "You know, these are very, very intelligent people." It's like all of us. We all have superstitions. When I was talking about this with one woman, she said, "Well, in my family there's no way—if you're pregnant and going to have a baby, your mother-in-law will absolutely not allow you to buy baby furniture until the baby is born. This is prohibited. And so these things—we had all kinds of ideas about what you do, what you don't do. It's normal. We had witches and sorcery and evil spirits in Salem. People were burned at the stake. This was not that long ago. These are villagers who are very smart, who have survived where we could not have survived, in conditions that I almost didn't survive in. [*Laughter.*]

And we taught them brain science, and brain development. We taught them about neurons and synapses, and they loved it. It was that understanding that led them to see—we did it in a way they could understand, I believe—I didn't know that much about it, so I took myself, and how I could learn, and we kept trying and we piloted. We made the big mistake in the pilot. We got them all talking to their babies but then we came out to the villages and they were going, "Baby, baby, baby!" We weren't teaching them how to talk to the babies; we didn't realize. People really didn't know what to say, how to interact to do that sort of cognitive stimulation. Everything you do, we'd say to the women, "Just tell them what you're doing: 'I'm going to go cook, come, let's go cook, come cook with me, let's put the tomato on in, oh, look at the red tomato, it's round and beautiful, oh, look at the eggplant, it's black and long, oh, it's longer than the tomato.'" Just saying that; we explained to them that the baby registers this. We now know that the baby is registering this information, and the most important time for these neurons to grow and be used and connect in the synapses is when they're zero to three. They said, "Oh, we just didn't know. This is amazing; this is really interesting," and they're trying that. We'd say, "Recite the Koran." They love that. They recite the Koran, they tell the traditional stories. And we use a lot of the traditional stories. So it really did make a huge difference. I always say that when people get good information, they make good decisions. And it was a lot easier than I thought, even the first time I talked to a group. I was in M'Bour. And there was one man following all of this, and we said we were doing research then, and he said, "I can't believe that's true. I never knew that. I'm going to the mosque this afternoon and I'm going to tell every man to go home and talk to his baby!" I was like, "Wow." If you don't know, you just don't know. And that's what everyone says—even about FGC: "We just didn't know. It was a taboo subject. You don't talk about it." But it's the communication, it's the information; it's so important. I hope I answered your question.

Sally, you said the training center. Well I think if different countries came—it would depend. We do English and French right now, because we can't do the training in those countries. Like in Guinea, where we work, we worked for six years there, and we sent a Senegalese coordinator and manager, but now there is a Guinean coordinator. So there's the training first in French with the languages that people can understand and then they go on in their own language. And we make sure everything is in French and English and probably Portuguese, because we are in Guinea-Bissau.

And, Judy, you said rural or city. We've done lots of classes in Thiès, and in the neighborhoods. And we organize them like we would a village, by neighborhoods. It's a little bit harder because people in a village don't have as much entertainment, and so they love the theater, and organizing the events, and they really get into it. Whereas in the city, people are very involved in other activities, and so it's a little bit harder. But we have done it—we've been in neighborhoods in Dakar, in Thiès, and in M'Bour, we did

the program, because M'Bour was kind of the bastion of female genital cutting in Senegal. They defended it. There were lots of Mandinkas and Bambaras in that city, and we were finding it was affecting people in the villages, because if they intermarried in that city, then the people there expected them to be cut, and therefore the people in the villages—we think that is one reason why certain of them, that 30% I was talking about—so we said we have to go do our program in M'Bour. We followed the social networks, is what we did. So we went to M'Bour.

Sudan: we did do a program. We did training for another NGO that is still working on this. And they're using other methods that have been very positive also. The Salima Campaign, where they talk about—*salima* means pure—whereas you were always associated, with FGC, if you hadn't been cut, as being *impure*, they're saying that girls are born pure. And they did a lot of different activities, very similar, in a way, in engaging the whole social network. UNICEF has been very active there. And we've had lots of meetings on an international level with UNICEF. One thing I might say that was exciting is UNICEF—they were so involved with the social norms that we're learning. They actually have a department of social norms at UNICEF, at the headquarters, and we are working with Cristina Bicchieri and Gerry Mackie, and they have been doing training for their senior program officers: a two-week training every summer at the University of Pennsylvania on understanding social norms, because they have found it so critical in their work in the field in different countries—in India, working on child marriage, for example, honor killings, things like this that have been so hard and so difficult for them to even penetrate. So they have actually used this now. Her book, Cristina's book, is called *The Grammar of Society*, if any of you are interested. A very interesting book.

Jeff, you said women's empowerment. Have we had other unintended outcomes? Yeah! I started the program because I said, "There are too many children dying because women just don't have the information they need." And my original focus was on health. And as the program grew, and as we stayed and implemented, and we saw the need to do problem-solving and have collective problem-solving—I mean, people are already problem-solving, right? But to get them to understand how they went about doing that and apply that in projects, it led them to really start thinking, "Oh, we can do a lot more than we thought we could, if we work together collectively and try to find out what the real issue is." You know, it's not "the pump is broken down," it's that "we don't like the guy who is running the pump and we don't want to fix it because we don't want him to continue." So a lot of times there are reasons why things aren't working that people aren't discussing. So the unintended outcomes have been in governance with these—you know, we've had women who've run for office locally, who are now national deputies in the National Assembly, who went through the program, who are taking the lead, and emerging as leaders for the federations.

[To Amy Fairbanks] Amy, do you know how many federations we have? There are 49, I believe, in Senegal. And it's an amazing thing to see them as head of a mixed group, and daring to speak out on issues that they never would have spoken out on before, and then working to get their girls in school, defending their right to go to school, and having schools built, making sure that the girls don't have to do all the housework. In health, we've had so many different things: family planning, malaria, as Judy was saying. That's one of the results, among others. Organizing campaigns for bed nets, helping people to buy them if they don't have enough money. Making sure—one of the biggest problems was: people had them, they were handing out bed nets, but no one was using them. Well, the community management committees are going around and saying, "Did you use your bed net last night? If you didn't, you're going to be fined." That kind of thing. I mean there's follow-through by these community management committees. But they had to go through democracy training, participation, social mobilization; you know, those things—they're not just there, if you've never done that before. So there's malaria, there's family planning, there's vaccination, birth registration—almost 100%, and that came from human rights, all because they realized kids can't go to school if they don't have an ID card. You can go to our website. We have a new website that just launched yesterday. And if you have any questions at all on the book, feel free to write and ask me.

**Ellis:** This was a great event; thank you. I know we all learned a lot. And please feel free to pick up a book outside so she can sign it.

**Melching:** If you have any suggestions, please let us know, and thank you for the questions. I hope all the events are like this one!