Tostan

Annual Report 2008
Tostan’s mission is to empower African communities to bring about sustainable development and positive social transformation based on respect for human rights. Since 1991 Tostan has brought its holistic 30-month education program to thousands of communities in nine African countries. Tostan has been recognized by the international community for its groundbreaking work with villagers living in extreme poverty in remote areas. Tostan means “breakthrough” in the West African language of Wolof.
Letter From the Executive Director

DEAR FRIENDS AND SUPPORTERS OF TOSTAN,

Another year has gone by, one in which Tostan again crossed thresholds we would have never dreamed of even a few short years ago.

I hope this annual report will give you a picture not only of what Tostan does, but also of who we are. It is an absolute privilege to be surrounded every day by the amazing people that make up the Tostan family, and I cannot mark the passing of 2008 without saying thank you to everyone who makes Tostan what it is.

As you will read in the coming pages, the communities we partner with accomplished important results in 2008. And their work is now being recognized at a national level by the Government of Senegal and on an international level, with a growing consensus that there is a way forward and that FGC can be abandoned in positive, respectful ways in the near future.

Of course the work of our community partners is made possible by our local facilitators, who are the very heart of our organization. These women and men continue to dedicate their lives to empowering communities to lead their own development. They work long hours, month in and month out, to bring knowledge, skills, and experience to communities eager to move forward. Each facilitator touches the lives of hundreds--often thousands--of people, with only a modest stipend and their tireless commitment to education, human rights and peaceful, positive change.

Our facilitators are supported by our experienced program staff: supervisors and regional coordinators who ensure that our project goals are achieved. And in Tostan’s country offices we have administrative staff and volunteers doing the detailed work that makes our organization go. And last but certainly not least, I want to mention our external partners, donors and supporters around the world who make our efforts possible through their gifts and by telling our story far and wide.

Thank you to everyone who has helped us reach this exciting place in our history. I look forward to what the future brings for all of us in our ever-growing Tostan family.
2008 In Review

By the Numbers

- Implemented the Community Empowerment Program in seven countries in Africa: Djibouti, The Gambia, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Mauritania, Senegal, and Somalia
- Published resources in 19 African languages
- Worked in 787 communities across Africa
- Reached 43,800 participants, with over 400,000 people indirectly benefitting from our program through organized diffusion
- Partnered with 887 communities on their public declarations to abandon female genital cutting and child/forced marriage
- Distributed approximately US$60,000 through micro loans

Highlights

- Community Empowerment Program implemented for the first time in Djibouti and Mauritania
- Groundwork laid for launching the Community Empowerment Program in Guinea Bissau in 2009
- New partnerships formed with Operation Smile, Extending Service Delivery, and Sponsor a Mum
- Impact evaluation commissioned by UNICEF reported female genital cutting (FGC) decreased drastically in Tostan communities
- Two international documents endorsed an FGC abandonment strategy for African countries based on the Tostan model
- Tostan’s human rights-based, community-led approach adopted by the Senegalese Government

Tostan Named National Program in Senegal

In October 2008, the Senegalese government adopted Tostan’s approach as the basis for the 2009-2015 National Action Plan for FGC Abandonment. In a seminar hosted by the Ministry of the Family, National Solidarity, and Women’s Enterprise and Micro-credit, government, UNICEF and NGO leaders discussed the 2000-2005 National Action Plan and made recommendations for how to achieve total abandonment in Senegal by 2015. The Ministry’s evaluation of past activities revealed that Tostan’s non-formal education and social mobilization programs were the only successful components of the government’s National Action Plan. As a result, the government made Tostan’s approach the centerpiece of its plan for total FGC abandonment by 2015. In a subsequent seminar involving government delegations and NGO representatives from across West Africa, the Senegalese delegation recommended that other countries also adopt the strategies of empowering education, organized diffusion and public declaration as the way forward. Representatives from all countries present—Guinea, Guinea Bissau, The Gambia, Mali, Mauritania, and Senegal—came to a sub-regional consensus based on the Tostan program in efforts to accelerate the abandonment of FGC.
Commissioned by UNICEF, the *Long-Term Evaluation of the Tostan Programme in Senegal* found that Tostan’s approach led to substantial changes: a drastic decrease in the practice of female genital cutting (FGC), improvement in women’s status, and a decrease in marriages below the age of 15. The study compared 1) villages where Tostan implemented its program, 2) villages that did not have the program but participated in public declarations, and 3) villages that had neither the program nor an opportunity to participate in a public declaration. The findings underscore the importance of Tostan’s long-standing commitment to what Tostan terms organized diffusion—the sharing of information with family and friends and with other interconnected communities through intervillage meetings. The prevalence of FGC decreased more than 70% over 10 years in villages that participated directly in the Tostan program and in public declarations. A slightly lower reduction was found in villages that only participated in public declarations. The report concludes: “It is generally accepted that Tostan’s intervention was globally beneficial to all populations in the zones where the NGO was active.”

Two international documents on abandonment of female genital cutting endorsed the community-led, human rights-based approach that has typified Tostan’s work in Africa: *Platform for Action Towards the Abandonment of Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting (FGM/C): A Matter of Gender Equality* by The Donors Working Group on Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting and *Eliminating Female Genital Mutilation: an Interagency Statement* (ONCHR, UNAIDS, UNDP, UNECA, UNESCO, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNIFEM, WHO). Both reports argue for a common programmatic approach: community-led education programs that support and include discussion about human rights, organized diffusion, and public declarations and which make visible the pledge to abandon FGC.

**Tostan Represented at Clinton Global Initiative**

In September 2008, Tostan’s Executive Director Molly Melching attended the Clinton Global Initiative (CGI) Annual Meeting, an event where heads of state, CEOs, philanthropists, non-profit leaders, and Nobel Peace Laureates address today’s most pressing global issues and turn abstract ideas into concrete action. Tostan pledged support to the Banka-Billion Mega Commitment, a collaboration between several NGOs, microfinance institutions, and private-sector corporations to use telecommunications technology to bring banking services to some of the poorest and most remote areas of the world. Tostan’s innovative SMS for literacy and development project will play a critical role in this initiative.
EMPOWERING THROUGH EDUCATION

At Tostan, we believe that the most effective path to community empowerment is to share with people knowledge and skills that will help them utilize their personal resources to act on their own behalf. This is especially true for women and children, who are frequently denied a voice in community decisions. Tostan’s Community Empowerment Program (CEP) enables participants to harness the knowledge they possess and the resources available to them to work for sustainable change in their own communities.

The CEP is a 30-month holistic education program that addresses key topics for development through participatory learning, emphasizing group discussions and information sharing. In the first phase, the Kobi 1 (Mandinka for “tilling the soil”), class members learn about human rights and problem solving. The Kobi 2 covers individual and community hygiene and health. The final phase, the Aawde (Fulani for “planting the seed”), teaches literacy, math, and project management. Tostan-trained facilitators lead classes in local languages using traditional African educational methods, such as theater, song, poetry and story-telling. Over the course of the CEP, participants and community members gain the leadership and problem resolution skills necessary to identify and address key development issues within their community. Because Tostan believes that knowledge is a catalyst for action, we immediately give program participants the tools to put their new skills into practice by training a Community Management Committee (CMC) in each village. Each CMC is comprised of 17 democratically elected members, and Tostan trains the CMC as the community begins the CEP. The CMC connects class participants and other residents and helps the community turn the skills learned in class into an achievable plan of action. CMCs are the critical link in localities taking charge of their own sustainable development. CMCs organize activities ranging from awareness campaigns in neighboring villages to small income-generating activities using micro-credit funds distributed by Tostan. Many of the CMCs register officially with the government as Community Based Organizations with their own bank accounts.

Tostan is continually making improvements to the CEP. In 2008, after several years of discussion with and feedback from participant communities, we began to revise the curriculum, in order to improve methodology. The biggest changes occurred in the Aawde modules, which have been altered to include our innovative SMS for literacy and development project, which uses cell phones to teach and reinforce the literacy, math, and project management skills taught in other modules of our program. We hope to begin using this updated curriculum in early 2009.

THE CEP: A HISTORY

1976: Molly Melching founds a children’s cultural and learning center in Dakar

1982: Melching and team design education sessions, collaborating with villagers from Saam Njaay

1987: Education sessions organized into modular form for a rural development program in Kaolack

1988: Modules on problem solving, hygiene, children’s health, management, leadership, and feasibility study introduced

1996: Additional modules added on women’s health, early childhood development, democracy, and resource management

1996: Additional modules added on women’s health, early childhood development, democracy, and resource management
When visiting villages in Senegal in September of 2007, Tostan staff noticed an interesting phenomenon: almost everyone they met had a cell phone. It seemed this trend sprouted almost overnight in Senegal. From this small observation Tostan created its SMS for Literacy and Development Project.

As part of our Community Empowerment Program (CEP), Tostan teaches participants to read and write in their local language. We pride ourselves on teaching literacy in a way that makes it relevant and applicable to learners’ daily lives and gives them tools to practice those skills regularly. Often learners struggle because of a lack of access to reading materials on subjects of interest. Cell phones present an excellent opportunity to use and hone newly acquired reading and writing skills through SMS texting, as well as the opportunity to learn how to navigate the phone menu and use basic programs such as the calculator and calendar. The widespread availability of cell phones makes them an easily accessible tool for practicing literacy skills. Communicating with family and friends through texting provides participants with an incentive to continue learning.

The power of mobile phones for development extends far beyond literacy. Pairing the ability to read and write with the skills to use communications technology such as cell phones makes the possibilities for development even more far-reaching. Rapid communication between family members will facilitate decision-making on both local and diaspora communities, accelerating social transformation.

It will allow villages to better communicate about important health issues, such as cholera outbreaks and vaccination campaigns, and aid in planning small income-generating projects.

The SMS for Literacy and Development Project has also opened up exciting partnership opportunities for Tostan. For example, the Bank a Billion Initiative introduced at the Clinton Global Initiative in 2008, will bring basic banking services to the world’s poorest people through cell phone services. This project lacked a comprehensive plan to introduce non-literate people to banking basics and did not have a strategy to teach the literacy skills necessary to navigate on the cell phone. At the 2008 CGI Annual Meeting, Tostan pledged to provide the necessary educational resources to implement the program more effectively.

Tostan and its CGI partners strongly believe that great potential from innovation exists in emerging mobile phone markets. Mobile banking taps into this potential to offer financial services to segments of the population who are rural, poor, and/or underserved, and, as a result, could be a powerful tool for poverty alleviation.

2000: Tostan revises the curriculum, making human rights, democracy, and problem solving the foundation

2008: SMS texting sessions are piloted and added to the curriculum
SUPPORTING COMMUNITY-LED DEVELOPMENT

Through the Community Empowerment Program (CEP), Tostan gives participants the tools to implement small projects and contribute to the development of their communities. Once a community has finished the CEP, Tostan supports them in their projects by providing micro-credit and facilitating partnerships with local and national government, the private sector, and other NGOs.

**Enabling Change with Micro-Credit**

For many women in villages throughout Senegal, money can be hard to come by. They are dependent on their husbands—who often work in distant cities—to give them money, and when emergency situations arise, their allowances from their husbands are often insufficient. Women who have participated in Tostan’s CEP, however, are beginning to gain financial independence thanks to Tostan’s micro-credit program.

Tostan’s micro-credit activities give participants the opportunity to utilize the math, literacy, and management skills learned in the CEP, while also creating improved and sustainable economic conditions in communities. The goal of the micro-credit program is to build the capacity of participants, particularly women, to take charge of their economic wellbeing.

Tostan’s micro-credit program began in 1999 with a grant of $5,000 from Hilary Clinton during a visit she made to the village of Saam Njaay. The funds were distributed among five villages using a system adapted from the Grameen Bank model. Today, Tostan’s micro-credit fund totals over $300,000. In 2008 these funds were divided and distributed to more than 15,000 participants in 508 villages across seven regions in Senegal. Loans are given to participating villages and managed by each village’s Community Management Committee (CMC). Eighty-five percent of these funds are given out as small loans to individuals for private ventures. Ten percent of the funds are set aside for the Tostan CMC within the village to use for collective projects such as the construction of a health station or the opening of a community bank account.

The micro-credit program provides small loans that enable women across the country to raise livestock, grow vegetables for the market, sell handicrafts, and open stores. With the income generated by these ventures, the women are better equipped to care for themselves and their children. They no longer have to rely solely on the money sent to them by their husbands.
Therefore financial concerns are decreasingly catalysts for domestic disputes and in the words of one participant, “Households are calmer now.” The micro-credit program enables women to demonstrate their ability to contribute to the financial stability of the community, and as a result, communities are learning to respect women and recognize their valuable contributions.

Because the results of the micro-credit program in communities are so evident, many villages in which Tostan works are eager to receive micro-credit funding. Unfortunately, demand for the program exceeds our current funding capabilities. Throughout 2008 we sought funding from and partnerships with individuals and organizations in this empowering venture, and we look forward to expanding it to many more communities in 2009.

**Partnering for Development**

In the past 18 years, Tostan has trained over 1,500 Community Management Committees (CMCs) across Africa. In 2006, Tostan created the Empowered Communities Network (ECN) to help CMCs better address the needs in their communities after completing the CEP.

Through the ECN, Tostan hopes to reinforce the capacities of CMCs to act as independent community development organizations. CMCs develop and implement specific action plans through subcommittees focused on the environment, community health, social mobilization, education, income-generating activities, and child protection. The ECN then facilitates contact and partnerships between the community and trusted NGOs, service providers, and decentralized government authorities.

In 2008, CMCs executed exciting projects to improve daily life in their communities. For example, CMCs:

- Trained 60 participants in the region of Kaolack, Senegal to make anti-mosquito cream (malaria prevention) and constructed improved wood-burning stoves (air-quality improvement and reduction of deforestation)
- Built 13 latrines in the village of Keur Simbara
- Constructed a health hut in the village of Soundiane, serving over 370 people
- Dug a well in the village of Andiyéry

In 2008, Tostan was able to provide some exciting new opportunities to ECN members as a result of new institutional partnerships. For example, we:

- Distributed 1000 solar HotPot ovens with Solar Household Energy in the Thies region of Senegal in March 2008
- Implemented the “Savings for Change” program with Freedom From Hunger, enabling savings groups from 53 communities around Senegal to collectively save over $15,400 and make micro-loans to 860 people
- Piloted a project in the Senegal village of Keur Sanou with the British NGO Sponsor a Mum to improve perental healthcare
- Extended a composting project in Joal-Fadiouth, Senegal, to the regions of Thies and Mbours in partnership with Peace Corps, WWF and Aprosen
NEW APPROACHES:
COMMUNITY-LED CHILD PROTECTION

Young boys, often barefoot, wearing raggedy clothing, carrying a red tomato can and asking for food and money are a familiar sight to anyone who has visited Senegal. They are the talibés: children who have been sent by their families to Koranic schools, called daaras, in order to learn the tenets of Islam. In order to teach the boys humility and finance their education, the marabouts—religious teachers who run the schools—send the boys to beg in the streets. In some daaras the boys face corporal punishment if they fail to collect a certain minimum amount of money. Today, over 100,000 talibés are studying in daaras across Senegal, often hundreds of miles from home. The talibés are one of the most recognizable images of poverty in Senegal.

In 2002, in an effort to address this problem and recognize the rights of talibés, Tostan started partnering with local religious authorities and other NGOs. Our talibé project had two goals: to improve daily living conditions for the children and to address the roots of the problem by providing economic assistance, raising awareness, and mobilizing communities to find long-term solutions. We gave grants and micro-credit to the marabouts to help them earn an income apart from sending their pupils to beg. We also provided direct support by building new shelters for the schools, administering first aid to students, and providing soap, bleach, and mosquito nets. We encouraged local community members to “adopt” talibés, ensuring that they were healthy, clean, and well fed. Finally, we partnered with Just World to teach a basic educational curriculum of French and math in a number of daaras.

In 2008, Tostan evaluated the program and recognized that the project was not sustainable and was insufficient for achieving long term solutions. From June through August, internal evaluators visited daaras in three regions of Senegal where we were implementing our program to learn what was working and what could be improved. The evaluators concluded that while the project was having a short-term impact on the health and well-being of talibés, Tostan did not have the funds or personnel to replicate this on a larger scale. Furthermore, we were not adequately including local communities in this project, thereby departing from our philosophy of community-led development. Based on the results of this evaluation, Tostan decided to make child protection part of the Community Empowerment Program. As such, each Tostan-trained Community Management Committee will establish a Commission on Child Protection that will ensure that the human rights of all children in the community are respected. The Commission will work on prevention strategies in areas where parents often send their children to the larger cities to beg.

This has the dual advantages of encouraging community-led action and ensuring that other at-risk children also receive support in the community. The Tostan pedagogical team is currently writing curricula to train CMCs in child protection and will start a pilot project in 2009.
NEW DIRECTIONS:  
THE ENVIRONMENT

As part of our CEP, Tostan teaches participants about their human right to a healthy environment. This year we expanded two projects that will help villages make this human right a reality.

COMPOSTING

As part of our CEP, Tostan teaches participants about their human right to a healthy environment. This year we expanded two projects that will help villages make this human right a reality. A lack of solid waste management has created a serious and growing health and environmental crisis across Africa. In June 2007 Tostan partnered with Peace Corps, WWF, Aprosen, and the City of Joal to pilot a project in Joal-Fadiouth, Senegal, to address this problem. What resulted is an innovative, replicable waste management program that collects organic waste and composts it into high-quality, organic fertilizer. The project teaches about the harmfulness of pollution and the benefits of good waste management habits. By the end of 2008 the project had been implemented in two neighborhoods in Joal, with a goal of composting 80% of Joal’s waste and safely land filling the rest. According to studies at the University of Dakar, the compost being produced in Joal is of higher quality than locally available commercial fertilizer.

This project has far-reaching implications for the health of Joal’s citizens and the city’s economy. The City’s Hygiene Department estimates that 69% of the malaria, respiratory, parasitic, and skin maladies in the city can be prevented by proper waste disposal. Additionally, the city’s economy is largely dependent on fishing and tourism, both of which are harmed by the current levels of pollution. Furthermore, this project created 77 new full-time jobs and could create many more. User fees and fertilizer sales will create a $45,000 annual profit for the city. The comprehensive nature of this project makes the prospects for expansion and replication throughout Africa very exciting.

SOLAR COOKING

Most women in Senegal use wood stoves or propane for cooking purposes. This leads to deforestation and increased carbon pollution as well as health problems from smoke inhalation. Also, these methods of cooking can be expensive. In an effort to help alleviate these problems, Tostan partnered with Solar Household Energy and Center of Evaluation for Global Action to distribute solar HotPots to women living in villages near Thies, Senegal. In 2008, these HotPots were delivered to 45 villages and 9,000 women were given training in how to use them. The HotPots are completely solar-powered, greatly reducing the demand for gas and wood. Furthermore, the solar cooking process conserves water, which is scarce in many regions of Senegal and burdensome to carry. With the use of solar HotPots, women participating in this project will improve the environment and their health, while simultaneously easing their substantial daily workload.
TOSTAN: A GLOBAL VIEW

Tostan firmly believes that we can achieve lasting social change only through consensus-building within communities and their extended social networks. In many of the villages in which Tostan works, community members have emigrated to Europe and the United States and are therefore not included in the learning and decision-making process that occurs as a result of the CEP. In an effort to connect diaspora communities (communities of Africans living abroad) with their home communities and better facilitate consensus-building, Tostan France initiated the Jokkondiral Diaspora project in 2008, a pilot project with the Diola population in Senegal’s Casamance region. Working with local staff, Tostan studied social networks and the means for sharing information between communities in the Casamance and their diaspora communities in France. Tostan conducted a survey on relations between the villages and their community members living abroad that was administered in ten villages that had been through the CEP with the aid of local staff. This study provided information on the social structures of the Diola diaspora, as well as the means and levels of communication between communities. We were also given numerous contacts and resources in diaspora communities both in cities in Senegal and around the world.

To help villages share information and promote decision-making for social change within the diaspora, Tostan partnered with the Belgian NGO Respect to produce a film in the Diola language in collaboration with the village of Diégoune. Set in the village that hosted a Public Declaration to abandon female genital cutting and child/forced marriage on May 4, 2008, the villagers told their own story of how and why they abandoned FGC, with the community itself selecting the people and events featured in the film as well as adding their input throughout the filmmaking process. The film will be an essential tool for future social mobilization and awareness-raising activities. It will be shown not only in the course of Tostan’s activities in Diola communities in Senegal, but also in communities of the Diola diaspora throughout Europe (Spain, Italy, Belgium, and France) during events to raise awareness about human rights and development.

In 2009, Tostan France hopes to use the information we gathered and the contacts we made in the Casamance to involve the Diola diaspora in the movement to promote human rights that is currently taking place in Senegal. We plan to simultaneously host activities in Diola communities in Europe and Senegal, ultimately facilitating collective decision-making in the world’s Diola communities. We are very excited to continue our work with diaspora communities and hope to expand our work to other ethnic groups in the coming years.

Engaging the Diaspora

Tostan currently has offices in Washington, D.C., Paris, and Stockholm. These international offices help raise funds and promote our communities’ causes in their respective countries. In 2008, staff in these offices embarked on their own innovative projects and designed new collaborations.
In the seven African countries where Tostan worked in 2008, exciting changes are taking place at the grassroots level. Communities have undertaken innovative environmental projects, have continued collective abandonment of harmful practices and the sharing of positive cultural practices, and formed intercommunity organizations to sustain their projects and increase social mobilization activities. The stories of some of these successes are found on the following pages.
Senegal is the first country in which Tostan worked. We still facilitate the CEP in hundreds of communities here. Many new programs implemented in Senegal continue to spread across borders into other countries. The following story illustrates how Tostan both educates and advocates for human rights.

Preventing Forced Marriage

Every year, thousands of young girls across Senegal, some as young as 12 years, are forced into marriage by their families. Girls who marry at a young age lose the opportunity to continue their education and often experience the serious health consequences associated with early pregnancy and childbirth.

On February 14, 2008, in the southeastern region of Tambacounda, 16 year-old Kadiata learned that her father had given her in marriage to a man from a neighboring village without her consent. Upon hearing about the marriage, Kadiata fled to her maternal grandfather’s home.

Unfortunately, this did not resolve the problem. When Kadiata’s father learned of her actions, he threatened to leave her mother. Kadiata’s grandfather was torn between saving his daughter’s marriage or his granddaughter’s future. In the end, Kadiata’s grandfather asked her father to send a car to take Kadiata home and advised her to do what her father wanted.

Kadiata lost all hope. Not knowing where to turn, she told her aunt and uncle that she planned to end her life. That night, her aunt brought Kadiata to Tostan’s office in Tambacounda. When Ali Ba, Tostan’s Assistant Regional Coordinator in Tambacounda, learned the story, he passed the information to authorities in Tambacounda so that they could advocate for Kadiata’s wellbeing. The next day, Tambacounda’s regional tribunal for children was informed of the case.

The court deliberated and placed Kadiata in her uncle’s care until she turns 18. Disturbed by the case, the judge personally called Kadiata’s father, advising him to keep his distance from Kadiata and respect the court’s decision. Finally, Kadiata’s marriage was annulled.

Kadiata’s tale is one of many similar stories across Senegal. Communities across the country are declaring an end to child/forced marriage and other harmful practices as awareness spreads of the human rights of young girls. As awareness continues to spread, we hope that soon we will see an end to child/forced marriages in Africa.
**Communities Teaching Communities in the Gambia**

When the CEP participants in Basse Manneh Kunda, located in the Upper River Region (URR) of The Gambia, learned about the harmful effects of female genital cutting (FGC), they decided to share the information with neighboring communities. After completing the Kobi 2 (the health and hygiene module of the Tostan CEP), the participants led a social mobilization campaign to disseminate information about the health threats caused by the practice.

The ten-member team—which included the Community Management Committee (CMC) Coordinator, the village Imam (religious leader), the CMC health coordinator, and CEP participants—first held an awareness-raising meeting in their own village. After learning more about FGC, the people of Manneh Kunda decided to voluntarily and communally abandon the age-old practice. The social mobilization team, encouraged by this positive outcome, held two separate awareness-raising campaigns in which they visited 31 neighboring villages in the Upper River Region. By the end of these campaigns, 80% of the villages, including a village that had not previously been introduced to information in the CEP, signed a letter of intent to voluntarily abandon FGC, expressing their understanding of the human right to health and the harmful effects of the practice. In early 2009, the social mobilization team hopes to revisit all of these communities as well as embark on a new campaign to continue spreading their knowledge.

**Youth Taking the Lead**

From November 14–19, 2008, 80 youths, accompanied by 80 Tostan facilitators, organized a caravan in URR. The caravan visited five communities along the South Bank of the Gambia River and ended with a march through the town of Basse Santa Su, the largest town in the far eastern part of the country.

The youth caravan was an opportunity for adolescents from many of Tostan’s classes in the Upper River Region to come together, share their experiences, and make their concerns known to village leaders and regional officials. In each village they visited, the youth held a meeting in which they shared testimonies and dramas about what they learned in their Tostan classes. Issues frequently discussed at these meetings included teenage pregnancy and rape, child trafficking, education for girls, birth registration, malaria treatment and prevention, and access to clean water.

They ended at the Governor’s residence, where a forum was held on the concerns the youth expressed throughout the caravan. The final speaker presented the Governor with a manifesto concerning all the issues discussed.

These 80 youth have stepped forward as leaders in their community’s development. Their active engagement in their society offers hope for the future.

**Total Participating Communities: 80**

**Total Participants: 8,964**
On May 10, 2008, representatives from 70 communities in the prefectures of N’Zérékoré and Guèkedou gathered in the village of Níampara, 20 kilometers north of the city of N’Zérékoré, for an intervillage meeting. The gathering, which was organized by the communities themselves with the support of Tostan and UNICEF / Guinea, provided time to share the lessons participants learned during the first year of the CEP.

Twenty of the 70 communities at the meeting were participating in Tostan’s CEP. The other 50 villages had been “adopted” by the 20 participating communities so that those without the program could learn about human rights and responsibilities, democracy, problem solving, and health and hygiene. The CMC coordinators from the 20 Tostan villages presented their committees’ achievements since starting the CEP. They focused their presentations on concrete, community-wide results, such as birth registration and building improved wood-burning stoves. The CMC leaders then introduced the representatives from their adopted communities.

Níampara was chosen to host the intervillage meeting in part because the community holds special significance for the movement supporting FGC abandonment in the N’Zérékoré prefecture: it traditionally has jurisdiction over whether neighboring villages may or may not practice FGC. The President of the district—herself a member of the Tostan class—asked during the meeting that Níampara no longer authorize girls to be cut. The crowd applauded upon hearing the President’s request. In the course of further discussion, one man from a community in the Guèkedou prefecture shared a personal experience about how he lost his daughter to complications related to FGC. He felt that the education he received from Tostan reinforced what he already knew about the negative effects of the practice.

The meeting ended with the creation of a regional plan to promote health and human rights with particular emphasis on the abandonment of four common practices: FGC, child/forced marriage, child trafficking, and gender-based violence.

One unique aspect of this intervillage meeting compared with others was the inclusion of the theme of child trafficking. The Forest Region of Guinea has been host to thousands of refugees resulting from conflicts in neighboring Ivory Coast, Liberia, and Sierra Leone, and this population has been especially vulnerable to human trafficking.

The movement to promote health and human rights and abandon harmful traditional practices is growing in Guinea. This meeting represents an important step in that process and communities in Guinea are committed to build upon the foundations laid in Níampara.

GATHERING TO PROMOTE HEALTH AND HUMAN RIGHTS IN GUINEA

GUINEA

TOTAL PARTICIPATING COMMUNITIES: 200
TOTAL PARTICIPANTS: 5,259
In February 2008, Tostan centers throughout Somalia started the Kobi 2, in which participants learn about health and hygiene. At around the same time, villages near the Shabelle River of Somalia, including several villages where Tostan is implementing the CEP, experienced an outbreak of cholera. Communities used this as an opportunity to put the principles of community health that they had been learning in class into action. Tostan Somalia and our partner communities, in conjunction with NGO partner HAPO-CHILD, organized activities and events throughout the zone in order to raise awareness about cholera prevention and treatment. Working in the district town of Beledweyne and 24 surrounding villages, participants shared information about the importance of hygiene and the use of bleach to purify water. This campaign helped communities organize and bring an end to the cholera outbreak.

Four women Tostan participants have started a grassroots movement in the village of Arabsiyo, located in the North East Zone (Somaliland).

These women, all participants in the Tostan CEP, are running for seats in the National Assembly in the upcoming election. After learning about their human right to vote and run for office, they decided they had a responsibility to their communities to work for change through elected office. According to one of the women, “If we don’t actually dare to run for office, we will not be applying this important information from our new education sessions on democracy.” All four women are running on a platform of community health and education, which they see as vital to their community’s wellbeing.

Tostan joins with Somalian participants in celebrating these pioneers in Somali politics.
In Mauritania, castes and discrimination are entrenched traditions. The division between white and black Moors dates back hundreds of years when Berbers first came to northwest Africa and enslaved the local people. Historically, slavery and caste systems existed among the other ethnic groups as well. Today, some studies estimate that 20% of the population is still enslaved. Even in communities where slavery is not practiced, discrimination is rampant.

Tostan Mauritania is seeking to end this discrimination. The Community Empowerment Program (CEP) teaches the human right to be free from all forms of discrimination and urges communities to model this. Despite the fact that white Moors hold virtually all leadership positions in the country, several Tostan communities have elected black Moors to lead their Community Management Committees (CMCs), and many have sought to elect CMC members that represent the full spectrum of ethnic groups in their villages. These communities are also working to ensure that all people have access to the information being shared through the CEP, regardless of social status.

In the village of Taiba, for example, women from the lowest caste, the leather workers, have often been denied access to education.

In an effort to rectify this, several of these women were chosen as members of the Tostan class.

While the reality of discrimination in Mauritania will not change overnight, in 30 villages citizens are seeking to include their marginalized neighbors and openly discuss the problem creating a base from which a grassroots movement can grow.

**Politics as a Platform for Change**

Like many Tostan participants across Africa, members of CEP classes in Mauritania are learning about the importance of participating in the political process. After discussing the human right to vote and run for office, several participants decided to put their new knowledge into action.

In order to take a more active role in his community’s development, a participant from the village of Mbagne successfully ran for deputy mayor. The CMC coordinator in Bowdé was also elected deputy mayor so that he had more say in his community’s future.

In addition to running for office, many communities are teaming with their locally elected officials to share the information they are learning in classes with government authorities. In the Region of Brakna, communities worked with the regional Mayors Association to raise awareness about the harmful effects of traditional practices such as female genital cutting (FGC). Equipped with knowledge of democracy and human rights, Tostan participants are actively using the political process to work for positive change in their communities.
**Encouraging Dialogue on FGC in Djibouti**

Randa, a village of 1200 people in the region of Tadjourah, appears out of nowhere in the middle of the brush. At first glance, it seems an unlikely place for a social movement to begin. Yet on December 26, 2008, Randa hosted an inter-village meeting on ending female genital cutting, making it the center of a movement to abandon the practice in Djibouti.

Cheikh Houmed Siraj Barkad, a prominent religious leader, led the meeting, with the support of many local traditional chiefs, religious authorities, and elected officials. In front of hundreds of people, these authorities called for the total abandonment of FGC in Djibouti. The Cheikh’s presence was particularly important because he explained that Islam does not endorse FGC, dispelling a long-held misconception.

During the meeting, the audience asked questions and raised concerns about FGC, especially as it relates to religious practice. The Cheikh and other officials assured the audience that FGC was not necessary for purification or for Muslim identity. Later, local officials, traditional and religious authorities, and CMC members met to discuss future initiatives to raise awareness about the harmful effects of FGC. This dialogue on FGC in the communities of Tadjourah represented an important step in Djibouti’s progress toward abandonment.

---

**Total Participating Communities: 33**

**Total Participants: 1,482**

**Guinea Bissau**

**Laying the Foundations for Change in Guinea Bissau**

In 2008, Tostan took the first steps towards starting the Community Empowerment Program in Guinea Bissau.

According to the 2006 UN Human Development Report, the country is one of the poorest in the world, with a per capita GDP of US$182. The infant mortality rate (126 of 1,000 live births) and maternal mortality rate (1,100 of 100,000 live births) are among the world’s highest. Furthermore, 98% of the Islamic population practices FGC.

In order to help address these and other problems, Tostan worked with UNICEF, UNFPA, and the government of Guinea Bissau, to lay the groundwork for implementing the Tostan CEP. Tostan plans to fully launch our program in 2009, with the goal of increasing respect for human rights and abandoning harmful traditional practices.

To this end, in October 2008 Tostan staff conducted Community Situation and Site Studies in 50 communities. Of those 50, 39 were selected to participate in the program. Staff members in Guinea Bissau worked to translate program materials into local languages and prepared training materials for program facilitators and supervisors. The foundation for the program is set, and Tostan eagerly anticipates starting work in communities in Guinea Bissau in 2009.
Financial Support

Tostan would like to thank the major institutional, governmental, and foundation supporters that make our work possible.

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Anonymous Donors
International Spanish Cooperation Agency and Community of Madrid
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Jacob and Hilda Blaustein Foundation
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Danville High School
Judy Miller
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Kimberly Barnes
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Odile David
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Shelly Dodson
Harriet Elam-Thomas
Hugh Ewart
Amy Farris
Roxanne Friedman
Alison Fysh
Harold Gillespie
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Joan M. Warrick

$100 - $199

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Clayton Holt
Barbara Dunn
Julie and Edward Weil
Lawrence Slight
Loretta Breckenridge
Malvern Iles
Sandra Gooch
Steven Fuller
Virginia Paige
Wendie Diane Malick
Barbara R. Seavey
Barbara Trierweiler

We also acknowledge matching gifts by the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation and the Cleveland Dodge Foundation, and we would like to thank all donors who chose to give via Important Gifts/Changing the Present.
Finances

**Income (USD)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Income Category</th>
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<tr>
<td>Government Grants - including</td>
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<td>Bilateral and Multilateral</td>
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<td>Grants - Foundations and Trusts</td>
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**Expenditures (USD)**

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<tr>
<td>General &amp; Administrative</td>
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<td>Fundraising</td>
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**Expenditures by Country**

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<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Amount</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Tostan Intern</td>
<td>$706,418</td>
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<td>Gambia</td>
<td>$596,141</td>
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<td>$451,103</td>
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<td>Djibouti</td>
<td>$210,485</td>
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<td>Guinea Bissau</td>
<td>$195,762</td>
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<td>RIM</td>
<td>$159,621</td>
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<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>$71,595</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
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**Revenue by Year**

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<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>$405,890</td>
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<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>$787,426</td>
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<td>$1,102,768</td>
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<td>$2,421,507</td>
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<td>$2,387,522</td>
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<td>$4,221,389</td>
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<td>$5,820,540</td>
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<td>2008</td>
<td>$6,582,379</td>
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</table>
2008 was an incredible year for Tostan’s volunteer program! Growing from three volunteers in 2001 to welcoming 55 this year, our volunteer family is expanding at an exponential rate, as is volunteer contribution to our work.

What makes our program unique is that there is no “average” Tostan volunteer. Volunteers range in age from 18 to 65, from recent high school graduates to Ph.D. candidates. Some are new to the world of professional work or the nonprofit sector, others are changing careers or continuing their international volunteer service. They come from many countries, including the US, Canada, France, Sweden, Germany, Scotland, Argentina, Australia, Benin, and Senegal. This year, our volunteers contributed 240 months of service to our organization, at offices in Senegal, The Gambia, Guinea, and Somalia. They worked in curriculum development, monitoring and evaluation, micro-credit, regional operations, donor relations, project management, capacity building, marketing, and administration.

Tostan volunteers are so committed to our mission that they financially support their time with us and take time away from their families, jobs, and homes to join us. The enthusiasm, skills, and knowledge of these 55 volunteers have greatly contributed to our success in 2008. We thank them for their hard work and dedication.

The Gambia
- Erik Asplund (Sweden)
- Leah Ghoston (US)
- Magnus Hedberg (Sweden)
- Meg Smith (US)
- Bjorn Westerdahl (Sweden)

Guinea
- Nana Ndow (UK)
- Curtis Young (US)

Senegal
- Jessica Andes (US)
- Graham Baggott (UK)
- Clemence Bessiere (France)
- Rowan Braybrook (US)
- Sophie Bresny (France)
- Jessie Brown (US)
- Kevin Brown (US)
- Laura Buback (US)
- Catherine Burns (US)
- Adriana Catena (Argentina)
- Martha Chahary (US)
- Guillaume Debar (France)
- Myriam Dems (France)
- Marius Djego (Benin)
- Jonathan Dunnill (US)
- Clara Dutton (US)
- Jillian Emerson (US)
- Jenny Evans (US)
- Celine Giuliani (France)
- Claire Groby (US/France)
- Miranda Hall (US)
- Jess Hamilton (Canada)
- Amalia Johnsson (Sweden)
- Kim Karels (US)
- Jessie Karnes (US)
- Eva Kersey (US)
- Christina LaPorte (US)

Germany, Scotland, Argentina, Australia, Benin, and Senegal. This year, our volunteers contributed 240 months of service to our organization, at offices in Senegal, The Gambia, Guinea, and Somalia. They worked in curriculum development, monitoring and evaluation, micro-credit, regional operations, donor relations, project management, capacity building, marketing, and administration. Tostan volunteers are so committed to our mission that they financially support their time with us and take time away from their families, jobs, and homes to join us. The enthusiasm, skills, and knowledge of these 55 volunteers have greatly contributed to our success in 2008. We thank them for their hard work and dedication.

Nadine Marti (Switzerland)
- Stephanie Mulet-Marquis (France)
- Sarah Nehrling (US)
- Jenna Nishimura (US)
- Francisco Perez (US)
- Katherine Philipson (US)
- Adrienne Raphael (US)
- Amie Ritchie (Canada)
- Evelyn Sallah (US)
- Inbal Samin (US)
- Adrienne Siebert (US)
- Carly Stewart (US)
- Tala Talaei (Iran/US)
- Carolyn Tan (Australia)
- Emi Tardy (Sweden)
- DeMaris Trapp (US)
- Elizabeth Walsh (US)
- Zoe Weinberg (US)

Megan Williams (US)
- Victoria Wilson (US)

Somalia
- Iain McLellan (Scotland)

Washington, DC
- Kelly Bauhofer (US)
- Kate Black (US)
- Heidi Davis (US)
- Ambler Mauger (US)
- Megan Phillips (US)
- Emma Schroder (US)
- Julia Slocum (US)
- Molly Wilkin (US)
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Molly Melching
Executive Director

Jen Hedrick
Director of Operations

Gannon Gillespie
Director, US Operations

Anne-Charlotte Ringquist
Director, Tostan Sweden

Sabine Panet
Director, Tostan France
Anne Williams, Chair

Falilou Cisse
Coordinator, Djibouti

Bakary Tamba
Coordinator, The Gambia

Mohammed el Kebir Basse
Coordinator, Guinea

Alassane Diedhiou
Coordinator, Guinea Bissau

Mamadou Baba Aw
Coordinator, Mauritania

Khalidou Sy
Coordinator, Senegal

Oumar Name
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If you would like more information about Tostan, our programs, and how to support our work, please visit our website (www.Tostan.org) or contact us at one of the following offices:

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