



December 2012

Dear Tostan Friends and Supporters,

I am very excited to share with you historic news that took place this December: 115 Tostan partner communities in Guinea-Bissau held two public declarations specifically to declare their decision to ensure that all human rights are respected in their villages. These declarations marked the first time that participants of Tostan's [Community Empowerment Program](#) (CEP) have collectively decided to not only abandon the practices of [female genital cutting](#) (FGC) and [child/forced marriage](#), but also embrace all human rights and responsibilities.

Coinciding with [International Human Rights Day](#) on December 10, the first human rights declaration took place in Cambadju in the region of Bafata in eastern Guinea-Bissau. Representatives from 75 communities gathered to publicly declare their commitment to human rights at this declaration, which was also the very first declaration to take place in the country. [You can read more about this historic event on our website.](#)

I was honored to attend the second human rights declaration which took place in the village of Pirada on December 20. I feel the words spoken at the event by CMC Coordinator Maimuna Djau embodied the transformation these declarations represent. She shared, "Before learning about my human rights, I never spoke publicly. Now I see how important it is to be able to express myself and share my opinion. These classes have given us something that can never be taken away – I will have this knowledge until I die!" [Learn more about the personal stories shared at the declaration.](#)

Their commitment to understanding and supporting the human rights of all people will have a lasting impact on their communities for generations. Please celebrate their extraordinary actions with me and the entire Tostan family.

Warm wishes,

Molly Melching

Executive Director



The CMC Coordinator from Calenque Fula in Guinea-Bissau holds her human rights sign which reads in creole: "[The right to] have a name, family, and nationality: yes!"

P.S. There will be another human rights declaration in Guinea-Bissau on January 8. Stay tuned for updates and photos from the event!

On December 22, over 1000 people gathered in the village of Mabo in Senegal to collectively declare their decision to abandon FGC and child/forced marriage. This was a unique declaration because it resulted solely from [social mobilization efforts](#). All of the 70 declaring villages were engaged in the movement to abandon harmful traditional practices by community social mobilization teams, as opposed to being direct participants in the CEP.



Tostan Founder Molly Melching spoke on the movement to abandon FGC on December 4-5 at the [Trust Women Conference](#), a conference which aims to empower women to know and defend their own rights. While the conference focused mostly on national law, Molly reinforced that "community law that comes from within; this is when you really have long-lasting change."



[Learn more about this declaration in Mabo](#) as well as additional declarations that took place this month in [Bantunding](#) and [Hella Kunda, The Gambia](#).

U.N. General Assembly adopts resolution that bans FGC

On the same day, December 20, that 40 communities in Guinea-Bissau declared their promotion of human rights and the abandonment of harmful practices such as FGC, the [U.N. General Assembly](#) passed an international resolution that calls for direct efforts to end female genital cutting.



Read about the potential impact of this resolution in a [Trust Law article quoting Gannon Gillespie, Tostan Director of Strategic Development](#), as well as [updates from our partner, Orchid Project](#).

When communities lead, communities succeed: donate now!

As a part of our year-end fundraising campaign, [we are highlighting different stories from Community Management Committees \(CMCs\)](#). CMCs plan and carry out local initiatives and truly lead the way in community development, providing inspiration as we head into 2013.



[Read their stories on our blog](#), and [support their efforts by donating today and sharing this campaign with your friends and family](#).

DONATE NOW



Click on the icons above to donate and stay connected with Tostan.

To find out more about upcoming events and ongoing projects, please visit our [website](#). Tostan is a US 501(c)(3) nongovernmental organization based in Senegal, West Africa.

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