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1 THE APPLICATION PROCESS

1.1 *I am interested in interning/volunteering with Tostan. Where can I find more information about applying?*

We accept Volunteer/Interns from all over the world in a very competitive venue. For more information about applying, please visit our website at www.tostan.org. There, you will find both

the answers to most of your questions about our program and our work as well as our standard application form available to download. On our homepage, select the "Take action" link on the upper bar, and then click on the "Volunteer and Intern" link. If you click on "Africa Volunteer Program", you will find two documents that are very helpful in this process: the application and a document on costs and considerations. Please read the costs and considerations document, fill out the application entirely, and e-mail it to volunteer@tostan.org along with your most current resume or CV, a letter of motivation, and two short writing samples (one in English and one in French if you are applying for a position in a Francophone country). We will then review your application.

1.2 *What is the application process?*

After sending your application, resume or CV, letter of motivation, and two short writing samples (in French and English) to the volunteer coordinator (volunteer@tostan.org), s/he will review your completed application. If placement is a possibility, the coordinator will contact you to set up a phone discussion via Skype, roughly 3 months before your intended departure date, to exchange more about you and Tostan.

1.3 *For which countries can I apply to work?*

We are currently placing volunteers in Senegal, the Gambia, Guinea, and Guinea-Bissau.

1.4 *Is there any required educational or work experience?*

There are no specific requirements, but you must be over 18 years old to apply, and preference is given to applicants with college experience. Some volunteers have found it useful to have had a clear theoretical and practical base in a specific area, such as microcredit or women's empowerment. Other volunteers say that it is helpful to come with only general skills, which leaves the volunteer and his or her experience open and flexible to the needs of the organization and the opportunities that arise.

2 LANGUAGE

2.1 *Is there a language requirement?*

For all our volunteer positions in Francophone countries, we ask that volunteers be proficient in French, with very operational oral proficiency, as we work in a francophone environment. For volunteer positions in the Gambia and Guinea Bissau, French is an asset.

2.2 *I speak little or no French. Can I still volunteer with Tostan?*

At the present time, all of our volunteer positions in Francophone countries are for candidates who are highly competent in French. If you speak little or no French, you may consider applying for open positions in the Gambia.

2.3 *Can you suggest resources to improve my French before I arrive?*

It's a good idea to take a French class or two, where possible, to brush up and learn more. I'd also suggest supplementing this learning with a few more activities. Conversational partners are always fun and beneficial - check with a local exchange group, university, or ESL/TOEFL/TESOL center for possibilities. Also, check about becoming a bit of a Francophile; go to French lectures and events if possible, rent some French videos, download or borrow some French music and Podcasts. If you really have the time and the means, look into a short session at an immersion situation, such as the Concordia Language Camps.

2.4 *Should I bring a French dictionary and grammar books?*

There are some old copies of a French textbook or dictionary at both the Dakar and Thies volunteer houses, but they are not necessarily good ones. If you already have these books and would use them, I'd suggest you bring them with you. If you would go out and buy them, think about the possibility of buying them here - it will lighten your luggage on the way here, but the downside is that it will be a little more expensive and will probably not have English guidance in the grammar book.

2.5 *In what language does the volunteer orientation take place?*

Orientation takes places principally in English, even if some sessions are in French. This is due to the fact that the majorities of our volunteers are from English-speaking countries or understand English better than French. If this poses a significant problem for you, please let the volunteer coordinator know.

3 VOLUNTEER WORK AND LIFE

3.1 *How many volunteers do you welcome per year and what are their backgrounds?*

Every year we welcome around 20 volunteers, ranging in age from about 22 to 30, with BA/BS, Masters work, or completed Masters. Some are new to the NGO world, some to the world of professional work in general; others are on their second careers or continuing after Peace Corps

or other international volunteer service. Volunteers come from the US, France, Great Britain, Congo, Sweden... In the past, we have had volunteers from West Africa, Germany, Sweden, Italy, Ireland, Argentina, and Australia.

3.2 *What is the typical living situation for a volunteer?*

Each volunteer is provided his own bed in a shared room (1-2 people) with volunteers of the same sex. There is a space to cook in, a bathroom, and mosquito nets are provided. Other than these minimal requirements, the living situation depends a bit on the position/city.

A Dakar volunteer lives in a large city with access to nightlife and large supermarkets (read: + lots of conveniences and options, -more expensive), but sometimes suffers the inconveniences of living in a capital city in a developing country, such as water and electricity outages, roaches, and an overall smaller living space. There are sometimes water shortages, so we fill up large plastic barrels at night from which we take "bucket showers" and get water for other activities. Dakar volunteers love the nightlife, the expat community, and the shopping, and despise the water outages!

A Thies volunteer lives in a semi-large city, a 2-4 hour ride from Dakar, with access to most conveniences but a limited nightlife and organized social scene. He also deals with water and electricity outages, but less so. The house has a rather large common space where volunteers spend time relaxing and taking advantage of the wireless internet (may still be there, may not, in a few months). Thies volunteers enjoy the calm city but long for social opportunities!

The regional volunteer situations vary quite a bit. In each, the volunteer lives within the house-like office building, in a room that is clearly a bedroom - not an office - with a bed, an armoire, a bathroom (usually running water, sometimes not), and a space with at least minimal cooking capacities (a gas stove, basic pots and pans, plastic storage containers). In some regional offices, other staff spend weeknights, and rarely weekends as well, in the office - sometimes you will be asked to share your room with staff members visiting for a meeting or other event. The city, a regional capital, will have at least the very basics: a daily market with at least a few vegetables and fruits (availability and variety depends on season), at least one "epicerie" with some chips, noodles, and other Western basics, a bank, a post office, a gare routiere, a few restaurants of varying quality, ... Living in the regions is a budget deal, partially because you don't have many expensive options and partially because you are getting food at the source. Regional offices vary in distance from Dakar, the closest being 1.5 hours away and the furthest about 14 hours. Regional volunteers miss living with other volunteers (although they're integrating the Peace Corps scene more and more), but they love being able to work often in the villages and feeling more immersed in Senegalese culture!

3.3 *I have an extenuating circumstance that will prevent me from living in the volunteer house. Will Tostan provide me with or help me find alternative housing?*

Unfortunately, we are unable to cover alternate housing expenses. The housing market in Dakar

is getting a bit rough, but it all depends on your budget. You can get a small, non-furnished room with a shared bathroom (possibly outside) in a quartier populaire for about 50.000 CFA/month. Starting around 100 - 150,000 CFA/month, you can get an apartment in a nicer area with a bedroom, bathroom, and small kitchen area, still non-furnished. If you're looking for something rather Western and pretty, budget more. For furnishing basics, budget around 250,000 CFA.

Unfortunately, we will not be able to provide logistical support with the search - our logistics staff is kept quite busy with other tasks and projects. We can sometimes help get you some names and numbers, however. It is best to just come and start looking for an apartment once you arrive, to make sure that you like the neighborhood, know the state of the place, etc. In between, we may be able to help you work out temporary housing, either in our volunteer house if space permits, or in finding an apartment that rents daily, to avoid larger hotel expenses.

3.4 *Is communication expensive in Senegal?*

Yes, telephone communication is rather expensive in Senegal. You can buy a cell phone for around 15.000 CFA for a base model. Local calls (Senegal) cost between 75 and 100CFA/minute during the day, more for calls to landlines (200-250CFA) and less during the night (50-75CFA). International calls from a cell phone cost between 300 and 400CFA/minute and a little less from public telecentres. Text messages cost 20CFA/text locally and 100CFA/text internationally. The office phone is only for work-related calls except in cases of extreme emergency. You shouldn't have any problems accessing the internet in Dakar and Thiès, while other areas of Senegal may have connection problems and higher prices. Tostan offices are open all day on weekdays, for personal internet use during break and reasonable non-work hours. Another option is to go to a public cyber café, which will cost around 300CFA/hour in larger cities and between 500 and 3.000CFA/hour in more remote locations.

3.5 *I am vegetarian/vegan. Will this be accommodated?*

As the Costs and Considerations packet noted, we will do the best we can to accommodate special requests, concerns, diets, etc. However, in a country where fish is a staple and meat is a luxury, please do know that a vegetarian diet will be a difficult to respect, with a vegan diet being even more challenging. While milk products and most other byproducts are relatively easy to avoid (outside of milk in your coffee, yogurt snacks, and congealed cheese and butter on your bread, it is rarely in meals), most, if not all, local dishes do have some type of meat or fish in them. Also, eggs are the cheapest way to get protein in most places, so they can be a staple of certain people's diets.

We will do our best to accommodate you during meal times - which usually means a separate plate of rice and veggies or eating around the common bowl, but around the meat as well. However, please be prepared for times when we cannot meet this need, especially during field visits. I would suggest you research what is necessary to maintaining a vegan diet, that you bring extra vitamins (usually cheaper elsewhere than in West Africa) and that you be ready to eat

lots of beans! There have been volunteers who have successfully respected these dietary restrictions, but if not done cautiously, you risk letting it take a toll on your health, your budget, your time, and your ability to accept hospitality. PLEASE, most importantly of all, remind the Volunteer Coordinator of this fact in big bold letters on your Emergency Contact Info form; this will allow him/her to do the most possible to prepare for your dietary preferences before your arrival.

3.6 *How long do volunteers serve?*

The minimum commitment for volunteer service at Tostan is one year. This period allows them the time to adjust to the new cultural and professional environments, which in turns helps them become productive, integrated members of our team. Such volunteers are also able to provide a certain level of continuity for the projects with which they are involved.

3.7 *How much time will I spend doing office work vs. fieldwork?*

It depends a bit on the position, but the regional volunteer positions probably have the largest percentage of fieldwork of all of our positions. Of course, fieldwork in the regions is dependent on your involvement, initiative, and the time of year you are here (Sept - Dec is usually rather busy, along with Feb - May/June). We do ask all of our volunteers to do a fair amount of administrative work, especially reports, proposals, and village snapshots for donors. We also ask them to work on capacity reinforcement activities with their regional staff, namely in the areas of report writing, English language, and computer skills.

3.8 *What hours are volunteers expected to work?*

You are expected to keep the same hours as your colleague, which usually means about 8h15 to 13h30, an hour for lunch, and then 14h30 to 18h00. These hours vary in the regions but still average to about 8 hours a day, with intermittent downtime and sometimes the occasional long hours on missions or to meet deadlines. Volunteers usually don't have a problem finding the time for other extracurricular activities, such as language lessons, other volunteer activities, and social outings. Volunteers also receive 2 weeks of vacation time for every 6 months they commit to volunteering, valid after their first 3 months with us.

4 HEALTH

4.1 *Do I need a rabies shot?*

The CDC recommends a rabies shot for those working in a rural area. The truth is, there are certain streets of DAKAR that are "rural areas"! Farm animals walk the streets around here along

with feral cats and stray dogs.

It's true that the vaccine is quite expensive, so look around for your best option. Check with your insurance for any coverage they may offer you. Check with travel clinics to see if you can get a discounted rate at a certain time of year or with certain qualifications.

4.2 *Do I need a yellow fever shot?*

The Yellow Fever International Vaccination Certificate is needed to travel to a few surrounding countries (including the Gambia), and it's just not a disease that you would want to risk. The shot is valid for 10 years, so it's expensive but it lasts.

4.3 *Should I take a malaria prophylaxis, and if so, which one? Are there dangers from prolonged use?*

You have to be on a malaria prophylaxis for the duration of your service. As far as malaria medicine, you just have to weigh your options. Larium can give you crazy dreams, Malarone can affect your liver, doxycycline is less effective and makes you sun-sensitive - but NOT taking anything is rather dangerous. Having some level of prophylaxis in your body means that, if you do get malaria, it will be less serious and more easily treatable. Please seek medical advice from your family physician prior to your arrival in Senegal.

5 TRAVEL

5.1 *Do I need to get a visa to get into Senegal?*

Citizens of African countries that are members of UMOA and ECOWAS do not need a visa, regardless of their length of stay. Some nationalities may enter Senegal without a visa, and have the right to stay up to 3 months without one (Canada, Israel, Japan, Taiwan, United States, EU countries). If possible, we strongly encourage you to get a visa before coming to Senegal (by far the easiest); otherwise, you can apply for a prolongation within the country (long and bureaucratic). If you are not a citizen of the countries listed above, consult the Senegal Embassy website for more information: www.consulsenny.org

5.2 *How much luggage should I bring?*

A large backpack and a suitcase should suffice, easily. Of course, some people come with just a duffel bag and others come with 3 suitcases... Know that many things are available in Dakar, but the cost, brand, quality, etc.. As long as you're not paying too much for overweight luggage, you have brought those rare and hard-to-find items, and you're planning to replace some clothes and

toiletry space with some souvenirs, etc., on your way home, you should be fine. Make sure to bring a good solid lock for your chest at the volunteer house.

5.3 *What materials do I need to bring with me?*

If you will be living in a Tostan volunteer house, the materials that you need to bring with you are minimal. There are 2-3 volunteers of the same sex per room and the houses are equipped with essential items: curtains, mosquito nets, pots, pans, utensils, buckets, etc. On the other hand, we don't have a lot of electronics available. Therefore we ask volunteers to bring personal electronics that could be useful in their work, such as laptops, digital cameras, and video recorders. Given our limited stock, if you already own these items, it would be an asset to bring them. If you don't own any of these and you can't afford to purchase them, we can try to arrange something.

5.4 *Should I bring my hiking boots?*

You're probably not going to use them, almost definitely not around here. Some volunteers have gone hiking in a great spot in Eastern Senegal, but most volunteers go elsewhere when they travel. If they're heavy, bulky, and you're not a serious hiker with plans to find a place to go hiking, then they are not worth bringing. Most volunteers bring Chacos and/or a pair of tennis shoes for anything that requires more than flip-flops.