

Kolda Villages Receive Anna Lindh Prize

Each Tostan office is currently undertaking the joyful task of giving the prize money from the Anna Lindh award to chosen villages in their respective region. These villages have all participated in



the Tostan education program and have shown particularly excellent work in protecting human rights and promoting social change. The awarded villages have been models and leaders for their neighboring communities. Program years before, and including the 2001-2004 session, make up the recipients.

Tostan received the international Anna Lindh prize for its

positive contributions to health and human rights. The prize is named after the Swedish Minister for Foreign Affairs known for her dedication to human rights and gender equality. Assassinated in Stockholm in September of 2003, her work has lived on with the establishment of this award.

The meeting location for the Kolda prize event was an appropriate choice. In 2001, Medina Samba Kandé began the Tostan education program. The community soon took a primary role in activities that would lead to the 2004 public declaration against female genital cutting and early and forced marriage. Set in the rural district of Velingara, east of Kolda, Medina Samba Kandé is a village of about 500 people. The villagers use their many large fields for growing corn, peanuts, cotton, beans, and manioc.



Lala.Baldé, village representative, speaks on behalf of her village.

It was in this beautiful setting that the preparations for the many arriving guests began. The previous day, a cow was slaughtered and a large load of rice, onions, potatoes, bread, butter, and seasoning was dropped off for the weekend's meals. With two representatives from each of the 20 awarded villages attending the event, there was a constant flow of arrivals. Many traveled from several hours away for this opportunity to not only receive their awards, but to meet fellow participants and celebrate the success of the Tostan program. All three departments, Velingara, Kolda, and Sedhiou, were represented.

The morning of Sunday July 30th started off on two good notes. It rained for the first time since July 5th and news was received that the Tostan-Kolda secretary, currently on maternity leave, had just



given birth to a healthy baby girl. After a morning of breakfast and mingling, the party listened to music by griots who arrived from the local village of Lingawal. A song was played about the importance of learning to read and write in Pulaar. With the arrival of the sub-prefect, Boubacar Diallo, a little after two, the ceremony was ready to begin. Others present include radio journalist Abdalay Mballo, Tostan Regional Coordinator Baba Aw, and numerous Tostan facilitators and supervisors.

The awards began with opening speeches by Tostan staff members. Each village was then announced, and their delegate had an opportunity to say a few

Woman singing about the importance of literacy.

words to the crowd. Everyone thanked the Tostan program, and often cited the hard work and dedication of their village's supervisor and facilitator. Tostan staff then spoke of the importance of the meeting and their thoughts on the program's success. Following a few words from Baba Aw, each village was again called upon to receive their awarded money.

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Village representatives accepting the prize.

Awarded Villages	
Médina Chérif	250,000 cFa
Karcia	250,000 cFa
Bagadadji	250,000 cFa
Mampatim	250,000 cFa
Médina S. Kandé	250,000 cFa
Salikégné	100,000 cFa
Maka Pakao	100,000 cFa
Dialicounda	100,000 cFa
Témento Goundo	100,000 cFa
Couboni	100,000 cFa
Katabina	100,000 cFa
Dassilamé	100,000 cFa
Soutouré	100,000 cFa
Fass Diayé	100,000 cFa
Dianabo	100,000 cFa
Thioubouck	100,000 cFa
Diop Counda	100,000 cFa
Médina Y. Fouta	100,000 cFa
Maranda	100,000 cFa

Some had not known about the money or the exact amount and were thrilled at the news. Fourteen villages received 100,000 cFa (approx. 200 dollars), five villages received 250,000 cFa (\$500) and one association of villages received 400,000 cFa (\$800). The villages who received a greater sum were those that hosted the five landmark public declarations that have taken place in Kolda since the program began. The grand total of money given was 3,050,000 cFa (\$6,100). With Tostan support if needed, the villagers will decide to what purpose the money will be spent. The prize is indeed a great aid in continuing the work that the villages have begun through the Tostan program.

The event ended with a concluding prayer and final words by the sous-prefect. He emphasized that development can not occur without the active inclusion of women and he urged the villages to continue the work that they have begun through the Tostan program. The speech showed clearly the depth of the local government's appreciation for and understanding

of Tostan's work. With these last words the music began again, and in high spirits, those in attendance danced in celebration. An early evening dinner followed by many warm good-byes ended this full and successful day!



Those in attendance gather for one last dance.