



Update: SHE and Tostan Begin Solar Cooking Partnership In Senegal

March 9, 2008, Thiès, Senegal

Dear Friends,

Last Sunday, Solar Household Energy and Tostan had a very successful training session for the Senegal Solar Cooking Initiative, a project we are implementing in partnership with 21 Community Management Committees in villages in the Thiès region. Over the last week, I joined Dame Guèye, Tostan Community Management Committee Coordinator, and Kiné Seck, SHE Program Trainer, as they conducted four demonstrations for representatives of five to six villages. Each village sent three women to the demonstration who, among themselves, chose one woman who was going to be the point person for each village. This point person will conduct daily demonstrations until the HotPots are distributed in the villages at which point they will support the program participants with solar cooking tips, advice and short training sessions.

During the training session Kiné Seck and Madame Touré, SHE training assistant, led the 21 women in cooking six dishes—we had planned on five dishes so that they could see a range but one woman did not believe Madame Touré's assertion that for a certain type of cake there was no need to add water to the powdered milk; we ended up cooking two cakes so that they could understand that solar cooking did indeed require less water for things like cakes and meat dishes. They cooked fish, rice, beans, millet porridge (millet flour cooked in

water and then mixed with locally made yoghurt) and two cakes. As the food cooked we went into the training room where the trainers explained how the HotPot worked and spoke of their solar cooking experience. The group discussed foods which could be cooked in the HotPot and the foods which could not be cooked in the HotPot as well as the advantages of solar cooking for health, savings, the environment and girls' education. Our trainers shared the experiences of the women who participated in Solar Household Energy's Senegal pilot project; the women were particularly interested in the savings reported on cooking gas as well as cooking oil, an expensive staple. There was lively participation—Touré noted to me that the quality of the questions asked by the women showed that the exposure they got through the demonstrations was a very important step.

Towards the end of the training the participants got to taste all the dishes and were delighted. The cakes were the first to be ready for consumption after one hour and fifteen minutes and were greatly appreciated. We ended the session by having the participants practice how to unfold, set up and fold their cardboard reflectors. The point persons had not seen the cardboard reflectors and were at first hesitant to believe that these were as efficient as the metal reflectors but they quickly saw that the food cooked just as fast. They were also interested in the locally manufactured reflector made of recycled printing plates. We explained that we are still in the test phase for this reflector, and if it proved viable they would have a local supply in Mekhre.

We are to meet the whole group again on March 27 by which time the point persons will have conducted daily



Trainer Kiné Seck demonstrates the pot before closing the lid to allow for heat retention

demonstrations and started collecting names of interested buyers in their communities. Between now and March 26, Kiné Seck will visit each village and help the point person conduct a demonstration, I will accompany her all next week and Dame Guèye will accompany her the following week. This support will strengthen the confidence of the

point person, preparing her for her role as primary support to new users in the village. The meeting of the 27th will also include the team from the University of Berkeley who will begin conducting a study to measure the health and economic benefits of solar cooking.

Having the Senegalese experts lead the training was extremely helpful as they could share solar cooking experience in Wolof and relate what worked for them in terms of local dishes. The trainers were excited to be working with Tostan to extend solar cooking's reach in Senegal!

**Best,
Marie-Ange Binagwaho
Executive Director, Solar Household Energy**

P.S. I had a copy of the El Salvador recipe book and it was very popular! The women loved the pictures and were impressed that women were using the HotPot for such a variety of dishes. There is now a demand for a Wolof translation!



A participant prepares the sauce for rice and fish (thiebu denn)



Outside the training room at the Tostan Training Center in Thiès