

The Camel Express



Newsletter of the Friends of Niger

August 2021

Friends of Niger PO Box 452 Haverford, PA 19041

In this issue:

1. Board News: Nominate yourself or other friends of Niger to the board
2. Four new projects funded after rigorous selection process
3. Boston University Alumni Corner
4. New Horticultural Center to open in Liboré
5. The Sahel: What Needs to Change, People's Coalition for the Sahel.
6. "Ruminations on the value of the Peace Corps experience "
7. News from Niger

From the Editors

Dear readers,

There is a lot of great news and activity to share! We just finished up our first round of scheduled grant-making after reviewing 22 requests! Thanks to 12 project reviewers we selected 4 projects to fund this time around. We have board member elections coming up soon, and there are always opportunities to serve on committees and do special projects. Please think about getting more involved with FON soon!

Ismagil Ag Moussa, Amy Wilson

1) Friends of Niger Board update: Nominate yourself or other friends of Niger to the join the board

What does the FON Board of Directors do, you may ask?

We are representatives elected by you, and meet regularly to further FON's mission to connect our membership, support development in Niger, and advocate for the benefit of Niger. Our activities in the past year included:

- In the fall of 2020, we responded to the health and shelter needs occasioned by flooding in Niger with a successful special appeal to provide needed items such as malaria medications and bed nets.
- We followed up with multiple long-term projects we have supported in Niger.
- Despite COVID, we managed to gather for a Zoom retreat in October, where we learned more about the realities in Niger in the years since we have worked there, updated our mission statement, and laid the groundwork for an overhaul of the projects process
- We planned and implemented the new projects process, with a successful round in June of our now twice-yearly applications cycle. Our existing board members and committee members were joined by several volunteers from among our FON membership who gave their time to help review project applications.
- Throughout the year, we maintained careful accounting and financial oversight
 - We reached out to you all regularly through the 1) [Annual Member Letter](#), 2) [Camel Express](#), and 3) [new Facebook Group](#)

Would you like to be part of this interesting and important work?

It will soon be time to elect board members! We are looking for a few new board members to help us continue our existing efforts, and imagine ways to expand and improve the ways we serve our membership and fulfill our mission. New board members will be asked to commit to a two-year term, during which time they will participate in monthly full board meetings via Zoom, as well as work on at least one committee. We also welcome non-board members to help us with committee work, especially the projects committee, where we are in need of regular committee members to keep the projects process moving and improving, as well as volunteer reviewers who participate in 2-3 meetings over a brief period of time to help the committee evaluate the applications we receive. The next cycle of project applications is planned for November.

If you are interested in being a board member, committee member, and/or project reviewer, or in nominating someone else for one of these roles, , please contact the President [president@friendsofniger.org], Camel Express editor [camelexpressnewsletter@gmail.com], or any other board member to learn more.

2) Four new projects funded after rigorous selection process

We are thrilled to announce funding for a new round of projects totaling approximately \$16,250*. Project selection was accomplished through our new, rigorous competitive process. Many thanks to our "Friends of" group colleagues, including Nepal, Tanzania and Burkina, and the Portland OR RPCV group, who shared ideas and information about how they select and fund projects. We cobbled together all the best ideas and we think our maiden voyage was a success. We received 22 applications for funding from a variety of groups and a wide range of projects. After sorting out 3 that did not meet basic eligibility criteria, a team of 12 volunteers reviewed and scored the remaining applications. Following lively debate and discussions, 4 applications were selected for funding. Those that were not selected received feedback on what we liked about their proposals and how they might be more competitive next time.

Many thanks are also due to JoAnn Lewis and Alix Barstow Fedoruk who contributed lots of thoughtful, constructive input to the new process. And **HIP HIP HOORAY** for the review team members: Mary Abrams, Ismaghil Ag Moussa, Steven Anderson, John Baird, Kimberly Dixon, Alix Barstow Fedoruk, JoAnn Lewis, Dane Miller, Yari Rabiou, Cheryl Turner, Pamela White, and Amy Wilson.

**Please note \$ amounts shown here reflect the amount requested in cfa and are approximated in dollars; actual amounts are dependent on exchange rates.*

PROJECTS ACCEPTED FOR FUNDING:

Tchizamene Clinic Solar Batteries & Beds, Organisation Vie et Développement ~ \$3,175
Organisation Vie et Développement demonstrated their cooperation in 2020 by implementing a FON small grant-funded emergency response project, providing medical supplies in the Agadez area. This successful proposal will replace 12 year-old batteries for the solar array for the health clinic and purchase 10 beds and mattresses. The clinic serves about 10,000 people in the Village of Tchizamnene, Commune of Dannat, Agadez Region. There are two nurses, one midwife and her assistant at the clinic. The batteries will improve capacity for refrigeration of essential medicines.

Bangiya Elementary School Desks, Bangiya Village Cooperative ~ \$1,401

The Cooperative in the village of Bangiya near Zinder has been awarded funding to supply a new classroom with desks. This project follows the successful implementation of a classroom construction project previously funded directly by individual members of FON in December 2020. FON Board

member Yari RABIOU has already delivered the funds for this project and visited the site while he was visiting in country in July 2021. The grant will fund the purchase of 30 table-benches for the Bangiya elementary school. (A video will be uploaded soon).

Sécurisation contre la chenille mineuse de l'épi du mil. Potentiel Terre ~ \$4,855

Potentiel Terre will implement a program to breed and reintroduce an indigenous wasp that attacks millet boring insects. The program will also provide training so that it can carry into the future with local people producing and distributing the wasps. As many as 20,000 households hope to benefit from a reduction of crop loss in the commune of Mokko.

Vocational Training for School Dropouts, Incarcerated and Unemployed Youth. Centre de Formation des Artisans de Maradi ~ \$5,000

The Centre de Formation des Artisans de Maradi is working with prison officials to provide youth training in various vocational programs. A 13-month program will be delivered for up to 20 participants for approximately \$350 each. Training will include literacy, technical writing, basic accounting and entrepreneurship to the trainees.

In other project news –

A \$10,000 grant to Kirker Foundation/Niger last year helped cover costs for ground transportation and delivery for a significant shipment of medical supplies. As with previous shipments, the medicines and supplies were selected in close cooperation with the Ministry of Health to ensure they are used appropriately throughout Niger's health care system, greatly expanding the capacity to meet the needs during the pandemic. A video of the shipment being received in Zinder can be viewed at

<https://youtu.be/PkIlrYKbRxY>

3) BU Alumni Corner

With Sue Rosenfeld's passing, the glue that previously held the various program years of BU Niger together thinned considerably. Since my academic year in Niamey (2006-2007), I had kept in regular contact with Sue, accustomed to her predawn missives. Through Sue, though not exclusively, I was able to keep a window open to Niger and to the other students who spent time there. It might be an understatement to say that Sue was the head of our informal alumni association. It was a privilege to hear so many different stories during the online memorials held in her honor.

Without our dear *fono nya*, our alumni group may well drift off like the sands of the Sahel. Although Friends of Niger has historically been connected to Returned Peace Corps Volunteers, its membership is not exclusive. We'd like to dedicate space for some of the stories and experiences of the BU Niger alumni, either during their semester(s) in Niger or in the time since, and offer other opportunities to connect for this group. If you were a BU Niger student and would like to share an experience here or learn more about how to engage with FON, please contact Dane "Jadi" Miller at mucigaba@gmail.com.

4) New Horticultural Center to open in Liboré

The Dov Center Niger's preeminent Horticultural Training Center opening Spring 2022 in Liboré, will train horticultural technicians to support agricultural cooperatives across Niger, increasing food and economic security for 50,000 farmers, their families and communities over 5 years. Tom & Patsy Lightbown, Niger 1965-67 invite you to join them in helping to furnish classrooms, cafeteria and dormitories.

Read more about the center [DOV Center](#).

The Dov Center: From architect's rendering to reality!



November 24, 2020—Cornerstone is laid



January 23, 2021—Admin. building



April 8, 2021—Progress!



June 4, 2021—Almost there!

5) The Sahel: What Needs to Change, People's Coalition for the Sahel

Check out this report which was created by the People's Coalition for the Sahel. It's about how governments, NGOs and international partners in Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger can work toward the following:

1. Protecting civilians
2. Addressing the root causes of conflict in the region
3. Responding to humanitarian crises
4. Ending human rights abuses

Although it is a lengthy report, it is well investigated and conceptualized and probably of interest to the Friends of Niger members.

<https://www.sahelpeoplescoalition.org/home>

Shared by Caroljean (Pint) Coventree Niger - 78-80

6) Ruminations” on the value of the Peace Corps experience

Most of these appear in Randolph Hobler’s book *101 Arabian Tales: How We All Persevered in Peace Corps Libya*. Write to us with you own thoughts about the value of Peace Corps, and we’ll share in a follow-up article:

- You never understand your own country until you’ve left it.
- Why – if the United States is so serious about “Peace” – is there is no cabinet position designated “Secretary of Peace”?
- (unexpected consequence of participating in international volunteerism) The exposure to other sides of arguments, of realizing other valid points of view...and that in the U.S. on some topics we can be as close-minded as any ignorant person in a third-world country.
- The Peace Corps is the best way in the world to find out what you’re made of.
- We came away with a realization that beauty, goodness, intelligence, and wisdom are pretty evenly distributed around the world, even if healthcare, education, opportunity and freedom are not.
- My faith in the basic goodness of humanity grew during my three years living in a Muslim village in Niger.
- I found that the guys who have it a little rough and who have a lot of contact with the Libyans are most happy. The volunteers who are living with other Americans are the most dissatisfied although they eat American food and have nice houses.
- Thanks to my consciousness being raised about media bias in the U.S., only discovered when I went overseas, has left me forever careful and skeptical of what I read in the press.
- I believe the Peace Corps made us better citizens of the U.S. and in fact made us citizens of the world.
- I realized that wars are never started by citizens; they are always started by leaders.
- Wherever people are in the world, let them be helped; whatever their nationality, let them be fed; whatever their beliefs, let them be educated; whatever the color of their skins, let them be freed from disease. Let there be peace.

Submitted by John Baird Niger 68-71

7) News

• **Aissa Maiga, Filmmaker**

For its 74th edition, the Cannes Film Festival is hoping to inspire further efforts concerning climate change with an environment focus in a special selection. With her film “Above water”, which was shot in Niger, French actor and now filmmaker Aïssa Maïga sends a plea for world leaders to rethink their approach to global development and the climate interconnections between the polluters and those who pay the price. See video interview with FRANCE 24.

<https://www.france24.com/en/video/20210712-at-the-cannes-film-festival-a%C3%AFssa-ma%C3%AFga-gives-a-voice-to-the-voiceless>

• **Morocco will invest 3.3 billion dollars in the capital Niamey**

A Moroccan investment group will invest 3.3 billion dollars (1.824 billion FCFA) in several industrial and infrastructure projects in the Nigerian capital, Niamey, the city authorities and the Moroccan group announced this week. One project consists of construction of an agro-food complex, including fattening of livestock, fodder cultivation, slaughterhouse, meat processing, milk and poultry farming, and construction of a new town with 36,960 social housing units and a shopping center on 1,050 hectares. Other projects aim to create a smart city along the banks of the Niger River, build an industrial zone (intended for export), and install 20,000 solar street lights made in Morocco.

<https://www.moroccoworldnews.com/2021/07/343254/moroccos-yummy-holding-to-invest-3-3-billion-in-nigers-capital-city>

- **Education Reforms Promised**

Niger President Bazoum promises major reforms in Nigerien Educational System in his message during the 61st anniversary of the country's independence on Tuesday August 3rd, 2021. President Bazoum stated that the weaknesses of the education system "paralyze our possibilities to build up real human capital, capable of taking charge of the development challenges of our country."

Nigerien government is working on developing a major policy to reform the country's educational system.

The reform aims above all to rethink the training policy for teachers and supervisors.

Bazoum explained that, "Boarding schools for young girls will be built in order to keep girls as long as possible in the education system and give them real opportunities for social advancement."

<http://news.aniamey.com>

- **Flooding in Niger: at least 35 dead in Maradi, Agadez and Niamey**

<https://amp.rfi.fr/fr/afrique/20210802-au-niger-la-saison-pluies-a-d%C3%A9g%C3%A0-fait-au-moins-35-morts-et-de-nombreux-d%C3%A9g%C3%A2ts>

- **Niger needs western help to tackle Jihadis, president says** <https://www.ft.com/content/c14f030e-8d7e-4b84-8189-42927112ca30>

- **African Faith Leaders Call on The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to Drop African Green Revolution** <https://foodtank.com/news/2021/08/african-faith-leaders-call-on-the-bill-melinda-gates-foundation/>

- **Senegalese plant circular gardens in Green Wall defence against desert**

<https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/wider-image-senegalese-plant-circular-gardens-green-wall-defence-against-desert-2021-07-28/> Submitted by Mattie Harms

- **Growing Sahelian apples helped Abdoulsalam stay close to his family**

<https://www.wvi.org/stories/niger/growing-sahelian-apples-helped-abdoulsalam-stay-close-his-family>

- **Interview with Niger President Mohamed Bazoum on the importance of keeping girls in school and other current affairs (July 30, 2021)** <https://www.bbc.com/news/av/world-africa-580304>

- **Coronavirus - Niger: United States Donates Second Batch of 151,200 COVID-19 Vaccines to Niger**

The U.S. Embassy in Niamey, Niger announces the donation by the United States

Government of a second batch of 151,200 doses of the single shot Johnson &

Johnson COVID-19 vaccine as part of the Biden-Harris Administration's global efforts to fight the COVID-19 pandemic. In the past week, the Embassy donated 151,200 vaccines from the American people to the people of

Niger. The U.S. government coordinated closely with the African Union, Africa CDC, and COVAX on the country allocations. COVAX supported delivery of these vaccine doses, which arrived in Niamey on July 29, 2021.

This combined total of 302,400 doses is part of the Biden-Harris Administration commitment to share U.S. vaccine supply with the world. As we continue to fight the COVID-19 pandemic at



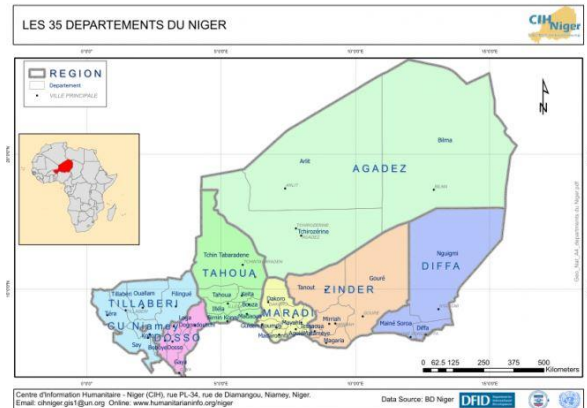
home and work to end the pandemic worldwide, President Biden has promised that the United States will be an arsenal of vaccines.

The U.S. government, through USAID Niger, is also supporting the Ministry of Health's work to ensure Niger can safely and effectively distribute these vaccines. USAID is providing assistance to support training, planning, supply chain logistics, and communications outreach to make certain the vaccines are available for the people of Niger.

CONNECTING YOU, OUR MEMBERS

WHERE were you?? And, can we share?

These are two important questions for which we don't have good answers. Our information for members is spotty and mixed. With updated information about the regions you know and love, we can better help connect and engage members. Please take a moment to go to our website <http://www.friendsofniger.org/about/join-fon/> and fill out a membership form to help provide better info about members. And please indicate if we may share your contact information with other members.



YOUR DONATIONS FUEL THIS WORK

Friends of Niger is an organization founded by Returned Peace Corps Volunteers to initiate and support activities related to Niger and its people. We pursue three main purposes:

- Connecting and engaging people who have connections to Niger including diaspora, Nigeriens those who have worked or are working Niger,
- Supporting development and humanitarian activities in Niger, and
- Advocating for and educating about Niger

Donations are accepted at any time. . To donate now, you can either go to www.friendsofniger.org to use PayPal, or write a check payable to Friends of Niger and mail to: Friends of Niger PO Box 452 Haverford, PA 19041. Thank you very much.

For more about Friends of Niger:

- Our website (volunteers needed to help with the website): <http://www.friendsofniger.org/>
- Join & follow us at: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/676485096587560/>
- Submit news topics and articles: camelexpressnewsletter@gmail.com
- Contact President John Baird, president@friendsofniger.org

Olympics Tokyo 2021



“There is no way to peace; peace is the way.”

