

# The Camel Express



Newsletter of the Friends of Niger

**June 2022**

Friends of Niger PO Box 452 Haverford, PA 19041

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From the Editors

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Dear Readers,

Many thanks to the grant review team, volunteers and board members who worked together to complete another successful round of grant making. We reviewed 26 project proposals, and seven great projects were selected for funding. Thanks to your donations innovative locally-led projects are getting done. Following is more information about the projects funded this round. Other ways you can get involved include being a grant reviewer, becoming a project champion, serving on the grants management committee or volunteering to be a board member. "Many hands make light work" could never be more true, and we would love to have you join us.

It's the beginning of the rainy season in Niger. We hope that Nigeriens get enough rain for pasture and agriculture. A good rainy season contributes to food self-sufficiency across the country.

Merci, Fofa, Mungodey, Tanimert, Foma, Thank you

*Ismaghil Ag Moussa & Amy Wilson*

## **1) Congratulations to grant recipients!**

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Many thanks to the grant review team this round!

**VOLUNTEERS:** John Berry, Brianne Boylan, Andrew Danzig, Tom Dechert, JoAnn Lewis, Lois Rakov, Pam White, Scott Youngstedt

**BOARD MEMBERS:** Mary Abrams, Kelsey Andersen, John Baird, Kimberly Dixon, Alix Fedoruk, Alhassan Ali Mamadou Souma, Doug Steinberg

With their dedicated help we reviewed 26 project proposals!!

Seven projects were selected for a total of \$27,870. All made possible by your donations.

Here is a snapshot of the projects funded this round:

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**Job Skills for Young People in Niger.** (DIMA) \$5,000

Train 72 unemployed youth to do leatherwork and make other marketable crafts. This grant builds on an existing program where girls constitute more than half the trainees. NIAMEY

**Inclusion sociale et économique des enfants vulnérable.** AfriYAN Niger 1,460,000 cfa

Work with 50 handicapped or otherwise vulnerable street kids to teach them to make marketable crafts from used plastic items. Project culminates in a craft fair/exhibition of products. OUALLAM

**Ma sœur, Mon Modèle.** (MICA) 2,515,000 cfa

Employ 12 young women mentors who have already participated in leadership training (Expanding Lives) to work with 100 middle school girls to reduce early marriage, increase school attendance and overall life success. MADAOUA

**Maison de la Parole.** ONG GONI 2,500,000 cfa

Create an event space/center for oral tradition in Libori, a community known for this heritage. Project will construct a stage and a meeting space (hut/hangar) to support cultural and artistic events. NIAMEY

**Soutien des Femmes d'Eladab.** ONG TAMAKRAST 2,680,000 cfa

Drill a borehole and install a solar pump in a garden for the women's co-op, which is already organized and active in drying and processing fruits and vegetables. AGADEZ

**Dignite des Femmes Tagala Kove.** Tagaz

Espoir 231,000 cfa

Conduct a needs assessment to evaluate economic opportunities available to women sand carriers in order to develop future job skills programs to help them gain better employment. NIAMEY

**Elementary School Maradi.** AFN \$5,000

Build a classroom to replace temporary shelters being used since classrooms were destroyed in a fire that took the lives of 34 children. MARADI



*Temporary classrooms provided by UNICEF*

## 2) Get involved by being a Project Champion

Each funded project is assigned a Project Champion. The Champion job is an opportunity to reconnect with Niger and learn more about the innovative community-driven projects that your donations are supporting.

We are looking for more volunteers to participate in this part of our grant making— some say this is the most fun part! Please contact us if you are interested after reading more here.

**Who can do it?** What does it take to be a project champion? All of you reading this probably satisfy the most important criterion, which is to be interested and supportive. Most of the grantees in Niger are enthusiastic and passionate about their projects and eager to share their activities and results with us.

**How does it work?** Grant recipients receive a formal notification letter when their project is selected for funding. That letter also introduces their Project Champion, who will serve as the major point of contact for FON. The first task is to work with our treasurer Gary, to get the funds delivered. Then, once the funds have arrived in Niger, the Champion checks in regularly to see how the project is going, providing encouragement and coaching if needed. Champions will remind the grantees of reporting requirements and make sure the story is shared with the FON board and the membership once the project is complete.

The good news is that communications options are SOOO much better than in the past! Most of our applicants are easily accessible via WhatsApp -- you'll be happy to know we don't need to rely on handing a note to a driver and asking him to drop it off in the village! A lot can be achieved using phones to transmit photos and messages. Some of our grant recipients even speak English!

**How do I sign up?** Please send an email to [projects@friendsofniger.org](mailto:projects@friendsofniger.org) or contact any board member to let us know you are interested in being a project Champion. Tell us the kind of projects you are interested in or in what geographic area. Do you have a soft spot for Ouallam like John Berry or are you especially interested in supporting projects to help women and girls?

**Why we do it?** By using Project Champions we are continuing the rich tradition of the Peace Corps by working through personal relationships. These relationships help us stay grounded and achieve our capacity building goals, as well as assuring accountability, making new friends and offering encouragement and appreciation for their efforts. Friends of Niger is committed to being careful with the donations you provide AND to providing mentorship and support to promote successful projects.

### 3) Outreach & education library launched

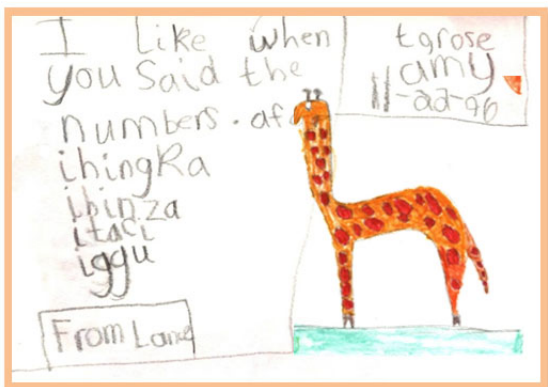
FON is creating an online library for people interested in sharing ideas, photos and presentations for that "Third Goal" stuff. This is a brand new idea and we welcome your input and participation.

The new Google Drive has folders for:

- Ideas and tools for presentations
- Photo Library
- Power Points

These folders will be a resource to anyone who would like to do presentations and do outreach about Niger. We are counting on you to help us populate the folders and share your favorite ideas. To gain access to the folders and start sharing please contact: [outreach@friendsofniger.org](mailto:outreach@friendsofniger.org) Let

us know if you are interested in participating in this working group to promote outreach and education. Once you ask around in your community, you will probably find there is a lot of local interest in hearing from someone who has lived and worked in Niger. From Rotary Clubs to classroom presentations, many people will be interested in your special insight into Niger.



*For our non-Peace Corps readers:*  
**PEACE CORPS MISSION**  
To promote world peace and friendship by fulfilling three goals:

1. To help the people of interested countries in meeting their need for trained men and women.
2. To help promote a better understanding of Americans on the part of the peoples served.
3. **To help promote a better understanding of other peoples on the part of Americans.**

This idea for the digital library came from our March 5 online rendezvous and from the small working group that evolved from that meeting [Dane Miller, Justin Smith, Chris Huh, John Baird, Dale Downes]. THANKS team!

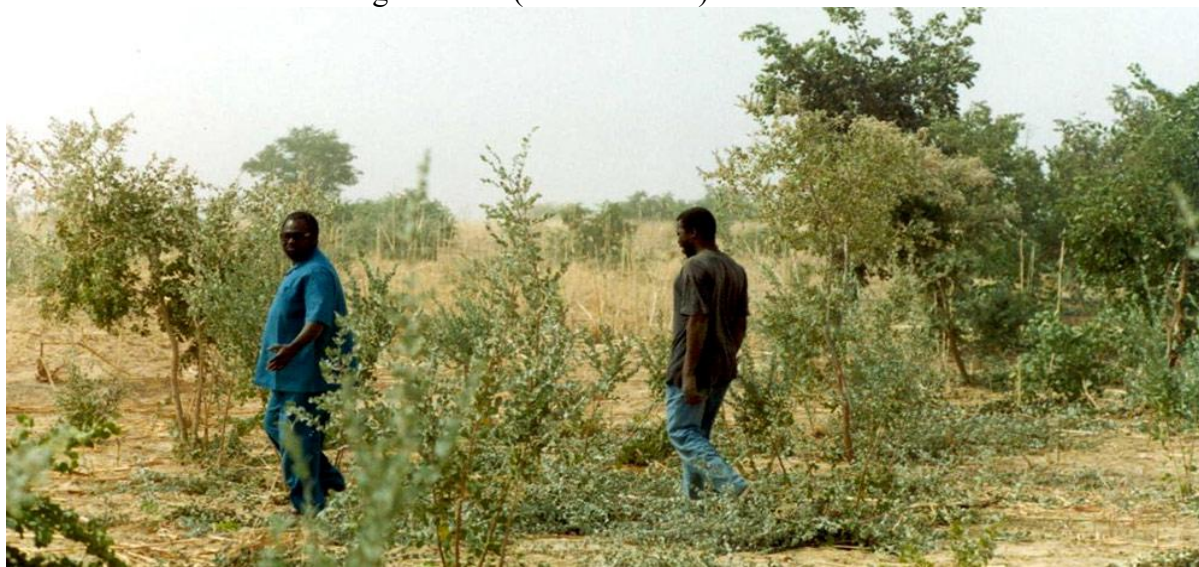
*Thank you notes from students.*



#### 4) Niger News

##### **The Aussie who Helped Transform African Desert into 200 Million Trees**

Across Africa, World Vision and others are helping poor communities to practice and benefit from Farmer Managed Natural Regeneration, or FMNR. Through FMNR, farmers prune the regrowth sprouting from tree stumps and roots. From their revitalized land, they are dramatically improving their harvests and livestock productivity, and increasing their income. Families have more food on the table, and the risk of famine has reduced and child nutrition has improved. Tony started promoting FMNR in Niger in 1983. In that country alone, 200 million trees have since grown on five million hectares of degraded farmland. Over the last 10 years, World Vision has promoted FMNR in communities elsewhere across Africa and Asia, and at least one million more hectares of land have been regenerated. (World Vision)



Picture of Maradi region which used to be an empty desert, FMNR helped restore trees  
<https://www.worldvision.com.au/global-issues/work-we-do/famine/aussie-spirit-fuels-africas-greatest-transformation/>

##### **Niger Pushes For Peace With Jihadists Talks**

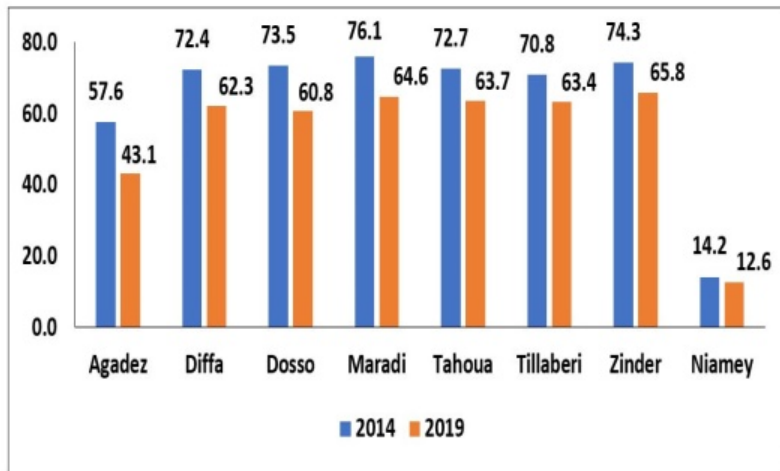
Niger is pressing ahead with an initiative to talk to jihadists whose attacks have shaken the country's southwest, amid fears that a new wave of bloodshed lies ahead. A source in his office said President Mohamed Bazoum first reached out to the jihadists "three months ago," offering "an extended hand" to youngsters who had been recruited to an Islamic State-linked group. President Bazoum announced he had begun "discussions" with jihadists as part of "the search for peace." He said he had released several militants and received them at the presidential palace. He had also dispatched envoys to meet nine "terrorist chiefs." A presidential aide said the emissaries were local officials, traditional and religious leaders, and relatives of the jihadist chiefs. (Eyewitness News EWN)

<https://ewn.co.za/2022/03/18/niger-pushes-for-peace-with-jihadist-talks>



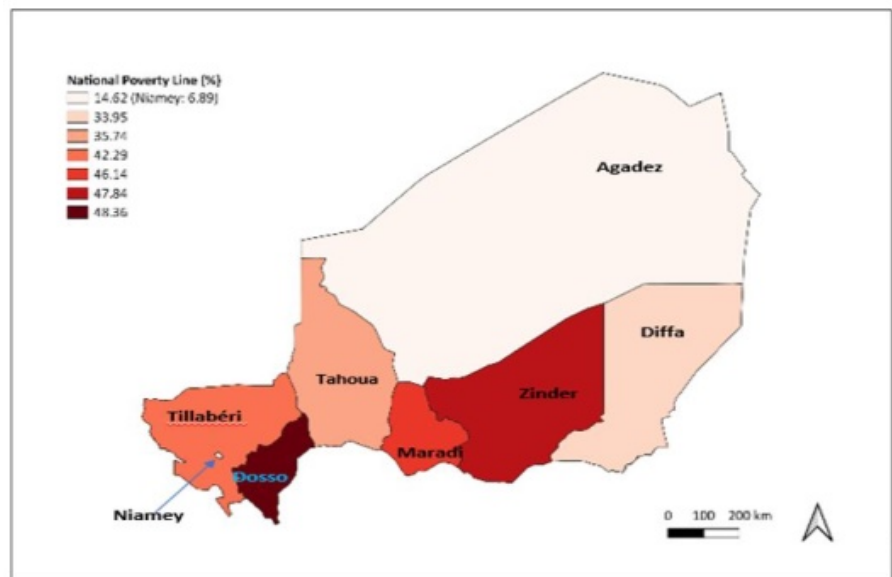
*Niger's President Mohamed Bazoum.  
Picture: Bernd von Jutrczenka/AFP*

## Understanding Poverty & Reversals in Five Charts on Niger



Niger made progress in poverty reduction between 2014 and 2019, experiencing accelerated economic growth from 2015 onward. Agriculture, which employs most of the country's poor, has been the main driver, ahead of industry, manufacturing, and services. As a result, poverty dropped by 5.4 percentage points, particularly in rural areas, and the percentage of people living in multi-deprivation—defined by health, education, electricity, water, sanitation, housing conditions, and asset ownership—dropped from 70% to 60%.

But, despite these improvements in non-monetary dimensions of welfare, Niger is still underperforming, with limited access to basic social services. In 2019, two in five Nigeriens (40.8%) lived below the national poverty line, most (95%) in rural areas, with the incidence of poverty much higher in rural areas (46.8%) than in the capital Niamey (7%) and other urban areas (11.8%). Reducing the gender gap also remains critical for the fight against poverty. Most Nigerien households exhibit gender gaps despite government efforts to narrow them. Girls' education suffers after primary (elementary) school from, among other things, early child marriage and teenage pregnancy. (World Bank Blogs)



<https://blogs.worldbank.org/nasikiliza/understanding-poverty-and-reversals-five-charts-niger>



## 5) Steve and Wendy Reid Memorial June 24

Stephen Leavitt Reid and his wife Djeswende Pasgo Reid tragically died on Monday, April 18, 2022. Steve was born in 1955 in Concord, New Hampshire, the second of five children of William and Peggy-Ann (Leavitt) Reid. Djeswende, affectionately known as Wendy, was the eldest daughter of nine children, born in Benin in 1956 to Bila and Poco Pasgo.

After receiving full scholarships to several law schools, Steve decided to pursue a career in public service, starting by joining the Peace Corps. . .

.In 1979, Steve's first overseas assignment took him to the small town of Madaoua in Niger, West Africa where he taught English. In 1982, Steve returned to



the United States to take a position at Peace Corps headquarters in Washington, D.C., as a liaison to several West African countries. It was there that Steve met the love of his life, Djeswende (Wendy).

A memorial service celebrating Steve and Wendy's lives will be held June 24 in Derry, New Hampshire. Click the link above to RSVP. There will be another memorial service in Togo and/or Burkina Faso at a later date. In lieu of flowers, memorial donations may be made to PCI Media ([www.pcimedia.org](http://www.pcimedia.org)), and Doctors Without Borders ([www.doctorswithoutborders.org](http://www.doctorswithoutborders.org)).

Read the full obituary: <https://www.watersfuneralhomeconcord.com/obituary/stephen-and-d-reid>

*Meanwhile the police are making some progress in identifying the person responsible for their deaths.*

“Investigators looking for the gunman who killed a New Hampshire couple are sorting through a surge in new tips received since they publicized a sketch of a person of interest earlier this week.

More than 110 new tips were received since Tuesday, the New Hampshire Attorney General's Office said. That's in addition to approximately 170 tips received earlier in the investigation.”

<https://www.wcvb.com/article/stephen-djeswende-reid-homicide-sketch-investigation-110-additional-tips-may-20-2022/40061462#>



## YOUR DONATIONS FUEL THIS WORK

The Friends of Niger (FON) is a charitable and educational 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation formed to initiate and support activities related to Niger and its people, and for the benefit of its 1200+ membership.

Major activities include:

- Engaging people who have connections to Niger including diaspora
- Supporting and promoting development and humanitarian activities in Niger through grant making
- US-based advocacy and education for the benefit of Niger and Nigeriens

Donations are accepted at any time. To donate either write a check payable to Friends of Niger and mail to: Friends of Niger PO Box 452 Haverford, PA 19041, or go to [www.friendsofniger.org](http://www.friendsofniger.org) to use PayPal.

*Thank you very much!*

For more about Friends of Niger:

- Our website: <http://www.friendsofniger.org/>
- Join & follow us at: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/676485096587560/>
- Submit news topics and articles: [camelexpressnewsletter@gmail.com](mailto:camelexpressnewsletter@gmail.com)
- Contact President Amy Wilson: [president@friendsofniger.org](mailto:president@friendsofniger.org)



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

