

The Camel Express



Newsletter of the Friends of Niger

August 2022

Friends of Niger PO Box 452 Haverford, PA 19041

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From the Editors

Dear readers,

This summer has been action-packed for FON members with at least 3 reunions that we heard about. In addition your board and review team members are ramping up for another round of grant making. Project Champions have been keeping in touch with grantees and sharing the news with the board and newsletter editors. And last but not least Alix has started reaching out to people who have expressed interest in joining the board of directors. There's always room for more in all of these activities. Reach out to us and let us know where you'd like to jump in.

Merci, Fofo, Mun godey, Tanimert, Foma, Thank you

Ismaghil Ag Moussa & Amy Wilson

1) Organizational updates

Board Positions Open. Your organization's leadership continues to enjoy the camaraderie of working together for a good cause and seeing results. We are building some great systems and procedures to make it easier for people to step in and participate at the level that works for them. A couple of board members are stepping down this year due to other commitments and priorities and we are looking for a few good candidates who would like to join us. We welcome diaspora and others who have lived and worked in Niger beyond the Peace Corps.

Board members are asked to commit to participating in monthly meetings and actively supporting at least one committee or taking on some special project. It is not too demanding and we strive to make it congenial and fun. Please reply to this email (ASAP) if you are interested in joining the board. Election should take place within the next month.

Grant Reviewers Needed. The next round of grants closes September 1. We are looking forward to a wide variety of proposals and interesting projects to review—we have already received 4 proposals from eager beavers. Grant reviewers are asked to read a number of proposals and rate them based on established criteria. We have developed some great tools that allow all the reviewers to use the same score sheets and share comments with each other. Small teams of reviewers will meet to find agreement on which proposals should be sent forward for final review by the Grants Management Committee. (Note to previous reviewers: we have streamlined this so the small groups will meet only once.) We have updated our tips for better proposals and we hope to eliminate some of the requests that fall outside of our comfort zone (like spending a bunch of money on coffee breaks!). Also note that most of the proposals are in French, but we provide rough translations (Google Translate) to help out the rusty 'parleurs'. Send an email by Sept 1 to projects@friendsofniger.org if you want to join this rewarding team.

2) GRANT UPDATES

COMPLETED! Vocational Training for Incarcerated Youth. In the first round of 2021 grants we funded a project to provide incarcerated youth with vocational training in Maradi. The training was provided in regular sessions to a total of 20 youth who were specifically chosen for the program. Here are the results:

- 10 young women trained in sewing
- 4 young men trained in metal fabrication
- 4 young men trained in carpentry
- 2 young women and 2 young men trained in motorcycle mechanics

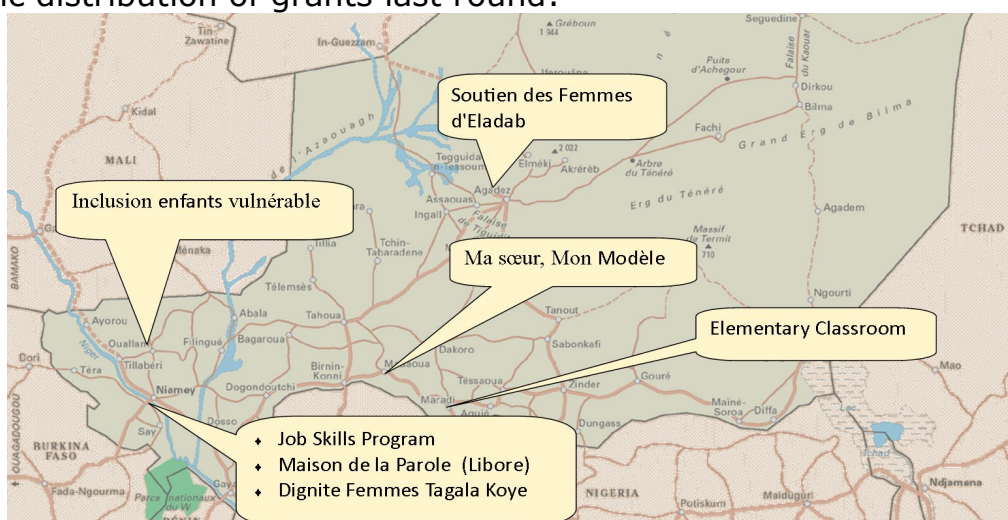
Three of the young women trained in sewing have been placed in atelier in town since they have been released from incarceration. One of them has set up shop with her own machine at her family home. Two who completed motor cycle mechanics have been placed in shops where they can continue their apprenticeships. Other trainees are continuing their programs, many of whom remain incarcerated and are therefore not able to be placed in internships yet.

Site visits made. Millet borer project and DIMA Skills training programs visited by board member. We count ourselves lucky to have Alhassan Souna on our board of directors. He joined with the specific intent of learning more about how projects are implemented and with the idea that he could help get more done—and he does just that! In his recent trip home to visit family, he made some site visits to two projects. We'll get more detailed info from him later, but the short version of his analysis was: FON money is really being put to good use! He was very impressed by the dedication and commitment of those implementing the projects, Potentiel Terre and DIMA. At the DIMA training center he met the whole board of directors and all the students of the training center—even though they were called back in for that specific purpose while on their break.

Grant Scoreboard as we enter round 4:

	<u>Round 1</u>	<u>Round 2</u>	<u>Round 3</u>
Applications received	22	10	26
Funds requested	\$95,500	\$59,000	\$116,362
Volunteer reviewers	13	16	11
Projects funded	4	3	7
Funds granted	\$15,430	\$12,713	\$27,870

Geographic distribution of grants last round:



3) Reunions!!

The universe aligned recently where two different groups spanning the decades held respective reunions in Santa Rosa CA on the same weekend.

1966-67 GROUP. The Niger V, VI & strays reunion conducted at the Bob and Gayle Reid residence in Santa Rosa, CA has concluded. The attached photo of RPCVs & partners who have been attending these reunions for so long they think they served in Niger will give you some idea of the attendance, and the slide show will explain why some of the usual suspects did not attend. Not in the picture (taken on the last day) is Cathy Sharpe, who did attend the first two days of reunion. In addition to screening Guy's slide show, we saw the film Bob Potter made to memorialize Judy Irola and shared photos of our departed comrades, many taken in the past century. Though there were the usual "organ recitals" to be heard at any gathering of substantially senior citizens and we did spend a lot of time remembering the dear departed, the general mood was positive. People celebrated the service that changed their lives for the better and told stories of adventures survived in the near and distant past. We got reports on children and grandchildren and shared suggestions on books to read, including memoirs by Laurie (Lehtinen) Oman and Wendy Wallin.

A number of Niger alums decided not to come this year because of the recent Covid 19 variant surges, but Chez Reid has expansive outdoor seating, and almost all of our time was spent outside.

The 1969 marriage of Bob Reid (Niger V) and Gayle Lyman (Niger VI) was a fortuitous merger that has helped to keep our groups together. Though there was initially some talk about this being the last reunion, I think we may have one more in us, perhaps with dancing next time. **We all maintain interest in Niger and continue to support the projects of FON.**

Submitted by Joel Neuberg

For an in-depth description of this event please go to this article written by Gary Steele on our website [A FABULOUS TIME WAS HAD BY ALL](#)



Fall 1992 Group. The Fall '92 Peace Corps Niger stage of Environment and AFSI (and adjacent stages) met for their 30th reunion of becoming Peace Corps Volunteers in early August in Santa Rosa, CA at the home of Judy Crawford. There were 18 RPCVs and their families who traveled from all over, with folks traveling from MT, DC, OR, WA, MN, CA, IA, CO, and even from Paris! It was great to get together again, share memories, and see the next generation become part of the PC Niger family! Jeff Gherardini put together a great video from his time there, and included photos and also current video memories. You could almost smell village life! What a great time, filled with fun, laughter, tears, and sun. We look forward to the next reunion, but will celebrate the 30 years of friendship with smiles and fond memories. *Submitted by Michelle Miles*



The Fall 1989 Peace Corps Niger Stage (environment and agriculture) gathered in Idaho the last weekend in July, generously hosted by Mary Johnston Kelly and family at their lake cabin. It was such a treat to be in company with each other again. We boated, fished, and swam, checked out the local farmer's market, ate incredibly well thanks to Mary's hard work and good planning, and even fit in a round of Euchre, a favorite game amongst our stage. Yoga overlooking the lake was a special treat. We shared memories of course, of good times with each other and in our villages, and caught up on what everyone has been doing ever since. Denise wowed us with her wide ranging wardrobe of Niger clothing, even changing a couple times a day to fit them all into the weekend! I think that's a Bush Pagans baseball uniform she's wearing in the photo. In all we were 13 RPCVs, probably the largest gathering to date from our stage, plus about as many family members. Enormous thanks to Mary and family for making this happen and taking care of us all so well. We can't wait to meet again, and if you're from our stage and missed it, please be in touch to make sure we get to see you the next time.



4) BU CORNER

Dane "Jadi" Miller

News and Info from, for and about Boston University Exchange participants

It's not every day that I get to talk to someone who has had a pet donkey named Jenny -- and whose donkey had a companion animal named Vincent Van Goat -- so when I learned I was going to be in DC for work, I called up my friend Rebecca Doffing, aka "Bonkano", to see if she would sit down for an interview about her time spent in Niger. Rebecca was in Niger with me as a BU student in the spring of 2007, and later returned to Niger for two years as a political officer in the US Foreign Service from 2015-2017. What stood out during the course of our interview was the variety of experience she was able to have, but also the challenges that came with being in Niger in a different capacity. Gone were the days of trying to make homemade ice cream out of Laban yogurt bags -- she now had access to her own ice cream maker at home -- but gone too were some of the freedoms she enjoyed as a student. She could no longer walk around freely in the city, and when she attended local events, she could no longer mingle but was usually given a place of honor on the couches that were invariably made available for protocol seating. She seemed to take these changes in stride; after all, it was part of the job. What was harder to confront was the reality that the situation on the ground felt more difficult for everyone. By the time she had returned, BU and Peace Corps had both shut down their programs due to the deteriorating security situation, and the country was in the process of "un-developing" as population increase outstripped economic growth.

It wasn't all bad news of course. A significant portion of Rebecca's time was spent on refugee and migration issues, and she was able to visit camps in Diffa and in Agadez, where psycho-social support and basic needs were being provided for people fleeing Boko Haram violence and for migrants who had been pushed back across the Algerian border, respectively. One of the more interesting refugee projects she visited was run by the UNHCR: a first-of-its-kind refugee zone for nomadic peoples, where displaced herders from Mali were able to bring their livestock and continue to move around a large region, with access points provided for schooling and social services.

We talked a lot about the importance of context, and how her experience as a student had helped her come into the work with a better understanding of the local situation and more accurate expectations about what could be achieved through outside assistance. One example: during her time in Niger, the US government had made money available for training prison wardens. She toured several Nigerien prisons and noticed how the local emphasis on communal living was reflected in how people experiencing incarceration were grouped together, rather than living in smaller cells. At one point, some of the Nigerien prison wardens were invited to the US to tour American prisons, and they were surprised to see how prison populations were separated in the US, something they found contrary to Nigerien customs. Sometimes, Rebecca noted, you have to take a step back and ask: When we intend to help a community, who defines what is helpful? Even within Niger, she added, you can't just take a project that is working well in Niamey and drop it down in Zinder expecting it to be a success. This might seem intuitive for many of the readers of the Camel Express, but Rebecca still sees this happening in the international aid context. One of the most important lessons she's learned from her time in Niger is to question basic assumptions. Instead, she hopes to approach every situation in her work with a level of respect and humility, something she feels Niger can teach us all.

Are you a BU Niger alum with a story you'd like to share? Let us know. We'd be glad to hear from you.

5) In Brief - Announcements

Golf Tournament in honor of Brian "Barke" Nowak.

Friends of Barke's father, Raymond Nowak, held a golf tournament in his memory to benefit the Friends of Niger. The "Feyrerball Invitational" was headed up by John Feyrern of the Cherry Valley Golf Club and Tom Matteini of Midland Golf Club. They played golf, had fellowship with Bryan's dad and raised \$4500!

Barke's dad said; "Please use it to continue the wonderful work that you do in Niger!"

Caroljean Coventree is in need of your comforting thoughts and support. There is a caring bridge site which provides more information about a tragic accident which has lead to Caroljean going on hospice: <https://www.caringbridge.org/visit/caroljeancoventree> Caroljean served from 1978-80 in Keita, then in Zinder as an ESL teacher and then a grader of national exams.

Passing of Warren Enger. Warren Jay Enger, age 81, of El Paso Township died December 15th, 2021. After serving in Niger (64-66) Warren was involved in the early formation of Africare and went on to work with other development organizations in many countries on the African continent. He retired to a farm in Texas where he raised cattle. See the full obituary at: – <https://oconnellfuneralservices.com/obituaries/warren-enger/>

6) Niger in the News

Algeria, Niger, Nigeria resume talks on Trans-Sahara gas pipeline

The revival talks come at a strategic time as the European Union seeks to wean itself off Russian gas following the invasion of Ukraine.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/6/23/algeria-niger-nigeria-resume-talks-on-trans-sahara-gas-pipeline>

Digital Farm in Niger: An advanced System to Adjust Farmer's Water Usage

In Niger, a Tech entrepreneur is hoping that his innovation in automatic irrigation could be a game changer for rural communities struggling to manage increasingly scarce water supplies. Abdou Maman Kane's prizewinning system lets farmers adjust their water usage drop by drop. Our team reports.

(France [24.fr](https://www.france24.com/en/video/20220817-digital-farm-in-niger-an-advanced-system-to-adjust-farmer-s-water-usage))

<https://www.france24.com/en/video/20220817-digital-farm-in-niger-an-advanced-system-to-adjust-farmer-s-water-usage>

Niger and Canada Announce the Construction of a New Mining Company to be Called DASA between Agadez and Arlit

The Canadian company Global Atomic Corporation in partnership with the government of Niger has created a company called SONIDA to build a new mine called DASA between Agadez and Arlit". Selon le PDG de Global atomic Corporation M. Stephen Roman, "c'est une nouvelle mine d'uranium dont les travaux vont commencer l'année prochaine, et en 2025 nous allons commencer la production" soulignant que "C'est un nouveau grand projet pour le Niger." (ANP Niger)

<http://www.anp.ne/article/le-niger-et-le-canada-annoncent-la-construction-d-une-nouvelle-societe-mini%C3%A8re-qui-s>

Fight Against Malaria: Unicef Distributes More Than 128,471 Long-Lasting Impregnated Mosquito Nets (LLINs)

As part of its support for the State of Niger to improve the living conditions of the most vulnerable groups, in particular children, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) proceeded on Friday August 12, 2022 in Tahoua, launch of an operation to distribute long-acting impregnated mosquito nets (MILDA) to more than 128,000 pupils enrolled in primary and preschool in 14 municipalities in the departments of Illela and Madaoua. Funded by the

Global Partnership for Education (PME), this action falls within the framework of the Project for Reducing the Vulnerabilities of the Education System in the Face of Crises (REVE) implemented by Unicef in collaboration with the Ministries of National Education and that of public health through the National Malaria Control Program in schools. (ActuNiger)

<https://www.actuniger.com/societe/18475-lutte-contre-le-paludisme-unicef-distribue-plus-de-128-471-milda-dans-le-cadre-du-projet-reve-aux-students-of-the-region-of-tahoua-reportage.html>

Niger: Population Growth too Fast to be An Asset

Professor Alzouma Gado, anthropologist and academic, attempts to demonstrate, with supporting figures, that the extremely rapid demographic growth of Niger, far from being a brake or a handicap to its economic development, is in fact the best thing that can happen to him. Indeed, thanks to it – or despite it – we would go to school more, we would live longer and we would also be less poor...Three indicators are mobilized to accredit this thesis. Thus, the fertility rate of more than seven children per woman of childbearing age and the annual population growth rate of nearly 4% are not constraints to be loosened, but assets to be celebrated. (NigerPress)

<http://nigerexpress.info/2022/06/06/niger-une-croissance-demographique-trop-rapide-pour-etre-un-atout/>

Nearly 40 jihadis killed in drone strikes in Niger.

DALATOU , June 16, 2022— French drone strikes killed nearly 40 Islamic extremists earlier this week who were traveling on motorcycles near Niger's border with Burkina Faso, France's military announced Thursday.



-- This photo provided by the French Defense Ministry communication center and taken Tuesday Dec. 17, 2019, shows French soldiers loading a French Reaper drone with two GBU 12 missiles on Niamey airbase, Niger. French drone strikes killed nearly 40 Islamic extremists earlier this week who were traveling on motorcycles near Niger's border with Burkina Faso, France's military announced Thursday, June 16,

2022. (Malaury Buis/EMA/DICOD via AP, File)

What the U.S. and Niger Have in Common | Opinion

As human rights degrade for women in the wealthiest and most powerful country in the world, I can't help but think about the West African country of Niger, where I lived for nearly three years. By Emilie J. Greenhalgh, International Development Professional

<https://www.newsweek.com/what-us-niger-have-common-opinion-1723081>

Submitted by Pam Britton White

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

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

