

The Camel Express



Newsletter of the Friends of Niger

January 2023

Friends of Niger PO Box 452 Haverford, PA 19041

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Dear Readers,

We are giddy from all the love showered on our mailbox during our annual fund drive. Your donations motivate us and help us strive to do more. Thank you so much! Together your donations add up to possibilities! So far 157 people have responded to the annual fund drive. Those donations are almost perfectly apportioned in three categories: 35% donate \$200 or more, 33% are in the \$100 range and another 31% donate up to \$100. Each donation is important and allows us to make grants to support projects designed and implemented by Nigeriens.

We'd also like to welcome at least 12 new members who were recently added to our rolls thanks to getting their contact information from the National Peace Corps Association.

Please note the announcement of a new grant cycle and consider reaching out to friends and colleagues who may be interested in applying for funding. As we help launch the new projects we are also busy receiving and evaluating the final reports from completed projects. Lots of good work is getting done!

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

Amy Wilson

1) BOARD ELECTIONS

The board got busy with other things and somehow the annual board elections slipped by the wayside until now. We are proposing an election now rather than skipping the year even though we will be holding our regular annual election later this summer.

Several board members have completed their terms and find themselves occupied by other priorities – family, work, life! To that end we want to extend our **sincere thanks to Christy Collins, Ismaghil Ag Moussa, Myriam Kaplan-Pasternak** for their service on the board. Each of them brought enthusiasm and helpful contributions to the board during their tenure.

Please take a minute to vote for board members to support the work of our organization.

Please [click here](#) to vote for your Board of Directors by February 13, 2023.

Under our bylaws we have two categories of membership: voting and non-voting. Voting Members are those who have donated at least \$20 in the last 12 months. If you would like to vote and have not donated recently, you can make a donation now and vote immediately. (PayPal is available at <http://www.friendsofniger.org/> or mail payment to: FON, PO Box 452, Haverford PA 19041).

Candidates for the board of directors:

- Brandon Bragato, Washington DC, candidate for a new term of 2 years
- Alix Barstow Fedoruk, Dummerston VT, current board member, candidate for a second term of 2 years

Current Board

- Mary Abrams, Tucson, AZ
- Kelsey Andersen, New York, NY
- John Baird, Decatur, IL
- Paige Pihl Buckley, Manchester, NH
- Kimberly Dixon, Washington, DC
- Gary Geoghegan, Haverford PA
- Alhassan Ali Mamadou Souana, College Park, MD
- Douglas Steinberg, Hyattsville, MD
- Amy Wilson, Central Point, OR
- Seybou Douma, Bronx, New York, CONUSA representative [appointed by Comité des Nigériens aux USA]

Please consider throwing your hat in the ring in the future. Note that board membership is not too taxing. We meet monthly via Zoom and ask board members to help with other committees or activities when needed. We fully embrace diversity on the board and recognize that a board with more viewpoints is more likely to come up with better ideas and results.

2) 2023 CALL FOR GRANT APPLICATIONS AND GRANT UPDATES

Please share this information with potential grant applicants.

FRIENDS OF NIGER GRANT PROGRAM 2023

Applications must be received by March 15 or September 1 to be considered for funding. Notification of results will follow 2 months after the cutoff date. Guidelines and forms are available in English and French on our website <http://www.friendsofniger.org/grants/>

Our grant-making program is designed to support locally identified projects which demonstrate community support, are likely to succeed and have an enduring positive impact. Board members and volunteers thoughtfully review grant applications and serve as project champions.

We are proud to have funded 22 projects over the past two years, providing a total of \$94,809 from our generous members to support important work for the benefit of our friends and colleagues in Niger.

The hallmarks of our process are engagement of our membership, transparent criteria, scheduled grant cycles, and clearly presented forms and instructions. All unsuccessful applicants receive feedback on what we liked about their proposals and what would make their application more competitive. Each successful proposal is assigned a project champion to act as liaison, facilitate communication, and provide any assistance needed to ensure successful implementation of the project.

GRANT UPDATES

Job Skills / Artisan Training For Young People in Niger - COMPLETED

DIMA [Dispositif d'Initiatives pour les Metiers de l'Artisanat] provided one year (3 quarters) of training in tailoring, leather working and weaving for 68 youth which included 52 female students. They also held an intensive 2 week training program for weavers featuring a visiting artist who introduced new equipment and methods. In addition to the FON contribution of \$5,000, DIMA leveraged funding from many other sources as well as volunteer contributions of local artisans to make this project possible: Remember Niger Coalition \$6,000; Ministère de la Culture du Tourisme et de l'Artisanat \$3,333; Global Giving Donors \$9,738; US Embassy in Niamey \$7,000.

From their report: What was the most successful aspect of this project?

“The quality of the work our students are producing. We are unique in Niamey as a vocational training school in that we do not require any prior educational background to enroll in the school. The skills of our students vary from no school to high school. We need to develop a business skills curriculum that ensures all our students leave DIMA with the training in reading, writing, mathematics and French to be successful artisans.”



Weaving samples and site visit by FON Board member Alhassan M Souna

GET INVOLVED: REVIEW TEAM & PROJECT CHAMPIONS NEEDED

If you are looking for a way to get involved and make a contribution, we are always happy to add members to the grant review teams and to recruit project champions. These are opportunities to participate even if your time is limited.

Helping with the review process is a commitment of about 3 weeks and you can sign up for one session or more depending on your availability. Volunteering to be a project champion is a different kind of task and the time commitment varies with the project. Champions become the main point of contact for FON during project implementation. Most grantees implement their projects independently and the champion focuses on making sure we get reports and pictures to share with the membership and donors when the work is completed. If interested please reply to this email or to projects@friendsofniger.org to learn more or volunteer to review applications or champion grants.

3) Remember Niger Coalition supports education in Niger

In 2007, Kara Vanderkamp set out on an adventure sponsored by the Presbyterian Church to consult on education in Niger. Little did she know that she would fall in love with Niger, create a non-profit and dedicate all her energy toward advancing education in Niger. She is quick to point out that she did not serve in the Peace Corps, however she did form many friendships with those who did. It is a good reminder that FON is focused on those with Niger connections and not limited to the Peace Corps experience.

After her initial experience, Kara gathered partners to rally around the need for improved education in Niger. While the donor base is well-rooted in the Presbyterian community, Kara highlighted that Remember Niger partners with all schools - both private and public - that share their vision of providing a quality education to every child in Niger. They receive funding from more than 20 charitable foundations and the US Embassy in Niger. Remember Niger Coalition works with a recognized

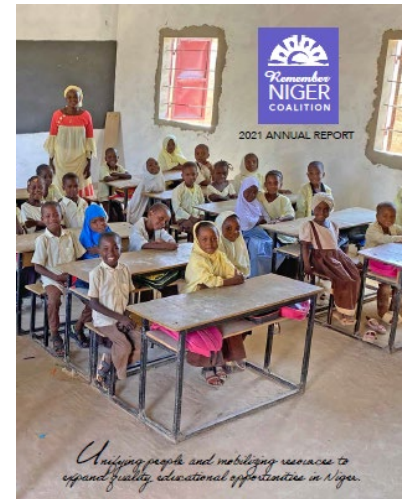
nonprofit counterpart organization in Niger to provide support for school construction and other educational support as requested and prioritized by local people.

Their efforts include classroom construction, solar energy for schools, serving meals to students, setting up computer labs and teacher training. Kara said the latter has become increasingly prioritized by education professionals and communities in Niger and they are adapting to support these locally identified needs. Other trends include supporting school gardens and computer labs. They have ensured that their efforts support traditionally underserved communities including smaller rural schools, school for the deaf, handicapped programs and girls' education.

"The foundation of our partnerships consists of three core values: respect, trust, and a passion for providing quality educational opportunities to all Nigerien children and youth."

Their website is jam-packed with good information about their work and about Niger. <https://www.rememberniger.org/>

Kara has a house in Niamey now and splits her time between the US and Niger. She welcomes visitors and guests.



4) Niger in the News

Postpartum hemorrhage: Niger halves blood-loss deaths at clinics



Researchers working with Niger's health ministry say they have managed to more than halve the number of women who bleed to death after giving birth in health facilities. Blood loss is the leading cause of maternal deaths in low-income nations. Those behind the initiative say it could dramatically lower mortality rates elsewhere too. It relies on following a simple three-step process including the use of a low-cost drug.

<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-64358784/>

Nomadic and Sedentary Communities Sign a Peace Accord

On 23 January, the nomadic and sedentary communities of the province of Banibangou in the Tillabéri region signed a peace agreement ending two decades of conflict. Over 300 people were left dead and thousands were displaced as a result of this conflict. Facilitated by the Swiss Center for Humanitarian Aid after two years of mediation efforts, the agreement was signed by representatives from Zarma and Fulani communities, and witnessed by Arab, Tuareg, and Hausa communities, as well as local government officials. Community conflicts are fueled by competition over natural resources and exacerbated by the presence of armed groups in the past years, leading to population vulnerability. More than 120,000 people were displaced in the Tillabéri region in 2022 alone. (Multiple sources)



- [ActuNiger](#)
- [RFI](#)
- The accord document: [ACCORD](#)

The New 'Cold War' in Africa

"in recent years, a new dynamic has emerged. Popular support for Russia in West Africa in particular has soared. Russia's growing prominence coincides with the declining influence of former colonial ruler France, which has traditionally wielded immense clout in the largely francophone West Africa and Sahel regions."

<https://www.ozy.com/pg/newsletter/the-daily-dose/455558/>

German man freed more than four years after kidnapping in Niger 11 Dec 2022

Armed men on motorcycles abducted Jorg Lange, a 63-year-old aid worker and engineer, from the town of Inates in 2018.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/12/11/german-man-freed-more-than-four-years-after-kidnapping-in-niger>

The good, bad, and the ugly: West Africa's big issues in 2022

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/12/22/the-good-bad-and-the-ugly-west-africas-big-issues-in-2022>

U.S.-Africa Leaders' Summit

Delegations from all 49 invited African countries and the African Union, alongside members of civil society and the private sector attended the summit. The President, Vice President, and members of the Cabinet engaged extensively with leaders throughout the Summit.

<https://www.state.gov/africasummit/> *This website has links to many recorded sessions!*

5) In Brief - Announcements

- Augusta Lucas-Andreae died in her sleep four days before her 93rd birthday and after a sudden, undiagnosed decline. Augusta was born in Arnhem, The Netherlands, where part of her childhood was overshadowed by the Nazi occupation. She moved to the United States at age 21. Always an artist, Augusta received her MA in Design from the University of California, Berkeley. In her thirties she entered the Peace Corps and spent three deeply fulfilling years in Africa, in both Ivory Coast and Niger. She was engaged in creating art work throughout her life as well as art education and therapy.

OBITUARY: <https://www.legacy.com/us/obituaries/mailtribune/name/augusta-lucas-andreae-obituary?id=36530237>

[Augusta Lucas woodcuts of Niger village life served as the cover of the Peace Corps Newsletter of December 1968/ January 1969](#)



- **A group of 2006-2008 volunteers** are whispering about a reunion on a farm in Indiana in 2024. Stay tuned for more info.
- **A suspect has been arrested** under suspicion of murdering Steve and Wendy Reid April 2022. Story at Boston.com : <https://www.boston.com/news/crime/2022/10/25/what-we-know-logan-clegg-murder-concord-new-hampshire-stephen-wendy-reid/#:~:text=According%20to%20authorities%2C%20Stephen%20Reid,the%20trail%20on%20April%202021.>
- **Nigerien diaspora held a cultural soiree** in Harrisburg PA December 2022. Check out the video they made capturing high points of the event, including Nigerien musicians performing.

Check out the video:

[Sada Zumunta 1 in Harrisburg PA, USA with Ado Gwanja 1st visit in the USA](#)



Stay tuned for more info about a **follow-up event tentatively planned for Greensboro, NC either July or August 2023**. FON members and the general public will all be welcome. Volunteers to help with planning and putting on the summer gathering would be welcomed by the organizers. Contact us president@friendsofniger.org with ideas, contacts and offers to help and we will connect you.

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

To donate 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 to use PayPal.

Board of Directors

Officers: Amy Wilson/President, Alix Barstow Fedoruk/Vice President, Gary Geoghegan/Treasurer, Mary Abrams/Grants Management Committee, John Baird/Past President

At Large Board members: Kelsey Andersen, Paige Pihl Buckley, Kimberly Dixon, Alhassan Ali Mamadou Souana, Douglas Steinberg,
CONUSA representative: Seybou Douma

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.”

