

The Camel Express



Newsletter of the Friends of Niger

September 2023

Please note new address: Friends of Niger 4865 Hwy 234 Box 180, White City, OR 97503

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Dear Readers,

The Friends of Niger is steadfast in our mission to support Nigeriens as they pursue development and humanitarian activities. We have no reason to believe that the recent coup will impact our engagement with Nigerien communities. We remain an apolitical organization, seeking to support locally developed projects that improve peoples’ lives.

The recent global interest and attention provides an opportunity for those of us familiar with Niger to share more context and perspective. As you take the opportunity to share your understanding of Niger, don’t be shy about encouraging donations and promoting our grant program which supports projects communities develop for themselves.

Our online member gathering in August was warmly received by those who were able to attend. Please consider joining us next week, Sept 26 for a repeat performance (details below).

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

Amy Wilson

1) Organizational Update & our thanks to Treasurer Gary Geoghegan!

Our huge thanks and appreciation for the work of Gary Geoghegan as Treasurer! As Gary steps down from the board, we need to thank him for all his work and especially for big advances in our accounting and fiscal management. Gary initiated the use of QuickBooks Online which makes for easy sharing, reporting and accounting for FON funds. He also helped us cross the threshold of filing the “grown-up” 990 tax forms as we graduated from the easier postcard filings to the more in-depth requirements. He persevered, sending out grants as we learned more about international wire transfers, which banks work best and how to navigate exchange rate changes and fees.

FON is now searching for a new treasurer. We recognize that the treasurer position is becoming a workload that might scare off some volunteers so the board has engaged a bookkeeping service at

minimal monthly cost. With an expert bookkeeper on tap, the treasurer can focus on depositing donations and sending funds to Niger—*both of these are fun activities!* The treasurer does not need to be a master with software or accounting. Please consider throwing your hat in the ring. Contact us to learn more about our financial management policies.

2) The coup has put Niger in the news

As stated earlier, Friends of Niger does not believe that the coup will impact our activities. Our current grantees report that they continue the work of ongoing funded projects. FON extended the grant deadline to September 29 to allow applicants more time.

Main events: (excerpted information from Wikipedia:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2023_Nigerien_coup_d%27%C3%A9tat; please explore more detail in over 100 articles referenced in the posting)

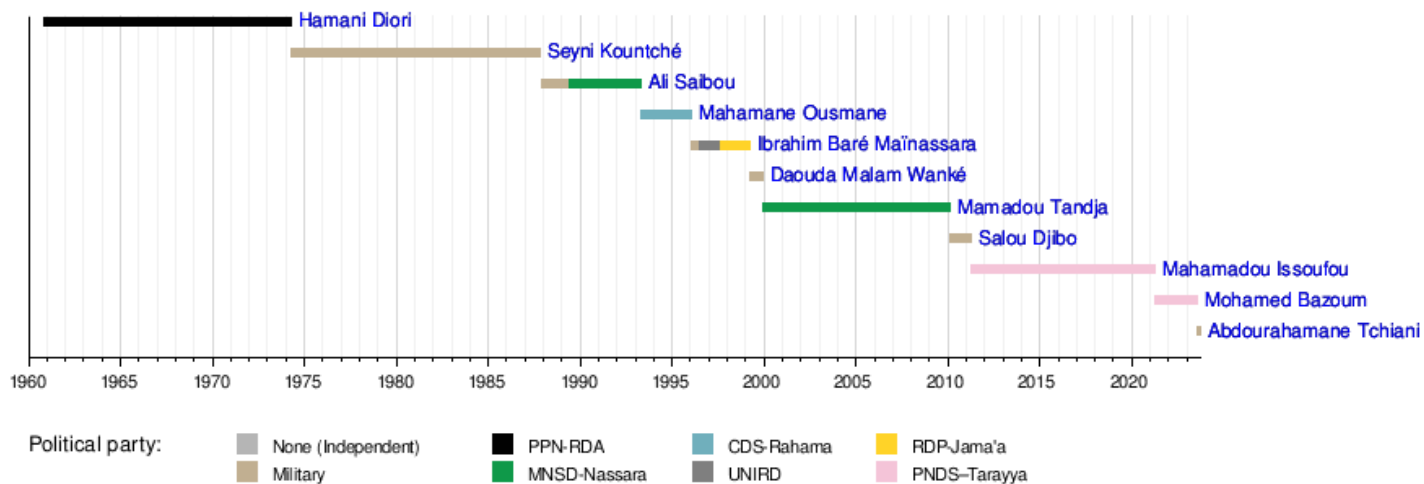
July 26 - A coup d'état occurred in Niger, in which the country's presidential guard removed and detained President Mohamed Bazoum.

July 27 - The leadership of the Nigerien armed forces issued a statement signed by the army chief of staff General Abdou Sidikou Issa declaring its support for the coup, citing the need to "preserve the physical integrity" of the president and his family and avoid "a deadly confrontation that could create a bloodbath and affect the security of the population."

July 28 - General Abdourahamane Tchiani proclaimed himself as the president of the National Council for the Safeguard of the Homeland in an address on Télé Sahel.

August 10 - The junta declared a new government, naming 21 ministers led by Prime Minister Ali Lamine Zeine in an announcement on Télé Sahel by "secretary-general of the government" Mahamane Roufai Laouali. Three generals who were members of the CNSP were named to head the interior, defense and sports ministries.

Historical perspective on heads of state since independence:



(https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_heads_of_state_of_Niger)

**Two Friends of Niger members working in Niger were caught in the initial confusion—read their stories here:

- <https://news.northeastern.edu/2023/08/01/professor-in-niger-takes-shelter-after-coup/>
- <https://news.northeastern.edu/2023/08/08/niger-evacuation-military-coup-escape/>

3) Grant updates

Grantees have been knocking it out of the park with reports and photos. Although we are most eager to see people engaged in activity, sometimes we get photos of chickens and sheep—a gentle reminder of the value they place on livestock.

VIDEO GURU needed. We are receiving lots of short video clips from our grantees that could be shared more widely with a bit of editing. Anyone with time, expertise or passion to help with this?? Please contact us!

Recent reports from the field:

NAMU le Notre- a poultry production project: training and establishing women and youth in poultry production. In a recent report they shared this response to the question:

Quel a été la plus grande réussite du projet ?

... la plus grande réussite du projet est son appropriation par les bénéficiaires c'est-à-dire que les femmes ont fait de ça leur affaire et sont fières de l'assumer. C'est une première expérience dans ce milieu et elle a fait déjà tache.



Potentiel Terre reports that the biocontrol project to protect millet from the millet miner has had success at responding to a recent attack.

Grâce au projet SMEP (stopper la mineuse de l'épi du mil) la commune de Mokko est désormais capable de répondre promptement au besoin de prendre en charge une attaque de la mineuse de l'épi du mil.



DIMA (Dispositif d'Initiatives pour les Métiers de l'Artisanat) reports that their soap-making training in Hamdallaye was a great success:

Thirty women from Hamdallaye, Bartchawel Beri, Louza, and Tokobenikani were trained in Hamdallaye for two weeks in the middle of August on how to make soap, incense, and skin

cream. DIMA provided the instructor, supplies and equipment. The products made during the training, equipment and leftover supplies were left with the group to help them start businesses. Less than a week after the training ended, four of the participants were headed to Niamey to buy equipment to start a business. The people in Hamdallaye are now asking when we can open a tailoring school.



Sheep Fattening project in Agadez :

Je viens vers vous pour vous faire part de la bonne évolution de notre projet d'appui à l'autonomisation de vingt femmes appartenant à deux scoops (cooperative groups) à travers l'embouche ovine. Hier nous avons procédé à la cérémonie de dotation en petits ruminants et aliments bétails.





DIMA reports that the young fistula patients have made great progress in their training. Most heartwarming is the notable improvement in their self-confidence and hopeful outlook. They are planning to purchase 10 more sewing machines @ \$140 per machine. To contribute directly to this effort please go to <https://www.globalgiving.org/projects/job-skills-for-young-people-in-niger/>

4) Member virtual gathering – next chance Sept 26

About 20 members tuned in for an online gathering in August. Its purpose was purely social and we achieved our goal! The consistent feedback we heard was that we should do this more often, so we are throwing another date out there, taking advantage of this newsletter to let you know. Join us for a social gathering. Some folks have suggested a Hausa conversation group, so come weigh in on what that might look like or suggest other ideas for focused gatherings.

Member meeting:

Time: **Sept 26, 2023, 8:00 PM Eastern Time/ 5:00 PM Pacific Time**

Join Zoom Meeting: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88199089054>

Meeting ID: 881 9908 9054

(pass code not required) text 541-218-7085 for assistance.

Find your local number: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88199089054>

5) Reunion of 2000-2002 Training group aka 'Mega-Fun Love Stage'

Niger Stage 2000-2002, served under the name Mega-Fun Love Stage, boasting a stage of 54 volunteers who flew to Niger in the Winter storm of 2000 to arrive in Niger with 2 different groups. During the pandemic the group hosted a 20 year zoom reunion whereby many of the volunteers attended virtually from all over the world and they vowed to get together in person when it was appropriate to do so. The event was hosted by Mike and Carol Toppe, volunteers who married during their service who now reside in the Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Several volunteers who call mid-west home agreed their Milwaukee Riverside home, sun-porch and field was reminiscent of the Kirtachi Hostel, and the porch



the Hamdallaye refectoire. It was the perfect setting, where this bunch mimicked Mickey's Bar at Hamdallaye, goat and sheep brochettes and petit pause with imported crackers, gun powder green tea and all who attended did their best to recreate their favorite Niger dish. "It was an amazing few days, it felt like no time past and we all just fell into place, talked as is we had just been together a few weeks ago." said, Virginia Emmons McNaught one of the organizers, and added "Of course we had to share Milwaukee as well, we pontooned the Milwaukee River, tubed the upper river, went to a Brewers game, the Safe House and enjoyed the cities' famous Bloody Mary's, I have a good feeling that we won't wait another 20 to do it again!" The event was family friendly and even included a camp out for those who preferred to stay on site. *Submitted by Virginia Emmons McNaught*

6) Niger-related News

16 sept 2023 Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger have signed a mutual defense pact, as the three Sahel countries aim to help each other against possible threats of armed rebellion or external aggression. The charter, known as the Alliance of Sahel States, signed on Saturday binds the signatories to assist one another – including militarily – in the event of an attack on any one of them.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/9/16/mali-niger-and-burkina-faso-establish-sahel-security-alliance>

7) In Brief –

- **The olden days of the Camel Express**—from the original author Catherine Taylor —

I was happy to see your mention that Camel Express started as a newsletter for serving volunteers. Of course, origin stories often morph into many versions, but I swear this is true. From 1974-75, I was the volunteer leader in Niger. I decided to start a newsletter for the volunteers. I was picturing the Pony Express delivering mail, and thought calling it Camel Express would be funny. I enlisted a volunteer artist from Texas to draw the camel. His name Terry and I wish I could remember his last name. I remember he cooked us Texas Steak at the Volunteer Hostel on a joyous evening. We at the headquarters also put together, with lots of help, a cookbook and a songbook. I wish I had copies. To produce the first editions, I had to type stencils, hand crank copies from the mimeograph machine and mail them to the volunteers. I love following current projects on the Friends of Niger site. It would be wonderful to hear from my old friends! Cathy Dunston (Taylor) Niger PC volunteer 1972-1975

- **TCP Global is looking for a Niger RPCV interested in serving on their board.** TCP Global was created by RPCVs to promote microloan programs where they can work with RPCVs or serving Peace Corps volunteers. They are active in Niger and would like to have someone with local knowledge and language skills to enrich their support for programs in Niger.

<https://www.tcpglobal.ngo/>

Board members attend 6 Zoom meetings per year, currently on Saturday mornings at 11 a.m. EDT; respond to email request for input and vote - estimated 12 times per year. If interested please contact Helene Dudley <helenedudley@yahoo.com>

- **We note the passing Lorraine Krusa who served in Niger from 1964-66**

"Her life as an educator and love for teaching others led to a career in education spanning 40 years. In 1964, at age 22, she received her Bachelor of Arts in French, from St. Joseph College in West Hartford, Connecticut, and became a Peace Corps volunteer in Niger, West Africa from 1964-1966. After receiving her Master of Education in 1970 from South Carolina State College in Orangeburg, SC, she began teaching first in Sumter, SC and later in the Washington D.C. Public Schools. In 1984 she received her Master of Arts in Anthropology from The Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C.

eventually becoming the Director of Multicultural and Special Services with The Catholic University of America. Throughout her career she held several positions including serving as the International Admissions Advisor at University of Maryland and she retired in 2007, from Montgomery College in Takoma Park, Maryland as the International Student Coordinator. “

Links to the full obituary and recorded memorial service:

(<https://www.irwinchapel.com/obituaries/Lorraine-I-Krusa?obId=27382402>);



lorraine_krusa_memorial_service (720p).mp4

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:

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

To donate write a check payable to Friends of Niger and mail to

NEW ADDRESS: **Friends of Niger 4865 Hwy 234 Box 180, White City, OR 97503,**

OR go to www.friendsofniger.org to use PayPal.

Board of Directors

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

At Large Board members: Kelsey Andersen, Brandon Bragato, Paige Pihl Buckley, Kimberly Dixon, Alhassan Ali Mamadou Souna, Douglas Steinberg,

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.”