

The Camel Express



Newsletter of the Friends of Niger

January 2001

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Message from the President

Greetings to all of you, members and others, who have found your way to the Friends of Niger web site. On behalf of myself and the FON Board of Directors, I want to extend best wishes for the upcoming year and to thank you for your continued support.

Most especially, I want to thank all those who contributed so generously to our recent campaign in support of Niger's National Immunization Days drive to eradicate polio. In our next full edition of The Camel Express, sometime next month, we will try to have a report from Niger as regards the campaign as well as regards future plans related to this important national effort.

Also, by the time of the February issue of The Camel, we should be in a position to pass along more detail on both the upcoming Celebration of Niger - scheduled to be held in Washington, DC during the first weekend of August 2001- as well as on the planned return trip to Niger in 2002. Questionnaires will soon be sent to all those who have already expressed interest in the trip but we continue to welcome input and ideas from anyone.

In this mini-edition of the newsletter you'll find a reminder of the availability of the new FON T-Shirt - selling like hotcakes, but plenty left; an update on the FOB/BU chewable vitamin campaign; Jim Bullington's latest column from Inside Peace Corps Niger; as well as a number of other items which should be of interest.

Elsewhere on the site, along the left-hand column under the Other Great Links heading, you'll find a new link named Photos from Niger. This new link currently features photos recently sent to me by Jim Bullington. In the future, other photos will be added and we'll keep you informed as new material arrives and gets post ed.

Concurrent with the arrival of the year 2001 is the debut of FON's 2001 membership year. I want to welcome and thank our new members; express our gratitude those of you who have already renewed; and, encourage those of you who are thinking of joining and those of you who have yet to renew your membership - to print

the form that can be found under the Join FON link in the upper left and take action today.

Finally, for those of you who have been asking for information concerning Noma disease in Niger, we've included a news item from the January 7 issue of Kakaki: News of Niger - <http://users.idworld.net/jmayer/kakaki/>. Additional information can be found at the World Health Organization site - <http://www.who.int/ncd/noma/index.htm> - and the Winds of Hope site - <http://www.windsofhope.org/e/home.htm>.

Enjoy the update and please stay in contact.

Jim Schneider
President

Inside Peace Corps Niger

Dear Friends of Niger:

We are all enjoying Niger's glorious and all-too-brief cool season, marred only by occasional bouts with harmattan dust storms. On recent field trips, when I slept under the stars in Volunteer transit houses in Matameye and Gaya, a heavy blanket was necessary. And even in the middle of the day, it requires rather vigorous exercise to work up a sweat.

This issue, in addition to my letter I'm also sending along a few electronic photos - these new digital cameras are really great for a place like Niger!

Articles on Peace Corps/Niger

Before coming into Peace Corps, I frequently wrote articles on foreign policy and global economic topics. Several of them were published in *American Diplomacy*, an on-line quarterly journal based at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. The publisher asked if I would document some of my Peace Corps experiences in Niger with a series of letters for his readers.

Some of you may be interested in my article in the current issue of *American Diplomacy*, "Peace Corps Adventures in the Sahara." It describes my 10-day visit to the Agadez region a few weeks after my arrival in Niger. (We've had two Volunteers in Iferouane for the past year, and we're tentatively planning to put additional Volunteers in the region next year.) The article can be found on the *American Diplomacy* home page at <http://www.unc.edu/depts/diplomat/>.

I hope to have further articles related to Peace Corps and Niger in future issues of *American Diplomacy*, as one of my contributions to Peace Corps' Third Goal.

Islamist Violence

In November, there was a brief outburst of Islamist violence in Niamey and Maradi. This was reported on BBC and Radio France International, so some of you may be aware of it.

The Islamist demonstrations were initially aimed at an annual fashion show to be held in Niamey, which some Islamists judged to be a promotion of public nudity. The targets were quickly broadened, however, to include the national lottery and bars and restaurants serving alcohol. In Maradi, the targets also included a church and the offices of some American missionaries (SIM). There was significant destruction of property, and several people were injured. The Government reacted promptly, quickly restoring order and security and

arresting several of the Islamist leaders.

Neither Peace Corps as an organization nor any of our Volunteers was a target or in any way involved. Moreover, the vast majority of Nigeriens are not religious fanatics and did not approve of the extremists' actions. The Government remains avowedly secular, and non-Muslims have long enjoyed toleration in Niger.

The importance of this development, however, is that it was the first-ever outbreak of Islamist violence in this country. In view of Islamist-inspired attacks on Americans elsewhere, we cannot afford to be complacent. Volunteer safety and security is our highest priority, and we will remain vigilant and work closely with the Government of Niger and the US Embassy to minimize any danger.

Bukoki Transit House

Peace Corps has maintained a transit house (hostel) in the Bukoki neighborhood of Niamey for about 15 years. It has generally served Volunteer needs quite well.

In recent months, however, concerns about security at the transit house have been mounting. Though Volunteers have not yet been victims, the incidence of petty crime in the neighborhood has become worrisome. Moreover, a new, two-story Coranic school is under construction next door to the transit house, bringing the courtyard and verandah into full view of people who might be offended by what they could see therein (e.g., alcohol consumption, "immodest" dress, etc.). And finally, the Bukoki mosque has become a center of the Islamist movement in Niamey (see above).

Therefore, prudence and Volunteer safety dictated that we relocate the transit house.

We have just leased a new house, which is in a much safer location, only a five-minute walk from the Peace Corps office. An added bonus is that it's considerably nicer in terms of aesthetics and cleanliness.

The move to the new facilities should be completed by January.

New Trainees

We are preparing for the arrival of 56 new trainees and the beginning of our now once-per-year Pre-Service Training on January 11. This will be my first PST as Director, so I'm looking forward to it as they must be, with a mixture of excitement and trepidation.

Full Staff

With the hiring of Hassane Abdourahamane, a well-qualified and hard-working Nigerien, as our new Training Manager, and the return from maternity leave of our outstanding APCD for Natural Resources Management, Jen Burt Davis (along with baby Zachary), PC/Niger is now fully staffed for the first time in more than a year. This gives us the opportunity to further improve Volunteer support as well as to begin looking at some new programming possibilities and other initiatives.

Jim Bullington
Country Director/ Niger

Introducing - Friends of Niger T-Shirts You're gonna love this T-Shirt!!

Based on a design originally created by our neighbors at Friends of Burkina Faso, FON had produced its first shirts in plenty of time to meet holiday gift giving needs. The short-sleeved shirts are 100% cotton, pre-shrunk beefy-T, natural muslin-colored fabric. The design (above) is four color: brown, black and the orange and green of the flag of Niger. You'll notice a nifty proximity map of Niger within the map of Africa which appears in the branches of the baobab tree. The shirts are available in Medium, Large and Extra Large sizes and sell for \$18 each, shipping included. Use the **FON Membership & Order Form** or send a check made out to Friends of Niger (indicating the number of shirts by size), along with your name and address to: **Shirts, c/o Friends of Niger, P.O. Box 33164, Washington, D.C., 20033-0164.**

You're Gonna Love This T-Shirt		
Available in 3 Sizes		Makes a Great Gift!!
- M, L, XL		It'll Look Good on You as Well!!

Children's Chewable Multivitamins - a Campaign Update -

Friends of Niger continues to receive donations for the purchase of children's chewable multivitamins. As before, these donations are used for the periodic bulk purchase of vitamins as part of the FON/Boston University project which began last year. The vitamins are then carried to Niger and passed along to BU's Resident Director in Niamey - Sue Rosenfeld. Sue, in turn, makes sure that the vitamins are forwarded to the National Hospital in Niamey and to the SIM Hospital at Galmi, near Madaoua.

The next shipment is tentatively scheduled for late winter/ early spring of this year.

Financial contributions should be made payable to **Friends of Niger** and sent to:

**Vitamins c/o Friends of Niger
P.O. Box 33164
Washington, D.C.
20033-0164**

FON will continue to liaise between people going to Niger and anyone or any group wanting to make a contribution to the campaign. In this regard, anyone travelling to Niger and finding themselves with room in a suitcase or, better yet, a spare suitcase is encouraged to get in touch with **Jim Schneider** via e-mail at **lorenz3@magi.com** or by telephone at 819-827-4870. *Remember - it all counts.*

New Group of PC Trainees Arrives in Niger



On January 11 of this year, 56 new PC Niger trainees arrived in Niamey. The picture below - courtesy of Jim Bullington - shows all but two of the group just after their arrival at Hamdallaye, the Niger PC training center.

*The following item has been reproduced from the January 7 edition of **Kakaki: News of Niger** with the permission of Joel Mayer (Kakaki editor and Niger RPCV).*

NGO's Join to Fight Noma

Officials of two non-governmental organizations, "Vents de l'Espoir" and "Aviation Sans Frontières," will visit Niger from January 8-14 within the framework of the fight against noma, also known as cancrum oris and "grazer disease."

Vents de l'Espoir (Winds of Hope) was created in 1999 by Bertrand Piccard and Brian Jones following their balloon trip around the world. Each year, they make a contribution in defense of "neglected causes," notably diseases that affect children. Last year, they contributed \$100,000 to the fight against noma in Niger, Mali, and Burkina Faso.

The recorded incidence of noma in Niger is 7 to 14 cases per 10,000 children aged 0-6, although the real incidence is probably much higher since many victims have no access to health facilities. In 1999, Niger recorded 117 cases.

Noma is often called the "face of poverty," since it flourishes in the absence of hygienic conditions. The name "noma" is Greek for "devour." Indeed, the illness devours the flesh of its victims and is said to be fatal in over 80% of its cases worldwide, and the survivors remain disfigured for life.

In Niger, the mortality rate from noma often reaches 90%. The most vulnerable segment of the population are children aged 2-6, because they often suffer from malnutrition after being weaned. It also attacks people already suffering from infectious diseases such as typhoid and measles, and those with poor oral hygiene. Victims of HIV are also severely vulnerable to noma due to their impaired immune system, and the rise of HIV and AIDS among children in Niger has almost certainly contributed to the increased incidence of noma in the country, according to information we have received from a Nigerien medical source.

Sources: PANA, citing the World Health Organization, Kakaki of 8/19/00

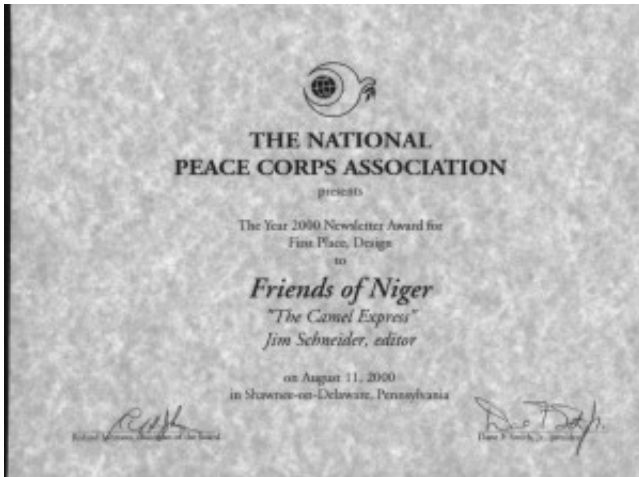
Peace Corps Fellows Program at Illinois State University

The Peace Corps Fellows Program at Illinois State University is now in its 7th year, training and placing RPCVs in community and economic development internships around the nation. Students who successfully complete the program receive graduate degrees in economics, political science or sociology.

According to Michael Kelleher, director of the program and a Sierra Leone RPCV, the program is now considering Fall 2001 (August) and Spring 2002 (January) admissions.

Additional information is available through the program web site - <http://lilt.ilstu.edu/uced>. The program can also be contacted by e-mail at UCEDInfo@ilstu.edu or by phone at 309-438-8685.

The Camel Express Takes First and Second at NPCA



Newsletter Awards Ceremony

When Friends of Niger President Jim Schneider attended the Awards Dinner at the National Peace Corps Association (NPCA) Annual General Meeting in August he was looking forward to a pleasant evening and received a pleasant surprise as well.

The Camel Express, newsletter of the Friends of Niger and edited by Schneider, was recognized by NPCA with the first place award for Newsletter Design. FON also tied the Friends of Burkina Faso (FBF) for the second place award for Editorial Content. FBF President Bob Osborne and FBF

newsletter editor Denny Fitzpatrick were also in attendance at the meetings which took place at Shawnee-on-the-Delaware, Pennsylvania.

FON Reunion 2001: A Celebration of Niger

Target Dates Tentatively Set for Niger's Independence Day Weekend in August

The **Friends of Niger Reunion 2001** has now been given a thematic designation and is being called *A Celebration of Niger*. This name is intended to reinforce the hope of FON's Board of Directors that next year's event involve Niger's Embassy as well as the Nigerien community in Washington, D. C. - the site of the reunion.

On a recent trip to D. C., FON President Jim Schneider met with Mr. Joseph Diatta, Niger's Ambassador to the United States. Mr. Diatta expressed support for the reunion and has agreed to work closely with FON on the organization of the event.

FON's Board has tentatively scheduled *A Celebration of Niger* for the weekend of August 3-5, 2001. August 3 is Niger's Independence Day and a national holiday in Niger itself.

Tentative plans call for social gatherings on the nights of August 4 and August 5; exhibits and displays which highlight Niger, its culture, and the activities of FON - archives, multi-media shows, etc.; films from Niger; Peace Corps and NPCA material; readings by authors of books on Niger and by RPCV Niger authors; as well as events related to the nation's capitol - such as a memorial service at the John F. Kennedy grave site. Additional information regarding alternative accommodation and other details will be released via the FON web site - <http://www.friendsofniger.org> - and the next issue of *The Camel Express*.

The theme of the reunion, according to Schneider is "a celebration of Niger and its people as well as of our time in Niger and our experiences while we were there. We are hoping that people who care about Niger - and who fondly remember each other and the time that they spent in Niger - will bring their families, their photos, their scrapbooks and help make the weekend a very special occasion."

2002 Trip to Niger Sparks Interest & Ideas

- 40 Years of Peace Corps in Niger -

The last issue of *The Camel Express* carried a brief announcement of FON's plan to sponsor a trip back to Niger in the year 2002 - for many reasons, including the commemoration of the 40th anniversary of Peace Corps presence in Niger.

That brief announcement has stimulated considerable response from people interested in participating in such a trip - in some cases along with members of their family: spouses, parents, children. The amount of interest expressed at such an early date, means that the trip is now a likelihood.

When the trip first went onto the FON drawingboard, it was assumed that most everyone interested in the trip would be primarily attracted to the idea of returning to the community in which they served. While this is, indeed, true for many - others have expressed interest in two other kinds of activity or itinerary.

Some - especially those who served in the earlier years and who lived in the larger urban areas like Niamey - have expressed an interest in visiting locations that they were never able to get to before, like Agadez - for example. Others have expressed an interest in being involved in some manner of 'work project.'

Because of these and other inputs the Board will now be 'exploring' a wider range of potential activities. Both the timing of the trip, the content of the trip itinerary, and trip options are still open to input from anyone who might be interested. The current plan is to take the process to a second phase - involving research on more specific details regarding timing, content and cost - this coming winter.

Meanwhile, early and very tentative discussions have begun with Peace Corps Niger.

Please continue to send input, comments or questions to **Jim Schneider**. Jim is most easily reached at either his e-mail address - lorenz3@magi.com - or by telephone - **819-827-4870**. He can also be reached by surface mail at the FON address (see page 2).

FRIENDS OF NIGER

2001 MEMBERSHIP & ORDER FORM

Name(s) _____

Address _____

City/State _____ Phone (h) _____

Zip _____ Phone (w) _____

E- Mail Address _____

Connection to Niger (RPCV, etc.) _____

Dates in Niger _____ Location in Niger _____

Program or Involvement in Niger _____

Membership Dues & Contributions Help Fund FON Activities, including The Camel Express

Please Check Appropriate Boxes

- Enclosed is \$20 for an Individual Membership in FON
 - \$45 to cover Individual Membership in both FON & NPCA
 - Enclosed is \$35 for a Family Membership (2 Members at One Address)
 - \$67.50 to cover Family Membership in both FON & NPCA
 - I am a New RPCV, entitled to a 1-Year Free Membership
 - Please send me a Copy of FON's Bylaws (Members Only)
 - In Addition to my Membership, I have enclosed a Contribution of _____
 - Instead of Joining FON at this time, I have enclosed a Contribution of _____
 - Please send _____ Friends of Niger T-Shirts at \$18 each (Shipping Included) _____
- T-Shirt Sizes: M _____ L _____ XL _____

TOTAL AMOUNT ENCLOSED _____

Make Check or Money Order Payable to **Friends of Niger** and mail to:

P. O. Box 33164, Washington, D. C. 20033-0164

(Please Enclose Membership Form)

FON Participation Menu

Indicate your interest with a check mark. Or add something new at the bottom. Tell us how to reach you on the **Friends of Niger 2001 Membership & Order Form** (see above).

- × ___ Will help set up local FON group
- × ___ Would participate in local FON group
- × ___ Reunion 2001 in Washington, D.C.
- × ___ Trip back to Niger in 2002
- × ___ Will be local FON contact person
- × ___ Will help with BU/FON Vitamin Campaign

Other _____

Credits and Other Information

This edition of **The Camel Express** was prepared, produced and distributed via hardcopy, e-mail and website posting with the contributions Sue Bracken, Irma Poots Sarata, Judd Lyon, Jim Bullington, Jane Bonin, Sue Rosenfeld, Jai Evans, Don Bracken, Julia Burke, Carrie Regan, Penni St. Hilaire, Tori Paide, Meghan Maguire, Andrew Younger, Chris Fabian, Gabriella Maertens, John Soloninka, Larry Koff and our friends from Friends of Burkina Faso and from RPCVs of Madison, Wisconsin Please send address changes and corrections, as well as any queries to **The Camel Express** at any of the addresses below.

The Camel Express is the periodical newsletter of **Friends of Niger (FON)**.

FON can be contacted via the post at P.O. Box 33164, Washington, D.C., 20033-0164;

by e-mail at lorenz3@magi.com; and you will find FON on the web at the following Internet address

www.friendsofniger.org.

Board of Directors Friends of Niger

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Jim Schneider, President
& Editor

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Gabriella Maertens, Vice-President

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John Soloninka, Recording Secretary

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The Camel Express



Newsletter of the Friends of Niger

April 2001

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FON Commits to Microcredit Project & Teams with MICA to Provide Oxen & Carts



Friends of Niger has formed a partnership with MICA, Inc. (Microcredit Africa) to provide oxcarts to women in villages in central Niger as part of a project whose aim is to empower women to reclaim their basic rights for education, health care and respect as human beings.

MICA is a non-profit organization, founded by Haoua Diatta, which seeks to alleviate poverty in Africa by empowering women. Mrs. Diatta is the author of *Shadow of Africa* and is the spouse of Nigerien Ambassador Joseph Diatta.

The flagship activity of MICA is the Oxcart Project which begins with the formation of an association of village women, who then choose their officers (including 2 Financial Managers) from amongst themselves and undergo training as a group. This process is followed by the provision of an ox and a cart to the group. The woman rent the carts to villagers who need transportation for a variety of purposes - as an ambulance, for farmers

taking produce to market, for craftspeople transporting goods, etc. Rental revenues allow the women to eventually purchase the cart while continuing to generate revenue. These recovered funds, in turn, allow MICA to purchase additional carts for other women in other villages. The cost of an ox and a cart is \$280.

The Oxcart Project is operating in the Maradi region with active projects in Dan Keri and Aguié and with another four villages at various stages of project development.

Friends of Niger has agreed to fund oxen/cart sets for two villages as well as to package donations from its members and contacts in units of \$280 for the purchase of additional oxen and carts. Information about where and how to contribute can be found below..

More information regarding MICA, its various projects in Niger, and Haoua Diatta's book (*Shadow of Africa*) can be found at the MICA web site - <http://justin.kirk.net/mica/>.

Contributions to the FON/MICA Oxcart Project should be made payable to Friends of Niger and sent to :

Oxcart; c/o FON; P.O. Box 33164; Washington, DC; 20033-0164

Message from the President

Greetings to each of you. Hopefully this message finds you still enjoying all the good things of a new year as well as the many pleasures of early spring.

It is likely that you've already read this month's lead story above, which describes FON's new working relationship with MICA and which encourages your support for the Oxcart Project. We believe that the project has great potential as a triggering mechanism for the mobilization of the largely untapped energy and creativity of the women of Niger. While encouraging your support for this project, I want to thank all of you who so generously responded to last fall's appeal related to Niger's NID campaign to eradicate polio in Niger. The goals of the project were largely achieved, though work remains to be done and you will hear again from us regarding NID activities.

Elsewhere in this issue of The Camel Express you will find Jim Bullington's latest column (Inside Peace Corps Niger), the inspiring Kabey Fo story; the latest report on the BU/FON campaign; an update on FON's 2002 return trip to Niger; and much more.

We hope that you'll take special note of the story and information regarding Celebration Niger 2001 (which follows below) and that then you will begin making plans to join us in August in Washington).

Help Needed

In that context - discussion of the big reunion/exhibit/celebration scheduled for August - we need help. Specifically we need a few people from the DC area to come forward and help us with the initial stages of several critical organizational tasks. Quite a few of you have offered to help during the event itself and these offers are very gratefully accepted. I've been in contact with most of you and you'll be hearing from me again as the event draws nearer. But we still need a few people to help us with things that must be done now. Please contact me by e-mail - lorenz3@magi.com - or phone - 819-827-4870. Thanks in advance.

FON Membership Drive

Friends of Niger continues to depend on membership contributions to cover the cost of its operational expenses. Members will be in receipt of the annual President's Report. Its contents will show that, once again, FON more or less broke even but that the organization does not have a lot of financial latitude. So - please, please renew your 2001 membership now and/or join us for the first time. The FON 2001 Membership Form can be found below.

You can also access the membership form from the FON website - <http://www.friendsofniger.org>. Our webmaster, Jai Evans, has just finished updating the site - check out the sections on news, books, art and photos.

Enjoy the newsletter, stay in contact and - please, please - join Friends of Niger.

Jim Schneider
President

Celebration of Niger 2001: See You This August in DC

As previously announced, Friends of Niger is sponsoring Celebration Niger 2001 on the weekend of August 3-5 in Washington, D.C. The event, a combination reunion/exhibition, kicks off on the afternoon of Friday, August 3 - Niger's Independence Day and is being held in DC in recognition of Peace Corps' 40th anniversary activities.

Celebration 2001 will be an opportunity to make new friends, reacquaint with old friends, reconnect with Niger and celebrate the relationship between Niger and its friends - old and new. As such, all weekend events will be open to all friends of Niger - FON member or not - as well as their families and friends.

The weekend schedule, still tentative and open to input, has nonetheless begun to take shape - with a first contact/registration session set for the afternoon of August 3 and a dinner/social slated for that evening. Refreshments will be available.

The FON Exhibit, which will be located at the same site (to be announced) as Registration, will run Friday afternoon through Sunday morning. Amongst the exhibits will be the FON Archives, a growing collection of materials from people who have lived and worked in Niger over the past 40 years, and the Patrick Thomas collection of recycled tools from Niger.

Saturday's events at the Exhibit will include readings and book signings by authors of books on Niger - including Paul Stoller and Haora Diatta - as well as films and music from Niger. Additional exhibits, readings and events will be announced over the next few months at the FON website - <http://www.friendsofniger.org> - and in the next issue of The Camel Express.

Space on the exhibits site will be set aside and audio-visual equipment available for those wanting to bring along their own slides, videotapes or audiotapes - as well as their photo albums, newspaper clippings, etc.

Saturday evening planning envisages groups dining in years of service groups and then gathering for a cross-FON social evening, music included.

Additional events for the weekend will include participation of the Nigerien Ambassador to the US, Joseph Diatta. Current Peace Corps Director for Niger, Jim Bullington; PCDC Niger desk people Dan Reilly and Leanne Johnson; past PC Niger directors and staff, and members of the DC Nigerien community are expected to be in attendance.

If you are planning to attend Celebration 2001, please let us know. We'll understand if your plans change - but we need to build an estimate of numbers for a variety of purposes. Thanks!!

Re: Housing: Some people have offered to host out-of-town attendees. If you can accommodate one or more persons for the weekend - please let us know. If you are hoping to board with someone - please send us a query. We'll try to put potential hosts and guests in contact. Please try to be specific regarding what you need or what you are offering. Thanks!!

For this or other purposes related to Celebration 2001, contact Jim Schneider by phone at 819-827-4870 or via e-mail at lorenz3@magi.com.

INSIDE PEACE CORPS NIGER

Dear Friends of Niger:

New Volunteers

On March 30 we swore in 45 enthusiastic new Volunteers. The ceremony, combined with a celebration of Peace Corps' 40th anniversary, was at the Ambassador's residence. Including Volunteers, there were about 300 guests for cocktails and dinner, among them four Government Ministers and other senior officials. The Minister of Justice, who is currently Acting Foreign Minister, gave a warm and supportive address in which he recalled being influenced as a youth by a Volunteer in his village. I presented a "Superstar Service Award" to Pat Alio, who arrived as a Volunteer in 1964, married a Nigerien, and taught for many years in Niger public schools.

The event drew extensive media coverage, including a front-page story in the Government daily and lots of radio and TV air time.

This was an outstanding finale to a very successful PST. Our only disappointment was that 11 of the original 56 trainees departed before swearing in. Their reasons were varied but all personal, not due to any unhappiness with the training or the program. The remaining new Volunteers seem highly motivated and enthusiastic about beginning their service.

The PST was co-directed by our new Training Manager, Hassane Abdourahamane, and Noelle Smith, a former PST director and Niger PCV whom some of you may remember.

Food Crisis

The effects of last summer's drought and the subsequent poor harvest are now beginning to be tragically apparent, especially in the more northerly agricultural regions that were hardest hit. Prices for millet and other staple grains are double their level at this time last year. In some villages, people are already reduced to eating tree leaves and other "famine food". Irrigated gardens, an important food source in the cool season (with which many Volunteers have been assisting), have mostly withered with the onset of hot weather and are no longer productive. The population of Niamey and other towns has noticeably swelled with immigrants from the countryside seeking work or handouts.

The most alarming aspect of this situation is that there will be no further agricultural production in Niger until after the rains come (inshallah) in July and August. Moreover, Government and donor food stocks do not appear to be adequate to meet the problem. Even though the poor harvest has been known and widely reported for months, both Government and donors have been slow to appreciate the gravity of the crisis.

A complicating factor is that overall, the harvest was poor but not catastrophic, not bad enough to create a country-wide famine comparable to those in the 1970s and 1984-85. In many villages, the harvest was normal; while in others, sometimes only a few kilometers away, it was terrible. National or even regional averages tend to conceal the extent of the problem in the worst-off areas. Moreover, hoarding and speculation by rich merchants is part of the problem, and an infusion of money without a corresponding increase in food supplies would only serve to drive prices even higher.

Even in good years, many people go hungry in Niger during the two or three months preceding harvest. This year, however, it looks like

about a third of the population will go hungry for five or six months before harvest. The Government has appealed for 60,000 tons of emergency food aid. At this point we just don't know if a combination of traditional coping strategies ("famine food," selling/slaughtering animals, etc.) and external aid will be enough to avert widespread starvation.

We and our Volunteers of course want to do what we can to help. We are urgently assessing the situation and trying to decide what to do.

Crime Increase

I don't want to seem overly negative in this column - Niger is still a great place to live and work and visit - but I think it's appropriate to inform Friends of Niger about the increase in crime in recent months. By far the most serious incident occurred the night of December 23, when the US Embassy Defense Attaché, was killed outside a nightclub in downtown Niamey (La Cloche) in an armed hijacking of his vehicle. An Embassy Marine Security Guard was wounded in the same incident. The vehicle was subsequently found in Timbuktu, but the perpetrators have not been apprehended.

In January, a visiting RPCV was robbed and slightly injured in a mugging in broad daylight near the National Museum; and in March a PCV was the victim of armed robbery at a Niamey bus station. In the Agadez region, there have been three recent incidents of armed banditry against American and European tour groups.

Please don't think I'm trying to give you the impression that we and the Volunteers are in constant danger or that law and order is breaking down in Niger. This is not the case. On the whole, there is still much less violent crime in Niger than in many other African countries (e.g., Nigeria, South Africa) or indeed in parts of some American cities. Moreover, Volunteers in their villages are as safe from violent crime as they are likely to be anywhere in the world. However, caution is in order, and we have taken some steps (e.g., making La Cloche off limits, curtailing nighttime travel) to try to reduce the danger.

Also, I want to remind prospective visitors of the need for prudence, especially in downtown Niamey, and medical insurance to protect you in the event of sickness or injury. Our Peace Corps Medical Officers can treat only current Volunteers -- not former Volunteers, Volunteer parents, or PC staff members. They can recommend a local medical practitioner, but medical capabilities here remain limited and far below US standards. Medevac flights cost around \$10,000 and require advance payment, so visitors should have medevac insurance.

PC/Niger Staff

Jim Schneider suggested that some of you might be interested in learning more about the current Peace Corps/Niger staff.

There are about 40 of us in all, augmented by another dozen or so during the annual PST. In addition to the Country Director, there are four APCDs: one for Administration (Steve Peterson), and three for programs (Gaston Kaba, Health; Don Osborn, Agriculture; and Jenifer Burt Davis, Natural Resources Management). We also have two PC Medical Officers (Cindy Levick and Walter Kittoe). Other staff members whom many of you may remember include: Hassane Abdourahmane, Training Manager; Maimouna Iro, Admin Assistant; Assalama Dawalak Sidi, Gender and Development

Assistant; Yacouba Sangare, Technical Coordinator; Boubacar Ide, Budget Assistant; Clement Doamekpo, Cashier; Kabirou Amusa, Receptionist; Dominique Yattera, Director's Secretary; Yacouba Hama, General Services Clerk; Fatimata Gado, Admin Secretary; Boubacar Keita, Travel Assistant; Sariou Garba, Lab Technician; Caroline Yattara, Medical Secretary; Hadiza Kiepin Toye, IRC Manager; Mani Mahamane, Language/Cross-Culture Coordinator; Aboubacar Mahamane (Tondi), Hamdallaye Site Manager.

We also have a great group of drivers, mechanics, janitors, messengers, guards and other hard-working people. I'm very proud of the staff and all they do to support our Volunteers.

Jim Bullington
Peace Corps Country Director/ Niger

From the Creative Responses Department: The Kabey Fo Story

Until a little over ten years ago, the people of Kabey Fo led a nomadic existence. Drought and other economic and political stresses led them to seek more sustainable means of survival. This in turn led them to the traditional chief of Babangatta-Barekire from whom they secured access to land near Kollo in western Niger - where they settled.

When Virginia Emmons arrived in the village of Kabey Fo as a new Peace Corps Volunteer in March 2000, her assignment was agroforestry. A few weeks after her arrival, people from the village approached her with a proposal for a primary school and an adult literacy center with a difference - the language of instruction would be Tamachek rather than French.



The villagers of Kabey Fo gather in their newly built one-room schoolhouse. Teacher Elhadji Amadou is seated front right.

Reluctant to take on too much, too soon, Virginia concentrated on her work in agroforestry and on getting to know more about the village and the villagers. Undeterred, the villagers pursued their idea. They met on a regular basis, they found someone to do an educational needs assessment survey in the village, they sent two villagers off to Niamey to be trained in adult education techniques, they shared their idea with local officials, they formed a parents committee and established a village caisee with long-term financial sustainability in mind. And along the way, good things began to happen.

Virginia Emmons became involved as a planning resource to the village. She involved her sister, Lucy Spoerk, a teacher in Milwaukee. Lucy raised funds and gathered supplies both in the States and in Niger - where she went for 10 days in November. American Airlines even waived the excess baggage charges as a humanitarian gesture of support.

Meanwhile, working with PC Niger Country Director Jim Bullington and APCD Don Osborn, Virginia submitted a Peace Corps Partnership Program proposal. Due to the soundness of the project, Lucy's stateside fundraising activities as well as her liaison work with PC DC, and the responsiveness of people in and around Milwaukee (as well as Miami, Los Angeles, Minneapolis, etc.) - the PCPP proposal was fully subscribed almost immediately.

While all this was taking place, the people of Kabey Fo began to build a one-room schoolhouse as well as a temporary home for the teacher that had been enlisted - Elhadji Amadou. Soon after Lucy arrived on the scene in November, the school's first primary school term began at the Tamachek Experimental Primary School and Adult Literacy Center. Basic literacy training was already taking place in the evenings.

While they wait for formal accreditation for their school - and the state funding that comes with it - the village is housing and feeding the teacher. Lucy's fundraising has secured enough money to provide the teacher with a salary for at least a year. With any luck, the school will become accredited by that time - especially as the government now sees education conducted in Niger's national languages as a priority.

Luck or not, the villagers are determined that the school is there to stay. Thirty-seven children between the ages of six and eight attend class most every day (with additional classes slated for next year). The adult literacy classes are conducted at night, with Elhadji Amadou overseeing the work of the recently trained villagers. Other villagers have been sent off for training in agricultural techniques, AIDS prevention, etc.

Lucy Emmons Spoerk said it perhaps best - "There's a saying, it takes a village to raise a child. Well, in this case it took many villages ..." Or as The Camel has been known to say - it all counts, or none of it does.

Children's Chewable Multivitamins - the April Update

Friends of Niger continues to receive donations for the purchase of children's chewable multivitamins. As before, these donations are used for the periodic bulk purchase of vitamins as part of the FON/Boston University project which began last year. The vitamins are then carried to Niger and passed along to BU's Resident Director in Niamey - Sue Rosenfeld. Sue, in turn, makes sure that the vitamins are forwarded to the National Hospital in Niamey and to the SIM Hospital at Galmi, near Madaoua.

The next (and fourth) shipment is scheduled for shipment to Niger in late April when Sue Rosenfeld returns to Niamey after a trip to the States. Another shipment is tentatively planned for the fall of this year.

Financial contributions should be made payable to Friends of Niger and sent to:

Vitamins c/o Friends of Niger
P.O. Box 33164
Washington, D.C.
20033-0164

FON will continue to liaise between people going to Niger and anyone or any group wanting to make a contribution to the campaign. In this regard, anyone traveling to Niger and finding themselves with room in a suitcase or, better yet, a spare suitcase is encouraged to get in touch with Jim Schneider via e-mail at lorenz3@magi.com or by telephone at 819-827-4870. Remember - it all counts or none of it does.

Pat Alio Recognized as 45 New PCVs Sworn Into Service



A host of senior Nigerien officials joined American Ambassador Barbro Owens-Kirkpatrick on March 30 to swear in 45 new Peace Corps Volunteers for Niger. The new PCV contingent will bring the total number of Volunteers in Niger to 108. They will be living and working in rural villages in the regions of Agadez, Dosso, Maradi, Tahoua, Tillaberi, and Zinder - with responsibilities related to agricultural production, environmental preservation, and improved community health and nutrition. Some Volunteers also work with organizations such as Global 2000, Helen Keller International, CARE, Plan International, and the International Union for the Conservation of Nature.

The swearing-in ceremony, hosted by the US Ambassador, marks the completion of 11 weeks of training, and the start of the Volunteers' two years of service in Niger. The training program took place at the PC Niger Training Centre at Hamdallaye - for 16 years the site of new Volunteer training. Peace Corps began work in Niger in 1962, when seven Volunteers arrived to work as teachers in Nigerien schools. It has operated here continuously since that time and over 2600 Americans have now served as Volunteers in Niger.

At the March 30 event, Peace Corps Niger Country Director J. R. Bullington presented a special award to Pat Alio for "sustained superior service to the people of Niger, exemplifying the ideals of the Peace Corps." Ms. Alio arrived in Niamey as a physical education PCV in 1964. She has remained there ever since, for many years as a Nigerien public school system teacher and now as Director of the English language program at the American Cultural Center in Niamey. Pat married the late Dr. Aboubacar Alio,

with whom she had five children.

2002 Return Trip Taking Shape

The high rate of response to the questionnaire that went to all those who had expressed interest in the idea of participating in a return trip to Niger in 2002 has turned the likelihood of a trip into a strong probability.

According to FON President Jim Schneider, who sent out the questionnaire, the responses prompt and thorough and the input was very constructive. I would be very surprised if this trip does not take place.

The Board of FON has tentatively lined up Spector Travel of Boston, African travel specialists, to handle the arrangements for transatlantic travel. Initial indications are that the trip will be of the 10-15 day variety.

Both Peace Corps Niger and the US Embassy have become involved in discussions related to trip activities and in-country logistics.

Anyone who is not already on the list and interested in the trip can still contact Schneider via e-mail at lorenz3@magi.com.

FON Archives Project

Photographs, slides, audiotapes, newspaper clippings, film and correspondence - the accumulated, sometimes unorganized, but always fascinating record of the time spent in Niger by Peace Corps Volunteers, university students, career diplomats and members of the international development community - these are the targets of the FON Archives and the FON Recording Secretary, John Soloninka.

The project was initiated last year by the FON Board of Directors and is coordinated by John with the help of FON web guru and electronic storage wizard, Jai Evans.

Material donated is in the process of being organized into albums and onto CDs - some of which will be exhibited at the FON Celebration of Niger this summer in Washington, D.C.

The project will be ongoing. Queries or donations should be directed to John at any of the FON addresses (see below) or at soloninka.1@osu.edu.

Remember the FON Archives this year during spring cleaning.

Friends of Niger T-Shirts -- You're gonna love this T-Shirt!!

Based on a design originally created by our neighbors at Friends of Burkina Faso, FON had produced its first shirts in plenty of time to meet holiday gift giving needs. The short-sleeved shirts are 100% cotton, pre-shrunk beefy-T, natural muslin-colored fabric. The design (above) is four color: brown, black and the orange and green of the flag of Niger. You'll notice a nifty proximity map of Niger within the map of Africa which appears in the branches of the baobab tree. The shirts are available in Medium, Large and Extra Large sizes and sell for \$18 each, shipping included. Use the **FON Membership & Order Form** or send a check made out to Friends of Niger (indicating the number of shirts by size), along with your name and address to: **Shirts. c/o Friends of Niger, P.O. Box 33164, Washington, D.C., 20033-0164.**

You're Gonna Love This T-Shirt		
Available in 3 Sizes		Makes a Great Gift!!
- M, L, XL		It'll Look Good on You as Well!!

Crisis Corps Openings in Africa- Work with PC HIV/AIDS Initiative

As part of its HIV/AIDS initiative, Peace Corps is sending RPCVs to Africa via Crisis Corps. The effort includes a range of volunteer

assignments including the development of AIDS curriculum and activities related to capacity-building within local HIV/AIDS NGOs.

The Crisis Corps is looking for RPCVs who have completed two years of PC service, who have some HIV/AIDS experience, who have at least one year of experience in sub-Saharan Africa and who preferably would be available for a six-month assignment.

Additional information about this and other Crisis Corps programs is available on-line at - <http://www.peacecorps.gov/crisiscorps>. Crisis Corps can also be reached by the following means:

Peace Corps - Crisis Corps
1111 20th Street NW, 7th Floor
Washington, D.C. 20526
crisiscorps@peacecorps.gov
1-800-424-8580 ext 2250 - or - 2020-692-2250
Fax: 202-692-2251

African Language Training

The University of Wisconsin-Madison will again host the Summer Cooperative African Language Institute (SCALI). Co-sponsored by the African Studies Program and the Department of African Languages and Literature at the University, with support from other Title VI Africa centers around the country and the National African Languages Resource Center, SCALI 2001 courses will be taught from 18 June to 09 August.

The tentative list of courses includes Fula/Fulfulde/Puular I and Hausa I in addition to courses in a dozen other African languages. The intensive eight week courses are equivalent to one year of academic study (8 credits). For more information about SCALI, FLAS, and updates on the languages that will be offered., visit the website -

<http://polyglot.lss.wisc.edu/afirst/scali/> or contact Jared avia e-mail at scali@mhub.facstaff.wisc.edu.

Other intensive language learning opportunities are available at a variety of institutions, including the University of Pennsylvania, Michigan State University, and the University of Florida.

This 'n That

Nine students, all female, arrived in Niger on Jan 22 for the spring 01 semester of the Boston University/Niger program. They hail from BU, Georgetown, Occidental College, and Fordham/Lincoln Center.

There have been a number of recent changes to the FON website - <http://www.friendsofniger.org>. In addition to posting of the latest issue of The Camel Express, their has been a new section added, entitled Photos from Niger, and updates to the Niger Art and Niger Books and Niger News pages.

For any of you hoping to attend Celebration Niger 2001 in DC this August, the Bulletin Board at the website is a great tool for letting old friends know that you are going and for making group plans for the weekend. Scroll down the left hand column at the site until you locate the link to the BB. Click and follow the directions.

FRIENDS OF NIGER 2001 MEMBERSHIP & ORDER FORM

Name(s) _____

Address _____

City/State _____ Phone (h) _____

Zip _____ Phone (w) _____

E- Mail Address _____

Connection to Niger (RPCV, etc.) _____

Dates in Niger _____ Location in Niger _____

Program or Involvement in Niger _____

Membership Dues & Contributions Help Fund FON Activities, including The Camel Express

Please Check Appropriate Boxes

- Enclosed is \$20 for an Individual Membership in FON
 - \$45 to cover Individual Membership in both FON & NPCA
 - Enclosed is \$35 for a Family Membership (2 Members at One Address)
 - \$67.50 to cover Family Membership in both FON & NPCA
 - I am a New RPCV, entitled to a 1-Year Free Membership
 - Please send me a Copy of FON's Bylaws (Members Only)
 - In Addition to my Membership, I have enclosed a Contribution of _____
 - Instead of Joining FON at this time, I have enclosed a Contribution of _____
 - Please send _____ Friends of Niger T-Shirts at \$18 each (Shipping Included) _____
- T-Shirt Sizes: M _____ L _____ XL _____

TOTAL AMOUNT ENCLOSED _____

Make Check or Money Order Payable to **Friends of Niger** and mail to:

P. O. Box 33164, Washington, D. C. 20033-0164

(Please Enclose Membership Form)

FON Participaction Menu

Indicate your interest with a check mark. Or add something new at the bottom. Tell us how to reach you on the **Friends of Niger 2001 Membership & Order Form** (see above).

- × ___ Will help set up local FON group
- × ___ Would participate in local FON group
- × ___ Will Attend Reunion 2001 in Washington, D.C.
- × ___ Trip back to Niger in 2002
- × ___ Will be local FON contact person
- × ___ Will help with BU/FON Vitamin Campaign
- × ___ Will help with Celebration 2001 (please contact me)

Other _____

Credits and Other Information

This edition of **The Camel Express** was prepared, produced and distributed via hardcopy, e-mail and website posting with the contributions Sue Bracken, Irma Poots Sarata, Judd Lyon, Jim Bullington, Lucy Spoerk, Sue Rosenfeld, Jai Evans, Don Bracken, Penni St. Hilaire, Betty Hutchinson, Justin Kirk, Gabriella Maertens, John Soloninka, Larry Koff and our friends from Burkina Faso. Please send address changes and corrections, as well as any queries to **The Camel Express** at any of the addresses below.

The Camel Express is the periodical newsletter of **Friends of Niger (FON)**.
FON can be contacted via the post at P.O. Box 33164, Washington, D.C., 20033-0164;

by e-mail at lorenz3@magi.com; and you will find FON on the web at the following Internet
address
www.friendsofniger.org.

Board of Directors Friends of Niger

*

Jim Schneider, President
& Editor

*

Gabriella Maertens, Vice-President

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John Soloninka, Recording Secretary

*

Larry Koff, Treasurer

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The Camel Express



Newsletter of the Friends of Niger
June 2001

- [Celebration of Niger 2001: See You This August in DC - The June Update -](#)
- [Friends of Niger Secures Group Rate Accommodation for Celebration of Niger 2001](#)
- [Latest Update on Celebration of Niger 2001 - 22 June](#)

Celebration of Niger 2001: See You This August in DC

- The June Update -

As previously announced, **Friends of Niger** is sponsoring **Celebration Niger 2001** on the weekend of August 3-5 in Washington, D.C. The event, a combination reunion/exhibition, kicks off on the afternoon of Friday, August 3 - Niger's Independence Day and is being held in DC in recognition of Peace Corps' 40th anniversary activities.

Celebration 2001 will be an opportunity to make new friends, reacquaint with old friends, reconnect with Niger and celebrate the relationship between Niger and its friends - old and new. **As such, all weekend events will be open to all friends of Niger - FON member or not - as well as their families and friends.**

If you are planning to attend Celebration 2001, please let us know. We'll understand if your plans change - but we need to build an estimate of numbers for a variety of purposes. Thanks!!

Re: Housing: Some people have offered to host out-of-town attendees. If you can accommodate one or more persons for the weekend - please let us know. If you are hoping to board with someone - please send us a query. We'll try to put potential hosts and guests in contact. Please try to be specific regarding what you need or what you are offering. Thanks!! **Also see the article below concerning the FON group rate.**

For this or other purposes related to Celebration 2001, **contact Jim Schneider by phone at 819-827-4870 or via e-mail at lorenz3@magi.com.**

Friends of Niger Secures Group Rate Accommodation for Celebration of Niger 2001

**** Reserve Your Room by July 3 ****

Friends of Niger has been able to secure a Group Rate at the Holiday Inn Central in Washington, DC for the weekend of **FON's Celebration of Niger 2001**.

The hotel is located at 1501 Rhode Island, NW (15th & Rhode Island) which places it near the White House, Peace Corps, Dupont Circle, etc. The Holiday Inn Central will be the location for the **FON Exhibit** as well as for many of the other activities related to the weekend.

The **Friends of Niger** Group Rate is \$109 per night, single or double occupancy.

Reservations can be made by calling 1-800-248-0016. Mention that you want the **Friends of Niger Group Rate** for check in on Friday, August 3 and departure on Sunday, August 5.. You may, of course, book a longer stay but the FON Group Rate only holds for the weekend. They'll want a deposit (which can be made by credit card) but cancellations may be made without penalty up to 6 PM on the intended arrival date.

IMPORTANT: The FON Group Rate is effective for reservations made no later than **July 3, 2001** - after which time rooms may still be available but will be subject to room and rate availability. Additional information regarding the hotel can be found at their web site - <http://www.inn-dc.com>. The hotel can also be reached via e-mail at holiday@inn-dc.com. Use the 800 number above for reservations.

Celebration of Niger 2001 activities will begin with the opening of the **FON Exhibit Hall** on the afternoon of Friday, August 3 - at Holiday Inn Central. Additional information regarding the weekend's activities will be available soon at the FON website - <http://www.friendsofniger.org>.

While you are making your reservations and/or other plans for attending the big weekend, please let us know that you will be in attendance. The best way to do that is to drop me a line at lorenz3@magi.com.

See you soon.

Jim Schneider
President
Friends of Niger

Latest Update on Celebration of Niger 2001 - 22 June

Over the next six weeks, this slot on the FON homepage will be used to report on the latest developments related to **Celebration of Niger 2001**. Check back often because there will be a lot more to come.

Dates - August 3-5, 2001
Location - Washington, DC
FON Exhibit - Holiday Inn Central

1501 Rhode Island Avenue, NW

Opening Event - **First Contact/Registration** beginning mid-afternoon on Friday, August 3 in the Council Room at the Holiday Inn Central. This event is being designed as an opportunity for people to find each other, check out the latest schedule developments for the weekend and take a first look at the **FON Exhibit Hall**.

Exhibits - **FON Archives** - a collection of photos, clippings, audio and videotapes donated by people who have lived and worked in Niger over the last 40 years.

The Patrick Thomas Exhibit - this exhibit includes Patrick Thomas' unique collection of recycled tools from Niger, calabashes of all kinds, Nigerienne textiles - as well as the exquisite Nigerienne photos of Didier Delattre and Blum.

The Mohamed Ahmed Jewelry Exhibit and Kiosk - Once located in Niamey, Mohamed now represents various artisans still located at the Musee in Niger's capital. Come practice your Hausa, Tamachek, Zarma or French.

And, more to come...

The Audio-Video Center - One of the fun features of the **FON Exhibit Hall** will be the availability of videotape playback and slide projector equipment for use by FON's members and friends. In other words, bring along your photos, slides and audio/video tapes. We'll help you set up a show for your friends or gladly add you to the audiovideo schedule of events.

Featured Videos - In addition to showings from the **FON Archives** collection, **FON** has been able to secure a number of Niger and Mali shows from the National Geographic Society - including the Sereno pieces, a 1980's film on the Woodabe, and several others.

Readings - Several authors - Nigerienne and those who have published on Niger - will be holding readings and be available for book signing over the course of the weekend: including Diatta Haoua, author of *Shadow of Africa* and founder of Microcredit Africa, and Paul Stoller, author of *Jaguar: A Story of Africans in America*. **And more to come.**

[[more...](#)]

The Camel Express



Newsletter of the Friends of Niger
July 2001

- [Celebration of Niger 2001 - The July 5 Update -](#)
- [Celebrate Niger's Independence Day with Old & New Friends of Niger](#)

Celebration of Niger 2001 - The July 5 Update -

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Celebration 2001 is be an opportunity to make new friends, reacquaint with old friends, reconnect with Niger and celebrate the relationship between Niger and its friends - old and new. **As such, all weekend events will be open to all friends of Niger - FON member or not - as well as their families and friends.**

If you are planning to attend **Celebration 2001**, please let us know. We ll understand if your plans change - but we need to build an estimate of numbers for a variety of purposes. Thanks!! Attendance indications, by the way are all very positive. Those already signaling that they plan to participate include Niger RPCVs from the early 60's through the late 90's; past PC Niger staff (Jane, Bonin, Dick Elwell and others); members of the Nigerienne diplomatic mission to the U.S. (Ambassador Joseph Diatta and author Haoua Diatta included); other Nigeriennes resident in the U.S.; as well as other folks who have lived and worked in Niger. It's going to be a good turnout!!

Re: Housing: Some people have offered to host out-of-town attendees. If you can accommodate one or more persons for the weekend - please let us know. If you are hoping to board with someone - please send us a query. We ll try to put potential hosts and guests in contact. Please try to be specific regarding what you need or what you are offering. Thanks!!

Check out the articles below for new information on the weekend's events - the Friday afternoon kick-off and the Friday evening dinner/social at the **Cafe Bukom**; Saturday's activities at the Holiday Inn Central, including the **FON Exhibit**, the **Patrick Thomas Exhibit** and the reading/book signing by **Haoua Diatta**; and tentative plans for Sunday morning.

For this and/or other purposes related to Celebration 2001, **contact Jim Schneider by phone at 819-827-4870 or via e-mail at lorenz3@magi.com.**

Celebrate Niger's Independence Day with Old & New Friends of Niger
- Find Each Other at the HI Central & Then

Enjoy West African Cuisine at the Bukom Cafe. -

Over the next four weeks, this slot on the FON homepage will be used to report on the latest developments related to **Celebration of Niger 2001**. Check back often because there will be a lot more to come.

Dates - August 3-5, 2001

Location - Washington, DC

Friday August 3

2 pm - First Contact/Registration beginning at 2 PM on Friday, August 3 in the **Council Room** at the **Holiday Inn Central**. This event is being designed as an opportunity for people to find each other, check out the latest schedule developments for the weekend and take a preview of the **FON Exhibit Hall**. The Council Room is located on the 1st floor at the Holiday Inn Central - 1501 Rhode Island, NW (the corner of 15th & Rhode Island). Bring along your photos and slides.

7 pm - Dinner & Social at the **Bukom Cafe** - 2442 18th Street, NW in Washington's Adam Morgan district. This is going to be one great evening. The Bukom Cafe is DC's premiere West African restaurant. Folks at the Bukom are preparing a special buffet for the FON crowd, at \$10/person, featuring peanut butter stew, egusi, jollof, a fish dish, plenty of vegetarian fare and more. Enjoy a great meal and stay for the music.

Saturday August 4

All Day - The Friends of Niger Exhibit - Council Room, HI Central. The exhibit will include all the following and more.

FON Archives - a collection of photos, clippings, audio and videotapes donated by people who have lived and worked in Niger over the last 40 years.

The Patrick Thomas Exhibit - this exhibit includes Patrick Thomas' unique collection of recycled tools from Niger, calabashes of all kinds, Nigerienne textiles - as well as the exquisite Nigerienne photos of Didier Delattre and Blum.

The Mohamed Ahmed Jewelry Exhibit and Kiosk - Once located in Niamey, Mohamed now represents various artisans still located at the Musee in Niger's capital. Come practice your Hausa, Tamachek, Zarma or French.

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Featured Videos -In addition to showings from the **FON Archives** collection, **FON** has been able to secure a number of Niger and Mali shows from the **National Geographic Society** - including the Sereno pieces, a 1980's film on the Woodabe, and several others - as well as the award winning LWR film *When the Harvest Comes*.

Readings - Several authors - Nigerienne and those who have published on Niger - will be holding readings and be available for book signing over the course of the weekend: including Diatta Haoua, author of *Shadow*

of Africa and founder of Microcredit Africa, and Paul Stoller, author of *Jaguar: A Story of Africans in America*.

Sunday August 5

**10 am - Arlington National Cemetery - Laying of a wreath on the grave of John F. Kennedy.
Details to follow.**

The Camel Express



Newsletter of the Friends of Niger

August 2001

- [Fon Committis to Microcredir Project and Teams with MICA to Provide Oxen & Carts](#)
- [Childrens Chewable Vitamins - a Campaign Update](#)

FON Commits to Microcredit Project & Teams with MICA to Provide Oxen & Carts



Friends of Niger has formed a partnership with MICA, Inc. (Microcredit Africa) to provide oxcarts to women in villages in central Niger as part of a project whose aim is to “empower women to reclaim their basic rights for education, health care and respect as human beings.”

MICA is a non-profit organization, founded by Haoua Diatta, which seeks to alleviate poverty in Africa by empowering women. Mrs. Diatta is the author of [Shadow of Africa](#) and is the spouse of Nigerien Ambassador Joseph

Diatta.

The flagship activity of MICA is the Oxcart Project which begins with the formation of an association of village women, who then choose their officers (including 2 Financial Managers) from amongst themselves and undergo training as a group. This process is followed by the provision of an ox and a cart to the group. The woman rent the carts to villagers who need transportation for a variety of purposes - as an ambulance, for farmers taking produce to market, for craftspeople transporting goods, etc. Rental revenues allow the women to eventually purchase the cart while continuing to generate revenue. These recovered funds, in turn, allow MICA to purchase additional carts for other women in other villages. The cost of an ox and a cart is \$280.

The Oxcart Project is operating in the Maradi region with active projects in Dan Keri and Aguié and with another four villages at various stages of project development.

Friends of Niger has agreed to fund oxen/cart sets for two villages as well as to package donations from its members and contacts in units of \$280 for the purchase of additional oxen and carts. Information about where and how to contribute can be found midway down the right hand column on this page.

More information regarding MICA, its various projects in Niger, and Haoua Diatta’s book (Shadow of Africa) can be found at the MICA web site - <http://justin.kirk.net/mica/>.

Member Donations Push Oxcart Sets to Six

Financial contributions over the past several months have allowed Friends of Niger to boost its support for the Oxcart Project from two to six sets of oxen and carts .

Contributions to the FON/MICA Oxcart Project should be made payable to **Friends of Niger** and sent to :
Oxcart; c/o FON; P.O. Box 33164; Washington, DC; 20033-0164

Children's Chewable Multivitamins - a Campaign Update -

Friends of Niger continues to receive donations for the purchase of children's chewable multivitamins. As before, these donations are used for the periodic bulk purchase of vitamins as part of the FON/Boston University project which began in 1999. The vitamins are then carried to Niger and passed along to BU's Resident Director in Niamey - Sue Rosenfeld. Sue, in turn, makes sure that the vitamins are forwarded to the National Hospital in Niamey and to the SIM Hospital at Galmi, near Madaoua.

Since the beginning of the FON/BU campaign, almost \$1100 of vitamins have been forwarded to Niamey and Galmi. The next and fifth shipment is scheduled for shipment to Niger in the autumn of 2001.

Financial contributions should be made payable to **Friends of Niger** and sent to:

**Vitamins c/o Friends of Niger
P.O. Box 33164
Washington, D.C.
20033-0164**

FON will continue to liaise between people going to Niger and anyone or any group wanting to make a contribution to the campaign. In this regard, anyone traveling to Niger and finding themselves with room in a suitcase or, better yet, a spare suitcase is encouraged to get in touch with **Jim Schneider** via e-mail at lorenz3@magi.com or by telephone at 819-827-4870. *Remember - it all counts or none of it does.*

The Camel Express

Newsletter of the Friends of Niger

September 2001

Peace, Hope, Reconciliation, Renewal

Dear Friends of Niger -

Those of you who have visited this site over the past two days will have seen this space occupied by a simple but powerful photo depicting the [New York City skyline](#) before the terrible events of Tuesday, September 11. Prominent in the foreground is the American flag. The photo was our quiet way of remembering things as they were and of mourning all that has been lost - in New York City, in Washington, in Pennsylvania, and around the world.

Friends of Niger is an organization dedicated to the notion that individually and collectively we can be a force for the advancement of the dreams, aspirations and potential of the people of Niger - people with whom we have lived and worked for the best part of a forty years; people with whom we've grown up; people who have given us easily as much as they've received; and, people to whom we've nevertheless dared to suggest that we have something to offer.



"Placing of Friends of Niger wreath at grave of John F. Kennedy, Arlington National Cemetery, August 5, closing ceremony of Celebration of Niger 2001 - Jim Schneider on the left, Sue Rosenfeld on the right."

Barely six weeks ago, on the morning of August 5, it was my great honor to preside over the closing ceremony of Celebration of Niger 2001- which celebrated 41 years of Nigerien independence and at the same time recognized the 15th anniversary of Friends of Niger and the 40th birthday of the Peace Corps. As Sue Rosenfeld and I placed a wreath on the grave of John F. Kennedy and found ourselves standing midway between the eternal flame and the grave itself, and as with a few words I brought our weekend to a close, I found myself mindful of the historic significance of those forty years of service and of the wonderful potential of our continuing commitment.

Those forty years have also been witness to great suffering and to great human tragedy as neighbor has fought neighbor on countless battlefields in every corner of the globe. World peace has continued to be illusive; justice fleeting; human dignity often less the unshakable standard of human behavior than the fragile residue of the human spirit.

In the days and months ahead, our longstanding dedication to peace, to justice and to human dignity will be profoundly tested. The challenge will come from within each of us, as it always does. It is my hope that we will help each other meet this challenge and that we will take this opportunity to rededicate ourselves to the quest for universal peace - here at home, in Niger, and around the world.

Jim Schneider

FON Commits to Microcredit Project & Teams with MICA to Provide Oxen & Carts



Friends of Niger has formed a partnership with MICA, Inc. (Microcredit Africa) to provide oxcarts to women in villages in central Niger as part of a project whose aim is to “empower women to reclaim their basic rights for education, health care and respect as human beings.”

MICA is a non-profit organization, founded by Haoua Diatta, which seeks to alleviate poverty in Africa by empowering women. Mrs. Diatta is the author of [Shadow of Africa](#) and is the spouse of Nigerian Ambassador Joseph Diatta.

The flagship activity of MICA is the Oxcart Project which begins with the formation of an association of village women, who then choose their officers (including 2 Financial Managers) from amongst themselves and undergo training as a group. This process is followed by the provision of an ox and a cart to the group. The women rent the carts to villagers who need transportation for a variety of purposes - as an ambulance, for farmers taking produce to market, for craftspeople transporting goods, etc. Rental revenues allow the women to eventually purchase the cart while continuing to generate revenue. These recovered funds, in turn, allow MICA to purchase additional carts for other women in other villages. The cost of an ox and a cart is \$280.

The Oxcart Project is operating in the Maradi region with active projects in Dan Keri and Aguié and with another four villages at various stages of project development.

Friends of Niger has agreed to fund oxen/cart sets for two villages as well as to package donations from its members and contacts in units of \$280 for the purchase of additional oxen and carts. Information about where and how to contribute can be found midway down the right hand column on this page.

More information regarding MICA, its various projects in Niger, and Haoua Diatta’s book (Shadow of Africa) can be found at the MICA web site - <http://justin.kirk.net/mica/>.

Member Donations Push Oxcart Sets to Six

Financial contributions over the past several months have allowed Friends of Niger to boost its support for the Oxcart Project from two to six sets of oxen and carts .

Contributions to the FON/MICA Oxcart Project should be made payable to **Friends of Niger** and sent to :

Oxcart; c/o FON; P.O. Box 33164; Washington, DC; 20033-0164

The Camel Express



Newsletter of the Friends of Niger

October 2001

- [Message From the President](#)
- [FON T-Shirts & International Calendar 2002](#)
- [FON Takes Another Microcredit Initiative & Supports CARE Niger's Mata Masu Dubara Groups in Matamaye and Agadez](#)
- [FRIENDS OF NIGER 2002 MEMBERSHIP & ORDER FORM](#)
- [Credits and Other Information](#)

Message from the President

Dear Friends of Niger -

Greetings to each of you, wherever you find yourself this mid-autumn of 2001. We apologize for being a bit longer than usual between site updates. The huge backlog created by the preoccupation with **Celebration of Niger 2001** as well our focus on activities reported in this edition of **The Camel** wreaked havoc with our normal schedule. And we have a lot to report - some of which you see here and more of which will be posted within the next couple of weeks.

Of short term interest to many of you will be the availability again this year of the magnificent **International Calendar 2002** produced, as always, by the RPCVs of Wisconsin-Madison. The cover of this year's calendar is graced by a lovely photo provided by FON member and activist Diane Chopin. Inside the calendar, the September photo is by Charles O. Cecil, former U.S. Ambassador to Niger.

Details on how to order the calendar are provided above, along with instructions of how to purchase a **FON T-Shirt** - which now come in Small as well as M, L and XL. These are great shirts and, along with the calendars, make wonderful seasonal gifts.

All over the site, you will find little suggestions to the effect that it is now time to renew your FON membership for 2002. We would, of course, be equally thrilled if you decided to join us for the first time. In the final analysis, it is these membership contributions that sustain this site, our newsletter, and our growing list of projects and activities.

No mention of this website would be complete without reporting two items. First, the **Friends of Niger website** has been recognized by The National Peace Corps Association as the best site amongst all its affiliate organizations. (Our newsletter, **The Camel Express**, was also recognized). Second, **FON web guru Jai Evans**, who is almost singularly responsible for the development of this magnificent site, is stepping down from this responsibility - at least for the foreseeable future. We will greatly miss his dedication, skill and good humor. Niger RPCV Cathryn Poff will be replacing Jai as our primary website resource person.

Please take a moment to check out FON's exciting new microcredit initiative in partnership with CARE Niger - see the **Mata Masu Dubara** article above (which also has information on recent developments related to the FON/MICA Oxcart Project).

Our next update will be complete with stories and photos from **FON Celebration of Niger 2001**, including a report on the comments of Joseph Diatta - Niger's Ambassador to the U. S. - as well as an update on the **FON** return trip to Niger which is still scheduled for mid-autumn 2002.

Stay in contact and **please, please** join **Friends of Niger**.

Jim Schneider
President

FON T-Shirts & International Calendar 2002

You're Gonna Love

Makes a Great Gift!!

This T-Shirt
Available in 3 Sizes
- S, M, L, XL



It'll Look Good on
You as Well!!

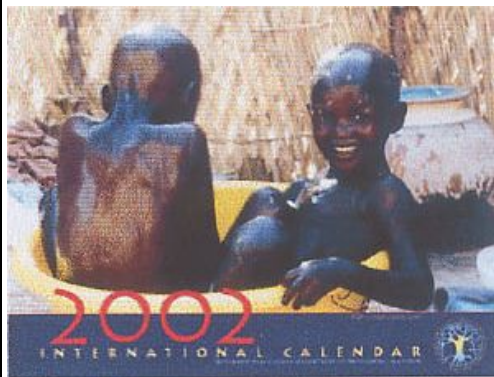
Introducing - Friends of Niger T-Shirts You're gonna love this T-Shirt!!

Based on a design originally created by our neighbors at Friends of Burkina Faso, FON had produced its first shirts in plenty of time to meet holiday gift giving needs. The short-sleeved shirts are 100% cotton, pre-shrunk beefy-T, natural muslin-colored fabric. The design (above) is four color: brown, black and the orange and green of the flag of Niger. You'll notice a nifty proximity map of Niger within the map of Africa which appears in the branches of the baobab tree. The shirts are available in Medium, Large and Extra Large sizes and sell for \$18 each, shipping included. Use the **FON Membership & Order Form** or send a check made out to Friends of Niger (indicating the number of shirts by size), along with your name and address to: **Shirts, c/o Friends of Niger, P.O. Box 33164, Washington, D.C., 20033-0164.**

... and the International Calendar 2001
from RPCV's of Wisconsin-Madison

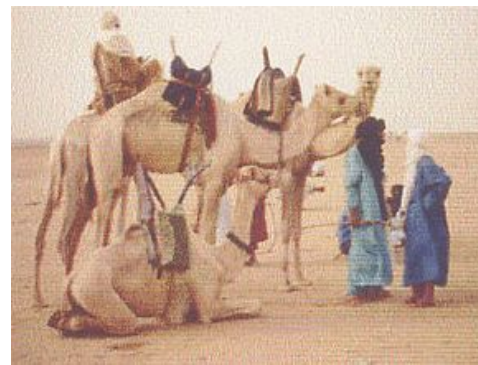
And this Calendar as well!!

Since 1987 the RPCVs of Wisconsin-Madison have been producing and distributing one of the finest quality calendars on the market - the **International Calendar**. This year the calendar is available through **Friends of Niger**. The calendar is open size, 12 1/4" x 18 3/4", features 13 color photos along with information from past and present Peace Corps service countries, and is printed with soy-based ink on recycled paper. Each day of the year is annotated with holiday and event information; each month includes information on lunar and celestial events; and each photo is complimented by material related to the country portrayed. Use the [FON Membership & Order Form](#) or send a check for \$12 US made out to Friends of Niger, along with your name and address to: **Calendars, c/o Friends of Niger, P.O. Box 33164, Washington, D.C., 20033-0164.**



(left) Cover Photo 2002 -Diane Chopin "Bath time in Boulke"

(right) "Tuareg Cure Salée at In-Gall" © Charles O Cecil (US Ambassador to Niger) for September 2001



FON Takes Another Microcredit Initiative & Supports CARE Niger's Mata Masu Dubara Groups in Matamaye and Agadez

The Board of Director's of Friends of Niger has announced financial support for the microcredit activities of CARE Niger. The goal of the program, entitled *Mata Masu Dubara (MMD)*, is to improve the socioeconomic conditions of rural and urban women in Niger. *Mata Masu Dubara* is a Hausa term meaning "Women of the Move."

Over the past several years, CARE Niger has been active in the formation of MMD groups, of approximately 30 women each, in six of Niger's seven regions - Tillabery, Dosso, Tahoua, Maradi, Zinder and Diffa. It costs about \$300 to form a group, an eight-month training program

included. The support from FON will be used to establish one of the first groups in the north, somewhere in the Agadez region, as well as to form a group in the area of Matamaye.



The picture on the left is of Fourera Soumana from the small village of Djoga in western Niger near Torodi. Fourera's story - and the story of the wonderful potential of *Mata Masu Dubara* is the subject of an article, [Reducing Poverty a Few Cents at a Time](#), written by Mark Wentling, former assistant country director, CARE Niger, and now with CARE Mozambique. Additional information about the methodology, operation and impact of MMD can be found by [clicking here](#).

FON Support for Oxcart Project Expands to Six Locations in Areas of Filingue and Gazaoua

Earlier this year, FON announced its support for the introduction of the Oxcart Project of MICA into two villages in Niger. With the support of financial contributions from FON members and contact people, FON has been able to support six Oxcart projects now in varying stages of development. Three of the sets of oxen and carts are being placed in the villages of Fandara, Siguirado and Inattes in the Baleyara/Boukoukou area between Filingue and Niamey. The other three will be located in the area in and around Gazaoua in central Niger between Maradi and Tessaoua. The organization of the groups in the Baleyara/Boukoukou area is being facilitated by PCV Brian Greenan and MICA coordinator Illiassou Na Indo.

How People Can Help

For both projects - Mata Masu Dubara (CARE Niger) and the Oxcart Project (MICA) - FON will package donations from members and contacts and pass them along in the appropriate financial units.

Contributions to Mata Masu Dubara should be made payable to **Friends of Niger** and sent to :
MMD; c/o FON; P.O. Box 33164; Washington, DC; 20033?0164

or

Contributions to the Oxcart Project should be made payable to **Friends of Niger** and sent to :
Oxcart; c/o FON; P.O. Box 33164; Washington, DC; 20033?0164

FRIENDS OF NIGER 2002 MEMBERSHIP & ORDER FORM

Name(s) _____

Address _____

City/ State _____ Phone (h) _____

Zip _____ Phone (w) _____

E- Mail Address _____

Connection to Niger (RPCV, etc.) _____

Dates in Niger _____ Location in Niger _____

Program or Involvement in Niger _____

Membership Dues & Contributions Help Fund FON Activities - Including The Camel Express, the FON Website, the FON Archives, and Projects such as Those Listed Below.

Please Check Appropriate Boxes

- Enclosed is \$20 for an Individual Membership in FON
- \$45 to cover Individual Membership in both FON & NPCA
- Enclosed is \$35 for a Family Membership (2 Members at One Address)
- \$67.50 to cover Family Membership in both FON & NPCA
- I am a current Niger PCV, entitled to Free Membership
- I am a New RPCV, entitled to a 1-Year Free Membership
- Please send me a Copy of FON's Bylaws (Members Only)
- In Addition to my Membership, I have enclosed a General Contribution of _____
- Instead of Joining FON at this time, I have enclosed a General Contribution of _____
- I want to support the Mata Masu Dubara project with a Contribution of _____
- I want to support the Oxcart Project with a Contribution of _____
- Please send _____ Friends of Niger T-Shirts at \$18 each (Shipping Included) _____
- T-Shirt Sizes: S _____ M _____ L _____ XL _____
- Please send _____ Year 2002 International Calendars at \$12 each (Shipping Included) _____

TOTAL AMOUNT ENCLOSED _____ *****

Make Check or Money Order Payable to Friends of Niger and mail to:
P. O. Box 33164, Washington, D. C. 20033-0164
(Please Enclose Membership Form)

Credits and Other Information

The Camel Express is the periodical newsletter of Friends of Niger (FON).
FON can be contacted via the post at P.O. Box 33164, Washington, D.C., 20033-0164;
by e-mail at lorenz3@magi.com; and you will find FON on the web at the following Internet address

www.friendsofniger.org.

**Board of Directors
Friends of Niger**

*

**Jim Schneider, PRESIDENT
& Editor**

*

Gabriella Maertens, VICE-PRESIDENT

*

John Soloninka, RECORDING SECRETARY

*

Larry Koff, TREASURER

*

The Camel Express



Newsletter of the Friends of Niger

December 2001

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Message from the President

Dear Friends of Niger -

Hanukkah, Eid-al-Fitr, Christmas, Kwanza'a - regardless of which of these or of how many of these special days you observe - it is my hope, and that of the Board of Directors of Friends of Niger, that this holiday season finds each of you happy and healthy and that the year 2002 brings peace to the world and all the very best to the people of Niger.

As promised, this FON web edition of The Camel Express is a big one and includes considerable coverage of the events of Celebration of Niger 2001; the remarks on that occasion of Nigerien Ambassador to the United States Joseph Diatta; as well as a more recent article by PC Niger Country Director Jim Bullington.; and much more (see complete list below).

If by chance you have not already had the occasion to update yourself on FON's involvement in and support for two microcredit initiatives in Niger - the Mata Masu Dubara program of CARE Niger and the Oxcart Project of MICA - please click on the links provided above and/or below. [Click here](#) for information on how you can support either or both of these exciting activities.

It's not too late to order a copy of the [2002 International Calendar](#). We'll be filling orders right through the holiday season (as long as supplies last). The cover of this year's calendar, produced as always by the RPCVs of Wisconsin-Madison, is graced with a photo by FON member and Niger RPCV Diane Choplin. Inside the calendar, the month of September features a photo provided by former US Ambassador to Niger Charles O. Cecil.

The beautiful high-quality Friends of Niger T-Shirt remains available in quantity. As with the calendars, we will be filling and shipping [T-Shirt orders](#) right through the season.

As we approach the end of 2001, I want to take this occasion to encourage each of you to [become a member](#) of Friends of Niger or to [renew your membership](#) for 2002 if you have been a member this past year. Membership dues and contributions help fund FON activities, including this award-winning website, FON's award-winning newsletter (The Camel Express), the on-going FON Archives project, and projects such as those reported on below.

Enjoy this FON web site up-date. Stay in contact. And please, please join **Friends of Niger**.

Jim Schneider
President

Ambassador Diatta Addresses Opening Event of Celebration 2001



Joseph Diatta, Ambassador of Niger to the United States and pictured on the left, addressed those in attendance at the Bukom Cafe opening during the August 3 kickoff to Celebration of Niger 2001.

After bringing greetings from the people of Niger, Ambassador Diatta reminded participants of Niger's great potential as well as the reality that Niger remains one of the poorest countries in the world "with a GNP of less than 230 US dollars per year, with low social indicators, and with 63% of the population living in poverty."

Ambassador Diatta brought attention in his remarks to the fact that the USAID office in Niamey has still not been reopened and that US economic assistance continues to be channeled to Niger through Africare, Care and Catholic Relief Services. He took the opportunity to thank those and other NGOs for their assistance and to call for a renewed "USAID presence in Niger, in addition to an increase of the US economic assistance level."

[Click here](#) for the complete text of Ambassador Diatta's remarks.

FON Presents Achievement Awards



The year 2001 marked the 15th birthday of Friends of Niger and the 40th anniversary of the establishment of the Peace Corps. The opening day of Celebration of Niger 2001 - August 3 and Niger's Independence Day - coincided with 41 years of Nigerian independence.

To commemorate these occasions, Friends of Niger honored several people on the evening of Friday August 3 at the inaugural event of Celebration of Niger, a multi-course West African dinner at the Bukom Cafe.

Recognized with a Friends of Niger Special Achievement Award for their "important and lasting contribution to Niger and its people and

to the purposes of Friends of Niger" were Meredith McGehee, founder and long-time leader of Friends of Niger; Joel Mayer, editor-publisher of Kakaki-News of Niger; Sue Rosenfeld, initiator of the FON/BU children's chewable multivitamin campaign; Robert J. Ryan, Sr., former U.S. Ambassador to Niger and longtime member and supporter of Friends of Niger; Joseph Diatta, Nigerian Ambassador to the United States; and, Haoua Diatta, founder of MICA, Inc. and the moving force behind the Oxcart Project.

Pictured above is C. Payne Lucas, recipient of the Friends of Niger Lifetime Achievement Award "in recognition of his lifetime of service and of his contributions to Niger and its people, to Africa and her people, and to the purposes of Friends of Niger." "Luke," as he is known, is a past PC Niger Country Director and founder and President of Africare.

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How People Can Help

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Contributions to Mata Masu Dubara should be made payable to **Friends of Niger** and sent to : MMD; c/o FON; P.O. Box 33164; Washington, DC; 20033-0164

Contributions to the Oxcart Project should be made payable to **Friends of Niger** and sent to : Oxcart; c/o

or include donation with [Friends of Niger 2002 Membership & Order Form](#)

Niger, Peace Corps, and The War on Terrorism

The people of Niger are more than 90% Muslim, for the most part fervently so. Islam is a vital part of their daily lives, in a way that Christianity used to be in the West but is no longer for most people. While the Government of Niger is constitutionally secular, and small animist and Christian minorities are well tolerated, Niger is a very Islamic country.

Moreover, the people of Niger are wretchedly poor, in a way that is unimaginable for most Americans. As measured by the United Nations Development Program, this is the second poorest country in the world, ahead only of war-ravaged Sierra Leone. Worse, the standard of living for most Nigeriens has been in decline for more than three decades. This is because of rapid population growth, continuing desertification, and a host of other factors.

And finally, Niger is located in a very tough global neighborhood. Four of the seven states on its borders -- Algeria, Libya, Chad and Nigeria -- are poster countries for various sorts of terrorism, anti-Americanism, political and religious extremism, and bloody ethnic warfare. And those borders are highly porous.

Doesn't all this make Niger a hotbed for international terrorism and a very dangerous place for Americans to be these days?

No, it does not.

Since September 11, some 400 Americans -- Peace Corps Volunteers, Embassy staff, non-governmental organization employees (CARE, CRS, Africare, etc.), and missionaries -- have continued to live and work throughout the country without serious incident or threat. There have been no anti-American demonstrations and no hostile media campaigns. Many Nigeriens, from President Tandja to ordinary villagers, have expressed their condolences and have spoken out against terrorism and Islamic extremism. Within its limited means, the Government has been exemplary in responding to our security concerns and in discouraging violence.

Why is this the case?

First, Government leaders and the vast majority of the people, while very religious, are not Islamic extremists. They are proud of Niger's record of tolerance and see Osama bin Laden as perverting Islam. Moreover, Niger does not have a tradition of terrorism or religious conflict, and even its political turbulence has not involved widespread violence. The Sahara Desert provides considerable isolation from the turmoil in Algeria, Libya and Chad. The Islamic extremism and communal violence in northern Nigeria are far closer to Niger's populated heartland; but thus far spillover has been minimal.

Another reason for Niger's relative tranquility in the current storm is that 39 years of continuous Peace Corps presence here has built a reservoir of good will toward America that makes Nigeriens less susceptible than they might otherwise be to the anti-American message of the extremists. It is far easier to induce people to hate an abstraction, an ugly American stereotype, than to hate the friendly young man who lives in your

village or the dedicated young woman who taught you English. In addition to those whose lives are touched by the 100 current Volunteers, I'm constantly meeting senior-level Nigeriens who tell me how they were influenced by a Volunteer from many years ago who lived in their village or taught in their school. This effect can't be quantified, but it's real.

Peace Corps was born and flourished in the 1960s, at the height of the Cold War. President Kennedy saw that in addition to confronting communism militarily, we also needed to address its challenge for the hearts and minds of people in poor countries who had no understanding of Americans and the ideals we embrace.

Kennedy's vision for Peace Corps was not as an instrument to achieve short-term foreign policy objectives but as a global showcase of American ideals in action that would at the same time productively engage the enthusiasm of Americans to serve their country through service to others. It would be an instrument not only to promote economic development but also to promote mutual understanding between Americans and people in poor countries. Just as Peace Corps showcased American values and won friends during the Cold War era, it can also contribute to our long-term success in the war on terrorism. While it should not be explicitly or organizationally linked to the war effort, the current international context offers an unparalleled opportunity for its modernization, expansion and rejuvenation. Today's Americans would be likely to respond to a call to join Peace Corps in service to their country and their fellow man much as their parents did in the 1960s.

By J. R. Bullington, currently Country Director of the Peace Corps program in Niger. He was formerly US Ambassador to Burundi and a career Foreign Service Officer, with extensive service in Africa and Asia.

FON Wins 2001 NPCA Website Award

The Camel Express Also Recognized

The National Peace Corps Association recently announced the winners of its 2001 website and newsletter awards. Friends of Niger was designated the overall winner of the website award for Country of Service (COS) affiliates of the NPCA, with honorable mention going to Friends of Morocco. The Columbia River Peace Corps Association was recognized as the best of the sites for Geographical affiliates.

FON's newsletter, *The Camel Express*, placed 3rd for 2001 in the Layout and Design category for COS affiliates, tying for that honor with Burkina Connection. Last year, The Camel placed first in the Layout & Design category and was tied with the Friends of Burkina Faso for second place in the Editorial Content category.

The FON website has been authored by Jai Evans with content supplied by Jim Schneider, editor of *The Camel Express*. Jai will be taking a leave from his work on the website, being replaced in that capacity by Cathryn Poff.

Haoua Diatta and Paul Stoller Conduct Readings & Book Signings During FON Exhibit

Haoua Diatta, pictured below (second from the left) during one of her visits to the FON Exhibit events on Saturday, August 4, teamed with Paul Stoller to deliver two exciting presentations and readings during Celebration of Niger 2001. Their contributions were amongst the highlights of the Saturday schedule which included the FON Archives, the Patrick Thomas Exhibit - part of which is visible below in the background, The Mohamed Ahmed Jewelry Exhibit and Kiosk, and several featured videos with discussions led by FON Recording Secretary John Soloninka.

Mohammed Ahmed is pictured top right in the photo below. The featured videos included *The Way of the Woodabe* and *When the Harvest Comes*. The Thomas exhibit included Patrick's unique collection of recycled tools from Niger, calabashes of all kinds, Nigerienne textiles - as well as the exquisite Nigerienne photos of Delattre and Blum.



FON Presents MICA with Contribution to Oxcart Project for Six Villages



Pictured on the left, FON Treasurer Larry Koff presents Friends of Niger check to Haoua Diatta, President of MICA at Friends of Niger dinner in Washington. The donation will be used to cover the cost of sets of oxen and carts for women's groups in six Nigerien villages - three in the Boukoukou/Baléyara area northeast of Niamey and three in the Gazaoua/Aguié area east of Maradi. The donation was made possible through the contributions of the membership and contact list of Friends of Niger.

Crisis Corps - A Chance to Serve Again

As part of Peace Corps' HIV/AIDS initiative, Crisis Corps is placing short term (usually six months) volunteers who have experience working in an HIV/AIDS field. Some of the projects CCVs have worked on throughout Africa are:

In Kenya: Working with the Ministry of Health, CCVs developed a training manual for post-HIV test counselors and family members.

In Namibia: A CCV worked to destigmatize HIV by promoting a new HIV Multipurpose Center to the community.

In Malawi: Volunteers worked at an orphanage providing support to teachers in developing HIV/AIDS educational materials and working with the medical staff to create a post-test counseling system.

In Togo: CCVs are working with local HIV/AIDS NGOs to coordinate their efforts and provide capacity building training.

If you're interested in being part of this exciting opportunity to serve again, please telephone Crisis Corps at 800-424-8580 ext. 2250, or visit the [Crisis Corps' website](#), or [email them](#). The web site has information on current assignments and an application form. *(Courtesy of Melinda Bridges)*

Return to Niger 2002 Goes Ahead as Planned: Trip Scheduled for the Coming Autumn

Planning is proceeding for the previously announced FON-sponsored trip to Niger. The continued strong response from interested people and several exchanges between FON and Peace Corps Niger has led to the decision to schedule the trip for the period October-November 2002 and for a duration of 14-15 days in-country.

Indications are that approximately 25 people will make up the return party. Trip activities tentatively include participation in a PC Niger all country conference and a visit to the original community of service, with plans in the works for several potential side trips (Agadez included) along with the possibility of a work project.

Dudley Parkinson of Dreamweaver Travel is working with FON on travel arrangements, transatlantic and in-country. Exact travel itineraries and costs are expected to be announced in the very near future.

Anyone who has not already indicated an interest should contact Jim Schneider as absolutely soon as possible [via email](#) or by phone at 819-827-4870. Look for further informational updates related to the trip on the [FON website](#).

Niger Embassy Launches New Website

The Embassy of Niger to the United States has launched its own website - which can be found at - <http://www.nigerembassyusa.org/>.

The site is still under construction but already features a great deal of information and news related to Niger, as well as documentation of the embassy's consular services and access to the various forms required for visa and other purposes. There are also pages on government personnel and institutions, business and finance, travel and tourism, and Niger Internet links.

RPCV Diane Cholpin & Former Ambassador Charles O. Cecil Place Photos in 2002 RPCV Calendar

The beautiful 2002 International Calendar, once again produced by the RPCVs of Wisconsin-Madison is graced on the outside and inside by photos provided by members and good friends of Friends of Niger.

The cover photo is the work of Diane Choplin. The photo, which we call Bathtime at Boulké, was taken between 1994-97 when Diane served as a Forestry PCV in Boulké, near Birni N'Konni.

Inside the calendar, featured for the month of September, is the photo entitled Tuareg Cure Salée at In-Gall which is the product of the skill of Charles O. Cecil. Mr. Cecil was U.S. Ambassador to Niger for the years 1996-99.

Either photo alone is worth the price of the calendar (\$12) which can be ordered via instructions here or via Friends of Niger 2002 Membership & Order Form.

Last year's calendar featured a photo from the collection of Niger RPCV Tori Paide.

This 'n That

Jim Bullington, PC Country Director Niger, has asked The Camel to remind RPCVs, their travel companions and other potential travelers to Niger that health hazards remain real, especially en brousse and especially for people most vulnerable to serious health issues.

It has come to our attention that Niger is one of the countries that has no community which enjoys official

"sister city" status with any North American city.

Peace Corps D.C. is well into the yearly exercise of recruiting new Peace Corps trainees for Niger. Next year's stage is expected to be about the same in number as the 2001 group - 56 - and is scheduled to begin its training at Hamdallaye in January 2002.

Credits and Other Information

The Camel Express is the periodical newsletter of **Friends of Niger (FON)**.
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www.friendsofniger.org

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Please send address changes and corrections, as well as any queries to *The Camel Express*.