

# The Camel Express



Newsletter of the Friends of Niger

March 2002

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## Message from the President

Dear Friends of Niger -

Greetings to each of you. We hope that this first edition of 2002 finds you well. As you will note in the [lead story below](#), I am recently returned from eight days in Niger - a journey as exciting as it was unexpected. And although the main purpose of the trip was to assist with a video production, the nature of the project was such that, by definition, it allowed me direct contact with most all the people and projects with which **Friends of Niger** has had an involvement - and to which so many of you have contributed - these past couple of years. You will all be aware of the occasionally uneasy feeling that comes with believing in what you are doing while being aware that this belief is based more on secondhand analysis than on firsthand experience. For me, this trip relegated that feeling to history. The story of the exchanges that I had and of the things that I learned can be found [below](#) along with updates on our continuing commitment to [microcredit](#) activities in Niger and to the [children's chewable multivitamin campaign](#).

Back in 1998, when **Friends of Niger** was just getting back on its feet and before we even had a web site, we dedicated a good portion of **The Camel Express** to the purpose of sharing basic information on **FON** - who we are, how we're organized and financed, what we hope to achieve. Our little organization has come a long way in four years and we felt it was time to repeat the exercise - for all of those who have helped us along our way and for all of those whom we hope will join us now. Please take a look at the [related stories](#).

Check out the latest news regarding the celebration of Peace Corps' unbroken 40 years of service in Niger, including the [FON trip](#) to Niger scheduled for this October. These and other stories on Niger, **Friends of Niger**, the Peace Corps and the [NPCA](#) will also found within the list below - along with a reminder of the continuing availability of the [FON T-Shirt](#) and information on how you can get yourself into one. Jim Bullington's column, [Inside Peace Corps Niger](#), is on the list as well. Please also take time to read through the material on related to the [future of the Peace Corps](#).

Finally, when you've done all that we hope that you'll use the [Friends of Niger Membership & Order Form](#) to either renew your membership for 2002 or join us for the first time. And if you're not a joiner, we hope that you will consider making a financial contribution to **FON** and/or to one or more of our activities. Please be assured that all support is gratefully received and that all support truly makes a difference.

Enjoy this edition of the **Camel Express** and please stay in contact.

Peace.

**Jim Schneider**  
**President**

## **Friends of Niger Featured in Video Production for Canadian Television: Hour-Long Program Focuses on Grassroots Projects**

At 19h20 local time on the evening of Sunday, January 13, Air France flight 774 touched down in Niamey. The flight was on time - an improbable start to an improbable event, the production for Canadian television of an hour-long documentary on Niger featuring Friends of Niger, FON President Jim Schneider, and FON support for such grassroots activities as MICA's Oxcart Project and CARE Niger's Mata Masu Dubara program. The documentary, produced by Andrew Younger of Whalesong Production and funded by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) was filmed on location in Niger, Quebec and Washington, D. C. and will first air on on the CBC later this spring.

The Niger portion of the "shoot" occurred between January 13 and January 21 and took Schneider, Younger, cameraman Kevin Hanlon and Whalesong's Amadou Kimba Sidde from Niamey to Zinder, Kante, Matamaye, Dan Barto, Botsotsoua, Gazaoua, Aguié, Dan Keri, Maradi, Galmi, Hamdallaye and back to Niamey. Additional information on the trip and on Schneider's meetings with [Oxcart Project](#) and [Mata Masu Dubara](#) groups; representatives of MICA, Care International, MECREF, the SIM and Niger National hospitals; as well as the new group of PC trainees and others can be found below.



Friends of Niger President Jim Schneider, Care Niger representatives Safiatou Mamane and Hadjara Ouedrago, and Amadou Kimba

## **Botsotsoua, Dan Keri, Aguié, Gazaoua, Galmi, Niamey & Hamdallaye - FON Visits its Project Partners Across Niger - and likes what it sees!!**

When Andrew Younger offered me the chance to accompany him to Niger and assist him and Kevin Hanlon with the production of a video documentary on Niger, it occurred to me that it might be possible to squeeze in some Friends of Niger business. For some time, I had been uneasy with the knowledge that none of us on FON's Board had had direct contact with the activities that we were supporting and, indeed, recommending to our members and contacts. We had done our homework, we had asked the right questions, we had sought advice from people who should know. We were persuaded we had the correct priorities - small scale, transparent, grassroots projects with a focus on tapping the immense and largely untapped potential of women, pastoralists and younger people. But - we had not had the opportunity to spend time, on location, with the people whose lives were effected by the activities that we were supporting.

This was that opportunity and take it I did. You all know how this works. It takes the best part of two days to get from North America to Niger. You arrive in Niamey - tired and disoriented. It takes half the next morning to buy CFA and the other half to get from Niamey to Dosso (between which the road is cratered like the surface of the moon). But then, after lunch at Dogondoutchi, you can finally settle into some of the things that you knew - the sights and the sounds of Niger - as you make your way to Zinder. And as the sun sets behind you, somewhere between Maradi and Tessaoua, you begin to accept that you are back in Niger.

For the next seven days - as Andrew and Kevin made their film - I visited with and talked to people whose lives were being touched by our activities these last several years. In Matamaye, Dan Barto, Kantché and Botsotsoua I was able to spend time with friends and colleagues that I had not seen for almost forty years. At Hamdallaye, I had a fun and meaningful exchange with the new contingent of PC Niger trainees. And back in Niamey, I was able to put faces to the names of people from FON's growing list of partner organizations. All in all, a very productive and worthwhile trip - some few reflections of which are shared in the articles that follow. - Jim

### **Aboukan Aboukan Niger**

The village of Botsotsoua is a relative newcomer to the area just east of the Matamaye - Kano road. Founded a scant 110 years ago by a man named Galihou, Beriberi from near Myrriah, the village sits along Niger's border with Nigeria - which runs beside a baobab that stands less than a hundred feet from the compound of the chef de village.

Eight years ago, the village was destroyed by flood and reconstructed with help from the Red Cross. Seventeen weeks before my morning in Botsotsoua, it became the last village in the Matamaye area to launch a formal Mata Masu Dubara group. Actually, CARE Niger had decided that the Matamaye area had enough groups and had turned down the Botsotsoua group's original request for training and assistance. So the women of the village started on their own. Then CARE's agent in Matamaye, Hadjara Ouedrago, was informed that funding had arrived from Friends of Niger - sufficient to cover the cost of training one more group.

This is why the women of Botsotsoua have named their group "Aboukan Aboukan Niger" - in Hausa "the friends of Friends of Niger." It is why when we arrived - in the middle of the afternoon and a day late - 31 women turned out in their finest to spend an hour talking about what the group meant for them and how they saw the group as a vehicle for the continued economic recovery of the village. And it was their sense of purpose which, in turn, convinced me that Mata Masu Dubara truly does mean "women on the move."



## When an Ox & a Cart Can Make a Difference

The communities of Dan Keri, Aguié and Gazaoua are situated - one after the other - along Niger's main east-west highway, midway between Maradi and Tessaoua. Aguié is the seat of the sous-préfecture and Gazaoua the home of the Chef de Canton. The three are also home to 19 of MICA's Oxcart Project groups. And, in turn, three of these were organized with financial support from Friends of Niger.

Over the course of one entire day, MICA organizer Halima Mazaou and I went from village to village along that road, meeting with the leadership of Oxcart groups, discussing their experiences, their learnings and their aspirations. In the process I saw and was told of examples of how sets of oxen and carts were making a difference in ease of access to medical facilities, markets, and fields.

But as I listened to these women articulate other needs and envision other applications for their new sense of economic competence, I came to realize that this clear expression of confidence was perhaps the most significant difference of all and that it likely represented Oxcart's most important and most lasting contribution.



Above an oxen and cart, serving as an ambulance, leaves Dan Keri for Aguié - site of the nearest dispensaire. Below, and later the same day, a FON sponsored ox has a quick feed shortly after returning from its task of transporting banco for making bricks.



## FON's Continuing Commitment to Microcredit in Niger & How You Can Help

Over the course of the past year, Friends of Niger has made a clear commitment to microcredit (and/or microfinance) in Niger. This commitment has been strongly seconded by FON members and contacts who have been generous with their support for both the Mata Masu Dubara program of CARE Niger and the Oxcart Project of MICA. While in Niger, I had the opportunity to meet with Rabiou Haoua Hambali, Directrice de la Mutuelle d'Epargne et de Cr dit des Femmes in Niamey, and with Danielle Dumont, Canadian project advisor to MECREF, and discuss their work with urban approaches to women's credit institutions. Africare is also in the early stages of a microfinance project in eight villages and two towns in the Dosso area, under the direction of Sheryl Cowan, and FON is in the process of learning more about that initiative as well.

Contributions to our ongoing support for microcredit in Niger should be made payable to **Friends of Niger** and sent to: Micro Niger c/o FON, P.O. Box 33164, Washington, DC, 20033-0164 or sent along with the [Friends of Niger 2002 Membership & Order Form](#).

## FON Chewable Vitamin Campaign Back On Track: Pat Alio to Coordinate Distribution from Niamey

As some of you know, but many do not, Sue Rosenfeld has not been well. Sue, an RPCV and a member of FON, has been back in the US for some time now - waiting for a liver transplant. During her tenure as Niamey Resident Director for the Boston University Study Abroad Program, Sue was the person who originally launched the campaign for the distribution in Niger of children's chewable multivitamins. She began the project in collaboration with Dr. Herbert Degbey of the Pediatric Ward at the National Hospital in Niamey. The good response that she received to her original efforts, encouraged Sue to contact Friends of Niger and enlist our support. That was the start of the FON/BU program. Later, when Niger RPCV Chris Zoolkoski decided to do his medical internship at the SIM hospital in Galmi, he decided to try to initiate the program there. FON worked with Chris toward that end and now the FON/BU program includes both insitutions. Now - with Sue's illness and her temporary absence from Niger - the program was in jeopardy. During my visit, I was able to meet with in Galmi with SIM administrator Allan Quinn and in Niamey with Dr. Degbey - both of whom assured me of the important role that the vitamins played in their treatment of children fighting illness, disease and malnutrition. And I was able to meet with Pat Alio - Niger PCV (1964-66) and Director of the English Language Program at the American Cultural Center in Niamey. Pat has agreed to manage the vitamin distribution process in Niamey - which puts the program back on track.

**For anyone so inclined, the best way to reach Sue Rosenfeld is via e-mail at - [meredebebe@yahoo.com](mailto:meredebebe@yahoo.com).**

## Yakking it up



Yakking it up with the trainees at Hamdallaye; with Issa and Hassan in Matamaye; and (below) with Elhadji Ibrahim in front of the cooperative store at Dan Barto.



## Inside Friends of Niger

Back in 1998, when **Friends of Niger** was just getting back on its feet, we dedicated a good portion of **The Camel Express** to the purpose of sharing basic information on **FON**. At the time, we were particularly sensitive to the confusion that seemed to exist in people's minds between **Friends of Niger**, Focus on Niger, NigerNet, NPCA, etc. Since that time, although a lot of this information is readily accessible at the **FON** website - <http://www.friendsofniger.org> - and all of it is available for the asking, we've tended to confine this kind of material to the President's Annual Report to *members* each year. This is likely to continue to be standard practice but, after four years, it seemed timely to repeat the exercise both for its own sake and as part of an outreach designed to expand the base of active, participatory support for **Friends of Niger**.

**Friends of Niger (FON)** is a registered nonprofit corporation under the laws of the District of Columbia. The purpose of **FON** is to initiate and/or support activities related to Niger and its people and for the benefit of its membership. **FON** was established in about 1986 and was active for many years under the leadership of its founder, Meredith McGehee. In the mid-90's, the organization became more or less inactive for a couple of years before being revitalized by Terry O'Leary and others - most of whom are members of the current Board of Directors.

The Board of Directors of **FON** is comprised of up to five people elected every second spring. The Board then chooses its own officers. The composition of the present Board can be found on page two. The next election is slated for spring 2002. **FON's** By Laws can be found at its website - [www.friendsofniger.org](http://www.friendsofniger.org). The membership of **Friends of Niger** includes Niger RPCVs and Niger PCVs in service as well as other people who have lived and worked in Niger.

**The Camel Express** is the name of its newsletter. It is usually issued three times a year in hardcopy, e-mail and website editions. Both the e-mail and website editions are updated frequently between these three complete issues. In addition, the **FON** website provides links to a large range of sources of news and information on Niger.

At the point a couple of years ago when **FON** went into temporary hiatus, the Camel Express Telematique and Niger Net were amongst the services provided by **Friends of Niger**. During **FON's** down time, these two services would have disappeared had it not been for the special efforts of two people - Joel Mayer and Bill Stein, both Niger RPCVs. Joel, who kept CET going until very recently, added additional features under the umbrella of Focus on Niger and eventually changed the name of his news service to

Kakaki. Bill kept Niger Net going, giving many of us the information that we needed in order to establish or maintain contact with each other. In 1998 Bill was replaced as manager of Niger Net by John Soloninka and, as you read these words, Focus on Niger has ceased to exist.

Niger Net is an e-mail network of people who have lived in Niger. Joining puts you in electronic contact with Nigeriens, RPCVs and other people interested in Niger. It currently has an active list of almost 800 names. John Soloninka, FON's Recording Secretary, is the manager of the list. He can be reached at [soloninka1@osu.edu](mailto:soloninka1@osu.edu) or via links available at the **FON** website by scrolling down the lefthand side of the site's front page.

The National Peace Corps Association (NPCA) is a worldwide network of RPCVs, former staff and supporters of the Peace Corps movement. NPCA works in the U.S. and abroad for world peace, understanding and well-being. Its membership tops 11,000 and it has more than 130 affiliated geographical and country-of-service organizations - **Friends of Niger** being one. Membership includes entitlement to its magazine - World View - and its newsletter - 3/1/61. More information on NPCA and its various programs and services can be found at - [www.rpcv.org](http://www.rpcv.org).

## Inside FON Finance

Friends of Niger is entirely financed by people like you -through membership dues, outright financial contributions, targeted donations and sales of T-shirts and the yearly International Calendar.

Everything that comes in goes into one of three accounts - the annual operating budget, the turnaround account, or the discretionary account.

Each year in the autumn, the Board of FON dedicates one of its meetings to discussion, debate and approval of an operating budget for the upcoming year. This is the budget that is designed to cover all the basic, more or less ongoing activities of the organization and includes - this newsletter, the FON website, the FON Archives, Board meetings (which are conference calls), occasional attendance at NPCA meetings, affiliation to NPCA, occasional special activities like Celebration of Niger, and all the unavoidable administrative costs such as - postage, telephone, post office box rental, bank charges, etc. This budget (and these kinds of costs) are covered by membership dues and those donations which are specifically earmarked by the donor as a General Contribution to FON.

The turnaround account is our name for a way to keep track of money that arrives in response to an appeal for financial support for specific projects or activities in Niger - Oxcart, MMD, vitamins, etc. We also use this account for the membership money that we forward to NPCA . In other words, every cent that comes in, turns around and goes back out. All the normal administrative costs related to these kinds of activities - long distance phone calls, postage, etc. have been borne by the operating budget .

The discretionary account, is where we keep track of expenses and revenue related to the sale of T-shirts and calendars. We use this still very small amount of money for unanticipated expenses and operating budget deficits as well as for the provision of calendars to new PC trainees and to PC Niger's 13 transit houses.

For the first time, in year 2001, the operating budget was slightly in deficit. This was due to two factors, both on the expense side of the ledger: cost overrun on Celebration of Niger 2001 and the purchase of software for use on our web site. The operating budget for 2002 is expected to be \$5500.

## The Camel at the Crossroads & Other Such Stories

The title is meant to get your attention so that you will read this article and respond to its underlying message which is this - The Camel Express, the FON website, and other basic services of Friends of Niger are caught in a classic cost squeeze which poses the classic dilemma: how do we continue to provide the widest range of service to the widest range of people - and pay our bills - if only some of those people are helping to pick up the tab? Here are several examples of how the dilemma manifests itself for Friends of Niger.

Since 1998 - when The Camel Express made its reappearance on the scene - the Board of Friends of Niger has worked hard to get the newsletter into the hands or before the eyes of each and every person with whom we have contact. Cost-wise this is very economical for the e-mail and web site editions. The hardcopy edition, however, is expensive to produce and distribute. The easy solution is to not send copies to anyone who has not made a financial contribution in one form or another to FON over a set period of time - e.g. the past year. And so - at least until we are certain that the FON operating budget for 2002 (see article on this page) will balance - this is what we will do starting with the next issue, scheduled for publication this spring.

Since later that same year, when we launched the FON website - [www.friendsofniger.org](http://www.friendsofniger.org), we have openly posted each edition of the

newsletter onto the site - and updated that material on a more or less monthly basis. From some quarters we have been advised to refrain from doing this because, obviously, this allows anyone free access to the newsletter. But we will not be heeding that advice because getting information before people remains a high priority for us. We've opted for inclusion, trusting that over time more of you will join FON or otherwise help us financially.

That's the Camel's dilemma - how does it keep getting the word out to as many people as possible - about Niger, about the people of Niger, and about how people here can respond to people their - and balance its budget.

This, of course, poses a related but different question. Why should all those of you who do make a contribution continue doing so, knowing that you could easily join the ranks of those who have been enjoying a free ride? After we cut away the fluff, the answer is this - without your help the women of Botsotsoua and others near Agadez would not have their Mata Masu Dubara group; women east of Maradi and others south of Filingue would not have an ox and cart; children near Galmi and in Niamey would not have had the vitamin supplement that helped them through malnutrition and/or illness; some of the children in Niger's north would not have been immunized against polio; Niger would not have had sufficient vaccine to respond to the meningitis epidemic in 2000; etc.

That is to say - you help because it makes a difference. No one has said it better than Peace Corps' first director. - Jim

**“Serve, serve, serve. That's the challenge. For in the end it will be the servants that save us all.” - Sargent Shriver .**

Friends of  
Niger

**You're Gonna  
Love This T-Shirt**

**Available in 3  
Sizes  
- S, M, L, XL**



**Makes a  
Great  
Gift!!**

**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 and very own T-shirt. 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 Small, 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**



## INSIDE PEACE CORPS NIGER



### Dear Friends of Niger:

Niger remains peaceful as we begin the transition from the beautiful weather of the past few months to the rigors of the coming hot season. The anxieties that beset us post-9/11 have eased, and life has more or less returned to normal, especially for the Volunteers in the bush.

Our 55 trainees, who arrived for PST on January 13, are doing well. We hope to be able to swear them all in as Volunteers on March 29.

We are excited about President Bush's Peace Corps expansion initiative and its implications for Niger.

The first impact was Peace Corps/Washington's approval in principle of our new education project. This had been under discussion and in planning for nearly a year, but the President's initiative put the approval process on fast forward by making it all but certain that the needed Volunteer input and other resources will be available.

Most Niger RPCVs will recall that education was a major element of the program in Niger from 1962 until serious political turbulence and financial collapse in the mid-1990s caused Niger's schools essentially to cease functioning for several years. Consequently, Peace Corps/Niger was forced to close out its work in education.

With renewed political stability and emphasis on education since the current Government came to power in early 2000, we decided it would be appropriate to add an educational project to our current programs in health, agriculture and natural resource management.

Our plan is to use the new education Volunteers to create and operate several English Language Centers in regional towns, where there are few if any opportunities to learn English. As demonstrated by the popularity of the English program at the Embassy's American Cultural Center (directed by Niger RPCV Pat Alio), there is a high demand for English classes among Nigeriens. Moreover, teachers of English are easy for Peace Corps to recruit and train (as opposed, for example, to teachers of math and science, who would need a high level of French to be effective). Since the English Language Centers will be primarily for working adults and will operate only during evening hours, the education Volunteers would also be expected to work with youth groups and undertake other education-related projects such as organizing in-service training for Nigerien teachers.

We anticipate bringing a new APCD/Education on board this fall to prepare for the arrival of 15-20 education Volunteers in June or July of 2003, with another 15-20 to follow in the summer of 2004. This should bring our average number of Volunteers in Niger from the current level of just under 100 to more than 130.

One implication of this project is that we will move from one to two PSTs per year. The current intent is to have an AG/NRM PST beginning next December, and a Health/Education PST beginning in June or July of 2003.

It may also be possible to further expand the PC/Niger program in other areas, both programmatically and geographically, but any serious planning in that regard will have to await guidance from PC/Washington on resource allocation and policy directions.

**Jim Bullington**  
**Country Director**  
**Niger**

## Preserving the Independence of the Peace Corps - Act Now!!

Ever since George Bush called for a significant expansion of the Peace Corps and, in almost the same breath, mandated the

establishment of the Freedom Corps, there has been much speculation and considerable discussion of the obvious possibility that the expansion initiative was a cover for the intent to bring the Peace Corps under the jurisdiction of the Freedom Corps. RPCV Colin Gallagher has been spearheading efforts to make certain that this does not occur. Colin has established an internet location where people can express their concern by signing a petition. It can be found at - <http://www.thepetitionsite.com/takeaction/632965389>. A discussion of the related issues can be found at - <http://208.234.30.110/messages/messages/2629/6870.html?1012969871>. Colin has also been working where he can with Congressional staff people in an effort to agree upon legislative language that would protect Peace Corps' historic independence. The draft petition below is only that -a draft - and is intended to serve as an example of a position that the Board of Directors of Friends of Niger could support and that we would encourage you to sign. Encourage others to sign it as well. Then do one or more of the following - forward the petition, with or without comments of your own' to potentially supportive members of Congress; and, send us a copy. We will package the signatures that we receive and pass them along to the petition organizers. Send to Petition, c/o FON, P.O. Box 33164, Washington, DC, 20033-0164. When you've finished doing that, sign the web site petition as well. A [click here](#) will take you to a page from which you can easily print the petition. Keep informed and stay in touch.

**Whereas, under Section 908(b)(1) of the USA Patriot Act, officials of the Federal Government who are not ordinarily engaged in the collection, dissemination, and use of foreign intelligence in the performance of their duties may be trained to do so at the discretion of the Attorney General and the Director of Central Intelligence, pursuant to Section 908(a) of that same Act, and funded pursuant to Section 908(c) of that Act,**

**And furthermore, under Section 3(b)(ii) of the Executive Order establishing the USA Freedom Corps, the Attorney General is a member of the USA Freedom Corps Council, with the Director of the United States Peace Corps and other executive branch or agency heads; and per Section 3(f)(iii) of that same Executive Order, upon the request of the Chair of the USA Freedom Corps Council, to the extent permitted by law, the heads of executive branch departments and agencies shall provide the Council with relevant information,**

**Regardless of these or any other such sections of law, the U.S. Peace Corps shall retain the right to withhold information from the USA Freedom Corps Council, pursuant to Section 3(f)(iii) of the Presidential Executive Order establishing the USA Freedom Corps, or pursuant to any request to provide the aforementioned Council with relevant information;**

**Further held, that the U.S. Peace Corps shall withhold information and disallow participation from any agency, entity, initiative, individual, or group of individuals, where the distribution of said information or the allowance of said participation would be contrary to the mission goals of the U.S. Peace Corps;**

**Further held, that no person or organizational entity associated with the U.S. Peace Corps shall be allowed to participate in any class of activities which occur pursuant to section 908 of the USA Patriot Act, nor shall any person who is not associated with the U.S. Peace Corps involve or cause to be involved any person associated with the U.S. Peace Corps in such activities, regardless of whether these persons act knowingly or otherwise;**

**Further held, the words "or interagency initiative" shall be inserted following that part of U.S. Code, Title 22, Chapter 34, Section 2501-1, which states, "Effective on December 29, 1981, the Peace Corps shall be an independent agency within the executive branch and shall not be an agency within the ACTION Agency, the successor to the ACTION agency, or any other department or agency" --**

**This shall hereby be made law, to maintain a true independence of the U.S. Peace Corps, and to maintain separation of Peace Corps Volunteers from political, intelligence, and religious intervention, so as to preserve and protect the intent of U.S.C., Title 22, Chapter 34, Sec. 2501: To promote world peace and friendship through a Peace Corps.**

**This petition is made in the spirit of and in accordance with the people's first and tenth Amendment rights.**

**Presented this \_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_.**

**(Signatures)**

## **FON Trip to Niger 2002 Slated for October 17 Arrival**

The FON sponsored trip to Niger is now confirmed for autumn 2002, with a Niamey arrival date of Thursday, October 17. Participants will be in-country for 15 days. Activities are still in the planning stages but highlights of the trip will likely include: an exchange with current PCVs at the PC Niger training center at Hamdallaye, visits to communities of service, a group excursion to Agadez and points

north, participation in one or more work projects, a reception in Niamey as part of the celebration of the 40th anniversary of Peace Corps in Niger.

Transatlantic flight arrangements are expected to be finalized during April 2002. For information, contact Jim Schneider at 819-827-4870 or [lorenz3@magi.com](mailto:lorenz3@magi.com).

## PC Niger Seeks Historian as Peace Corps Prepares to Celebrate 40 Years in Niger

Peace Corps Niger is in the early stages of planning related to 40th anniversary activities in Niger. Among the ideas being discussed is the possibility of producing a history of Peace Corps in Niger - which would then be available for sale on a cost-recovery basis. Is there a historian out there who would be willing to take this on as a project? Anyone interested should contact Jim Bullington, PC Niger Country Director at - [jbullington@ne.peacecorps.gov](mailto:jbullington@ne.peacecorps.gov) - or Jim Schneider at - [lorenz3@magi.com](mailto:lorenz3@magi.com).

## Who the Heck Are These Guys?



In September 1964, within days of their arrival in Niamey, the Niger 3 PCV basketball team played Niger's national team in back to back outdoor games - splitting the two-game series. In the back row (left to right) - Len Strauss, Brian Sarata, Jim Waters, Dave Cook, Charles Stover ; in the front row - Jim Schneider, Ron Wisner, Dean Lockwood, Newton Baker, Owen Melville and PCMO Dave Nicholas.

## New Peace Corps Trainees Arrive at Hamdallaye in January...

On Sunday, January 13, 55 new Peace Corps Niger trainees arrived in Niger and headed for the training center at Hamdallaye. Members of the 2002 group will work in the fields of natural resource management, agriculture and community health and should be at their posts by early April.

At their one-day pre-departure stage at Philadelphia, each trainee received an International Calendar 2002 - courtesy of Friends of Niger. Calendars were also made available for all 13 of the PC Niger transit houses and for the training center.

## ... and 50 become Peace Corps Volunteers on March 29

# Help Wanted, A Great Web Site & Two Really Great Books

As **Friends of Niger** continues to expand its range of activities, we find that we often tax and then surpass the limits of the volunteer energies that we have at our disposal. Right now we really need help from someone who could assist with the management of our web site - <http://www.friendsofniger.org>. If you have that kind of experience, please contact Jim Schneider via e-mail at - [lorenz3@magi.com](mailto:lorenz3@magi.com).

The next time you find yourself looking for information on a location in Niger - or anywhere else, for that matter - check out the Worldwide Directory of Cities and Towns which can be found at - <http://www.calle.com/world/index.html>. The maps themselves are not all that useful, but the page for each location has Google links to other websites with info on the location as well as to All the Web graphic images for the specific location. Hint: you may need to try alternative spellings - e.g. Bouré (see article below) is listed as Baouré. and Botsotsoua is listed as Bossosowa.

Paul Stoller - one of the featured presenters at last year's **Celebration of Niger 2001** - has announced the publication of his new book, *Money Has No Smell: The Africanization of New York City*. Published by University of Chicago Press, the book traces the lives of three street traders from Niger as they attempt to adjust to life in New York City.

Kathleen Hill's must read novel, *Still Waters in Niger*, is now available in paperback via Amazon - <http://www.amazon.com>. You can probably find Paul's book there as well.

## **NPCA Reschedules 40th Anniversary Conference for June in DC**

Like so many other events originally scheduled for September of 2001, the NPCA biannual conference was postponed. The theme of the conference, now slated for June 20-23, is "The Peace Corps Family: Bringing the World Together."

Conference activities will kick off with Advocacy Day on Capitol Hill and windup with closing ceremonies at Arlington National Cemetery. In between, delegates will discuss Peace Corps new mandate and the RPCV impact on US multiculturalism, hear from Peruvian President Alejandro Toledo, and participate in a variety of workshops and panels.

Detailed information can be found at - <http://www.rpcv.org>.

### **“Making a Difference; One Village at a Time”**

The headline above is the motto of the Peace Corps Partnership Program sponsored by the students of Corcoran High School and Roberts K-8 School of Syracuse, New York.

For 18 years now, these schools have annually funded a PCPP. In the process, they have raised almost \$100,000 for 18 projects - including the construction of six primary schools, two maternity hospitals, two wells and the first school for the blind in all of central Africa.

This year's project involves the construction of a cemented drinking water well in Bouré, Niger - southeast of Myrriah and is the second time that the students have supported an activity in Niger. In 1998 funding was directed at an adult literacy project in Torodi.

For more information on the schools and on their incredible 18-year record, visit their great web site at - <http://www.angelfire.com/ny5/corcoranpeace/>.

## **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 email at [lorenz3@magi.com](mailto:lorenz3@magi.com); and you will find FON on the web at the following Internet address - [www.friendsofniger.org](http://www.friendsofniger.org).

This edition of **The Camel Express** was prepared, produced and distributed with the contributions of Sue Bracken, Irma Sarata, Jim Bullington, Don Bracken, Andrew Younger, Kevin Hanlon, Amadou Kimba Siddo, Pat Reilly, Pat Alio, Sheryl Cowan, Dan Reilly, Angus Martin, Doug Steinberg, Safia Mamane, Hadjara Ouedrago, Haoua Diatta, Halima Mazaou, Cathryn Poff, Gabriella Maertens, John Soloninka, Larry Koff, Jim Miller, Colin Gallagher, Michelle Ghiselli and the people of Niger. Please send address changes and corrections, as well as any queries to **The Camel Express** at any of the addresses above.

**FRIENDS OF NIGER**

# **2002 MEMBERSHIP & ORDER FORM**

# The Camel Express

Newsletter of the Friends of Niger

July 2002

- [Seats Still Available for FON's October Trip to Niger](#)
- [Niger AIDS Bike Ride Also Scheduled for October: FON Hosts Web Site](#)
- [FON T-Shirts](#)
- [FRIENDS OF NIGER 2002 MEMBERSHIP & ORDER FORM](#)

## Seats Still Available for FON's October Trip to Niger

The autumn 2002 Friends of Niger trip back to Niger is not only happening, but Air France has made additional seats available on the transatlantic flight leaving New York City on October 16 for Niamey.

Twenty six people have already put down deposits for the flight, which returns to NYC on November 1. The round trip fare - all taxes, commissions and fees included - is a very attractive \$1350. Because of this excellent price and because the trip otherwise will be equally exciting, we thought that we should let people know that Air France has indicated that seats are still available.

The 15-day trip will include several events that celebrate Peace Corps 40 unbroken years of service to Niger, assistance with a trip back to your community of service, the opportunity for an exchange with PC leadership in Niger, and options for side trips to places like Agadez and the Parc W.

For additional information, contact Jim Schneider by e-mail at - [lorenz3@magi.com](mailto:lorenz3@magi.com) - or by telephone at 819-827-4870.

## Niger AIDS Bike Ride Also Scheduled for October: FON Hosts Web Site

The 2002 version of the Niger AIDS Bike Ride will be take place this year between October 27 and November 2. As in previous years, the Bike Ride will be participated in by Niger volunteers as well as by Nigeriens. The 2002 route starts in Tigonous, north of Filingue, and will coninue through Filingue, Baleyara and Hamdallaye. The caravan will cover a distance of approximately 170 kilometers and will pass through Hausa, Tamachek, and Zarma ethnic regions and reach an audience of roughly 8,000 people in 36 villages.

Seth Wright has created an attractive and informative website dedicated to information about the 2002 Bike Ride and how peoeple can lend their support. Friends of Niger has agreed to host the Bike Ride site which can be accessed by [clicking here](#).



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Friends of  
Niger

**You're Gonna  
Love This T-Shirt**

**Available in 3  
Sizes  
- S, M, L, XL**



**Makes a  
Great  
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**It'll Look  
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*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 and very own T-shirt. 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 Small, 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.**

**FRIENDS OF NIGER**  
**2002 MEMBERSHIP & ORDER FORM**

# The Camel Express

Newsletter of the Friends of Niger

August 2002

- [Sue Rosenfeld Rebounds from Long Awaited Surgery](#)
- [Niger AIDS Bike Ride Scheduled for Late October: FON Hosts Web Site](#)
- [FON's Continuing Commitment to Microcredit in Niger & How You Can Help](#)
- [FON T-Shirts](#)
- [FRIENDS OF NIGER 2002 MEMBERSHIP & ORDER FORM](#)

## Sue Rosenfeld Rebounds from Long Awaited Surgery

This just in from Megan Gavin - Sue Rosenfeld's friend and her colleague at Boston University. Early in the morning of Monday, August 19, Sue received the liver transplant that she has been awaiting for a long, long time. The procedure lasted seven hours and there were no complications.

Sue, a Senegal RPCV, was the long time Resident Director in Niamey of the Boston University Study Abroad program. She has been a member of Friends of Niger for many years and is the person who took the early initiatives that resulted in the establishment of the Friends of Niger campaign which sends children's chewable multivitamins to several institutions in Niger. In 2001, Sue received the Friends of Niger Special Achievement Award for service to the people of Niger.

Because Sue's immune system remains weak and the risk of infection remains high, we are reminding people to not send flowers, fruit, or other things of that nature. Sue's colleagues at BU are encouraging people to make a donation to Friends of Niger in Sue's name. Anyone wishing to add to this donation can do so by sending a check or money order made payable to Friends of Niger to - **Gift for Sue, c/o Fon, P.O. Box 33164, Washington, DC, 20033-0164.**

Cards or letters can be sent to Sue Rosenfeld, c/o Sisco-Gerechter, 19 Francis Avenue, Cambridge, MA, 02138.

## Niger AIDS Bike Ride Scheduled for Late October: FON Hosts Web Site



The 2002 version of the Niger AIDS Bike Ride will be take place this year between October 27 and November 2. As in previous years, the Bike Ride will be participated in by Niger volunteers as well as by Nigeriens. The 2002 route starts in Tigonous, north of Filingue, and will coninue through Filingue, Baleyara and Hamdallaye. The caravan will cover a distance of approximately 170 kilometers and



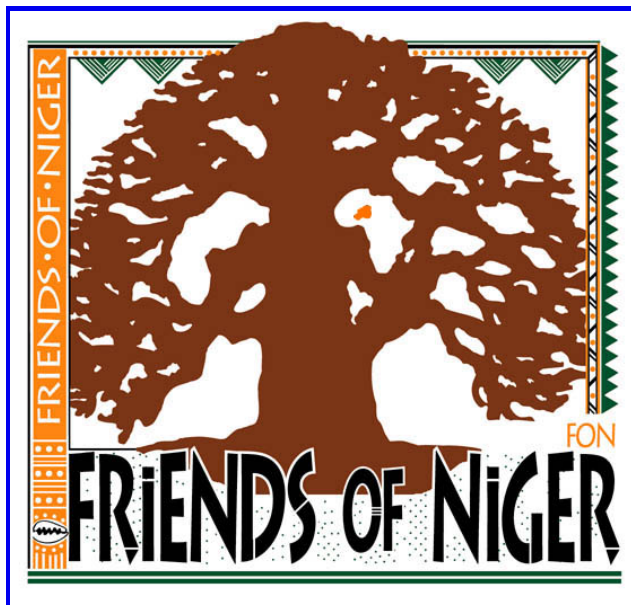
will pass through Hausa, Tamachek, and Zarma ethnic regions and reach an audience of roughly 8,000 people in 36 villages.

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**FRIENDS OF NIGER**  
**2002 MEMBERSHIP & ORDER FORM**

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# The Camel Express



Newsletter of the Friends of Niger

December 2002

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- [... And Reinforces its Commitment to CARE Niger's Mata Masu Dubara with Funding for New Groups in Tahoua & Tillaberi Regions](#)
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## Message from the President

**Dear Friends of Niger -**

It's been a while - too long, in fact - but we think that you will enjoy this issue of the newsletter and we'll try not to take quite so long before getting back to you with the next edition of *The Camel Express*.

A portion of our dilemma continues to be related to the cost of the hardcopy edition. We've had a good membership year, thanks to many of you, and we need a yet better one in order to be able to maintain the award-winning quality of both the newsletter and the web site as well as the frequency of newsletter production and distribution. This issue, in effect, launches our 2003 membership drive. We hope that you'll help by using the [FON 2003 Membership and Order Form](#) to renew your membership, to join for the first time, and/or to contribute to our various activities in one or more of the ways listed on the form.

You will likely notice that NPCA membership fees have increased by \$10 while we have held the line on our fee structure. None of the NPCA increase will find its way to **Friends of Niger** or, for that matter, to any other of the organizations affiliated to the NPCA. This in spite of the fact that we had been led to believe that the increase would be split equally between the two sets of organizations. **FON** continues, of course, to support NPCA and continues to value its affiliation with that organization, as disappointed as we are with this decision.

\*\*\*\*\*

The featured stories in this edition revolve around the **FON** late October trip to Niger and the announcements made in Niger regarding new and expanded **FON** support for microcredit activities and the addition of new institutional partners to the **FON** children's vitamin campaign. The first eleven stories below cover those developments. Jim Bullington's column, *Inside Peace Corps Niger*, also appears along with a description of the new video, *Brother from Nige* -, featuring **Friends of Niger** and its project partners - and information on how to get a copies of the video, the 2003 International Calendar and the popular **FON** T-Shirt.

You will also want to check out other news and stories related to Niger and **FON**..

\*\*\*\*\*

On behalf of the **FON** Board of Directors, may I wish each of you the happiest of holiday seasons and the best for the new year.

Enjoy the newsletter and, please, stay in contact.

Peace.

**Jim Schneider**  
**President**

## **Twenty-Eight Travel to Niger with FON 15 Day Trip Includes Visits to Communities of Service and Friends of Niger Project Sites:**

### **FON Announces New Project Partners and New Initiatives**

The long anticipated **Friends of Niger** trip, more than two years in the planning, took place with little more than minor hitches, as 28 people traveled together to Niamey - arriving there tired but happy at 3 AM on Thursday, October 17. By the time that they left Niger, early in the morning of November 1, trip participants had visited countless locations across the country; reconnected with old friends and made new friends; had an exchange with current Peace Corps staff and volunteers; made direct contributions to **Friends of Niger** and other project activities in Niger; and, witnessed the expansion of **FON**'s on-going activities in Niger as well as the launching of new **FON** initiatives with project partners old and new.

The 28 trip participants included 18 RPCVs, five friends or family of RPCVs, and five friends or family of PCVs in service. After a couple of days in Niamey - spent marking the 40th anniversary of Peace Corps in Niger and visiting the Pediatric Ward at the National Hospital and the orphanage of the *Fraternité de Notre Dame* - people dispersed across the country to Ouallam, Dosso, Dogondoutchi, Birni N'Konni, Maradi and Zinder. From these regional locations, some participants continued on to Manahuri, Galbi, Matamaye, Botsotsoua, Kantche, Dadin Serki, Mayahi, Serkin Bougaje, Madaroumfa, Chadakori, Bouza, Madaoua, Ayerou, Hamdallaye, Baleyara, Agadez and points north.

Over the course of the 15 days in Niger, **FON** President Jim Schneider met with the organization's project partners in Zinder, Matamaye, Botsotsoua, Maradi, Galmi and Niamey and announced **Friends of Niger** support for new microcredit initiatives with new partner Africare as well as the expansion of support for the microcredit activities of CARE and MICA and the addition of the Maradi Hospital and the Notre Dame orphanage to **FON**'s on-going children's multivitamin campaign.

Details and photos of these and other stories related to the trip can be found below.



On their last evening in Niger, trip participants join PC Niger staff, current PCVs in service, representatives of **FON** project partners, and other friends at the **Friends of Niger** Thank You Reception and Mishwi held at PCHQ in Niamey.

## **FON Uses Occasion of Trip to Niger to Expand its Vitamin Campaign & to Broaden its Commitment to Microcredit Initiatives in Niger**

The recent **Friends of Niger** sponsored trip was designed - all good common sense advice to the contrary - to be many things to as many people as possible. This design objective had two quite different origins.

In the first place, we - the Board of **FON** - had long ago promised that we would try to facilitate such an opportunity: the opportunity, simply put, to go back.

Then, as we began an exchange with people who had expressed an interest in this possibility - through questionnaires and e-mail messages - we came to realize that people wanted different things from the trip.

Virtually everyone wanted to return to their community of service. Most wanted to reconnect with Niger and to try to find old friends and coworkers. Some wanted the chance to visit parts of Niger that they had never made it to the first time around. Many wanted to once again make some manner of contribution to a people and a country to which they had maintained a commitment. Some wanted to pursue professional interests.

So we tried to put together a range of opportunities and potential activities that would, as much as possible, allow people to do their own thing - and which would allow **Friends of Niger** to pursue some organizational objectives as well. We wanted to use the occasion of the visit as a means for meeting with the organizations and groups with which we have developed something of a partner relationship as well as a means of acquainting trip participants with what we were doing within these partnerships. And we wanted to use the trip as an opportunity, in country as it were, to announce our support for new activities with new partners and expanded support of existing programs.

Consistent with our organizational objectives, and in one of the many messages and updates that I sent to trip participants, I reminded people about the ongoing **FON** campaign to supply children's chewable multivitamins to health care institutions in Niger and I suggested that they might want to throw a couple of bottles of vitamins into their luggage. The response was overwhelming. Operating each pretty much on their own, in league with friends and family, church groups, schools and local business, people filled their suitcases with more than 500 pounds of vitamins and other health related supplies for Niger's children.

This set the tone for the trip, a tone whose resonance is hard to communicate but whose spirit we've tried to convey below. - Jim

## **FON Joins Africare/Niger Effort to Bring Microfinance to Women's Groups in Dosso Region**

The department of Dosso in the southwest of Niger has been reported by the United Nations (2001) to be the second poorest area in Niger. There, in the arrondissements of Dosso and Birni N'Gaouré, Africare/Niger's Women's Micro-Finance Program is assisting more than 50 women's groups in an attempt to generate new economic activity.

Groups of three women work together. They are trained to create a business plan and are given technical training related to the specific income-generating activity that they choose.

Most often, as shown in the example on the left, the women choose small business activities such as mat making, sewing, and small animal breeding and fattening.

According to Africa/Niger directrice Sheryl Cowan, \$500 will assist with the formation of three new groups. In October, during the **FON** sponsored visit to Niger, **Friends of Niger** President Jim Schneider announced that the organization has made an initial commitment to financial support for three such groups.

Africare/Niger joins CARE Niger and MICA as **FON** partners in support of microcredit activities in Niger, where **Friends of Niger** now helps finance fifteen such initiatives in six of Niger's seven regions - Dosso, Tahoua, Tillaberi, Maradi, Zinder and Agadez (see related stories below).



Mat weaving (above) and the breeding and fattening for resale of small animals such as lambs (below) are amongst the economic activities generated by the micro- finance programs organized by Africare in Niger and supported with funds from **Friends of Niger**.



## **AboukanAboukan Niger Revisited: FON Extends its Support for Botsotsoua Group**

In late 2001, **Friends of Niger** began a relationship with a group of women from a village located about 40 kilometers south of Matamaye in department of Zinder. The village is named Botsotsoua and the women are members of a microcredit collective organized by CARE Niger as part of its Mata Masu Dubara - 'women on the move' - program. The group calls itself *Aboukan Aboukan Niger* - 'friends of Friends of Niger' - in recognition of the funding from **FON** which allowed CARE to provide startup training.

**FON** President Jim Schneider visited the group in January of 2001, shortly after its creation, and had an exchange with its membership as part of the content of the video *Brother from Niger*. By the time he returned to Botsotsoua in October, the group had accumulated capital and interest in excess of 1.2 million CFA about one third of which was divided between the groups 41 members for the purpose of supplementing family food supplies prior to the 2002 harvest.

With the remaining fund of almost 800,000 CFA, the group continues to make small loans to its members for the purpose of income

generating activities. Soon group leaders will attend an advanced training session, designed to familiarize participants with the range of governmental and non-governmental services and to help them build strategies for accessing these and other resources. To assist Aboukan Aboukan Niger with this and other forms of advanced training, **Friends of Niger** deposited 100,000 CFA with CARE Niger.



**FON** President Jim Schneider presents copy of *Brother from Niger* to Hadiza Mamane, President of *Aboukan Aboukan Niger*.

### ... And Reinforces its Commitment to CARE Niger's Mata Masu Dubara with Funding for New Groups in Tahoua & Tillaberi Regions

Barely a year ago, **Friends of Niger** made its first financial commitment to the Mata Masu Dubara program of CARE Niger, in the form of funding for the training of two groups - one each in the departments of Agadez and Zinder (arrondissement of Matamaye). While in Niger in late October, **FON** President Schneider was able to announce the decision of the **FON** Board of Directors to expand this commitment by funding the startup costs of two new groups - one each in the departments of Tahoua and Tillaberi.

### FON and MICA Extend Oxcart Program to Youth Groups in Gazaoua and Aguié

At Celebration of Niger 2001 in Washington, DC last summer, Friends of Niger first announced that it had established a working relationship with Microcredit Africa, Inc. and that the FON Board of Directors had approved funding for six women's microcredit groups to be organized under MICA's Oxcart Project. Over the course of the past year, this funding has been instrumental in the establishment of the program in the arrondissements of Aguié and Mayahi in Niger's department of Maradi - including the communities of Gazaoua, Aguié, Dan Keri and nKanembakaché.

While in Niger in October of this year and after meetings with MICA staff in both Maradi and Niamey, FON President Schneider announced that Friends of Niger has agreed to fund a pilot project which will undertake to extend the Oxcart Project two youth groups - one each in Gazaoua and Aguié.

### MICA Joins FON Vitamin Campaign

Schneider and MICA President Haoua Diatta also announced that MICA will be working with FON on its ongoing vitamin campaign by providing storage facilities and inventory control for the program in the Maradi area.



(Above) -**Friends of Niger** donated cart being guarded by les enfants de Gazaoua and members of the **FON** funded Oxcart Project group in Aguié. (Below)  
- Schneider meets in Maradi with MICA coordinator Zanaba Hamib, and animatrice Halima Mazaou (photo taken by MICA adult education specialist Issoufou Kané); and, in Niamey, Schneider at the MICA office with Aminata Oumar, Hadiza, and Illiassou Na Indo.



## Micro Niger - How You Can Help -

Contributions to our ongoing support for microcredit in Niger should be made payable to **Friends of Niger** and sent to: **Micro Niger c/o FON, P.O. Box 33164, Washington, DC, 20033-0164** or sent along with the **Friends of Niger 2003 Membership & Order Form**

## FON Vitamin Campaign Grows: Orpelinat de Notre Dame & Maradi Hospital Join Program

It's been three years since **Friends of Niger** joined the program initiated by Sue Rosenfeld - then then based in Niamey as Resident Director in of Boston's University's Study Abroad program - to supply children's chewable multivitamins to the Pediatric Ward at the National Hospital in Niamey.

Soon after, when Chris Zoolkoski went to the SIM Hospital at Galmi for his internship, the program was expanded to include that institution.

The **FON** sponsored October 2002 trip to year was the occasion for another program expansion - with the orpelinat de Notre Dame in Niamey and the National Hospital in Maradi being the new program partners.

RPCV Pat Johnson Alio (64-66), now Directrice of English Language Training at the American Cultural Centre in Niamey continues to oversee distribution of the vitamins once they reach Niger.

## Vitamin Campaign - How You Can Help -

Donations to FON's ongoing vitamin campaign should be made payable to **Friends of Niger** and sent to **Vitamins, c/o FON, PO Box 33164, Washington, DC, 20033-0164**.

## Message from Allan Quinn: Administrator, SIM Hospital, Galmi

Dear Jim,

Thanks so much for your visit here on Sunday and for dropping off the vitamins. We were actually right out of Children's Vitamins and we are thrilled to have them. They will be well used and will make a difference in many young lives here, helping to ensure good growth and development. ... We can use all the vitamins that you can supply. We saw 10,000 patients in October alone, and around 1500 of these were children or babies. In the weekend one of our compound gardeners lost a son through bad diet; he was very anemic and died very quickly after probably getting malaria. We are extremely grateful for any vitamins or other products you may be able to



send. We have very good control systems in the hospital and you can be assured that the medicines you give reach the people who really need them.

## FON Helps Finance Playground for Orphanage in Niamey



Sister Brigitte-Marie of the Fraternité de Notre Dame surveys the site for the proposed orphanage playground during a visit by the participants in the recent **Friends of Niger** trip to Niger - along with **FON** President Jim Schneider and Tom Shafer (RPCV, 64-66, Madaroumfa). Charleen Pratt (RPCV, 70-73, Zinder), seen in the background, was among the twenty-two trip participants who visited the orphanage, delivered more than 125 pounds of vitamins and medicine, and spent time with the children currently in residence. At the **Friends of Niger** Thank You Reception and Mishwi, held the last evening of the group's time in Niger, Schneider announced and **FON** Treasurer Larry Koff presented a \$300 donation to the orphanage's playground fund.

## Video Production that Features FON Available for Purchase



The 42 minute documentary on Niger, originally produced for Canadian TV and shot in Niger in January 2002, is now available for purchase from **Friends of Niger**.

From the blurb of the video's jacket - "In a '*Brother from Niger*', award winning journalist Andrew Younger brings a story of courage, hope, and struggle from one of the world's poorest countries. '*Brother from Niger*' follows **Friends of Niger** president Jim Schneider as he returns to a country he once called home, a country that's still as poor as when he left it.

The video was shot on location in Niamey, Maradi, Matamaye, Botsotsoua, Kantche and Zinder and includes interviews with Haoua Diatta of the Oxcart Project as well as with Schneider, representatives of **FON**'s Nigerien partner organizations and others.

Copies of the videotape may be purchased for \$20 each (2 for \$35). Use the [FON 2003 Membership & Order Form](#) or send a check or money order, made payable to **Friends of Niger**, to **Video, c/o FON, PO Box 33164, Washington, DC, 20033-0164.**

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***... And the International Calendar 2003  
from RPCVs of Wisconsin-Madison  
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## INSIDE PEACE CORPS NIGER



### Dear Friends of Niger:

After a vacation and Peace Corps Country Directors conference in sweltering Washington, it is good to be back in the relatively pleasant weather of the rainy season in Niger.

Some of you may have read reports in the international media in early August about military mutinies and coup threats in Niger. Here is what happened

### Mutinies and Coups

On August 5, Peace Corps staff and others were awakened at 3 a.m. by a call from the Embassy reporting the outbreak of gunfire at the Army barracks on the eastern edge of the city. The gunfire, which continued for more than two hours, was noisy and intense, but it was mostly wild shooting in the air and did little damage. There were no reported casualties.

We soon learned what was happening via a report on Radio France International. Their Niamey correspondent was at the scene, and the Prime Minister called them to give out the government's account of events. Some troops from the Niamey garrison had mutinied and attempted to seize the main armory. Loyal troops quickly quelled the mutiny, however, and by 8 a.m. traffic had returned to its usual flow, markets were open, and most people resumed their normal routines. We kept those Volunteers who were in town and other Americans off the streets until mid-afternoon, however, just to be sure all the shooting was over.

The Niamey mutiny was apparently related to a similar but temporarily more successful mutiny that had taken place a few days earlier in Diffa, Nguigmi and Ngourti. There, the mutineers captured and held hostage the prefect and other officials. Their demands were mostly related to pay (currently about \$35 a month for privates), but they also called for the dismissal of the Armed Forces Chief of Staff. By August 9, loyal forces sent from Niamey had freed the hostages, arrested 235 mutineers, and restored order. Two soldiers were killed in the fighting.

According to the Prime Minister, the mutiny represented an organized attempt to destabilize and overthrow the government, with the mutiny in the Diffa region intended to draw enough troops away from the capital to permit a successful coup. Four officers associated with a previous military government were arrested on suspicion of involvement.

These events demonstrate that political stability in Niger remains fragile. There were two successful military coups during the 1990s, and there are no guarantees that this history won't be repeated.

However, I've been encouraged by the government's response. First, it put down the mutinies quickly and with little bloodshed, demonstrating both the weakness of the rebels and the loyalty of the bulk of the armed forces. Moreover, it adopted a reasonably open communications policy and sent Cabinet Ministers to all parts of the country to explain to people what had happened. And with help from the Konrad Adenauer Foundation, it quickly organized a seminar for military officers on civic responsibility and the role of the military in a democracy. Finally, it promised to do what it can to improve pay and living conditions in the barracks.

Moreover, all Nigeriens are vividly aware that the 1990s coups brought on a decade of disaster and further impoverishment for this already desperately poor country. They know that the violent overthrow of the current democratically elected government would lead to the suspension of most foreign aid, without which a successor government could not long survive; and this message has been quietly reinforced by the donor community.

I recognize that stupid, illogical things can happen, particularly in politically fragile countries, but my expectation is that there won't be any more coups any time soon, at least not successful ones, and that order will be maintained.

Our PCVs and staff were never in any danger from these events. We do not have any Volunteers in the Diffa region. Peace Corps operations continue normally.

### **Peace Corps Growth**

Peace Corps/Niger's growth plans for FY-03, which begins October 1, have now been approved and funded. We will change from one PST per year with trainee input of 56, to two PSTs, in December and July, with a combined trainee input of 84. The December PST will be for agriculture and natural resource management trainees, and the July PST will be for trainees in the health sector and the new Community and Youth Education project.

Over the next two years, we project growth to an average of about 135 Volunteers, from about 95 currently.

**Jim Bullington**  
Country Director Niger

## **FON to Host Website for Niger's Embassy to Canada**

The **Friends of Niger** website will host the webpage for Niger's Canadian embassy after discussions between Her Excellency Rekiatou Mayaki, Niger's Ambassador to Canada, and **FON** President Jim Schneider. The material for the webpage, currently under development, will be accessible through the *Niger News & Info Links* section of the **FON** site - which is located along the right hand column of the site's front page.

## **Baobabinfo Linked to FON Site: Coordinator Seeks French-English Translation Assistance**

[Baobabinfo](#) - an on-line newsletter produced in Niger, which features news, reviews and other items including online news of the state owned Radio Station Voix du Sahel and two private radio stations R&M and Tenere FM. Disponible en français, but soon to be mirrored in English.

Baobabinfo promoter Saidou Hangadoumbo is looking for help with English translation of the site's material. Saidou can be contacted at - [shangal@siu.edu](mailto:shangal@siu.edu).

## **Good News for Niger in IMF Review of Economic Reform**

According to a recent International Monetary Fund review, Niger's attempts to carry out economic reforms aimed at reducing poverty have met with "commendable success." The evaluation was part of an IMF review of the performance of the Nigerien economy for 2001 and was in reference to criteria set down by the IMF in December 2000 as conditions for Nigerien government access to as much as \$78 million dollar in loans at concessionary interest rates.

In its most recent review of the arrangement, IMF deputy managing director noted that "the authorities took strong actions to keep the programme on track... and to correct a budgetary slippage that occurred in the last quarter of 2001," said Mr Aninat.

Niger's economy grew by 7.6% in 2001 and inflation was down to 3.2% as the economy rebounded from a two year recession, partially due to a record cereals crop and partially as a result of the economic reforms which followed on the political reforms of the previous year.

## Hausa & Zarma on the Web

News from Niger APCD Don Osborn - the Peace Corps Zarma Dictionary is now "officially" on the web at <http://www.bisharat.net/Zarma/>. Don also passed along the URLs for the [Hausa Database Online Dictionary](#) and for the [Hausa site at UCLA](#).

## 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 email at **lorenz3@magi.com**; and you will find FON on the web at the following Internet address - **www.friendsofniger.org**.

This edition of **The Camel Express** was prepared, produced and distributed with the contributions of Ambassador Joseph Diatta, Ambassador Rekiatou Mayaki, Sue & Don Bracken, Irma Poots Sarata, Judd Lyon, Jim Bullington and everyone with PC Niger, Sheryl Cowan, Kathy Tilford, Roua Boukar, Illiasou Na Indo, Aminata Oumar, Zanaba Hamid, Issoufou Kan, Halima Mazaou, Sister Brigitte-Marie, Sister Maroe-Nöel, Sue Rosenfeld, Pat Johnson Alio, Haoua Diatta, Gabriella Maertens, John Soloninka, Larry Koff, Penni St. Hilaire, Niger trip participants, John Baird, Liz Griffin, Maureen & Jim Wysopal, Steve Hoyt, Amadou Kimba Siddo and the people of Niger. Please send address changes and corrections, as well as any queries to **The Camel Express** at any of the addresses above.

## FRIENDS OF NIGER 2003 MEMBERSHIP & ORDER FORM