

The Camel Express



Newsletter of the Friends of Niger

Volume 29 Issue 1



April 2014

Sahel Food Crisis Overshadowed by Regional Conflict

BY MATTHEW NEWSOME, 28 MARCH 2014(IPS) from allafrica.com

Niger's severe food shortages due to recurrent drought have also been compounded by conflict in neighbouring countries. Half of the country's 17 million people are without adequate food all year round, while one in 10 is unable to feed themselves for three months of the year. Conflict in northern Mali, southern Libya, northern Nigeria and CAR has put pressure on Niger's resources to deal with its food crisis as thousands of displaced civilians take refuge in the country due to its porous borders. Since 2012, Malian refugees have regarded neighbouring Niger as a safe haven. According to the U.N. Refugee Agency, over 51,000 refugees (47,000 from Mali and 4,000 from Nigeria) have entered the country as a result of regional conflict.

Last year's rainy season in Niger, which lasted from July to October, was disappointing says the country's Minister in the President's office for the national strategy for food security and agriculture development, Amadou Diallo. "The situation is dire and has not been improving for several years. We are unable to meet the food demand. The problem is that demand is growing from rising population numbers and incoming refugees, in addition to terrible drought our food supply is being compromised," he told IPS.

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FON Provides Funds for Well Repair in Touloukh

FON has received photos of the recent well repair in Touloukh taken by the Nigeriens who worked on the project. This is the second completed well repair partially financed by FON. This well repair provided work for Nigeriens and a much-needed source of water for the people and livestock of this region. There are still many more wells that were damaged or destroyed by the flooding in 2012. FON hopes to have the final report from Ghabdouane Mohamed, the Mayor of Ingall, for the next edition of CEX. *Additional photos on page 10.*



Peace Corps Niger

Letter from the FON President

April 2014

Dear Friends of Niger Members,

The Board of Directors of Friends of Niger is pleased to announce nominations and elections for the FON Board of Directors 2014. The term for board members is two-years.

For the 2014 spring elections, the current FON Board members are seeking additional FON members who would like to participate in the FON Board activities including quarterly phone conference meetings. The FON Board members oversee the activities of FON which include the content and publishing of the Camel Express Newsletter, maintenance of the FON Website and webpages, the selection of projects to support in Niger and the collection and disbursement of funds collected by FON for these activities. To participate in the election process for the FON board, we encourage you to submit your name and brief resume following the guidelines on the attached page. Deadline for receiving nomination forms is May 31, 2014. An electronic or paper form of your self-nomination is acceptable.

FON member Lorrain Krusa has agreed to serve as our "third party" to collect nominations. Please forward your nomination and bio (see below) to Lorrain by post or email:

Lorrain Krusa
27 Rose Ct.
Glen Carbon, IL 62034
email: lorrainekrusa@gmail.com

After responses from this "call for nominations" are collected, we will send a ballot of nominees to FON members in good standing by the end of May, 2014.

Thank you for your continued support of Friends of Niger and our FON activities.

John W. Soloninka
President, Friends of Niger

Board of Directors Friends of Niger

John W. Soloninka, PRESIDENT

Gabriella Maertens, VICE-PRESIDENT

Penni St. Hilaire, RECORDING SECRETARY

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The Camel Express is the periodical newsletter of **Friends of Niger (FON)**. FON can be contacted via the post at

P.O. Box 5823

Washington, D. C. 20016-9998

Or by e-mail at

president@friendsofniger.org

and you will find FON on the web and this newsletter in **FULL COLOR**

at:

www.friendsofniger.org.

Editor: Joel Neuberg

Assistant Editor: Jude Andreasen

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

IN MEMORIUM

from Joel Neuberg

Beginning with this issue, The CAMEL EXPRESS will publish brief notices regarding Friends of Niger who recently died. Please send any notices for future issuers to: jneuberg@santarosa.edu

Michael U. Parrish (11/13/1945-2/8/2013) passed away in Los Angeles after a brief illness. A longtime resident of Los Angeles, Michael was an adjunct lecturer teaching nonfiction writing for the Annenberg School of Journalism at the University of Southern California. He was a licensed private investigator, a career he turned to after a career in journalism.

Michael had a longstanding tie to Niger, having served as a Peace Corp Volunteer from 1966 to 1968. While in the Peace Corps, he helped build wells in desert villages. Michael returned to Niger to do a major feature for Life Magazine in 1985, and returned again in 2008 with fellow former Peace Corps volunteers for a documentary: Niger 66. Michael is survived by his wife, Judie Lewellen, and daughter, Suzie Lewellen, his mother, Lona Parrish, and his sisters, Mrs. Wayne (Pat) Lee, Ginny Parrish and Mrs. Jim (Dorothy) Mills. See more at: <http://www.legacy.com/obituaries/saltlakatribune/obituary.aspx?pid=163392349>

Diana Dolan (9/8/1941-2/7/2013), a sociologist, died peacefully in Santa Monica, California. She lived in Niamey in 1974 and was married while there to Brian Dolan, the Peace Corps Physician (1973-1974). Diana worked on various health projects in Western Niger. She had previously done pioneering research on U.S. Urban race riots and had worked in the Kennedy/Johnson Administration in DC. Following her work in Niger, she was a UCLA School of Public Health faculty member. She is survived by her husband, Brian, four children, and four granddaughters.

Niger Liaison Activities

From John Hutchison, FON Board Member

Archive of the Republic of Niger: The Boston University African Studies Library is hoping to launch the archive officially this year. The members of the FON are encouraged to increase their submissions to the archive, in the form of journals, letters, documents, memorabilia, reports, etc. Here is how to access the online form through the Mugar Library of Boston University where AREN has its own url: Submission Form (including a link to Boston University's Deed of Gift form and other information): <http://tinyurl.com/NigerArchiveSubmission>

Through the Boston University African Studies Librarian (Beth Restrick), Hutchison has now met with the Collaborative Africana Materials Project (CAMP) which held a meeting at BU recently. A funding application is in process and if funded this project will help archive masters' memoirs in departments like linguistics and lettres modernes at the Université Abdou Moumouni, as well as the publications of researchers, faculty members, and research institutes like IRSH and CELHTO (the African Union Center).

Possible New England consortium of Niger-oriented non-profits: Hutchison (ALMA/FON), Koff (FON) and Palmisciano (RAIN), plus Michael Klinger who runs a non-profit sister city program with Guidan Roundji, and CONUSA representatives, hope to establish regular meetings every few months of organizations like ours that are working in Niger for the purpose of discussing avenues of collaboration.

Translation of human rights documents into Nigerien languages: Hutchison and the ALMA Project are also working with another nascent women's NGO that wants to work on human rights for children, girls, and women. An initial effort using funds supplied by ALMA will be used to translate human rights documents like the ACHPR Charter of Women's Rights into at least 5 of the languages of Niger.

Plan for the Centre Communautaire de la Technologie et la Documentation for Maïne Soroa: While in Niger, Hutchison and colleagues from the Ministry of Education and the President of KAMRA in Niger, Gremah Boucar, established a groupe de réflexion on the establishment of a community technology and archiving center for Maïne Soroa. This is an ongoing project that will apply for funding subsequently.

Proposal for a website for the Artisans of the Musée Nationale de la République du Niger The Friends of Niger hope to be able to help the Artisans of the National Museum of Niger to set up an internet-based way for the artisans to accept orders and receive payment. Tourism is of course dwindling so this would be a significant contribution.

Video recorded interviews of RAIN Mentors: In mid-March, Larry Koff & John Hutchison met with Bess Palmisciano of RAIN in order to pursue possible avenues of collaboration. RAIN has nearly 200 women mentors who guide young girls and young women in keeping with RAIN's education program. Recordings of the mentors will be used for educational purposes and funding will be applied for from FON and other sources.

Schools are nothing without quality teachers !

In 2010, YOU helped [Les amis de Hampaté Bâ](#) secure a permanent spot on GlobalGiving!

Today, we need your help to supplement the wages of 14 teachers at the Amadou Hampaté Bâ School.

There can be no educational development without well trained and effective teachers. To reduce the high turnover rate and have a stable and motivated team of teachers, the school must offer decent salaries and professional development without increasing either class sizes or school fees.

That is why your help is needed.

If 78 supporters make a recurring donation of **\$20/month** (\$240/year) to this appeal, every one of the 14 teachers will receive the Nigerien national average salary for a teacher and school fees will stay as low as possible allowing the school to give quality education to families most in need.

Les amis de Hampaté Bâ would like to send \$1550 per month to the Hampaté Bâ Middle School to start with. Are you one of the 78 generous and heroic people we need to make a recurring donation of **\$20 per month**?

Also, presently, Microsoft is matching new recurring donations to our project! But this will not last for long! So please do not let this great opportunity go!

By supplementing the wages of a teacher for \$20 a month, you will greatly improve the quality of education for 350 low income children at the Hampaté Bâ School.

TO DONATE PLEASE GO TO :

<http://www.globalgiving.org/projects/provide-low-fee-quality-education-for-students-in-niger/>

**THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR YOUR
COMMITMENT AND GENEROSITY !**



KAMRA

Honoring Bill and Barbara Kirker

from Vince Farley

As a retired Foreign Service Officer, I have met many outstanding Peace Corps volunteers over the years – but Bill and Barbara Kirker have to be at the top of the heap. My wife and I got to know the Kirkers in Niger in the late 1960s. They were a remarkable couple even then – a legend in their own time. But even more extraordinary was their return to Niger in 2007 (when they were in their early seventies) to continue the work they had started over forty years earlier. When Carolyn and I arrived in Niamey in 1969 for our first overseas posting, we were around the same age as most of the young PCVs we met as we traveled all over Niger, and so we had a lot in common. The biggest difference was our comfortable living circumstances in the capital, compared to the bare-bones existence of the PCVs out in the villages. (The most requested items we would bring to our Peace Corps friends when we visited were jello and cake mix.) We soon heard about Dr. Kirker and his wife Barbara, who had been serving in Maine-Soroa for three years at that point. After their two-year Peace Corps stint was up, they stayed for six more years on a Niger government contract. They were tasked with building a sorely-needed hospital in Maine-Soroa to replace the small medical clinic, with its crude and rudimentary equipment, which they had found upon their arrival. At the same time, Bill treated and healed the people of the district. Bill field-trained Barbara to assist him in surgery and as an anesthetist. Barbara was also the hospital's nutritionist, cooking three meals a day in her own kitchen. Despite his busy schedule, Bill found the time to found an NGO dedicated to providing medical assistance to Africa, which he named "AFRICARE." He asked his old friend, C. Payne Lucas, to become the head of AFRICARE, which is still doing important work today.

Unfortunately, because of a coup in Niger in 1974, the Kirkers were not allowed to stay in Niger, probably because the hospital operation was associated with the previous regime. The Kirkers returned to the U.S., where Bill was a practicing physician for the next 33 years. Then in 2006, the newly-elected President of Niger asked the Kirkers to return to Niger – Bill and Barbara were told that the people of Maine-Soroa wanted them to come back and to rebuild the hospital. Although they were not the young PCVs they once were, the Kirkers responded to the challenge and returned to Maine-Soroa in April 2007. The town had grown from 900 to 15,000 residents, while the district had mushroomed from 12,000 to over 202,000.

Bill and Barbara got to work. Four new hospital treatment buildings were added, and the hospital went from 42 beds to 142. All the patient rooms are now air-conditioned. Bill was seeing about 100+ outpatients per day, and the hospital averaged about 60 to 75 patients. Patients from Chad, Cameroon, and Nigeria also made their way across borders to the Kirker Hospital (so named in their honor by the Nigerien government). Meanwhile, Barbara Kirker saw the need for a kind of "catch up" school to educate children who had not been able to start school at a normal age, or who had been out of school for awhile. She started a "Second Chance School" for children ages 8 to 12 or 13 who do six years of the national curriculum in four years' time and are able to matriculate back into the national system with their age peers. To support the Kirkers' work in Niger, some of their friends were inspired to start in 2007 an NGO called **KAMRA (The Kirker African Medical Relief Association)**. KAMRA is a 501(c)3 organization headquartered in Columbia, SC, and I am honored to be the President of this NGO.

Also in 2007, Nigeriens in Maine and Niamey established the Kirker Foundation, whose Board is all Nigerien, which has been responsible for clearing and transporting to Maine and elsewhere in Niger all KAMRA shipments. KAMRA has thus far been able to arrange for and facilitate the shipment of over \$50 million worth of medicines, medical supplies and equipment, and school books to Niger. The pharmaceuticals were provided by MAP International, based in Brunswick, Georgia, and included, among many other vitally needed medicines, antibiotics, pre-natal vitamins, and nutritional supplements for children. The Kirker Foundation has shipped most of these medicines to the Kirker Hospital, but has also shared the medicines with the hospital in Diffa and the national hospitals in Zinder and Niamey. The medical supplies and equipment came from MedShare, an NGO located in Atlanta, Georgia, and included, for example: surgical instruments, upgraded anesthesia equipment, three new ultra-sounds, surgical and exam gloves, surgical scrub outfits, beds, IV set-ups, and an EKG machine. Books for Africa, an NGO whose main warehouse is in Atlanta, provided books for Barbara's Second Chance School.

KAMRA continued

In 2010, after three years of back-breaking work, Bill (then aged 75) and Barbara decided it was time to turn the operation of the Kirker Hospital and the Second Chance School over to others and returned to Columbia, SC. They remained very active, however, in promoting the work of KAMRA, until Barbara was diagnosed with a life-threatening illness in May 2012. After a valiant fight, with Bill by her side every step of the way, Barbara succumbed to her illness in October of 2013. She is sorely missed, but her friends and loved ones are still inspired by her loving and giving nature, and KAMRA continues its work to support the needs of the people of Maine-Soroa, with the aspiration to expand its reach to other parts of Africa.

In 2013 and 2014, many Nigerians living in northeast Nigeria have fled the violence there and sought safety in Maine. The hospital has successfully expanded its operations to care for this influx of new patients. The patient load is now over 300 patients a day. In December 2013, thanks to generous donors who wanted to honor Barbara, KAMRA purchased and shipped to Maine, 10 computers which have been installed in the school, now teaching 150 students. In January 2014, John Hutchinson, a returned PCV who worked with the Kirkers when they were first in Niger, agreed to fund the establishment and continued support for internet services for the school. In February 2014, a UNHCR team surveyed the situation in Maine and offered to build three new classroom buildings at the Barbara Kirker School. The Kirker Foundation has accepted this offer and is now coordinating the expansion of the school.

MAP has found a sponsor for a new shipment of needed medicines, and KAMRA has agreed to raise the necessary \$12,000 for the transport of this shipment which left the US at the end of March 2014. Donations are urgently needed to fund this transport. KAMRA has supported two MedShare shipments to Maine in 2007 and 2010. It is seeking support to sponsor and transport a new MedShare shipment as supplies are running low. With the expansion of the Barbara Kirker School, KAMRA would like to ship additional books from Books for Africa to support the expanded student body.

If you would like to become involved in KAMRA's mission, or to make a donation to continue its work, please contact me at vincefarley@bellsouth.net (cell 404-983-7851) or Abdou Gagara, KAMRA Vice President for Development at a_gagara@yahoo.com (803-331-3699). Go to our website (www.kirkerfoundation.org) for more info on our work or to make a contribution. We have an ambitious agenda and could really use advice and counsel from Niger RPCVs regarding where we could find support.

UGANDA (and Niger) FOCUS ON EDUCATION AS PATH TO SECURITY

Niger RPCV (1965-1968) **Clark E. Kerr** sends us a NYT article about a boy in Uganda rescued from life as a terrorist by vocational training. "Uganda is not Niger (or Senegal). But there are some similarities -- the rising threat of terrorism and its draw on young men, the increasing involvement of the US military [and the continuing problems of development]. The author makes a strong case for the importance of education and economic opportunity -- far less expensive than military ops and far more effective at keeping terrorism at bay (not to mention moving a country ahead). The "Skilling Uganda" program seems especially interesting. Maybe the traditional education programs in Niger and Senegal could be modified along similar lines -- with an increasing emphasis on vocational, agricultural, and basic business skills. A more practical educational system for all, more girls finishing schooling and marrying a little later = a brighter future even in an environment of outside terrorist threat. More promising and much cheaper than a principally military response. More for us to think about." Here is a link to the story: http://www.nytimes.com/2014/05/02/opinion/ugandas-ticking-bomb.html?_r=0

Niger Reunion

The Niger III group who trained at the University of Southern Illinois at Carbondale in the summer of 1964 will reunite for the first time since their training and the beginning of their service 50 years ago at the YMCA at Estes Park, Colorado. This is a joint reunion with their fellow trainees, the Senegal IV group, and will be held from September 29 to October 2, 2014. Meeting nearby during the same week will be the Niger IV-Senegal V group and since there was overlap of these two groups, a joint social is planned. This reunion is mostly a social event to reconnect with fellow trainees but the reunion committee is also planning events to help reconnect with Niger and Senegal. A website is being established for the Niger III-Senegal IV group and all are urged to submit their biographical

Friends of Niger has a Record-Breaking Year in Both Income and Spending

Given the drought, heavy rains, and on-going challenge of life in Niger, the Board has pursued and received numerous requests for aid over the past year. In response, Friends of Niger has exceeded all prior years in both fund raising and program support. The Board would like to thank the membership, Ambassador Sidikou, Program Chair/vice President Gabriella Maertens, Pam White and the supporters of the Hauser Memorial Fund, and the leadership and membership of CONUSA for their efforts.

As noted below in the 2013 Financial Statement, Friends of Niger was able to spend over \$13,000 on a wide array of projects utilizing income from membership, contributions, and past savings. Overhead expenses, primarily postage and printing of the newsletter, accounted for just 12% of our costs. Projects funded this past year include well repair in Ingall, Chewable Vitamins (Galmi Hosp., National Hosp., Notre Dame Orph., and Yencabihali Clinic), Plumpy Nut (BESO),-Expanding Lives (Girls Leadership Conference/Seminar),-Nomad Foundation (Sewing Machine and training),-CONUSA Emergency Aid Shipment (Transport costs),-RAIN: women's education and credit Project Tilliberi.

Since the start of 2014, Friends of Niger was able to raise \$11,500, again a record in fund raising. The Board is currently reviewing requests for funding and continues to try and identify local initiatives in support of health, agriculture, economic development and young girl's education.

FRIENDS OF NIGER SUMMARY FINANCIAL STATEMENT 2013

Date range covered: January 1, 2013-December 31, 2013

INCOME 2013	(In dollars \$)
FON Membership	1,040
NPCA Membership	1000
Unrestricted Contributions	940
Sub total	2700
Program Income	2070
T Shirt sales	60
Transfer from FON Savings Accounts	10,057
Total Income	\$14,887
EXPENSES 2013 (\$)	
Postage/CEX Printing	1088
P.O. Box	124
Web	
Conference	125
General Adm.	
Wire Transfer fees	135
Sub total	1472
NPCA memberships	280
Project Funding	13,135
Total Expenses	\$14,887
ACCOUNT BALANCE end of 2013	
	\$9,916
Interest Savings Act.	6,000
Checking Act.	3,916

Peace Corps Niger Board Elections

FON by-laws: Board nominations/elections scheduled every two years in the Spring

As required by the bylaws every two years, nominations for Board members shall be solicited in writing from all members of the FON. The five candidates receiving the most votes shall be elected to the Board. Board members must be a member of FON. If no nominations are received, there will not be an election and all the current Board members will continue in office.

The Current Elected FON Board as of 01/2014 are noted below:

John Soloninka - <i>President</i>	Gabriella Maertens - <i>Vice-President</i>
Penni St. Hilaire - <i>Recording Secretary</i>	Larry Koff - <i>Treasurer</i>

In addition to these four members, the Board has selected additional members to fill key responsibilities that the board feels are needed as noted below:

Joel Neuberg,- <i>Newsletter Editor</i>	Jude Andreasen - <i>Assistant Editor</i>
John Baird - <i>Membership</i>	Steve Bushell - <i>Webmaster</i>
John Hutchison - <i>Niger Relations-Liaison</i>	Bob Jackson - <i>At-Large</i>
Abdul Kadir Kaigama - <i>CONSUA National President</i>	Rabiou Yari - <i>CONUSA National Secretary</i>

If you have a suggestions for undertaking an assignment that is not currently covered by the Board, please let us know. (see nomination form below).

NOMINATION FORM
Friends of Niger Board of Directors
Elections 2014

I. I am a member of Friends of Niger, and I would like to stand for election to the Board of Directors of FON. If elected, I am willing to participate in up to four quarterly phone conference meetings (dates vary) with other FON Board members:

Name: _____

My contact information:

Address: _____

Address: _____

Email address: _____

Phone: _____

II. Tell us about yourself. (This information will be shared with the FON voting membership).

Dates that you lived, worked, or served in Niger: _____

If you worked in Niger, for which organization did you work? _____

Other information about your experiences in Niger or life experiences that you would like to share.

III. What experiences, ideas, service, or vision would you be willing to bring to the table as a member of the Board of Directors of FON? (Please limit your response to one-half a page).

Continued from page 1

SAHEL FOOD CRISIS

Niger's refugee crisis escalated last year after neighbouring Nigeria launched a military offensive against Islamist terror group, Boko Haram, causing 10,000 people to flee northern Nigeria into south-eastern Niger and Cameroon. Of the 25 countries listed by the U.N. as being vulnerable to becoming failed states, 13 are in the Sahel. Breaking the cycle of recurrent food crises in the region is next to impossible while there is limited security says Gerda Verburg, chairperson of the Committee on World Food Security. "In the Sahel we have the solutions. We have the capacity. We have the willingness. However, as long there is insecurity then food production and access to food is at risk. There is not enough reliability and stability for us to adequately address food insecurity in the Sahel," she told IPS. See the complete article at: <http://allafrica.com/stories/201403290033.html>

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FON Provides Funds for Well Repair in Touloukh Top: Before Repair; Bottom: After Repair



2013-2014 FRIENDS OF NIGER MEMBERSHIP FORM

FON Dues are payable in January but if you missed that date, please pay anytime during 2014.

Name(s) _____ Date _____

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 local Nigerien Projects .

**The Friends of Niger is a tax-exempt organization under section 501(c)(3).
Membership and contributions to Friends of Niger are fully tax deductible.**

Please Check Appropriate Boxes

Enclosed is \$20 for an Individual Membership in FON

\$55 to cover Individual Membership in both FON & NPCA

Enclosed is \$35 for a FON Family Membership (2 Members at One Address)

I am a new RPCV or new to FON, entitled to a one-year free membership

2 members at 1 address

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 _____

Instead—**Project Funding / Donations**

I would like to support education; wells; health; agricultural;

microcredit projects in Niger (check all that apply. _____)

Please send paper copies of the Camel Express by U.S. Mail

Please send links to PDF version of the Camel Express by e-mail.

Merchandise

Please send _____ Friends of Niger T-Shirts at \$15 each (Shipping Included) _____

T-Shirt Sizes: S _____ M _____ L _____ XL _____ T-Shirt Color: _____ brown _____ beige

TOTAL AMOUNT ENCLOSED _____

Make Check or Money Order Payable to Friends of Niger and mail with this form to: P. O. Box 5823, Washington, D. C. 20016-9998

PRIVACY POLICY

Your contact information is requested and maintained by FON so that we can contact you in the future. FON does not share your contact information with any third party other than with the National Peace Corps Association with whom we have a reciprocity agreement.

Inside *THE CAMEL*...

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An electronic **FULL COLOR** version of this
newsletter and previous editions
can be accessed at

<http://www.friendsofniger.org>



Camel Express

Newsletter of the Friends of Niger





Ambassador Maman Sidikou Accepts New Assignment with the African Union

By Peter Easton



Ambassador Sidikou with President Barack Obama in January 2012.

Dr. Maman Sambo Sidikou, a long-time friend of FON, will shortly be leaving his position as Niger's Ambassador to the United States after nearly three years of fruitful and whirlwind work raising his country's profile here in America and uniting the Nigerien diaspora. He faces a new challenge: serving as Chief of Mission to war-torn Somalia for the African Union.

Dr. Sidikou is a native of Sabongari, Niger, fluent in Zarma, Hausa, French, English and Spanish. After completing his secondary schooling in Niamey, he undertook higher education study in political science at the University of Madrid in Spain, completing two years of the full five-year "licenciatura" program, or the equivalent of an AA degree. The next stop was at the University of Dakar, where he earned the *diplôme supérieur en journalisme* ("D.S." degree) in 1975. Sidikou began his professional life as a

journalist for the *Office de Radiodiffusion et Télévision du Niger* (ORTN) the following year and moved up to the position of Director of Television in 1979.

In 1983, he shifted to the political sphere, taking on the function of Director of the Prime Minister's Cabinet in the government of President Seyni Kountché, chief of the Supreme Military Council that had replaced Niger's first President Diouri Hamani after the military takeover of 1974.

Continued on page 6

Update on Expanding Lives

www.expandinglives.org from John Baird

You may recall that the front page story of The Camel Express in January 2013 (http://www.friendsofniger.org/pdf/CEX_Jan_2013.pdf) was an introduction to Expanding Lives (EL), written by the founder, Leslie Natzke. As a Peace Corps volunteer in Niger in the late '80s, Leslie noticed that there were very few young women and girls going to school. Since then, she's launched a non-profit aimed at developing leadership skills in young women in West Africa to empower them to become pillars in their communities.

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**Board of Directors
Friends of Niger**

**Update on the Bien-Étre
de la Femme Rurale (BFR) Project**

Madame Alhassane Nafissatou, founder and coordinator of the NGO Bien-Étre de la femme Rurale (BFR), thanked FON for their assistance and reported the status of her project. She was able to train 30 women, instead of the 20 originally proposed, such was the interest of the women in the region of Say. After the original training in the transformation of peanuts, the women began producing peanut oil, peanut butter and the residue, which is highly nutritive, is sold for mixture with cattle feed. There has been an important change in the life of the women. Now they are engaged and earning money and are learning ways of using this money for small business activities to benefit themselves and their families. This project has given the women hope and increased their confidence that they can be leaders in their village. The women have made a great start and Madame Alhassane Nafissatou hopes to expand her project to more women in the village and even to other villages in the region of Say. She is preparing a proposal for more funding for this expansion. If you would like to support her project, please send your donation to FON and indicate the NGO BFR.

**Submitted by Gabriella Maertens,
VP of FON and Projects Coordinator**

- John W. Soloninka, PRESIDENT
- Gabriella Maertens, VICE-PRESIDENT
- Penni St. Hilaire,
RECORDING SECRETARY
- Larry Koff, TREASURER
- Steve Bushell, WEBMASTER
- John Baird, MEMBERSHIP
MEMBER-AT-LARGE
- Bob Jackson
MEMBER-AT-LARGE
- JOEL Neuberg
CAMEL EXPRESS EDITOR
- Jude Andreasen
ASSISTANT EDITOR
- John Hutchison
NIGER RELATIONS—LIAISON
- Saley TAHIROU
CONUSA NATIONAL PRESIDENT
- Rabiou Yari
CONUSA NATIONAL SECRETARY



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Or by e-mail at
president@friendsofniger.org
and you will find **FON** on the web
and this newsletter in **FULL COLOR**
at:
www.friendsofniger.org.

Editor: Joel Neuberg
Assistant Editor: Jude Andreasen

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



FON Breaking the Pattern of Gender Discrimination By Supporting Hambaté Bâ School

From Gabriella Maertens

Friends of Niger has supported Homa Kombo's project to [empower girls in Niger for change via education](#) using the Global Giving website. The project has just posted another update from the field on the impact donations to this wonderful cause have made:

Breaking the Pattern of Gender Discrimination By Homa Kombo and Sher Betz-Cooper - Field Coordinator and Treasurer

Quality education is not just about pedagogy in the classroom but about the whole school environment. It is about the way a school is managed, the way the classroom process takes place, the way children are treated and the way gender issues are tackled. As many of you know, in Niger, the 4th poorest country in the world, 93% of the girls lack an education in Middle school.

The Hampaté Bâ Middle School promotes quality education by being sensitive to gender issues. There's an awareness of the extra burden on girls in Niger and therefore a special attention is given to respond to their special needs. The promotion of a gender-sensitive and girl-friendly school environment is a central feature of Hampaté Bâ.

Zeinabou's mother has this to say about the equal treatment girls get at Hampaté Bâ: *"Teachers do not discriminate, but treat all pupils equally. My daughter is given equal opportunities in the classroom and in all school activities. Everything in this school tells Zeinabou that she is NOT second-rate. I am really happy about this."*

You can help us pull down the barriers and begin to bring change for women in Niger. By granting scholarships to girl students, we can ease the financial need that forces families to take girls out of school. We can educate and empower girls through our special education program for them at Hampaté Bâ School and by doing so we can give whole families resources to create healthier and more stable lives.

You can be certain that your donations to this wonderful cause are making a difference, by teaching a girl to read, reason and unleash her potential. It will help her learn to be proud of being a woman and have bright prospects years from now. The link to this project is:

<http://www.globalgiving.org/projects/secondary-education-for-200-adolescent-girls-in-niger/>

They also have a video on YouTube that I would like to encourage you to view. Families with children will especially enjoy it: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HgT8cAYaP2o>

What We Know About the Multi-functional Platform

from John Hutchison & Joel Neuberg



According to Brenda McSweeney and Scolastique Kompaoré, this recently produced apparatus, known as the Multi-functional Platform reached West Africa in recent years. It consists of a simple diesel engine made in India with units that villagers select, like a shea and peanut butter press, grain huller or flour mill. The Platform is only the physical part of a development package. Essential components are a system of pre-project village consultations, the naming of a women's management committee by the women themselves, and follow-up visits by non-governmental technicians. Recently through board member John Hutchison, the FON has begun collaboration with a newly-formed women's NGO in Niger known as Fille Femme et Développement or FIFED. FIFED has initiated projects already with girls and women in the

town of Diribangou in Téra district, Tilabéri Region. FON Board Members Hutchison and also Joel Neuberg have begun discussing the possibility of marshaling resources that would enable us to be able to help FIFED and the women of Diribangou to possibly acquire one of these machines for use in their daily lives and to possibly free women from the weight of their traditional daily tasks and make possible time for change, and for them to be able to pursue education and training that will facilitate this. In another article which appeared in Energy Access, the following overview evaluating the nuts and bolts surrounding this apparatus is presented:

Began: The MFP program began in 1996 as the result of a collaboration between the Government of Mali and the UNDP. Highly successful, the program then expanded to Senegal (2001), Burkina (2004), Ghana (2005), and Guinea (2007).

What: The Multi-functional Platform is composed of a diesel engine mounted on a steel chassis with interchangeable attachments that can be used for a variety of tasks: milling, grinding, water pumping, electricity generation and battery charging, running power tools, etc.

The Energy Need: Each is located in a rural, marginalized community where the MFP is capable of replacing large amounts of human labor (particularly women's in the area of agro-processing) and spurring economic and social development.

Investment: Close to 90% of the total costs of the MFP (most of the capital and all of the programmatic costs) have mostly been subsidized by the UNDP, host country governments and donor organizations. The communities must provide the shed to house the MFP as well as pay for all the operating costs.

Capacity building: The UNDP and its partners provide capacity building by training artisans who can install and maintain the machines, as well as the group members who are responsible for operating the MFP and keeping track of the accounting.

Now (2008): The MFP program is enormously popular, currently in five African countries and poised to expand with more than US \$10 M pledged by national governments. Research is underway to evaluate the potential of biofuels and test whether MFPs can be commercially viable.

Outcomes/Impacts: 800 MFPs are operational; over 1 M people currently benefit from the program; 4,000 people are directly employed; 1,500 women participate in the managing committees.

Clearly, the MFP constitutes a development project which raises many issues and questions, and makes us want to do more research before taking on this project as a non-profit donor organization. The Friends of Niger have begun considering the possibility of lending a portion of the funds and fundraising for a portion of the rather high price of the MFP, so that FIFED can help the women of Diribangou to benefit from the process that is entailed by owning an MFP.

Continued on page 5

Continued from page 5

The Multi-Functional Platform

Hutchison and Neuberg are pursuing various avenues for making the financing of the project, which costs around \$9,000, possible. Having investigated using Kiva and also FINCA, they have discovered that those credit/fundraising programs do not operate in the Republic of Niger. We have already identified a number of potential donors to contribute and we are investigating the possibility of opening a bank account in Niger for the purpose of receiving payments from FIFED and the women of Diribangou. The majority of the Board of the FON

recommends that the FON should facilitate this project but not fund it, so that we hope to be able to possibly use the payback from the funds borrowed to then finance the same process for another women's organization in the Republic of Niger. So this is a work in progress whose outcome we will hope to publish in the next Camel Express.

References:

Photograph from an Energy Access article that appeared at the following url : <http://energyaccess.wikispaces.com/Multi-function+Platform+-+Case+Study>.

McSweeney, Brenda Gael and Scholastique Kompaoré. 2008. "Burkina's Women Shape Progress." Document shared by the authors.

Nygaard, Ivan Institutional options for rural energy access: Exploring the concept of the multifunctional platform in West Africa. Source: <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0301421509008374>

CONUSA Elects New Executive Committee

From Rabiou Yari

At the annual general meeting of 30 representatives to the General Assembly from eight states and the District of Columbia, held in Frederick, Maryland on April 26, 2014, the Council of Nigeriens in the United States elected the following members of the CONUSA National Executive Committee to serve for two years:

- ◇ President: Mr. Saley Tahirou called "Pele";
- ◇ Secretary General: Mr. Abdourahamane Dandi Abarchi;
- ◇ Deputy Secretary General: Mr. Bashir Hamza;
- ◇ General Treasurer: Mr. Abdul Aziz Alkassoum;
- ◇ Deputy General Treasurer: Kadjo Boureima;
- ◇ Business Secretary Social, Sports and Cultural: Mr. Abdul Aziz Moussa;
- ◇ Deputy Secretary Social, Sports, and Cultural: Mr. Abdourahamane Attaher;
- ◇ Secretary Academics, Research Projects and Investments. : Mr. Yari Rabiou;
- ◇ Deputy Secretary Academics, Research Projects and Investments: Mr. Brah Mahamane;
- ◇ Secretary Communication and Technology: Mr. Abdoulaye Youssoufa;
- ◇ Secretary Promotion of Women and Children: Ms. Haoua Sidibe;
- ◇ Deputy Secretary Promotion of Women and Children: Ms. Salifou Fatima;
- ◇ Secretary for External Relations: Mr. Abdoul Moumouni Djibo;
- ◇ Deputy External Relations Secretary: Mr. Inoussa Moussa.

The members of the Commission of Legal Affairs and Control, which assists the Executive Committee in its work and deliberations were also elected at this meeting:

- ◇ President: Mr. Abdourahamane Issifi;
- ◇ Administrative Secretary: Mr. Abdul Wahab Mahamane;
- ◇ Financial Controller: Mr. Oumar Toure.

The treasurer's report was read and approved, with a balance of \$2,378 turned over to the new Executive Committee.

After several recommendations for work for CONUSA's executive, the General Assembly addressed a special vote of thanks to their Excellencies Mr. Mamane Sambo Sidikou Ambassador of Niger to the United States and Mr. Boubacar Boureima Permanent Representative of Niger to the United Nations for their strong and unequivocal commitment from Nigerians living in the USA . Also a special vote of thanks was addressed by participants at the location of the Local Executive Office Washington DC area for the comfortable stay of the delegates.

Continued from page 1

Ambassador Sidikou Accepts New Post

He soon ran into trouble, however, as he was implicated in an attempted *coup d'état* staged by some of his friends among the Army's young officer corps. As one consequence, he was summarily imprisoned and remained incarcerated without trial for five years, part of the time in solitary confinement; and he was only released upon the accession of a new government to power after the death of Seyni Kountché in late 1987.

The new President, General Ali Saibou, then offered Maman Sidikou a full scholarship -- underwritten by USAID -- for graduate study in the United States at the institution of his choice. Sidikou went initially to the University of Texas in Austin to do his Master's degree in Development Communication, then transferred to Florida State University in Tallahassee to undertake the PhD in adult and non-formal education, graduating with the doctoral degree in 1994. While at Florida State, he worked as a Research Associate at the University's Learning Systems Institute on a variety of international education projects.

Practical employment in development resumed for Sidikou shortly after his graduation. In November 1994 he assumed the role of Human Capacity Development Manager at the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) mission in Niamey, Niger, a position that he held until October of the following year. He then accepted the post of Education Officer for UNICEF at their Lagos, Nigeria office and, over the next sixteen years, served in a variety of educational, consultative and ministerial roles for UNICEF, the Government of Niger, the World Bank and Save the Children, often in difficult and crises environments. Examples include his work as --

- ◇ Coordinator of the UNICEF Iraq Support Office in Amman, Jordan;
- ◇ Minister of Foreign Affairs in Niger;
- ◇ UNICEF's Team Leader for the Back-To-School Campaign in post-war Afghanistan;
- ◇ Senior Education Specialist in the World Bank's Human Development Network; and
- ◇ Program County Director for Save the Children (UK) in Rwanda and then Democratic Republic of the Congo.

It was on the heels of that last assignment that Dr. Maman Sidikou was asked to take the post of Niger's Ambassador to the United States, a role that he assumed in January 2012, beginning with an audience with President Obama. He has been a very active ambassador and has placed a particular emphasis on raising the profile of Niger in the United States, developing bilateral trade and cooperation between the two countries, contributing to the resolution of security problems in the Sahel and helping to unite the Nigerien diaspora in the United States in support of their own country. Signal accomplishments have been many. He has proved an indefatigable traveler within this country, meeting with business, community and non-profit groups from one coast to the other in order to better acquaint them with Niger -- and being awarded along the way a Distinguished Alumnus award from his doctoral institution, Florida State University.

Progress on the diplomatic front has likewise been substantial. In the years immediately preceding Maman's tenure, both USAID and the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) -- the two principal conduits of American public aid to developing countries -- were contemplating suspension of activities in the country for a variety of reasons related to efficiency and governance. Thanks to the return of rule of law in Niger, Maman Sidikou's efforts and the support of legislative allies in Congress, the Agency is back in Niger and planning to appoint a Nigerien director of operations for the first time, while the MCC is moving steadily towards approval of a compact with the country. FON itself actively advocated for MCC approval of Niger's compact.

Sidikou has undertaken repeated and critical dialogue as well with the Department of Defense about securing Niger's borders from the multiple threats afoot around the desert's edge and with the American business community about assisting Niger in judicious use of its considerable mineral resources. Early accomplishments in this vein include commencement of construction of a coal-based electrical generation plant for the city of Tahoua in Salkadamna, Niger -- carried out by a California-based company -- and a prospection tour of future Niger energetic resources by a U.S. business delegation.

Closer still to Maman's heart has been the fruition of efforts to help bring unity to the previously divided Nigerien diaspora community in the United States, resulting in the reconciliation of all factions and renewed participation within the "Conseil des Nigériens aux Etats-Unis" (CONUSA). FON itself is a member of the organization.

Niger's first family in the United States -- Maman, wife Fatima Djibo (a career diplomat herself who has been serving the last two years as *Madame l'Ambassadrice*), daughter Maya now in training in southern France and son Ahmed, married and working in Niamey -- will be sorely missed by FON, by American legislators, diplomats and business contacts and by a whole roster of community groups in the months and years to come. We can only wish them safe landings and many blessings: *Alla ya kiyaye rabommu, ya sake had'a mu lahiya!*

MAMAN SIDIKOU AT TELE-SAHEL IN NIAMEY, NIGER

from Ann Sulkovsky

My first meeting with Maman Sidikou was in 1981, during my service as a Peace Corps volunteer. I worked for Tele Sahel in Niamey under the Office of Radio and Television of Niger (ORTN). Maman Sidikou was the Director of Tele Sahel at the time.

The French originally set up Tele Sahel as a means to transmit school lessons to remote regions of the country via microwave and satellite transmission. Tele Sahel was recognized as very successful in West Africa. Two other Peace Corps volunteers also served with me at Tele Sahel during that time. We, as Peace Corps volunteers, were there temporarily to transition the former teachers/educators, who initially developed lesson plans, into becoming educational program film producers and directors. My assignment was in the Office of Action and Development with two Nigerien educators. A video of a film we produced during that time, "Projet Ronnier", is now posted on the FON website.

What a great surprise, after over 30 years, to meet with Ambassador Maman Sidikou here in Washington, DC, in his new role of Ambassador of Niger. I appreciate his joining us in a Friends of Niger November 2013 teleconference, to discuss how to mitigate extremist group penetration from Mali. He stressed education as an important factor. I'll miss knowing he is in Washington, DC, my hometown, but am sure he will have much to contribute in his new position.



Ambassador Maman Sambo Sidikou and Family next to Boubacar Boureima, Niger's Permanent Representative to the U.N., taken from Embassy of Niger website.

Niger III and Niger IV Plan Reunions

from Gabriella Maertens

Niger III (1964-66) celebrates 50 years since the beginning of their service in Niger with a reunion scheduled for September 29th to October 2nd at the Estes Park YMCA. They will be joined by fellow trainees for Senegal IV for a joint reunion. Forty-five RPCVs and guests have already registered but there is still time and space for more. Niger IV and Senegal V will meet during the same time and a joint social activity has been planned. There will be plenty of time for social interaction but a panel of speakers from the Niger III group, including Jamie Thomson, Tom Hale, Peter Easton and the PCV doctor, David Nicholas, is planned for Tuesday. The Reunion Committee is researching a project for the group to fund in honor of the 50th year celebration. The Nigerien Ambassador, Maman Sidikou, plans to attend. This is the first reunion the Niger III group has planned but hopefully not the last.

Funding Needed to Assist in Organization and Distribution of 10,400 Indestructible Soccer Balls in Niger for Local Schools

from Mike Mitchell and Larry Koff



Mike Mitchell, a former Peace Corps volunteer, has devoted his career to introducing and organizing soccer programs in Niger since 1985. Funding now (\$10,000 to \$20,000) is needed to deliver 10,400 soccer balls now in a warehouse in Niamey, the capital of Niger, to 1400 schools (almost 100,000 children) and to provide staff support for organizing soccer leagues in communities all over this 5th world country for both boys and girls, ages 7 to 22.

In 1984 Mike played for (Equipe Espoir-Team Hope) the local team of Zinder, which won the 1984 national championship! At that time Mike brought 15 balls in his suitcase which were used to practice as they did not even have one decent ball!

In the community of Libore, Niger, in 2008, Mike and Project Play partnered with Canadian Program Pencils for Kids to assist in organizing a soccer program, donating soccer balls. Pencils for Kids was funding the construction of three schools, an agricultural project, tree planting project, sowing, theater, (<http://www.pencilsforkids.com/our-projects/programs>). But the project the kids like best is the soccer project. Friends of Niger made several donations to Mike's program, Project Play.

In 2010 with the assistance of his friends, Tim Jahnigen, an inventor, the financial support of the world renowned entertainer Sting, and the Chevrolet Company, a nearly indestructible soccer ball was developed. The idea of making soccer nets made from trash plastic bags was conceived in 2008 to accompany the distribution of balls during the initial Project Play trip thanks to former Niger Peace Corps volunteer James Mas (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sTUczvqxUFU>).

The One World Futbol is a virtually-indestructible ball that never needs a pump and never goes flat, even when punctured multiple times. Whether for beach soccer, street soccer, play in your own backyard or for use on the roughest terrain anywhere in the world, the One World Futbol will last for years. A single One World Futbol can outlast hundreds of regular balls, sustaining play in any environment. Project Play, Chevrolet and One World Futbol Project share the belief that football (soccer) not only brings people together through the excitement of the game, but also helps heal and rebuild communities impacted by war, disasters and poverty. Through this partnership, we can influence millions of lives with the simple power of a durable ball—the One World Futbol.

Mike will be in the States for the month of September, to raise awareness and funds because it will take \$10,000 to \$20,000 to get the balls to schools throughout Niger, plus hire for at least a year a coordinator of Project Play Africa in Niger. This article is in response to Mike's request to spread the word via Friends of Niger and raise funds for this initiative. FON is considering donating \$1,000 but if this is matched by another \$1,000 we would encourage Mike to locate programs in other communities, such as Maradi and Zinder.



Above: soccer ball delivery in Niger.

KAMRA ON THE FRONTLINE, WORKING TO HELP NIGERIAN REFUGEES!

from Abdou Gagara Katiella

The crisis in Northern Nigeria continues to force more refugees each week into the impoverished southeastern region of Diffa in Niger. The regional population, which was estimated at 591,788, has now risen up to more than 650,000; with an average of 700 - 1000 new refugees crossing the border each week.

According to the Mayor of the city of Maine Soroa, Mr. Koukouma Gasso, the situation is very critical and refugees are in need of medical care and educational support. Many of them with sick children have not seen a doctor in several weeks.

The story from each refugee is unique, and heartbreaking: Mrs. Fadji, aged 33 is originally from Maine-Soroa. A few months back, she was still calling the town of Maiduguri hometown, and Nigeria her country. She has been married to Mallam Madu, a Nigerian citizen for more than 15 years until the extremist group Boko Haram hit their town five months ago. During that attack, her husband was killed, brutally slaughtered along with dozens of other residents. She is now back in Maine Soroa with her six children, living with extended family. Having left everything behind them, Fadji and her children ran for their lives to seek shelter in Maine Soroa, re-starting life from scratch, this time with children to care for, and no income or husband to support and provide for them.

Asked about the type of support she has been receiving since they arrived, Fadji said she only got a one time financial aid of about \$65 upon their arrival four months ago. Her children need medical attention, but cannot afford to buy prescription medicines. Thanks to a sponsorship from International Relief Teams, and contributions from people who received the Camel Express and donated, as well as other donors, KAMRA delivered a full container of medicines donated by MAP International. The shipment arrived at Kirker Hospital on Wednesday, August 27. This shipment made up of antibiotics, pain relievers, vitamins and various supplies will surely help in providing medical care to many of these women and children in need of immediate medical attention.

However, compared to actual needs on the ground, more shipments are needed to adequately care for the increasing number of refugees crossing the border each week. This is why, for the past two months the Kirker African Medical Relief Association has been working on the frontline to mobilize more resources. On July 7, 2014, KAMRA launched the shipment of hope campaign (<https://www.indiegogo.com/projects/shipment-of-hope>) to raise funds and send more medicines and supplies to care for the displaced. Funds raised will also be used to provide educational opportunity to children among the refugee population. To donate online and help Fadji, as well as thousands of other women and children in need please visit: <http://www.kirkerassociation.org/#!/donate/c1ghi>.

KAMRA hereby thanks all the donors for their support in funding the transport of the recent MAP shipment, and looks forward to your continued support.



Continued from page 1

Update on Expanding Lives

Just this past July 27, 2014, Friends of Niger board member, John Baird (Niger 68-71) participated in the annual EL 5K Run/Walk fundraiser, and met Leslie Natzke and other staff members.

This year, instead of bringing the young women to Chicago for six weeks of workshops, Expanding Lives went to West Africa. One of the reasons for the change was the timing of Ramadan this year – fasting would have made the workshops more difficult for the girls. Eight staff members made the trip to conduct the workshops, and while there they got to meet up with past alums of the program, and to marvel at how they have grown and changed. Each staff person raised their own funds for the trip -- everyone at EL is a volunteer; no one gets paid.

Expanding Lives is all about empowering young women. The workshops range all the way from learning fundraising and grant writing skills, to yoga and bicycle repair. Leslie Natzke says, "Our self-confident girls return home and become leaders." EL has offices in Chicago, Illinois and Maradi, Niger (partnering with Micro-Credit in Africa).



Lesley Natzke and John Baird

Only 6% of girls in Niger attend secondary school. The three main barriers to raising this percentage are economics, social and labor concerns. Why these barriers?

- ◊ School fees and loss of income from a girl's petty commerce are more immediate hardships for families. In addition, because school girls put off marriage, their dowries come later. Some girls who do go to school soon drop out to get married.
- ◊ Students often have to leave home to live in larger towns for secondary school and are put in the hands of strangers. There is a shortage of female classmates, female teachers and female role-models. Many schools even lack washrooms for girls. Because girls are less likely to attend school and more likely to drop out, some believe they lack intelligence.
- ◊ In addition to selling small goods and food supplies for extra income, girls often work long hours for the family. They carry water, gather wood, care for younger children, pound grain, cook and clean. Many girls who begin primary school do not continue because they cannot balance work and school.



BUT WHEN A GIRL GOES TO SCHOOL ...

- SHE'LL BE LESS LIKELY TO BE A VICTIM OF CHILD TRAFFICKING**
- SHE'LL BE LESS LIKELY TO DIE DURING CHILDBIRTH**
- HER PERSONAL HEALTH IMPROVES**
- HER CHILDREN ARE MORE LIKELY TO ATTEND SCHOOL**
- SHE'LL WAIT LONGER TO HAVE HER FIRST CHILD**
- HER CHILDREN WILL BE MORE LIKELY TO SURVIVE INFANCY**
- SHE'LL HAVE FEWER CHILDREN**
- AND THE CYCLE EXPANDS TO THE NEXT GENERATION**

2014 FRIENDS OF NIGER MEMBERSHIP FORM

**FON Dues are payable in January but if you missed that date,
please pay anytime during 2014.**

Name(s) _____ Date _____

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 local Nigerien Projects .

The Friends of Niger is a tax-exempt organization under section 501(c)(3).

Membership and contributions to Friends of Niger are fully tax deductible.

Please Check Appropriate Boxes

- Enclosed is \$20 for an Individual Membership in FON
- \$55 to cover Individual Membership in both FON & NPCA**
- Enclosed is \$35 for a FON Family Membership (2 Members at One Address)
- I am a new RPCV or new to FON, entitled to a one-year free membership
- 2 members at 1 address
- 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 _____
- Instead—**Project Funding / Donations**
- I would like to support education; wells; health; agricultural;
- microcredit projects in Niger (check all that apply) _____
- Please send paper copies of the Camel Express by U.S. Mail
- Please send links to PDF version of the Camel Express by e-mail.

Merchandise

Please send _____ Friends of Niger T-Shirts at \$15 each (Shipping Included) _____
T-Shirt Sizes: S _____ M _____ L _____ XL _____ T-Shirt Color: _____ brown _____ beige

TOTAL AMOUNT ENCLOSED _____

**Make Check or Money Order Payable to Friends of Niger and mail with this form to:
P. O. Box 5823, Washington, D. C. 20016-9998**

PRIVACY POLICY

Your contact information is requested and maintained by FON so that we can contact you in the future. FON does not share your contact information with any third party other than with the National Peace Corps Association with whom we have a reciprocity agreement.



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Address Correction Requested

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An electronic FULL COLOR version of this newsletter and previous editions can be accessed at <http://www.friendsofniger.org>

There is no way to peace.
Peace is the way.



The Camel Express



Newsletter of the Friends of Niger

Volume 29 Issue 3



December 2014

Friends of Niger Supports Local Programs: Member Contributions Needed

The FON Board has committed to matching \$4000 for 6 programs in education, health, and small business development, much of the focus on girls and women. With your year-end contribution please help us match or exceed the funds we have agreed to commit to the following highly qualified programs discussed in this newsletter: 1) CONUSA and Cholera \$1000; 2) Soccer \$500; 3) Goat project \$700; 4) Bien-Être (BFR) \$500; 5) Hampaté Ba School \$250; 6) Rain \$1000.

It's time to support FON with your dues and donations!

January is our once-a-year push to raise funds to support FON and the many projects that help the people and country we came to love during our time living there.

How many Friends of Niger are we? As of last count, we are a group of 612 (see the list on pages 7-11)! Incidentally, if you see familiar names of folks you would like to reconnect with, contact John Baird at JBairdRPT@cs.com and we will facilitate the contact in a confidential way — both parties giving consent.

We usually send the newsletter by email, but this time we are placing paper copies in your hands, hoping that the Camel Express will lie around on your coffee table for a few days and get picked up and read several times! For details on how you can continue your support, please see page 3.

Thank you for supporting FON!

FON & CONUSA Collaborate to Help Communities Hit by Cholera Near Maradi

FON (Friends of Niger) and CONUSA (a group of Niger Diaspora from throughout the USA, and an organization that now has two representatives on the FON Board) have agreed to work together to launch a cholera prevention program. With the help of CONUSA and especially Yari Rabiou, a representative to the FON Board) an anti-cholera program will be designed for the Maradi area, which is most impacted by the disease. This will be a cooperative effort spearheaded by the NGO Himma, including a representative of Maradi Hospital, local medical experts, as well as traditional and religious leaders. CONUSA has made a \$1000 contribution to match FON's donation. A general contribution will underwrite FON expenses for this effort. Sufficient funds have been now been raised with the support of CONUSA to film and broadcast the program on Niger National TV (Tele Sahel) and regional radio. Credit will be given to CONUSA and FON.

Over a succession of days in September, cholera cases were declared in Southern Niger, causing over 20 deaths. The epidemic is spreading primarily to those areas without access to clean water, trash collection, and proper toilets. It is important to organize awareness campaigns in affected villages to educate people about the symptoms of cholera so that those infected will come to treatment centers.



FON Urges Support for Kaouritel Association Dairy Goat Project

Submitted by Gabriella Maertens,
VP of FON and Projects Coordinator

FON has received a request from Ortoudo Bermo, President of the Women's Group of the Ajangafa Kaourital Association in the commune of Tchintabaraden for funding of a dairy goat operation. The FON Board is asking its members and friends to help fund this project with their generous donations. FON will match the amount up to \$1000 (the amount requested is 750,000FCFA). The need is urgent because the association wishes to purchase the animals at a good price during the dry season (from November to May), and benefit from the new births during the rainy season immediately following.

After several successive droughts in Niger many families in this region lost their entire cattle herd. Survival became very difficult with no means of livelihood. The degradation of natural resources (water, farm and pasture land, and forest) strongly contributed to the vulnerability of the people, and women were the most affected. To the already chronic food shortage was added social inequality because cattle constitute the only means of subsistence in the department of Tchintabaraden. All these factors contributed to the impoverishment of the people. The small village of Ajangafa, located 45 km from Tchintabaraden is one of the most affected areas. That is why the Kaourital Association's local partner in the village planned, in solidarity with the members of the community, to help the women from the most vulnerable households who had lost all of their cattle. In summary: The project will assist 12 women in the Ajangafa area in the commune of Tchintabaraden to begin to support their families by giving them a pair of goats (milking goat and kid). In 18 months there will be an accounting and the reimbursement will allow additional women in the group to receive animals in a revolving operation. This system will allow women to rebuild their lost herds and to have the means to sustain their families.

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The Camel Express is the periodical newsletter of Friends of Niger (FON). FON can be contacted via the post at P.O. Box 5823 Washington, D. C. 20016-9998 Or by e-mail at president@friendsofniger.org and you will find FON on the web and this newsletter in FULL COLOR at: www.friendsofniger.org.

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

Funds needed to Support One World Football Soccer Program

Mike Mitchell, President of “One World Football” and former Peace Corps volunteer in Niger, announced that 10,400 balls have been distributed in the Tilliabéri region involving 100,000 kids in conjunction with the Canadian Pencils for Kids Program. At our request, the new on-site Project Play Niger Coordinator, Ibbo Daddy, has distributed 1,100 balls for primarily the Maradi and Zinder regions. Funding is needed to cover the cost of these balls and to support the Project Coordinator. Mike Mitchell will be on the East coast next summer and is looking for opportunities to do fund raising events.



It's time to support Friends of Niger (FON) with your DUES and donations!

Please send your \$20 dues by January 31

Dear friends, we are a small and unique group of people who know Niger intimately from having lived and worked there. FON provides ways we can continue to help and honor those esteemed people who hosted us and with whom we developed friendships.

HERE'S HOW DUES AND DONATIONS CAN BE SENT:

Preferred Way #1 -- If you receive a paper copy of The Camel Express (CEX)

Please use the enclosed remit envelope. With this option, you have all the choices: Besides paying FON dues, you can also make a general contribution to FON, and you can elect to support FON projects in the areas of education, wells, health, and agriculture. Then there are **FON Matching** projects which fund RAIN, BFR, Soccer, Hambate Ba, and microcredit (see articles in this issue). Finally, you can buy T-shirts, and you can choose to pay dues to the National Peace Corps Association (NPCA).

Preferred Way #2 -- If you receive the CEX by email

Please print out the Membership Form and mail that in with your payment. Here you have all the same choices as above.

If you want to use Paypal

Go to the Friends of Niger website, www.friendsofniger.org, and click on the Donate button. The first \$20 you send will be your dues; anything above that will be a general contribution.

If you want to use a credit card

Go to the NPCA website, peacecorpsconnect.org. Here you can pay NPCA and FON dues. The Friends of Niger is a tax-exempt organization under section 501(c)3 – all contributions are fully tax deductible. All contributions are acknowledged with a written receipt.

Please make checks payable to Friends of Niger and mail to: PO Box 5823, Washington DC20016-9998. Please keep in mind that in addition to the projects listed, your dues and donations also support The Camel Express newsletter, the FON website, and the FON Archives.

Bien-Être de la Femme Rurale (BFR) Project Seeks Support for the Replication of Their Project in the Region of Say

from Gabriella Maertens, FON V-P & Projects Coordinator

Thanks to funding from FON earlier this year, Madame Alhassane Nafissatou, founder and coordinator of the NGO Bien-Être de la femme Rurale (BFR), was able to train 30 women (expanded from 20 originally proposed) because of the interest of the women in the Say region. After training in the transformation of peanuts, the women began producing peanut oil and peanut butter. The highly nutritive residue is sold to mix with cattle feed.



An important change has occurred in the lives of these women. Now they are engaged and earning money and are learning ways of using this money for small business activities to benefit themselves and their families. This project has given the women hope and increased their confidence to become leaders in their village. The women have made a great start and Madame Alhassane Nafissatou hopes, with your help, to expand her project to more women in the village and to other villages in the region of Say. The cost of her proposal for funding for this expansion would be \$1000 total for the bags of peanuts, the containers and stickers. The NGO's contribution would be \$350 for the mats, the training and the wood. FON has pledged \$500 and hopes that its members and friends will match that amount so that the project can be completely funded.

This project was specifically designed to respond to the needs of the rural women of Niger who have been displaced by drought or poor harvest and now live in the outskirts of Niamey without the means to earn a living. The project would start in April, 2015 and would last six months. During this time the women will be involved in the production of peanut oil and the training and revenue will enable them to return to their village

to establish a small business enterprise. This project was successful in the region of Say and will be duplicated for the displaced women living on the outskirts of Niamey.



2014 NIGER / SENEGAL 50TH REUNION AT ESTES PARK, COLORADO

The Niger III /Senegal IV training group gathered at Estes Park, Colorado Sept. 29-Oct. 2 to celebrate their 50th reunion. They trained at Southern Illinois University in the summer of 1964. Thirty-eight RPCVs and spouses attended — 22 from the Niger group, 18 from the Senegal group, including spouses and partners. Tammy Liberman and Steve Liberman were double-counted because she served in Senegal and married Steve, who went to Niger.

A full (15 page detailed) report on the reunion, including summaries of presentations on health, literacy, and welfare in Niger given by: **Peter Easton, Dr. David Nicholas, Tom Hale, Charlie Stover, Warren Enger, Jamie Thomson, and others** will be accessible from the FON website in January.

Niger Rural & Nomadic Students Find Opportunity at Agadez Learning Center



Only 2% of girls in Niger complete high school. The numbers are not much higher for boys. To prosper, a country needs a broad base of educated citizens to participate in government and business. To this end, RAIN partners with rural desert communities to promote access to education. Enrollment is rising in partner primary schools, and we're seeing the first girls *ever* graduating from these schools. For most, this accomplishment leads no further. Most rural and nomadic students live many miles away from the nearest secondary school – making attendance impossible. Since January of 2013, RAIN's Agadez Learning Center (ALC) provides safe access to secondary school education for girls and boys (ages 13-17) who would not otherwise have the chance to attend.

Located in the city of Agadez, Niger, **The Agadez Learning Center** houses nomadic students from seven rural communities. A safe and supporting place to live, uniforms, school supplies, and healthy food to eat are just the beginning at the ALC for 25 students of the Tuareg and Wodaabe ethnic groups from the vast surrounding Agadez region. Counseling, guidance and peer-to-peer and professional tutoring helps students acclimate from village to city life and develop leadership skills while succeeding in school. Normally rural students fall far behind their urban peers in academic performance. This year, 10 of our 13 10th grade students, including all our girls, not only surpassed their peers but aced their government exams, which were harder than ever.

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HELP TO EMPOWER UNDERPRIVILEGED GIRLS IN NIGER By Homa Kombo, Founder and General Coordinator of the Hampaté Bâ School

The challenging empowerment program at Amadou Hampaté Bâ Middle School in Niamey aims to instill strength, critical thinking, and positivity in girls so that they regain their self-esteem due to harmful cultural traditions. Our girl students learn that education does not automatically lead to empowerment as culture and custom also influence whether they are able to exercise their knowledge and understanding. They learn that mentalities and attitudes need to change as well. To end gender inequality, we believe everyone must be involved, and so our male students also learn gender awareness. This means learning to recognize the negative impacts of gender inequity. When you donate to our project, you give underprivileged girls access, duration in education, and empowerment: Sponsorship gives underprivileged girl students access to secondary education, a bespoke remediation program keeps them in school, and a special empowerment program provides the means for them to overcome the obstacles they face in their everyday lives to attain full access to their human rights. Now is the time to act. We need you to help make a difference and transform lives. Thank you for your support!

The FON Board has voted to approve an additional \$250 to be matched by FON members and friends. The link to this project is:

<http://www.globalgiving.org/projects/secondary-education-for-200-adolescent-girls-in-niger/>

Continued from Page 5 **RAIN Agadez Learning Center**

A Family Atmosphere RAIN provides the students with a safe and healthy environment, including full scholarships, room and board. Tutors work with students in groups and individually to improve their understanding of challenging academic concepts. Halima Aboubacar, RAIN Specialist for the Promotion of Women and Children, serves as a mentor and advocate for the students, meeting with them at least twice weekly to discuss their personal and academic needs and concerns. Her constant presence allows her to continually monitor their academic and social progress - and the results indicate that her hard work is effective. Brian Nowak, RAIN Director of Programs, is an educator who works closely with our tutors to provide individualized help to students 3 nights per week. Halima and Brian are viewed with respect and affection. They bolster the students' confidence and motivation with warmth, praise and gentle demands for greater effort. Together they create a family atmosphere, helping these rural students navigate the social mysteries common to middle and high school-aged students throughout the world.

Performance Results This academic year was a success, thanks to the hard work of Brian, Halima, the tutors, and of course, the students themselves. Despite the especially difficult exams this year, ALC students had a passing rate of 77%, well above the average for their school and for students at private schools. Adamou Moussa, Professor of Mathematics at the students' middle school and a RAIN tutor, noted that our ALC students were, on average, twice as successful as their counterparts at the local private school. Among the notable improvements throughout the year were several girls and boys who responded to demands for improved concentration and attention after reviewing midyear exam results. Many showed marked improvement over previous years when the center was under different management, with some leaping from merely passing to excelling. These remarkable results support our conviction that with the right support, rural students can outperform urban students living and studying in their hometowns.

The Hopeful Legacy of ALC Graduates

In mid-July, the students returned to their home communities or nomadic encampments in Agadez - immersed in their nomadic traditions - helping to herd their families' goats, sheep and camels across long distances to find food and water. The rains came late - wells were dry - girls and their mothers had to walk miles in search of water for their families. During this time, Brian and Halima received numerous text messages from students thanking them for the time and effort devoted to their education and life at the center. Assalama wrote, *"Thank you so much for everything. I will never forget all of the special times I spent at the center. Thank You, Thank You!"*

For \$200 per month, per student, we bring education and lasting change to those beyond the reach of other assistance, one student at a time. RAIN plans to enlarge the ALC to serve 50 children - extending this gift to twice as many, for less per student. And we look to introduce this wonderfully successful program to other locales in the Tillaberi and Agadez regions. Your donation of any to enlarge the ALC to serve 50 children - extending this gift to twice as many, for less per student. And we look to introduce this wonderfully successful program to other locales in the Tillaberi and Agadez regions. Your donation of any amount will bring rural children of Niger a mile closer to education and better

futures.

LEFT: Beth in Agadez.

The Niger III and Niger IV Reunion attendees at Estes Park, Colorado chose to fundraise for this project and as of December 1, 2014 the amount raised is \$1200. The reunion committee is seeking funds from all Niger III and IV volunteers. FON has also pledged to match funds received from FON members and friends. Please be generous with your contributions to the Agadez Learning Center.



Fatima (right), a bright and engaged ALC graduate, is attending an agricultural technical school in Kollo, south of Niamey. With class credits completed, she is writing her dissertation on growing onions during the rainy season in Agadez. She recently visited the RAIN office to tell us about her work. We are thrilled with her success.

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Address Correction Requested

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