

The Camel Express



Newsletter of the Friends of Niger

Volume 30 Issue 1



June 2015

President Issoufou Mahamadou hosted by Boston University



President Issoufou Mahamadou and Ambassador Hassana Alidou speak at the Archive of the Republic of Niger Opening Ceremony

Close to 100 guests attended the inauguration of the Archive of the Republic of Niger at the Boston University Mugar Library on Friday morning, April 3, 2015. The attendees included His Excellency, President Issoufou Mahamadou, Niger Ambassador to the United States, Dr. Hassana Alidou, representatives of Boston University, numerous alums of the Boston University Niger Program, FON Board members, the Conseil des Nigériens aux USA-CONUSA members, and a large group of Nigerien students from the Boston area and throughout the US, including Sani Mahamadou Abba, son of the President of Niger currently studying at the Fletcher School.

The inaugural event highlighted the personal and professional connections of staff and representatives of Boston University, the Université Abdou Moumouni (Niamey), Nigerien officials, FON, and CONUSA as well as their combined commitments to use the Archive program to enhance cultural, technical, and community development ties between the people of both countries. The Archive highlights over 50 years of these personal connections including artifacts donated by the first groups of Peace Corps Volunteers to Niger and students who participated in the Boston University Niger Program. Boston University officials also spoke during the ceremony. Welcoming and introductory comments were presented by Boston University Provost Jean Morrison, the Director of African Studies Professor Timothy Longman, and the Founder of the Archive Program Professor John Hutchison (RPCV-Niger).

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Message from the FON President

The President of Niger, SEM Issoufou Mahamadou, visited the United States in April. His stops included Washington D.C., and Boston. In Boston, in addition to visiting Harvard, and MIT, the President spent one morning of his official visit to the US at Boston University to officiate the inaugural opening of the BU hosted Archive of the Republic of Niger (AREN). Several of our FON members were in attendance including the founder of the AREN John Hutchison. Both John and Larry Koff, our FON treasurer, spoke at the event. Traveling with the President was the new Niger ambassador to the US, Dr. Hassana Alidou, a former student of RPCV John Hutchison. How exciting! Read all about the event in this issue of the Camel Express. We have more information about the BU event posted on our website.

We dedicated several pages of this Camel Express to the Boston event in hopes of not only calling your attention to the good things happening at Boston University but also to hopefully encourage you to consider making a material contribution of photos, books, artifacts, or other appropriate Nigerien materials to the AREN collection. Please visit the online Archive to view the contributions already collected and be inspired. The AREN donation webaddress is on page 5.

In the December issue of CEX, we appealed to you to consider financially supporting several projects and programs recommended by the FON Board of Directors. I am pleased to report that our goal of \$4,000 was exceeded and almost doubled; all the projects/programs were fully funded. Some of these projects/programs have already reported back to us and two of them the Himma Cholorea awareness campaign and the Hampate Ba girl's school are included in this edition of the Camel Express. It's not too late if you weren't able to donate last December as we are gearing up for another round of funding and support to these projects/programs and new ones that we will report on in the next issue. Meanwhile if you haven't submitted your 2015 FON dues, or would like to contribute to any of our FON supported projects/programs, please use the form at the end of the newsletter. And if you would like to contribute a news article to the Camel Express, please include it with your membership form.

On behalf of the FON Board of Directors, Thanks again for all your continued support. John Soloninka (Niamey, 1990-96)

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INTRODUCING DR. HASSANA ALIDOU, NIGER'S NEW AMBASSADOR TO THE UNITED STATES

Submitted by John Hutchison and Pamela Britton White

Dr. Hassana Alidou was recently appointed as Niger's ambassador to the US. This is wonderful news for Niger (and for Friends of Niger as well)! As today's headlines bring Niger more to the forefront of America's consciousness, Dr. Alidou will be a strong, articulate, dynamic voice representing Niger -- her people, her values, and her interests -- to the greater American public. She will also be a strong ally of Friends of Niger and the grassroots work we support on the ground in Niger. We are all fortunate indeed to have her in this position.

Dr. Alidou – an accomplished scholar in both the US and Niger, and a world-recognized expert in the field of language and education policy in development -- has a long history of commitment to underserved populations in Niger, particularly girls and women, and to expanding educational opportunities for Niger's children. (She has spear-headed several projects featured in the pages of Camel Express, often with FON support.)

Hassana Alidou and her twin sister Ousseina were born in Niamey in 1963. Orphaned at a young age, they were raised by a grandmother and educated initially in a local Catholic convent in Niamey. They faced much adversity in their early years, but both excelled academically at every level. They quickly developed the skill to transform challenges into learning experiences. Today, both are accomplished scholars in their respective disciplines, widely recognized for their contributions to their own and other African countries.

After completing her Bacclaireate, Dr. Hassana Alidou completed her License and Masters degrees at the University of Niamey, majoring in the field of linguistics. John Hutchison (FON Board member) counted the Alidou twins among his students at the University, and was an important mentor to both. They both came to share his deep commitment to the documentation of Niger's languages and cultures. They also developed a deep commitment to bi-lingual education for Niger's primary students, using mother-tongue languages as the medium of instruction.



Continued on page 4

INTRODUCING DR. HASSANA ALIDOU

(continued from page 3)

Following completion of their Masters program in Niamey, both Hassana and her twin sister Ousseina were awarded AFGRAD Fellowships, a program enabling qualified Nigerien university graduates to complete doctoral studies in the US. Hassana received her Masters and Ph.D, in socio-linguistics from the University of Illinois, Champaign-Urbana in 1997, as well as an Advanced Certificate in ‘gender roles in international development.’ Her dissertation topic, *Language Education Policy and Bilingualism: The Impact of French Language Policy on Primary Education in Niger*, uniquely captured her future career trajectory.

Dr. Alidou taught at Texas A & M University, and is currently a full professor (on leave) in Education and Cross-Cultural Studies, and the Alfonso T. Yuchengco Professor in Intercultural Leadership, at the Graduate School of Education at Alliant International University, San Diego, California. She has also authored books and numerous articles on the subjects of education policy, language and gender.

In addition to her career as a respected scholar, Dr. Alidou has wide experience in international development, international education, and diplomacy, having served most recently in Abuja, Nigeria, as the Regional Director of UNESCO for eight West African countries. She has worked throughout Africa as a specialist in educational and cultural policies and strategic planning, in international development and diplomacy, gender and transformative leadership, multilingualism and multiculturalism, and peace education. She also has a long history of work on African language textbook development.

Notwithstanding this formidable career as a scholar and international dynamo, Dr. Alidou is deeply embedded in the life of Niger. Every year she spends several months in Niger, working at the grassroots level to better the lives of children, women and families. This is perhaps her deepest passion. She and her sister Ousseina, along with partners in the US and Niger, established the NGO ‘Alliance for Women’s Education and Leadership’ (AAWEL), which focuses on leadership for girls, and partnership with schools in poor areas.

In the educational realm in Niger, Dr. Alidou has been a champion for bi-lingual education, continuing her lifelong commitment to the use of Nigerien languages as the language-of-instruction for primary students. She works closely with several bi-lingual schools, and has organized summer programs to enrich educational opportunities in poor neighborhoods, and to increase student retention. Her NGO AAWEL, in partnership with ONEN (Nigerien Organization of Innovative Educators), has had extraordinary success with its Second-Chance Schools program tailored especially for older-entering students, ages 9-14 – children who were initially un-served by Niger’s formal educational system. (see the Dec. 2010 article in Camel Express: www.friendsofniger.org/pdf/CEX_Dec_2010.pdf). This program, now expanded to Niamey’s Deaf School as well, has been a life-changer for many girls and boys previously “left behind” educationally.

Dr. Alidou and AAWEL also work in support of various community-based organizations in Niger, and are involved in women’s empowerment issues. One such initiative seeks to empower rural women through their village-based Women’s Association, supporting their group gardening/farming initiative with a rent-free parcel of land and numerous other resources.

We are all indeed fortunate that Dr. Hassana Alidou has assumed the post of Niger’s Ambassador to the United States. Her dynamic spirit and her tireless dedication to bettering the daily lives of Niger’s people, embodies the spirit we strive for, in our own small way, in Friends of Niger. We look forward to working with Ambassador Alidou.

Pamela Britton White (RPCV 1969-70) works closely with several of AAWEL’s projects in Niger. She worked in school-based projects with both AAWEL and ONEN during visits to Niger in 2006 and 2008, and continues to work closely in support of several village-based Women’s Associations.

AREN–The Archive of the Republic of Niger Background and History

The Archive of the Republic of Niger or AREN, was conceived by FON Board Member John Hutchison in 2012 in consultation with the FON, the BU African Studies Center, Ambassador Maman Sidikou then Ambassador of Niger, and BU African Studies Librarian Beth Restrick. There is a relationship which dates to the 1960s between Niger and the US, thanks to the Peace Corps, and dating back to the 1980s between the Universite Abdou Mounmouni (UAM) and Boston University (BU), due to the BU-Niger study abroad program.

As of now, the Archive consists of nearly 1,000 digital photographs, 320 books, and other written and printed materials including documents, academic journals, newspapers, ephemera, maps and personal correspondence. The print collection is housed in the African Studies Library Reading room. Digitized maps may be accessed through the collection guide: www.bu.edu/library/african-studies/aren

If possible, through AREN, we envisage with Niger, collaborative projects of archiving and digitization. Our librarians can help facilitate the acquisition of inter-institutional funding with the possibility of shared open access. We could, for example, propose such a collaboration in digitization between our two libraries, between our African Studies Center, the West African Research Association, FLSH (Faculté de Lettres et Sciences Humaines), IRSH (Institut de Recherche en Sciences Humaines), and CELHTO (Centre d'Etudes Linguistiques et Historiques par la Tradition Orale), among others. We all have documents and recordings endangered by time and climate.

We also hope that the Archive can be used as a space for research and interaction amongst scholars, professionals and nonprofit organizations involved in addressing contemporary issues of culture, health, education, technology, and economic development in the Niger Republic and more broadly in the Sahel and West Africa.

Contributions to the Archive are welcome. To date the Archive includes artifacts donated from several members of Friends of Niger and others including: Larry Alice, Carrie Allen, John Baird, Phoebe Kitson Davis, Cathy Della Penta, Thomas Hale, Larry Harms, Mason Hults, John Hutchison, Guy Immega, Judy Irola, Gail Lyon, Susan Josenhans, Larry Koff, Russell G. Schuh, James Thomson, and Jennifer Yanco. If you would like to donate your digital photographs, books or other written and printed materials, please contact the BU library:

<http://tinyurl.com/NigerArchiveSubmission> or contact the African Studies Library at asl@bu.edu



Continued from Page 1 **Opening Ceremony: Archive of the Republic of Niger**



SEM Issoufou MAHAMADOU
President de la Republique du Niger, Chef de l'Etat



HE Professor Hassana ALIDOU
Ambassadeur du Niger



Above: FON Members Steve Bushell, Yari Rabiou, Prof. John Hutchison, Saley Tahirou, and Larry Koff

Right: Prof. John Hutchison, Yari Rabiou, Michael Klinger, Prof. Pearl Robinson, Saley Tahirou, Jennifer Yanco, Larry Koff, Emily Nolan, and Steve Bushell



Archive of the Republic of Niger

Wurin adana kayayyakin al'adun gargajiya na Kasar Niger (AREN in Hausa)

by John P. Hutchison

The following is a summary of some of the highlights of the presentations given during the inaugural ceremony of AREN. The full text of the various presentations are posted on the FON web site. www.friendsofniger.org

Professor John Hutchison, founder of AREN, spoke of his participation in Crossroads Africa Niamey in 1965, and how inspired he was when he met Yazi Dogo in the 70s in Zinder in the first Hausa language primary school of the country, and how during the 80s and 90s how he worked in language reform of the education system, teacher training, and Nigerien language documentation. In 1984-85, on leave from BU, Professor Hutchison taught as a Fulbright Lecturer in the linguistics department of the University of Niamey (U. Abdou Moumouni) in 1984-85 as the first Fulbright Lecturer to that department. Among his students were twin sisters Hassana Alidou and Ousseina Alidou who are today the Professor Ambassador to the US from Niger and the Professor and Head of African Studies at Rutgers University, respectively.

Professor Hutchison recalled the origins of the Boston University program in Niger which resulted in BU's establishing a USIS-funded affiliation grant which involved a faculty exchange that brought Karen Boatman of BU's School of Education to Niamey. Karen Boatman proposed and launched in 1987 the international professional linkage program that led to BU's 25-year study abroad program in Niamey, which until 2011, was capably directed by Susan Rosenfeld.

Professor Hutchison closed with a memory from his Peace Corps service. While a volunteer he had a small tape recorder with him for recording various storytellers. Once, a child, Ali Abdoui, had heard the tape recorder and approached him to say: "Monsieur John, I would like to get inside of your radio!" John recorded him and he was happy. This is what we wish for the future of AREN – we want everyone to get inside of the radio and we want their voices to resonate. AREN is an archive that will tell our stories and inspire the hopes of others.

Larry Koff, Representative of the FON Board of Directors, noted that The Friends of Niger organization embodies the spirit of service and dedication of the more than 3,000 Returned Peace Corps Volunteers who were fortunate to have served in Niger beginning in 1962 for 49 consecutive years. We are reminded by President Issoufou Mahamadou's presence that the Peace Corps goals are even more significant and important today to both the USA and the Republic of Niger than when the Peace Corps was initially established in 1962. Peace Corps' goals are: *"To foster development, to promote international cooperation, and to contribute to the education of America and to more intelligent American participation in the world."*

During his remarks, President Issoufou Mahamadou discussed the importance of the relation between the US and Niger as exemplified by the Peace Corps and also by the inter-university connection linking our two countries. He was clearly impressed and touched by the speeches that included references to Nigerien languages and cultures, experiences in Niger, research projects in Niger, and even the use of three Nigerien languages by some of the speakers. Emily Nolan's speech in French, Hausa and Zerma, included anecdotes about her adventures in Niamey and travels through Niger, her work with her Nigerien teachers and acquaintances, and a description of the life of her Nigerien mother resulting from her homestay there. The President spoke of the importance of the example set by American Peace Corps volunteers and university students both while in Niger and afterwards in their continued commitment to service and work in Niger, and talked of Peace Corps volunteers who had taught him in Niger and the impact they have had on countless Nigeriens.

In addition, the President discussed the present security situation in Niger and Niger's role in combating those who threaten Niger. He reassured the audience that he and his administration are taking steps to secure Niger's future free from terrorism and spoke to the basic tenets of Islam which prove the drastically misplaced and misguided arguments being made by various organizations threatening the peace and wellbeing of the country. And finally, he praised the importance of the connection being made via AREN between Boston University and its counterpart organizations in Niger, and how this inherent respect for Nigerien culture and values is important to all Nigeriens.

A Heartfelt Thanks to FON Members for Supporting Girls' Education



A big thank-you to FON Members for your positive reaction to our article in the December issue of Camel Express. Your generous donations to our girl empowerment project at Amadou Hampaté Bâ School will help make it possible for our school to transform lives. Without YOUR support, our school would not be the special place it has become for our girl students. Many of our students may not have been able to pursue their education, feel respected, safe and important. These students are now receiving a bespoke education in a girl friendly environment thanks to YOUR generosity. Every student success story I will ever share with you concerning education for underprivileged girls has its roots in the faithful encouragement and financial contributions from donors like you, who believe in our projects and the potential of our girls. Your help in educating these girls is especially crucial in today's climate where fanaticism and obscurantism place all of our students, but especially our girls, in a difficult position. We need to open minds and hearts, and your donations will help us do just that. I can never say it enough: THANK YOU!

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Homa Kombo, Founder and General Coordinator of the Amadou Hampaté Bâ School

MENINGITIS IN NIGER by Saley Tahirou for CONUSA

“An outbreak of meningitis with ‘unpresented features’ is spreading rapidly in Niger” according to the World Health Organization. Meningitis is common in the dry season between December and June in Niger but vaccines have been in short supply. Niamey has been especially affected by the outbreak during the month of May. Hundreds of children have already died of the current meningitis outbreak.

CONUSA, the Counsel or Nigeriens in the USA (a 501(c) 3 non-profit) has established connections with an organization in Niamey and is sending 500 vaccinations which will cost us about 3,000,000 francs cfa, or about \$6,000. We are accepting contributions, and we sent our first contribution in May, and will send another one in June and July. \$10 (6000FCFA) can save a child in Niger from Meningitis, which has caused hundreds of deaths in cities and villages.

The Nigerienne diaspora in the US has decided to act by sending a vaccine donation to our brothers and sisters who suffer and die of Meningitis in Niger. Thus, the assistance and contribution of all in this noble cause is more than important, it is vital. Together we can make a difference and in sha Allah we will do it, because in Niger we are all brothers and sisters with loving hearts and affection for others. Let's help our country, helping children victims of Meningitis. With \$ 10 save the life of a child in Niger.

You can contribute via PayPal account: birdson6@yahoo.fr <https://www.paypal.com/us/webapps/mpp/send-money-online>

Update from Maine-Soroa

by Vincent Farley

The Government of Niger declared a state of emergency in the region of Diffa as a result of repetitive attacks from Boko Haram in February. Suicide bombers targeted markets, schools, and public administration buildings. Additionally rockets were launched from the Nigerian side of the borders. Thousands of civilians fled their homes in the southeastern region of Diffa. The area is struggling to accommodate and feed some 150,000 refugees, who have fled the violence in Northern Nigeria and is now being emptied of its residents. More than 10,000 local residents left for towns like Zinder, some 280 miles West. Families in major Central and Western Niger, so far spared by violence now struggle to host dozens of internally displaced people.

Maine-Soroa, 40 miles west of Diffa, and 10 miles North of the Nigerian border witnessed waves of displacement not only among civil servants, but also indigenous community members who feared for their lives. On Wednesday, February 18, Boko Haram carried out three attacks on the town. The gendarmerie brigade, the customs brigade, and the prison have simultaneously been attacked. No civilian casualties were reported.

In light of these activities, The Barbara Kirker Second Chance School has temporarily been shut down for safety reasons. The school was targeted because it accepted refugee children from Nigeria as students. The principal of the school was advised by the local police to close the school and leave town, after she reported suspicious activities, and a probable conspiracy to attack the school. The Kirker Hospital continues to operate despite obvious threats. Some of the medical personnel decided to stay, and continue providing care. A MAP shipment, which left Brunswick, Georgia late December made it to Niamey, and is expected to make its way to the Diffa region for distribution to medical facilities in southeastern Niger. These medicines will surely provide a great relief not only to refugees, but also to local residents, now directly affected by the imported violence.

In an effort to secure civilian populations in the region, Niger Government deployed hundreds of troops to counter the militant group after attacks started in early February. The military presence is on active patrol.

If you would like to help KAMRA provide emergency medical assistance and educational opportunity to refugees, their children, and local communities victim of Boko Haram violence visit our website, www.kirkerassociation.org, to make your contribution. You can also send your contribution by check to:
KAMRA
4840 Forest Dr.
PMB 216
Columbia, SC 29206



HIMMA CHOLERA AWARENESS SESSIONS IN 5 QUARTIERS: 3 MUNICIPAL DISTRICTS AND 2 IN THE CITY OF MARADI

by Saley Tahirou

The Association "Himma" (Hausa for “commitment” and “willingness”) was established in August 2003 by nineteen members including six women. The objective of the Association is to lay the foundations of a fair and sustainable development of towns and villages in Niger. There are now twenty-eight regular members and twenty-two associate members organized around economic interest activities such as cereal banks, savings and credit unions. The vision of Himma is a Niger where women, men, and youth living in cities and the countryside realize their aspirations for a dignified and fulfilling life continuously maintaining the hope of a better future. The mission of Himma is to overcome urban and rural poverty by strengthening the skills and competencies of men, women and young people to take charge of their development in the areas of food security, community and public participation, and basic social services

Himma has a Strategic Multi-Year Plan (PSP) including action on hygiene and sanitation in the city of Maradi; awareness sessions on cholera are part of this action. In this context, Himma received financial support from FON and Nigeriens from Maradi living in the United States to conduct a cholera awareness campaign in five areas of Districts II and III in the city of Maradi: The old quarters of Bagalam, Hassaw, Yandaka, Limanci and Maradaoua due to the proliferation of diseases such as cholera in these areas because of poor hygiene and sanitation observed by the inhabitants. Research showed these areas are the most affected, predominantly by cholera. Himma's objective is to contribute to a change in behavior of people living in the old quarters, to fight against the cholera epidemic in the city of Maradi. Specifically, this health activity aims to involve religious, administrative, traditional and other local groups in the fight against cholera, reduce the prevalence of cholera in the town of Maradi, strengthen hygiene and sanitation practices in the old quarters and raise awareness on preventive measures and the consequences of cholera.

The campaign was initiated and residents of the neighborhoods responded to awareness sessions and participated in rich discussions of behaviors contributing to unhealthy neighborhoods. At this level, citizens discussed issues of proper (and improper) use of latrines by some neighborhood residents; neighbors who empty their septic tanks at the door of their neighbors; and other non-hygienic practices. Throughout the campaign residents became more aware of the relationship between cholera and hygienic practices.

Himma is following-up with local authorities to design a project that will resolutely undertake hygiene, latrine use, sewage, and sanitation actions in the city of Maradi– while this project will require a lot of time and money, Himma will continue with their local cholera awareness raising campaigns among the population.



2015 Friends of Niger Membership Form

Name _____ Date _____

(Please print clearly)

Address _____

City/State/Zip+4 _____

Phones: (H) _____ (C) _____ (W) _____

Email _____

Connection to Niger (RPCV, etc.) _____ Dates in Niger (yy-yy) _____

Location in Niger _____ Program or Involvement _____

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 information with any third party other than with the National Peace Corps Associated with whom we have a reciprocity agreement.

Please send paper copies of The Camel Express newsletter by US Mail

Please send links to the PDF version of The Camel Express by email.

Membership dues & donations 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

In addition to my membership, I have enclosed a General Contribution of \$_____ or

Instead of joining FON at this time, I enclose a General Contribution of \$_____

I would like to support FON projects: KAMRA; BFR; Soccer; RAIN

Meningitis; Himma Cholera; Hampate Ba; Goats; Vitamins \$_____

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 \$_____

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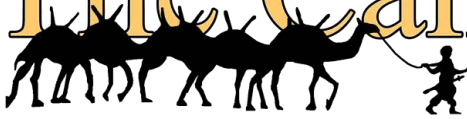


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TOWARDS AUTONOMY FOR BORORO WOMEN THROUGH BREEDING GOATS



The women of Tekinéwane and Ajangafa have never been to school in this northern Tahoua community in Niger because their lifestyle of nomadism imposes a constant displacement and seasonal transhumance: the boys drive grazing animals and girls help their mothers to do domestic work (fetching water, gathering wood, preparing meals, etc.). Following successive droughts, most of the population has lost livestock, and what remains is not enough for families to meet their daily food needs. A request of the local NGO, Kaourital, for financing of a dairy goat operation for the women of the Women's Group of the Association Kaourital in the town of Ajangafa in the commune of Tchintabaraden was accepted by the David Nikkel Foundation and Friends of Niger (FON).

The women in the project receive a dairy goat and her kid, which will allow their families to benefit from a few liters of milk per day. After 18 months the kid of the goat is sold to repay the amount awarded, and the recipient woman still has her goat and can anticipate more goat births to sustain her and her family. Repaying the original amount allows the NGO Kaourital to present other women of the group with goats to continue the operation.

from Ortoudo Bermo, President of the NGO Kaouritel, translated by Gabriella Maertens



Former Niger Peace Corps Director shares thoughts on the value of Peace Corps

In his 2007 book, *Adventures in Service with Peace Corps in Niger*, former Peace Corps Niger Director, James R. Bullington, shared some thoughts about the value Peace Corps. *War on Terrorism: A View from the Niger Front, November, 2001:*

“The people of Niger are more than 90% Muslim, for the most part fervently so. ... Moreover, [they] are wretchedly poor, mired in a sort of poverty that is quite literally unimaginable for most Americans. ... And finally, Niger is located in a very tough global neighborhood. Four of the seven states on its borders – Algeria, Libya, Chad, and Nigeria – are poster countries for various sorts of terrorism. ...

“Doesn’t all this make Niger a hotbed for international terrorism and a very dangerous place for Americans ...? No, it does not.

“Since September 11, some 500 Americans – Peace Corps Volunteers, embassy staff ... have continued to live and work throughout the country without serious incident or threat. Many Nigeriens ... have expressed their condolences and have spoken out against terrorism and Islamic extremism. I believe that Peace Corps Volunteers ... are as safe from terrorism as they would be in the United States.... Why is this so?

“First, the government and the vast majority of the people ... see [the terrorists] as perverting Islam. ... Another reason for Niger’s relative tranquility ..., I’m convinced, is that 39 years of continuous Peace Corps presence here has built a reserve of good will ... that makes Nigeriens less susceptible ... to the anit-American message of the extremists. ... I’m constantly meeting senior-level Nigeriens who say, “Oh, Peace Corps! Do you know X? (who turns out to be a Volunteer from many years ago who lived in their village ...).”

[Just recently His Excellency, President Issoufou Mahamadou, inquired about his Peace Corps 4eme English teacher from 1967, and Friends of Niger was able to put them in touch with each other.]

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FON Supports Bien-être des Femmes Rurales Soap Project

by Gabriella Maertens, Vice-President of FON, Projects Coordinator

This project took place in the refugee camp in Ayorou. At the time of the project's implementation, in April 2015, there were over 8,000 persons living in the camp. Of the 2,000+ households, 72% were headed by women. Most of these Malian refugees were Tamasheq, Sonrai, Peul, Bambara and Hausa. The BFR project aimed at training several women in the production and selling of liquid soap. With the help of Friends of Niger this training, which lasted about six months, brought smiles to the faces of these women who came into the camps with sad hearts and a tense demeanor. The women who lived in the camp did not receive assistance from international organizations and were struggling to support their families.

Thirty women benefited from the liquid soap project. The training has finished but the fabrication and selling of the liquid soap continues at the Ayorou Market. The women are fast becoming self-sufficient because they can take care of their needs without depending on others. This activity fits perfectly with the empowerment of rural women. Madame Alhassane Nafissatou, coordinator of the project, wishes to thank FON for its continued support of these types of projects that benefit rural women through the activities of BFR (Well-Being of the Rural Woman). The first BFR project supported by FON was a peanut oil extraction project, which continues to help empower women. Another current BFR project is a women's sewing project, which has been approved by FON for funding and began in September.

In the photos below: US Ambassador to Niger, Eunice S. Reddick (left) visits the BFR soap project.

Alhassane Nafissatou, BFR coordinator is in the photo on the right.



RAIN AGADEZ LEARNING CENTER

STUDENTS SHARE THEIR EXPERIENCES AND GRATITUDE

Rain for the Sahel & Sahara, along with the 25 students at the Agadez Learning Center, thank FON for funding student scholarships this year. The Center provides superior nomadic and rural primary school graduates who have no viable options to continue their educations with scholarships to attend middle school in Agadez. As new students Mahmoud and Ghoumar said: *When we first came to the city we saw so many cars. It was so busy, with so many roads. It's confusing. Everyone speaks Hausa and we don't even know how to greet.* Mariama added: *"The city is very tight. All the houses were so close together with so many people. There is no fresh air in the city."*

While rural students may attend middle schools in rural centers, they report that each village school is allocated one room in which all its students live, no food is provided, no books and no supplies. More critically, students have no support staff to help them with their studies or to adjustment to new situations and more difficult studies.

The RAIN Center provides the following:

- After-school classes – Math, French, English and Physics/Chemistry;
- Peer to peer tutoring - Students gather informally in the evenings to review and help each other with difficult subject matter, often with a selected leader that serves as a peer-teacher;
- Hygiene training- A variety of topics are covered: personal hygiene, living space and personal belongings, bathroom area etiquette, hand-washing, and diseases related to bad hygiene;
- Civic Responsibility: Roles include: dorm room leader, after-school class representative, dorm cleanliness organizer, and others as assigned;
- Evening film screenings: Cultural and environmental documentaries weekly; and
- Recreational and skills activities.



Meet Aissa. Hello, my name is Aissa Maidaji Ibrahim in 10th grade. I come from the village of Tagdount in the bush. When I was in elementary school I lived at home. I would wake up very early to be in class by 8 o'clock. My mother takes plastic jugs to get water at the well to bring back home so that we she can cook. My father takes the animals out into the bush leaving at 6am. Sometimes he does not come home until 11pm. When I am not in school I help my mother with the housework. The RAIN center really helps students to study because all of the things we need for school are actually here. We can study well. There are also all things that we need to live well to help a student with her studies. I love this center that RAIN made for students. We thank ONG Rain for the Sahel and Sahara, the Friends of Niger and all the people in the U.S. who support us. When I finish studying I want to be a nurse because I want to know something about how to bring good things to the life in our village. I would like to help my village. I am happy to be able to study to learn about things that I never knew about. There are so many things to learn.



Meet Ghaissata. Hi, my name is Ghaissata Alhassane from Hamzane, 35 km from Agadez. My mother herds goats but there is no food for the animals so she must leave every morning to walk the animals very far to find something for them to eat. There also is not enough water in Hamzane. Sometimes we have to go look for water in nearby villages like in Goofat. It is very difficult for my mother. My father is a gardener but there isn't enough water. Sometimes he has to go to a nearby village so that he can plant corn and tomatoes so that he can find money to buy food. Really it is difficult for him...I like the center because teachers come to help us after school. We have notebooks, pens, soap, beds, mosquito nets, and uniforms. We learn a lot by living and studying together at the center and I am very proud because I have learned many things with the help of this center. I want to continue my studies until I can become a doctor so that I can help my village, and especially my family, since they have helped me so much.

American Women's Club (AWB) of Niger Activities Report for 2014-2015

Information Provided by Sue Rosenfeld, Chair of the Charity Committee of the AWC of Niamey

Friends of Niger collaborates with the American Women's Club (AWC) of Niger to identify potential projects to be funded and local Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to partner with. The current AWC members want to reconnect with past members and friends to update them on the organization's current activities. AWC was founded in the late 1980s with a dual purpose: AWC is a social group, allowing women (not just Americans) to get together at least once a month. The working language of the group is English but all women are welcome regardless of what language they speak. The second purpose of AWC is to help Niger. AWC accomplishes their second goal by holding fund-raising events and then funding local projects. Normally the AWC sponsors two fund-raisers each year: A Christmas Bazaar and a Silent Auction and dinner. This year, thanks to the efforts of AWC's Pakistani and Indian members, a third fund-raiser was held, an Indian dinner. Through these events AWC collected a total of about 3 million CFA for the AWC Charity Committee. The committee received 16 proposals for funding, which was fewer than usual. The total request for funding was 8,693,450 CFA. FON funded one of the proposals for an animal husbandry project near Tchintabaraden (reported in this issue). Seven projects were funded, two of which were in Niamey:

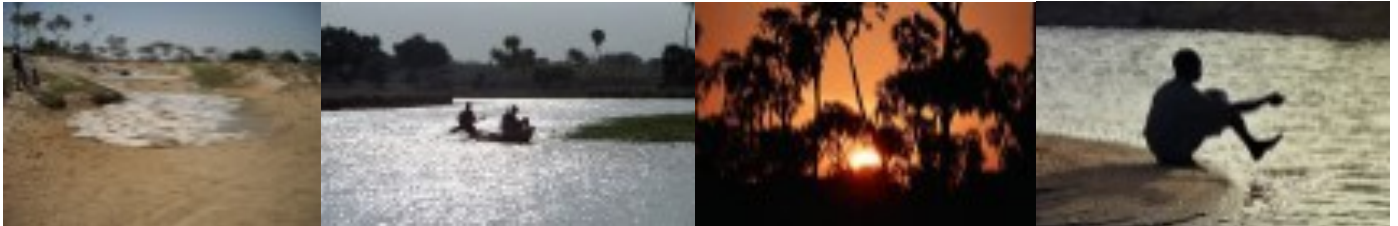
- ◇ 428,000 CFA to the NGO Bonbatou for a soil enrichment project in Tagar (Tillabery); beneficiaries: 6 rural organizations and more than 100 farmers.
- ◇ 390,000 CFA to the Gouré English teaching inspectorate for a workshop for rural CEG English teachers (Tesker, Bouné, Kele, Soubdou); beneficiaries: 21 English teachers and more than 4,000 students.
- ◇ 750,000 CFA to Académie Evangelique Cornerstone of Maradi for toilet construction (4 toilets) at the primary school. Beneficiaries: 90 students & 6 teachers and teacher aides.
- ◇ 520,000 CFA to the NGO OURZP (organisation d'urgent pour la zone poastorale) for a well rehabilitation project in Arahmat (south of Tchintabaraden) Beneficiaries: 850 inhabitants and their livestock.
- ◇ 670,000 CFA to JVE (Jeunes Volontaires pour l'Environnement) for creation of two school gardens in the CEG I and CEG Tallagé (they have put gardens in other schools in Niamey); Beneficiaries: approx. 1000 students and teachers.
- ◇ 76,300 CFA to SIM for their project 'Sowing the Seeds of Change' for birth attendant start-up supplies in 2 villages in Maradi region (Saye na Allah & Kudumus. Beneficiaries: approximately 1,500 people.
- ◇ 476,850 CFA to the Centre des Jeunes de Kalley-Sud (Niamey) for training for 15 girls (no longer in school) in soap making (all kinds of soap; liquid; perfumed, laundry soap, Omo, etc.) Beneficiaries: 15 young women initially.

Total amount obligated this year: 3,311,950 CFA. This is the most the AWC of Niger has ever funded since records have been kept (1992!) Since 1992, AWC has funded more than 50,000,000 CFA worth of projects in Niger. Below is a group photo from the Centre des Jeunes de Kalley-Sud Soap Making Project



DIFFA by Steve Anderson

Diffa, Niger. When referring to the Komadougou Yobé, most locals simply call it “the River.” There is only one. It returns once a year and then ebbs progressively. This cycle is one of the constants in the lives of Diffa’s population. The River’s rebirth is—by turns—weak or strong, early or late, long enduring or fleeting, but it will happen.



The River has returned more than 100 times since this countryside knew horror and violence akin to that now returned to its doorstep. In the closing decades of the 19th Century it was here that the Sudanese slave-trader and brigand, Rabih Fadl Allah (commonly called “Rabah”), and his bands looted, enslaved, and slaughtered men, women, and children. Their swath of destruction mowed through this same corner of the Lake Chad Basin that has once again fallen under the shadow of an implacable predator.

The oldest people I knew were born just after the termination of Rabah’s bloody reign. These children and grandchildren of survivors refused to utter his name. Those who would speak to me at all of what had come to pass did so in hushed, fearful tones. At a spot close to where I lived, it was recounted that the River had been so choked with bodies that they made a “bridge.” There is a village in a dale named “Man’s Head” for the number of skulls left strewn about the valley floor. And well into the 20th Century, clay jars full of silver Marie Thérèse Thalers continued to be unearthed in isolated spots...the cached fortunes of the unfortunates who’d not been able to return for them. The voices rising skyward, in lament, were legion during those years of scourge.

Rabah was felled in 1900. Three French columns converged on him, one from Brazzaville, another crossing the Sahara from Algiers, the third snaking east from Dakar. If his execution marked the beginning of la paix coloniale, Rabah’s brutal legacy outlived him, scarring the collective memory, reaching into the minds of successive generations, transforming perception of past evils to presentiment concerning the future.

The River came and went for more than a century without ever truly washing clean the wounds inflicted by Rabah. And so when we began to hear about another marauder the ancestral dread arose anew. It started vaguely, like the distant nocturnal flare of lightning and soft bumping of thunder that long precede the crashing cacophony of wind, dust, and torrential rain that will come. But no one doubted the inevitability of the maelstrom’s arrival. People spoke in hushed tones of something malignant evolving in northeastern Nigeria, just across the River, just beyond the horizon. The adults would not speak its name—Boko Haram. Indirect allusions were made, eyes fixed on the ground. No one wished to see his or her own apprehension confirmed in another’s regard. *(continued on page 7)*

This was ten years into the 21st Century. The wider world was preoccupied with the fighting in northern Mali, yet another coup d'état in Niamey, and the implosion of Libya. To my friends and neighbors these events seemed impossibly remote. They were transfixed by the slow but regular expansion and approach of Boko Haram's sphere of carnage, and the equally devastating, indiscriminately murderous ripostes of Nigeria's troops.



In reality, the battle had already arrived, stealthily. It was being waged in the hearts and minds of young men. Estranged and increasingly alienated, much of this new generation was veering radically away from its parents' ethos and customs. The rupture was largely involuntary, fueled by dangerously incompatible trends besetting both rural and urban contexts, namely a burgeoning youth population¹ versus incommensurately slow growth, stagnation, or regression of the natural resource base², educational opportunities, and licit employment options. Simultaneously, the IT revolution has fueled a veritable of globalization of dreams. The now ubiquitous cellphone and widespread Internet access provide an unprecedented window on the world. They tantalize with visions of a life that poor people will never attain, emphasizing the sense of relative deprivation already felt with acuity by ambitious by side-lined young men.

The narrow strictures of fundamentalist ideology are at odds with what most young men wish to do with their lives, but what happens when you are without viable career prospects, when your life is in disarray because the traditional values inculcated by your parents have revealed their bankruptcy? What happens when extremist dogma propagated online or in the streets is neatly packaged as an easy-to-follow recipe with which to organize and give sense to your errant existence? What happens when this new ideology is cloaked in sanctity, as a right-thinking movement meant to sweep away a corrupt world order, the entrenched elite whose cushioned indifference to your plight you feel bitterly every single day? Why not strike a blow against it, in a violent and purifying flameout? Compared to that, what are your vain, flimsy hopes for temporal wellbeing? Especially now that things are going to pot here...with Boko Haram attacking on Nigérien soil (which everyone said would never happen), the imposition of martial law, the denunciations, the arrests, the stop-and-frisk searches, the jailings, and the ever-present, pervasive fear and suspicion that transform anyone into a potential enemy.

It's over tea, on the street corner, that the young men are mulling over what they've heard. It sounds vaguely glorious. And, at least, it qualifies as "doing something," a signal merit when compared with facing another empty day, one more day you know your family can't help you get ahead and you're ashamed to depend on them but you do because you don't know what else to do. One of your group will get up from the bench on which you've passed these indolent, unfulfilled days together. It might be you or it might be another. Others will follow, because it's important to stick together with your friend. And because now you have a plan, a direction in life, not just listless drifting. Apprehensive and hopeful at once, you'll all head south into Nigeria, passing first through the palm forest, just across the River.

¹ An estimated 50% of Niger's 17 million population is less than 15 years of age. Similar demographic estimates are given for other Sahelian states.

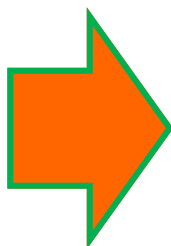
² Natural resources in the Sahel are under unprecedented pressure from combined effects of climate change (manifested by increased frequency and severity of rainfall deficits) and over-exploitation (more users employing more rapacious, unsustainable techniques). Diffa's situation in particular has been further exacerbated by the inflow of more than 100,000 refugees; the region's total pre-crisis population was estimated at just under 400,000.

SOCCER BALLS FOR NIGER

By: Larry Koff, FON Board Member

Friends Of Niger has facilitated the introduction of the “One World Futbol” soccer program started by former professional soccer player and former Niger PCV Mike Mitchell into the Maradi region with the delivery of soccer balls to the village of Mayahi and the city of Maradi. With the support of FON Board members, and Mike himself a former professional soccer player for the Niger National team, contact has been made with school teachers in both locales who will manage a soccer program.

FON is hoping that with additional fund raising and organizational capacity, we can promote a campaign to facilitate the delivery of soccer balls to additional programs in the Zinder and Dosso regions and retain the services of a full-time program manager for Niger.



IN MEMORIAM

Richard Lee “Rich” Lehtinen, 71, (RPCV Niger 1967-69) died March 30, 2015 in Florida. Before joining the Peace Corps, he worked for farmworkers rights in Delano, California. In Niger he worked with UNCC. Rich had two careers in regional planning, first in Sonoma County, California, then in International Falls, Minnesota. He retired to Florida. He leaves a wife (Liane) and three children (Zack, Raina, Eric) and grandchildren. He is greatly missed by everyone who ever knew him.

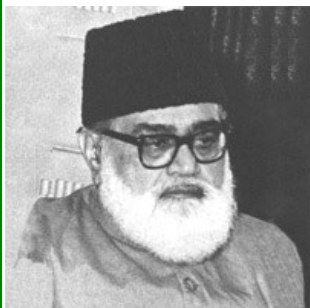
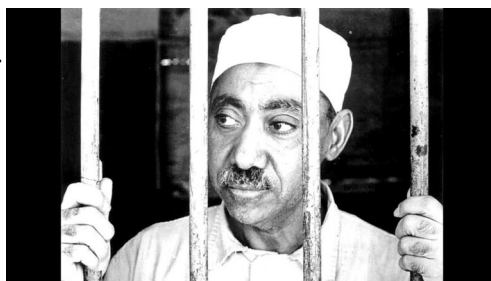
Luigi “Louie” Velo, 68, (RPCV Niger 1967-69) passed away peacefully on March 6, 2015. Born in Paderno del Grappa, Italy, Luigi moved to Sacramento with his family when he was 12. After graduating from Sacramento High School in 1965, Luigi joined the Peace Corps serving 2 years in Niger. After returning to America, Luigi worked several years as a steward for TWA, traveling the world and fulfilling his love of travel. In 1989, Luigi moved back to Sacramento to take over the family business - Italian Importing Company in Mid-Town Sacramento, Italian Importing Co. Luigi is survived by Lorie, his loving wife and companion of 25 years, son Christopher (Bethann), grandson Allan, stepson Justin, brother Mario (Alba), sister Donna, nephews, nieces and cousins.

Reflections on Religious Extremism by Daniel Chirot

Because Niger is one of a growing number of countries faced by the spread of radical Salafist Islam, as are the United States, Western Europe, and a great many Muslim societies, it might be worth keeping three aspects of this spreading trend in mind. The “Salaf” were the supposedly pure first three generations of Muslims whose devotion to uncorrupted Islam allowed them to conquer so much of the world. They have a highly mythologized image that hardly corresponds to the historical reality of almost constant civil war within their ranks, but there is no denying that they were astoundingly successful.

First of all, this radical and very violent kind of extremism has some support in almost all Muslim societies and among Muslims living in the West. Yes, it is definitely a minority, but it is a significant one. For every active young man (or now increasingly women) willing to fight, kill, and die for this cause, there are many more who more or less sympathize and agree that it is worth attacking and even killing unbelievers and the corrupt within Muslim communities. And for them it is also necessary to repudiate the Christian West, and all of its supposedly liberal but actually degenerate, anti-Islamic ideas (as they see it). It resonates also with very widespread anti-Jewish sentiment. The notion that this is just a bunch of wayward criminals who have “hijacked” Islam is a comforting fantasy.

There is a very old tradition of similar brutal, sectarian puritanism within Islam. Shortly after the Prophet’s death there were the Kharijis, and even though they were ultimately defeated, periodically, especially in times of stress, many other sects and leaders emerged proposing to cleanse the vile, perverted accretions to their religion. The very influential Arab theologian Ibn Taymiyyah in the 13th century who railed against impious “false” Muslims served as an inspiration for Ibn Wahhab, the founder of the Saudi brand of Islam in the 18th century, and more recently for Sayyid Qutb, perhaps the single most influential Salafist intellectual of the 20th century. Qutb was executed by Egypt’s dictator Nasser in 1966. (You can see him being led to his execution on YouTube.)



In Pakistan Abu Ala Maududi was a similarly influential preacher of violence against impurity and heresy. Ideas matter, and behind the mayhem there is a whole intellectual tradition that filters down to a popular level through the preaching and writing of learned extremists. The young men who kill may not be well read intellectuals, but their leaders have been inspired by these ideas. Such puritanism always was and remains a minority position, but then all revolutionary movements begin as fervent minorities, sometimes quite small ones, that grow in times of crisis if they have effective leaders.

Secondly, there is nothing uniquely Islamic about this. Christianity has had more than its share of religiously inspired murderers out to “cleanse” their religion, including the Crusaders who staged the first large scale European massacre of Jews in Germany in the late 11th century. In 1572 French Catholics massacred Protestants, and in the mid-17th century the Puritan Protestant armies of Oliver Cromwell massacred Irish Catholics. One need only look at the Bible to find numerous examples of calls to genocide and ritual cleansing to satisfy God’s will, and indeed, Cromwell’s men saw in the Book of Joshua, where all of the Canaanites are condemned to death, an example to follow in Ireland. More recently American evangelical Christians preachers were in Uganda furthering an anti-gay agenda that led its government to pass laws condemning gays to death, not quite genocidal, perhaps, but quite extreme nonetheless. (continued)

Reflections on Religious Extremism (continued from page 9)

There are Hindu and Buddhist versions of similar murderous fanaticism active in parts of Asia today.

Third, most of the Muslim world has been under extreme stress for a long time. Colonialism by Christian Europeans was followed by the largely inept, brutal, and corrupt rule of dictators who claimed to be promoting reform, but who were unable to remediate the effects of rapid population increase, grow their economies fast enough, curb corruption, or meet the challenge of emancipating women. In the 1960s the ideological contest in Islamic societies seemed to be between various brands of mostly secular Third World socialism (Ba'athism, Nasserism, Communism) and more conservative modernizers such as the Shah of Iran or the Pakistani military. All failed, leaving open the way to a very widespread religious revival whose most extreme form is Salafism.

I recently saw the wonderful, beautiful movie *Timbuktu*. If you have not seen it, do. It is about the recent events in Mali, but alas, perhaps about the Sahel's future too.

CHILDREN'S CHEWABLE VITAMINS Update

by Gabriella Maertens, FON V-P and Projects Coordinator



In July 2013, FON purchased 132 bottles of chewable vitamins, 100 tablets each to be delivered in a container with other supplies for the SIM Hospital in Galmi, Niger. FON received news that the shipment finally arrived in Niger and cleared customs.

The vitamins were to be equally distributed among the Galmi Hospital, the Niamey Orphanage, the Makalondi clinic, and the Pediatric Ward of the National Hospital. The expiration date on the vitamins is April 2016, so there is still time for kids to benefit from them.

In the meantime, FON Board member, John Hutchison, was able to take 20 bottles with him when he traveled to Niger earlier this year. Since these vitamins were distributed to the Pediatric

Ward of the National Hospital with the help of Sue Rosenfeld, special friend of Friends of Niger (see photo above), the remaining bottles will now be distributed among the remaining three recipients. FON hopes to continue the Children's Chewable Vitamins Project. There are remaining donated funds still available for children's vitamins. So if FON members continue to contribute to this fund, FON will find a way to deliver the vitamins to Niger. Thank-you again for your support.

Dear Friends of Niger, The rains began late this year and many here in the Tahoua region were worried that no planting rains came during the entire month of Ramadan. But since the latter part of July, the rains have been generous and frequent. The millet and sorghum are looking tall and healthy and we are anticipating a good harvest. As is typical, with the blessing of rain come increases in the incidences of malaria, typhoid, and dysentery. Since the harvest has yet to happen, our census is also high in our CREN / Malnutrition Rehabilitation Center. Thank you for your gift of Children's Chewable Vitamins which are being used to address the nutritional needs of these and other pediatric patients.

*Thank you for your partnership with us! Gratefully serving with you,
Christopher D. Zoolkoski, MD Galmi Hospital / RPCV Tahoua 88-90'*

2015 Friends of Niger Membership Form

Name _____ Date _____

(Please print clearly)

Address _____

City/State/Zip+4 _____

Phones: (H) _____ (C) _____ (W) _____

Email _____

Connection to Niger (RPCV, etc.) _____ Dates in Niger (yy-yy) _____

Location in Niger _____ Program or Involvement _____

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 information with any third party other than with the National Peace Corps Associated with whom we have a reciprocity agreement.

Please send paper copies of The Camel Express newsletter by US Mail

Please send links to the PDF version of The Camel Express by email.

Membership dues & donations 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 \$ _____

In addition to my membership, I have enclosed a General Contribution of \$ _____ or

Instead of joining FON at this time, I enclose a General Contribution of \$ _____

I would like to support FON Matching projects: KAMRA; BFR; Soccer; RAIN

Meningitis; Himma Cholera; Hampate Ba; Goats; Vitamins \$ _____

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 \$ _____

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Address Correction Requested

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

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

<http://www.friendsofniger.org>



The Camel Express

Newsletter of the Friends of Niger

Member Donation and Dues Drive

At this time of year we ask you to renew your membership and make a contribution to support local health, education and community development activities.

FON has received project proposals for well digging, a goat funding, and more which exceed our budget. We are hoping with your support we can continue to fund local projects at or in excess of the level obtained last year. We will be soliciting proposals, depending upon funding received. Many of last year's recipients are eager to receive continue funding from FON to continue with their life changing work.

**We are hoping to
again raise \$25,000.
Help us get there!**



Above is a picture from 1970. Does this remind you of your Peace Corps time? Share your experiences in the next Remembrances CEX section.

Hi Friends of Niger,

It is all my pleasure as President of the Nigerien community in the USA to know what a wonderful job Friends of Niger is doing to help the Niger population so far from the USA. You guys are for me the true heroes of Niger. The Niger government should officially recognize you as heroes.

The finances of CONUSA are very limited, but I wish that together as a group, or as individual Nigeriens and Americans, that people in the US will put a lot of effort to cooperate with Friends of Niger to have more effect on those whose lives you guys are saving.

The only thing I can say, I pray that God will reward you with millions times what you guys deserve.

Thank you very much,
Saley Tahirou

Hampaté Bâ Complex Proudly Opens New High School

The exciting news about Hampaté Bâ is that it has been approved by the Nigerien Ministry of Education to expand into a HIGH SCHOOL SECTION. On October 5, 2015, the school opened its doors to welcome its first class of 10th graders. Even better news is that of the 22 new high school students, 18 are GIRLS!

Nine of the 18 girls receive scholarships and have been supported for the last four years by the non profit “Les amis de Hampaté Bâ”. Entering middle school in 6th grade, the girls were functionally illiterate but through discipline and hard work—along with the unique quality education provided by Hampaté Bâ—they have been able to develop their potential. With your support we can help support these girls for the next three years until they graduate from high school!

Girls still face challenges in Nigerien society, challenges that boys do not, but these Hampaté Bâ girls are determined to continue their education, despite the barriers they face. They have gained confidence in themselves and have realized that girls and women are capable of accomplishing



“These girls still face challenges in the Nigerien society that their brothers do not”

many jobs in society, especially with the support of a good education.

This year, students will receive extra instruction after school in numeracy and literacy. For the girls, this is instrumental for increased understanding of difficult subjects such as chemistry, physics, mathematics, and French.

Your donations will save the Hampaté Bâ girls from early marriages and keep them in high school. Your generosity will allow them to become educated and open-minded future citizens helping to combat ignorance and fanaticism.

Please consider donating to make these dreams come true and to make our world a better place through education.

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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. 20016-1423. 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. Please send address changes and corrections, as well as any queries to The Camel Express at the addresses above.

2015 FON Funded Projects

Multi Function Platform: Total \$5,101 In the town of Diribangou the women-led NGO FIFED purchased a multifunction platform (PFMF) to remove chaff from millet and to grind corn and manioc for flour. The PFMF can charge cell phones as well! This multi-purpose piece of equipment will provide financial independence and management experience for the female members of FIFED. It is hoped that the utility of this equipment and the model of the FIFED management committee will spread to other villages.

RAIN Agadez Learning Center: \$3,000

Scholarship assistance allowed 25 rural and nomadic students to live in the Learning Center, receive tutoring, take after school classes, receive hygiene and civic responsibility training, and participate in cultural and recreational activities.

Hampata Ba School: \$1,035 Educational assistance was provided for 200 adolescent girls to attend a school that offers a curriculum focused on critical thinking, self-esteem, empowerment, and remediation programs.

Banche Village Project: \$1,800 Funds were provided to purchase grain and to construct a storage facility in assistance with HIMMA, a local NGO

Soccer ball program including Mayahi and Maradi: \$1,000 FON has facilitated the expansion of the "One World Football" soccer program started by professional soccer player and former Niger PCV Mike Mitchell. The program is offered in the regions of Kolla, Tilliberi and Tera and was expanded into the Maradi region using FON funds to deliver soccer balls to the village of Mayahi and the city of Maradi.

BFR: \$1,000 The replication of the previously funded peanut oil project for the village of Say. This project trains 30 women in the production of peanut oil and peanut butter with the residue sold as a mix for cattle feed.

Rice transport: \$1,941 Niger spends 85 billion CFA annually on rice imports from Asia even though Asian rice not particularly liked by Nigeriens. FON paid for the shipment of six bags of seed varieties from Texas and Arkansas to be grown in test plots in the Tilliberi region under the direction of Abdo Kasso, a US-trained agronomist working in Niger with INRAN (the National Agronomical Research Institute). Mr. Kasso and INRAN are testing to see if these American varieties can be grown locally and yield a crop more pleasing to the Nigerien taste bud.

NGO AAWEL (Jane Huser Maxwell Fund \$2,500) This fund supports "Girls' Leadership Academies" in four Niamey-area schools: Lazare and Gamkale bi-lingual schools, Second-Chance School, and the Deaf School. Together, the Academies provide 150-200 adolescent girls training in leadership skills, critical thinking and communication skills, and empower young women to think for themselves and make wise and informed decisions about their life-choices. There is also a goal to establish another such program in a small village school in the Dosso area.

BFR Sewing Project: \$1,380 The current project, located near Niamey, is a workshop that trains 45 displaced women from various nearby villages to sew using a sewing machine. With sales and contributions BFR bought two additional machines.

Kaourital Association Dairy Goat project: \$2,900 Women in this program receive a dairy goat and her kid. The kid is sold after 18 months and the mother goat provides a couple liters of milk per day. Women also have the opportunity to raise additional goats from the mother while paying back the loan from the sale.

OURZP Sheep project: \$1,820 Like the Kaourital project twenty women in the Arahmat Region were given a sheep and her kid to raise through this program.

BFR soap project: \$1,200 Through this project, 30 women, mostly Malians living in a refugee camp in Ayorou, were trained over a six-month period in how to make soap (liquid, perfumed, laundry, Omo, etc.) which they then sold in the Ayorou market.

For additional information see the For additional information see Projects Continued on page 10.

**Total project funds
disbursed in 2015:
\$24,677**

Women of Diribangou

by Amina Kaza, President of the NGO Filles, Femmes et Développement

The women of Diribangou mobilized themselves to work for their autonomy and the development of the village through the implantation of a multifunctional platform with the backing of Professor John Hutchison and the Friends of Niger. Conscious of the importance of the interplay in the



implication of women in the development of the country, but, also conscious that the weight of the domestic tasks is a major obstacle to the schooling of girls and the autonomy of women, the NGO Filles Femmes et Développement has resolutely engaged itself to accompany and support the efforts of the women of Diribangou.

The NGO, one of whose specific objectives is the autonomy of the women, is in the process of installing multifunctional platforms, in order to lighten the daily household tasks of these women. This will allow the women to have more time to devote themselves to revenue-generating activities, and thus to fight against poverty and liberate young girls to pursue their education. One platform has already been installed in Diribangou, to the benefit of this village as well as the surrounding hamlets.

The components offered by the multifunctional platform in Diribangou consist of a flour mill serving to grind cereal grains like millet, corn, sorghum and wheat ; a decortication apparatus to decorticate and remove the chaff ; an alternator for electrification, recharging of the population's portable telephones, and for soldering. This initiative would not have been possible, if it had not been for our making contact with John Hutchison of Boston University and the Friends of Niger, who believed in the project of establishing the NGO FIFED, and who was prepared to get involved and to put his « hand into the tuwo » so to speak. In this light, a partnership was established between the NGO FIFED and Professor John Hutchison. From that time on, he tried to do everything he could in searching for a way to finance the purchase of a Multifunctional Platform (MFPF) for the town of Diribangou. He had learned of the capability of this apparatus from Professor Brenda MacSweeney,

“These women have already begun to take the functional literacy course”

holder of a U.N. Women's Studies professor position at Boston University. She was familiar with the impact that it can have, and also with its success elsewhere, particularly in Burkina Faso. In this way, the Friends of Niger became a partner in this dance. The Friends of Niger did not hesitate to rise to the occasion in order to contribute to the realization of the MFPF project for Diribangou, to the benefit and the happiness of the women and girls of Diribangou. The Friends of Niger were joined by David Nikkel and Lois Ferguson who also contributed to this project. It is thanks to the installation of this machine that the women, trained in how to manage the apparatus, and to take on

responsibility for their own financial well-being. They are relieved from the crushing weight of the labor intensive activities such as the processes of grinding and pounding grains like millet and corn manually. Another advantage of the MFPF and the impact of its accoutrements that the women have benefited from is the accompanying training that has been implemented in functional literacy. The women also now have more time to follow and watch over the schooling of their daughters. The grains and the chaff which are produced through the use of the MFPF are resold in the market of Tera. The profit that is garnered is used for the purchase of articles relevant to the commercial enterprises of the women's group. In essence, the women of Diribangou are

organized into a group and they foresee the carrying out of various income-generating activities. They have now invited the women of Samyanta, a neighboring village, to associate themselves in this project of the management of the MFPP. These women have already begun to take the functional literacy course. This is a sign that the MFPP has the potential to considerably reduce the difficulties of women's lives and we hope and trust that their financial autonomy will also result.

Furthermore, the MFPP in Diribangou has enabled the NGO FIFED to sign a contract of entitlement so as to benefit from collaboration with the MFPP Project managed and supported by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP). The MFPP of Diribangou is today acknowledged as an example and a model to be emulated by other villages.

It is here now that we want to express our gratitude and reiterate our thanks to Professor John Hutchison and the Friends of Niger, as well as David Nikkel and Lois Ferguson, who have contributed to the promotion and empowerment of the women and girls of Diribangou.

This gesture has been highly appreciated by the local authorities of Téra, expressed at the time of the launching of the MFPP with the words, "Many thanks to John Hutchison and the Friends of Niger who had the consideration to do this for our small village of Diribangou. Long live the collaboration between the populations of Diribangou, the NGO FIFED, and the Friends of Niger."

Activity Report on the Sewing Workshop for Displaced Women

By Nafisatou Alhassane, Coordinator of Bien-Être de la Femme Rural

In Niger women represent 51% of the population. This important segment of our society is fighting daily for their survival and well-being. The situation leaves no segment of society, and particularly no women, unaffected and has helped focus on the issue of women's rights. This question is central to governance in Africa. Indeed the role of women leaves much to be desired when we know that in Africa and particularly in Niger socio-cultural and economic barriers limit the involvement of women in decision-making.

It is to overcome this situation that the NGO BFR in collaboration with the NGO Friends of Niger continues to conduct training sessions for income generating activities for displaced rural women for their empowerment. So apart from training women in the Say region through the production of peanut oil, the women trained in the Niamey region are still producing oil from groundnuts and selling the by products.

We also trained women refugees from Mali living in the camps in Ayorou in the production of liquid soaps. The current project with Friends of Niger is a sewing workshop for displaced women from various nearby villages who are in search of a better life. We estimated 20 women but we are now at 45 with a total of from three machines provided by Friends of Niger. But with sales and contributions we were able to buy two other machines so that these women can work even though it is insufficient. Still, we continue to support them and follow them until these women can benefit not only from the training but also with a machine at the end of the training. To that end a contribution of 2000 F CFA per woman was introduced at the end of each month not only for the upkeep of the machines but also to provide those who have finished the training with a sewing machine. A brown and white outfit was imposed on the trainees, estimated to be the colors of the Friends of Niger. Besides sewing these women also make smelling salts and pearl bead jewelry.

FON Note: Nafisatou noted that the project has one problem: The training takes place in a schoolyard whose owner may at any time tell them to leave. They need to rent a house until the women are independent and can take care of the rent themselves. You can help these women have a stable, comfortable workshop by contributing to this BFR project. Your funding will be matched by FON.

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.

Paper receipts are mailed for all dues and contributions. Those received by December 31, 2015 are tax deductible in 2015.

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.

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 unless you contact us to specify particular projects.

If you want to use a credit card

To pay FON dues with credit card through NPCA, please contact us for further instructions.

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 DC 20016-1423. Please keep in mind that in addition to the projects listed, you dues and donations also support The Camel Express newsletter, the FON website, and the FON Archives.

Thank you for supporting FON!

Project Play soccer project

“The test of our progress is not whether we add more to the abundance of those who have much; it is whether we provide enough for those who have too little”

-MIKE MITCHELL, PROJECT PLAY SOCCER

dream is to have coaches, uniforms and nets for goals.

From Maradi: • The Director of Bagalam primary school, one of the poorest neighborhood in Maradi, Mr Mahamadou Kounda told me this morning that the balls donated by the friends of Niger were well received and much appreciated by the students and their teachers.

• Mahamadou organized for the first time a soccer game between the school's 4th and 5th graders and the winner (4th graders' team) won a trophy given by Rabiou Yari from the USA.

• Mahamadou mentioned however that the game left out female students because they do not play soccer like their males counterparts (something to do with the local culture).

• He suggested funding programs like sport uniforms and shoes plus additional balls for a team of the boys and a group of girls so that they can practice the required physical fitness activities held in the school 2 hours a week for each physically fit child.

Mahamadou extends again his greetings to the FON. Mungodé sosai!

By Rabiou Yari With the receipt of 25 “indestructible” soccer balls which do not need to be inflated, the Bagalam Primary School in Maradi and the Mayahi Primary School now have the start of a soccer program. These balls were provided by Mike Mitchell, a former PC volunteer who played in Niger on the National Team and started Project Play which designed and fund raised to manufacture and distribute the balls world-wide in various soccer programs which he started. With FON funding and the efforts of Yari Rabiou and Ibrahim Boukary we were able to organize the delivery of balls to the two schools in the Maradi region. We hope through additional fund raising by Project Play Soccer and matching funds from FON we will be able to develop a soccer program in the Maradi, Zinder and Dosso regions. A



Zogala (Moringa)

By Rabiou Yari From Mr Moustapha Harou, the certified nurse who initiated the moringa project:

• Harou told me that the project will cover in total 32 villages and would help an estimated 4000 malnourished children between the ages of 6-24 months.

• For now, they have started with 6 villages and they are at the planting phase. In each of the 6 villages, they plant 1000 plants of moringa over a half hectare. A group of local women have been tasked to the work of watering and taking care of the plants. It usually takes 2 months for the plants to fully grow and be ready for harvest.

• Harou told me that they have an urgent need for fencing to protect the plants against grazing animals and wild camels that destroy crops in the region. The estimated cost to fully fence in a half hectare and plant the crops is \$1,600 or 800.000 CFA, all included.

He thanks Friends of Niger for making this project a priority and looks forward to working with us to implement the project; of course one step at a time. Nagodé

Remembrance

A place to remember your time in Niger and the people you served with



Thanksgiving Pie-Bake Jamboree in Maradi

November 1970. A recent email exchange with Peter Easton (Niger III and then some: 1964-1971) brings up some deep memories for early PCVs:

“There seems to be rather little to give thanks for in a year of such trauma in France, the Sahel and the MidEast,” he remarks, “not to speak of the loss of dear friends and the vicissitudes of senior living. But maybe a memory of a Thanksgiving past (and hopes for future ones) will tide us through. Believe it or not, we are coming up on the 45th

Anniversary of the gala

Thanksgiving and ‘First Annual Mid-Niger Pie Bake Jamboree’ held in Maradi in November 1970 – a diabolical scheme dreamed up by the largely bachelor crew of PCVs and associates then living in central Niger to lure in more female presence and create new causes for rejoicing.” Quite a number of Nigérien and Nigériennes friends were invited to the festivities that evening as well, and to better acquaint them with the holiday, Peter et al. wrote and produced a skit portraying the arrival of the pilgrims in the “new world” and the hardships they faced from cold and “snow.” (Newspapers torn into shreds and thrown up in the air provided the snow.)

Top photo: Back row left to right: unknown, Tom Gulick, Biruta Akerbergs, Dale Puffenberger, Steve Isom, Peter Easton, Sudi Bliss, Chaibou. Front row: Ruth Sitton, Jon Otto, Shula Raney, unknown, Clifflyn Bromling.

Right photo: Making cranberry sauce out of some Niger plant that wasn’t cranberries!



Biography of Daniel Chirot - Author of November’s CEX Reflection on Religious Extremism Article

Daniel Chirot, PCV Niger III 1964-66, Ph.D., Columbia University, 1973 Herbert J. Ellison Professor of International Studies at the University of Washington. Daniel writes: I was in Niger II (1964-1966). I worked (not very successfully) for Adult Literacy, then did research for the Ministry of Agriculture. I turned in a long report about the rural economy around Birni N’Konni that may have contributed a tiny bit to the irrigation project eventually built there. I went to graduate school intending to do my PhD research in Niger, but changed to Eastern Europe and wrote my dissertation on Romanian social history. I’ve been a professor ever since. I’ve done some consulting work in Eastern Europe and in West Africa, mostly for CARE in Côte d’Ivoire during the first years of their civil war. If you type in "Daniel Chirot Amazon" into a search engine the front covers of most of my books come up. My most recent one, *The Shape of the New: Four Big Ideas and How They Made the Modern World*, co-authored with a colleague, came out this year. I’m very pleased that it was just listed by the NY Times as one of the 100 most notable books of 2015. The brief article you published in *The Camel Express* was based on the research I did for the chapter I wrote on radical Islam in that book. A New York Times book review can be found by typing in "Chirot NY Times".

Biography of Steve Anderson - Author of November's CEX Diffa article

Steve Anderson, also known as Ari in eastern Niger, served as a Peace Corps Volunteer from 1987-1991 in the town of Diffa, in the Kanuri part of Niger. Subsequently, Steve did not come home. He remained in the area. A native Californian, he has studied Law at the University of California at San Francisco, and he majored in Anthropology and History at the University of California at Santa Cruz. His career has involved his staying on in eastern Niger for nearly 25 years. Steve has lived in Diffa, and also in Geskerou, and has traveled with his neighbors and friends, throughout Kanuri and Tubu country in eastern Niger from Lake Chad through Bilma. His career has involved his near lifetime commitment to the peoples of eastern Niger, and has entailed caravan marches, camelback transport trips, helping people to improve their goat and sheep breeds through hybridization, and cultivating his fields and gardens together with his Nigerien neighbors. Steve's other career has been in working as an expert and a consultant with USAID, founding member and consultant of the Nigerian NGO Karkara, and he has lived in communities throughout eastern Niger where as a photographer he has documented the people he worked and lived with, and their lives. Were it not for radicalism, the subject of Steve's CEX article, Steve Anderson might still be living in eastern Niger where he had decided to spend the rest of his life. He came to the realization however that his presence among his family and friends there, might in some way threaten the well-being of those he held so dear. Today he has returned to the US and has been working on publishing his massive collection of photographs in a constructive manor, and now he lives in Nebraska where he works as a director of an Americorps (formerly Vista) program there.

by John P. Hutchison, Member of the Board, Friends of Niger

For many of us, our volunteer experience in Niger was life-changing

-- impacting our life's direction, our career choices, our world outlook. We were immeasurably enriched, and Niger and her people remain in our hearts. Over the years, we have found myriad ways to give-back to Niger in ways great and small -- donations to Friends of Niger (FON), contributions to NGO's doing valuable work in Niger, working with (or founding) non-profits and foundations, contributing to famine relief, returning to Niger to work on a host of various projects,, etc. The list goes on.

Funding The Grassroots

One such effort -- the Jane Huser Maxwell Memorial Fund (RPCV 1967-69) -- recently surpassed the \$10,000 mark of funding small grassroots efforts on the ground in Niger. The Fund (under the umbrella of FON) was established by a small group of Jane's (many) friends in her memory, after her death in 2009. Its specific goal was to fund small projects (and small NGO's) outside the purview of large NGO's -- to provide direct-pipeline funding to Nigeriens doing good work. And in line with Jane's passions, we chose to focus this support on women, children, and education.

At least annually, we each make a contribution to the Fund in Jane's memory, and welcome contributions from others as well. We then make decisions regarding disbursement(s), and work with the FON Treasurer to facilitate the disbursals.

The first contributions were made to FON-selected famine-relief organizations during the 2010 hunger crisis (the Nomad Foundation and Doctors Without Borders). Subsequent contributions (now totaling \$10,100) have gone to: AAWEL, for their work with Second-chance schools, girls' leadership academies, and women's village-based micro-credit activities; The Danja Fistula Center, established in Niger by the Worldwide Fistula Fund, to provide corrective surgeries for women suffering from fistulas; ODI, for their work with Niger's

disabled and "handicapped" populations, primarily children; and RAIN, for their work promoting girls' education in remote desert communities.

(If you support the focus of this Fund and would like to make a contribution, checks payable to FON, with "Jane Huser Maxwell Fund" on the memo line should be mailed to: Pamela White, 1296 E. Woodbury Rd., Pasadena, CA 91104. After the amounts have been logged-in to the Fund [we help out with this record-keeping], the checks will be forwarded to FON's Treasurer.)

Caring Made Concrete

As Niger is increasingly prominent in today's headlines, Niger and her people are on our minds. How to channel our love for Niger into concrete support? Friends of Niger provides a valuable vehicle.

It is possible to establish a dedicated Fund, as we did, in commemoration of an important life event (graduation, retirement, etc.) or in memory of a loved one. Choose a focus, fundraise among your friends, and direct your contributions to the specific Nigerien projects/activities most dear to your heart.

And/or donations directly to FON will support the general fund.

And/or make donations directly to some of the NGO's (small and large) that are on-the-ground in Niger, doing work you support.

And/or make provisions in your Will or estate to support work you value in Niger.

There are many ways to turn our caring into concrete support. CHOOSE ONE! CHOOSE ALL!

Pamela Britton White

pamelabwhite@gmail.com

IN MEMORIAM

Elizabeth 'Liz' Gillis, 51, of Battle Creek, Michigan, died May 23, 2015. Liz joined the Peace Corps and was stationed in Niger, West Africa from 1986-89. There she built cement drinking water wells, introduced more resilient crops and livestock, and developed a deep and lasting respect for Africa and its people. <http://www.legacy.com/obituaries/battlecreek/obituary.aspx?pid=174954675>

Projects Continued

FON Goat / Sheep Projects

FON's goat project, which involved Bororo women and was held near the town of Tchintabaraden was very successful. Our partner NGO, Kaourital, would like to replicate this project with another group of women. In addition to supplying goats, Kaourital would like to provide a feed store for the animals to ensure the success of the goat-fattening project. Kaourital has asked FON for support and with your help we could expand this project to help more women. This would require a huge investment on our part. If our members contribute half of the amount needed—about \$1000—together we can make this feed store a reality.

FON has also received an update from our contact Sabit, from the NGO OURZP, about the project we support in collaboration with OURZP; a sheep fattening project to aid vulnerable women in the Department of Tchintabaraden. To date, FON funds have been used to purchase 20 sheep and 40 bags of cotton seeds and OURZP has distributed two sheep to every woman. OURZP will send photos and a detailed narrative report to FON.

OURZP has identified a new project for women; the fabrication of leather tents which are used for shelter during the seasonal migration. Fabricating a leather tent is estimated to cost 150,000 CFA but purchasing that same tent would cost at least 300,000. Further, these sturdy tents are in demand. If you are interested in helping to fund any of these projects, indicate Goats on the donation form.

Tidène Well Project

The Tidène NGO intervenes in Niger for the most disadvantaged nomadic and sedentary populations. Tidène's projects facilitate access to water by building wells and providing access to potable water to reduce infant mortality. Tidène also offer access to education by building schools, and provides health care, basic assistance and emergency food support. In collaboration with The Desert Wells, another nonprofit, Tidène has already rehabilitated and built more than 217 wells in the Tidène Valley and further south in Niger. The goal is to build 400 total wells in the region. Recently, Tidène requested FON support the building of a well. The total cost is estimated at more than \$20,000 and FON would like to commit to support this project at \$5,000. To do this, FON needs the support of our members. The FON Board proposes to match what our members and donors can contribute, up to \$2,500. In the past FON has assisted with the rehabilitation of several wells thanks to the support of our members. Wells are so important for the people of Niger and especially in the Tidène Valley. This region lies in the heart of the Ténéré in the Air range, one of the world's hottest and driest places.

The Banché Food Bank Project

This is a report about a FON member taking her own initiative to fund a project in her former village.

RPCV Rebecca Mandell (Fati) lived in Banché in 2002 but became ill and had to leave early in her service. Even though her stay in Niger was short, she came to know and love the people of Banché. She had a high degree of respect and admiration for the village chief Malam Bawa Mati. She always wished that she could have stayed longer and done more in partnership with the residents of Banché. That was why she and her husband, Asaf Peres, decided to make a donation to Banché in 2015 in celebration of their engagement and marriage.

Banché is a small village south of Maradi, Madarounfa, and very close to the border with Nigeria.

Rebecca contacted Friends of Niger wanting to do something that would benefit the people of her village. She didn't know if the village chief Bawa Mati was still there so FON board member M. Rabiou Yari and Professor Abdou Illia made some phone calls and discovered that he was indeed still there! They even talked for 15 minutes! Yari reports that Bawa Mati "was delighted to hear about Fati-Rebecca and the initiative."

Through the significant donation of Rebecca and her husband, plus donations from three others, \$1,800 was raised. Funneling the donations through FON made them tax deductible.

Through further discussion Yari was able to determine that the best use of these funds would be to strengthen Banché's Food Bank, which helps alleviate the hardship that villagers face during the dry season. Banché villagers buy millet, sorghum, and corn at the end of the rainy season when prices are low and store the supplies in the food bank building. By the time the dry season approaches, many farmers have used up all their crops and market prices are too high for most to afford. However, Banché villagers can buy these crops through the Food Bank at more reasonable prices. Those who cannot pay are given what they need as a loan to be paid later when they can afford it. The Food Bank also sells low-priced fertilizer to local farmers.

Yari was able to arrange for delivery of the funds to Bawa through the NGO Himma. FON's friend in Maradi, Mourtallah Idy Gondah, traveled to Banché to greet the people on behalf of Rebecca and the project, and he sent us this pictures of Bawa and the village.

From Rebecca and Asaf: "Thank you so much to John Baird, Rabiou Yari, Abdou Illia, and FON for coordinating this project, to Himma and Mourtallah Idy Gondah for all of their work on the ground, and to Bawa Mati and everyone in Banché for partnering with us on this! We are so happy that this idea was able to become a reality with all of your help. Mun gode! Sannu da kokari!"

Chewable Vitamins Project

In 2015 FON was able to send chewable vitamins to Niger via a SIM container shipment, John Hutchison, who traveled to the country in, and January with the staff of Rain for the Sahel and Sahara. Because shipping costs are prohibitive, we focus on sending small amounts with FON members who are traveling to Niger. If you are traveling to Niger and could take a case (220 2-piece samples), please contact FON Board member Joel Neuberg at jneuberg@santarosa.edu. Laura Haus, Joel's niece, is currently providing sample cases of chewable vitamins through her company, Smarty Pants while Joel is covering the internal shipping costs. FON is seeking contributions for our chewable vitamin project in case future shipping possibilities are available to us. FON will match your donations to keep this program operating.





Friends of Niger
P.O. Box 5823
Washington, D.C. 20016-1423

Address Correction Requested

There is no way to peace.

Peace is the way.

- A.J. Muste

Thank you, Friends of Niger, for supporting RAIN's Agadez Learning Center for Tomorrow's Leaders (ALC) in the city of Agadez! The ALC provides a place for 25 nomadic students to live, study and pursue their dreams of an education.

Rural and nomadic primary school graduates in Niger have almost no hopes to continue their studies, as rural education does not go past grade 6. The ALC provides this opportunity for achieving and motivated students to live in our Agadez dormitory. The rural students, despite their good grades in primary school, find themselves lagging behind their city-educated classmates. The support offered them at the ALC includes nightly tutoring with their schoolteachers in key subjects, a peer to peer counseling program, a woman mentor for encouragement and support as well as recreational and craft activities. A favorite is movie nights with Brian Nowak, RAIN's director of programs. Brian shows documentaries from all over the world on subjects ranging from cultures to animal life.

Among last year's 12 graduates, 10 passed with good to very good grades with 2 failed to graduate. Among our 2015 graduates we have girls studying to be teachers or nurses, a boy who is working as a volunteer teacher in his community, and another boy hired as a teacher by the state. This last is a real accomplishment for him but speaks to Niger's dire need for schoolteachers. Other ALC graduates currently attend university or high school with RAIN's continuing support. One young woman obtained a BAC in agriculture; we're hoping that she will continue to university.

In October, the ALC Director, Alhassene Aboubacar, took an arduous 10-day journey in the Air Mountains to recruit students for this year's 7th grade class. He told communities about the unique opportunity the center offers to continue to secondary education. Alhassene introduces himself and RAIN to the village chief, who calls a meeting for all the parents to attend. Alhassene discusses the rules and offers a chance for the parents and students to ask questions. He passionately believes that "during the village meeting it is very important that each participant can express his or her opinion." Listening carefully to the community members ensures that we select students who are committed to their studies, and whose parents understand the benefits offered by the ALC. The selected students begin in 7th grade with the educational support that can take them all the way through college.

Many thanks to FON and all of its supporters. If you'd like to contribute to RAIN and the ALC, please visit our website donation page at www.rain4sahara.org and click on the donate button.

Submitted by Bess Palmisciano, Rain for the Sahel and Sahara, PO Box 1503, Portsmouth, NH 03802.

Membership Form

Annual
Friends of Niger



Name _____

Date _____

(Please print clearly)

Address _____

City / State / Zip Code _____

Phone Numbers (H) _____ (C) _____ (W) _____

Email _____

Connection to Niger (RPCV, etc.) _____ Dates in Niger (Years) _____

Location in Niger _____ Program or Involvement _____

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 information with any third party other than with the National Peace Corps Association with whom we have a reciprocity agreement.

Please send paper copies of The Camel Express newsletter by US Mail

Please send links to the PDF version of The Camel Express by email

Membership dues & donations 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

In addition to my membership, I have enclosed a General Contribution of \$_____ OR

Instead of joining FON at this time, I enclose a General Contribution of \$_____

I would like to support FON Matching projects: Goats, RAIN, Well, Banche food (check all that apply) \$_____

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:

PO Box 5823, Washington DC 20016-1423

To pay FON dues with credit card through NPCA, please contact us for further instructions.