

# The Camel Express

Newsletter of the Friends of Niger

May 2018



## Message from the President

Meredith McGehee

Of the small number of Americans who have ever spent time in Niger, probably none anticipated the day when we would see Niger splashed across news headlines in the U.S. on a regular basis. But here we are — with American drone bases being built near Agadez and more than 800 U.S. military forces stationed in the country. Peace Corps Volunteers have not been posted in the country for some seven years.

If the suspension of Peace Corps had been due to economic growth and social development like India or South Korea, then the end of the Volunteers would be good news.

Unfortunately, what instigated the removal were concerns about security and terrorism. Despite improvements, Niger continues to hover at the bottom of the U.N. Human Development Index.

At the same time, the Americans with deep, personal connections to Niger — the kind of connections that come from living and working with everyday people — are growing older and shrinking in number. The first PCVs arrived in Niger in 1962. Since then, more than 3,000 of us have served there. Other Americans developed a connection to this remote Sahelian country through their work with NGOs or academic institutions.

But those connections grow more distant as time passes.

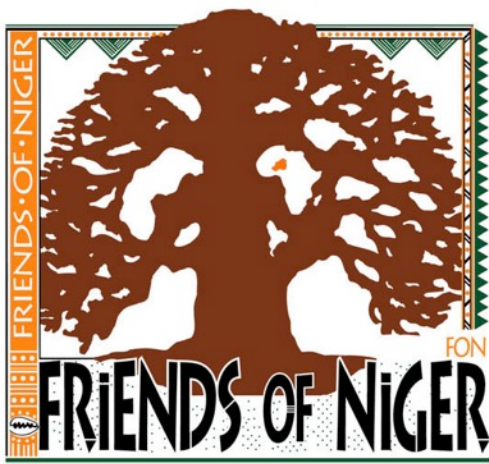
As we approach the end of the second decade of the 21st century, Niger remains surrounded by threats, from the north (Al Qaeda in the Maghreb and instability in Libya), from the southeast (Boko Haram) and from the west (the Malian insurrection). The inevitable tensions arising from the European-drawn border lines amalgamating Hausa, Djerma, Tuareg, Fulani, Toubou, and Kanuri (plus others) into one country continue to simmer and occasionally boil over as population growth explodes.

Yet, it would be wrong to paint only a negative picture of Niger. I currently sponsor a Nigerienne student, Maimouna Bio-Gado, attending the University of New Mexico in Albuquerque who is on schedule to graduate in December 2019 (getting straight As, I would add). She is the daughter of a Nigerien teacher I met while a PCV. Finding sufficient funding for her education is a challenge which continues (here is the link to where you can make a tax free donation to her education:

<http://www.africastomorrow.org/2016-cohort.html>

but her dedication, hard work on her studies and good heart make it worth the effort.

My two years as President of Friends of Niger are coming to a close in June. I leave knowing that the organization I founded back in the 1980s is doing good work. When I returned to being involved with FON after many years away raising a child and working, my goal was to increase fundraising and scope — to raise more money so the organization could support more worthwhile projects.



I'm pleased to say that we were able to move from four-digit bank balances to raising more than \$60,000 these past two years through annual appeals. Just about all of those funds have gone back into projects in Niger — from a sewing machine cooperative, to moringa plantations, to transport for hospital equipment. My fellow Board members have been generous with their time, patient with my impatience to do MORE, and absolutely committed to helping the Nigerien people. FON members who are development experts have volunteered enormous amounts of hours to assess project proposals, gauge their likelihood of success/impact and ensure the funds that FON expends are used wisely.

The Board has also worked to modernize our organization's accounting system, maintain a website, clarify organizational standards for transparency and share news about Niger and FON members. Joel Mayer continues to populate the Friends of Niger Facebook page, which remains the best place in the U.S. to get the latest news about what is happening in Niger.

All of us on the FON Board are thinking hard how to get more people engaged in FON's activities and how to utilize the talents of our membership.

The needs remain great — both for Nigeriens and for FON. The American (and other) soldiers who are in Niger have one job to do. It's an important one that will hopefully save many lives.

But the work of peace is also hard. It requires effort and dedication.

I leave you, fellow FON members, with two quotes I urge you to keep in mind daily in these difficult times. First: *Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.* (Margaret Mead)

Second, *The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing.* Edmund Burke

As I step down from FON, I again make a plea for you to step up. Be a more active part of Friends of Niger. Thank you and *sai anjima*.

\*\*\*\*\*



## Friends of Niger Board Nominations

-- elections coming up!

**We're stronger together!**

### **Please Consider Serving on the Friends of Niger Board of Directors**

In our recent survey many of you said you are interested in being more active and here is an opportunity to get involved. The time is ripe for some new and energetic leadership and the bi-annual elections are your chance. Three new members were added to the board in 2016 (Meredith McGehee, Tom Corcoran and Amy Wilson) and there is room for more. We're looking for Board members who have a variety of skills and experiences to provide new perspectives and ideas. Each board member contributes in their own way, and all the contributions together create a body to carry out the mission of accomplishing great projects in Niger. Together we are stronger!

There are currently 10 members on the Board of Directors (the list follows). Working through contacts, connections and partners, the Board identifies education, agriculture, and health and water projects and raises fund to support

them. In addition, FON reconnects former volunteers and other Friends of Niger with each other through the newsletter, web site, membership services, Facebook, etc. Active participation of members and a full Board of Directors is needed to continue these efforts and build on the many great suggestions that were brought forth in the survey. The Board has bi-monthly or quarterly meetings via Skype and communicates by email as needed.

### **FON Nomination Process**

The Board consists of a minimum of five members and can have up to 11 members. The FON bylaws establish an indirect nomination/election process. From the nominees, the current Board will select the four officers and appoint up to seven additional members-at-large. Please see <http://www.friendsofniger.org/about/friends-of-niger-bylaws/>.

### **FON Volunteer Needs**

Current Board members are eager to share out the workload among more members. We are looking for volunteers to:

- Serve in a board leadership capacity
- Serve as editor of the newsletter the Camel Express
- Generate news articles about Niger and Niger RPCVs
- Mentor and support projects
- Review requests for FON funding
- Raise funds in support of projects in Niger
- Maintain our presence on social media (Facebook, web site, Twitter, you name it!)

### **How to Apply or Nominate**

The deadline to apply is June 1, 2018. If you are interested in serving on the Board or volunteering for specific FON projects follow the process outlined below:

- Download the nomination form posted on the FON website: [http://www.friendsofniger.org/pdf/FON\\_Elections\\_2018.pdf](http://www.friendsofniger.org/pdf/FON_Elections_2018.pdf)
- Submit a nomination by identifying your background, interest and skills. You can send it by email to the FON recording secretary at <mailto:tommyt@erols.com> or by snail mail to Penni St. Hilaire, 4621 Albemarle St. NW, Washington, DC 20016

After responses from this "call for nominations" are collected, the current Board will form a new Board of up to eleven members

### **All Helping Hands are Welcome**

We understand that serving on a Board can be time consuming. If you don't think you can manage being a board member at this time but would like to assist with a specific activity, such as reviewing grant proposals or fundraising, please indicate the project or activity that would best meet both your time constraints and interests on the nomination form.

The FON Board looks forward to hearing from you!

\*\*\*\*\*

## **NOMINATION FORM**

**For the Friends of Niger Board of Directors Elections 2018**

Please submit by June 1, 2018

Dear Friends of Niger Member,

You are considered a FON Member for having made a donation and/or having paid dues. Thank you! You are an important reason why we exist and why Nigeriens get help.

Serving on the Friends of Niger Board of Directors is an opportunity to serve Niger and its people. Please nominate yourself by answering the questions below and sending them to us by June 1, 2018 as described at the end of this form. We need you!

- I.** I am a member of Friends of Niger and would like to stand for election to the Board of Directors. If elected, I am willing to participate in four conference calls per year (usually by Skype and the dates vary) with other FON Board members, and to assist as needed.

Name:

Address:

Email address:

Phone:

- II.** Please tell us about yourself. We will share this information with our voting membership so that they can become acquainted with you.

- Dates that you lived, worked, or served in Niger:
- If you worked in Niger, for which organization did you work?
- Other information about your experiences in Niger or life experiences that you would like to share.

- III. What non-profit board experience do you have?
- IV. What experiences, ideas, service, or vision would you bring to the table as a member of the Board of Directors?

Thank you for considering this request asking you to offer your time and effort for the mission of Friends of Niger.

**Please send your answers to us by June 1, 2018** in one of two ways. Either:

1. Email your answers to Recording Secretary, Penni St. Hilaire, at [tommyt@erols.com](mailto:tommyt@erols.com), or
2. Print out this page and mail your answers to: Penni St. Hilaire, 4621 Albemarle St. NW, Washington, DC 20016. Your answers will be shared with voting members.

**Thank you again!**

\*\*\*\*\*

## Member Survey Update

We asked you what you thought and you sounded off! Beyond our wildest dreams we heard from over 104 members in the recent survey. We learned that a lot of you stay in contact, donate money, support projects and have connections with development agencies working in Niger.

You suggested more stateside activity, advocacy and education involving and mobilizing members. For the membership you advocated bringing people together, engaging people and continuing to share news. Some suggested that tightening up the mission would be helpful.

Happily, many of you are interested in getting more involved – yay!! People supported growth of the organization IF it is controlled and sustainable; and you thought that some staffing might bring the organization to a new level that volunteers cannot achieve.

You LOVE the newsletter and the Facebook page. You want to support projects helping girls and women, and you think contraception needs to be available to all. According to you, project success should be defined by sustainability and meaningful involvement of local people. You think we should strive for measurable results and stay connected to the needs of average people. You provided a great list of project situations to avoid, those being mostly political, religious, unsustainable activities and projects beyond our capacity.

You shared a wide range of hopes and dreams for Niger, demonstrating that you are still actively thinking and caring about Niger. You want to keep the core values of FON and the empathy and human connections we engender. You suggested forming stronger partnerships with other organizations, mobilizing members and building leadership in the organization.

Individual respondents will be receiving an email with the detailed analysis of the survey. If you would like to receive it also or would like more information about it please contact Amy Wilson, [amibula.wilson@gmail.com](mailto:amibula.wilson@gmail.com)

And, THANK YOU for sharing your ideas and input. We hope to act on as many as we can. Together we are stronger.

## Three Projects Committee Reports

### 1) **Women's Cooperative Completes Tent-Making Training**



Achet'Akal, a women's cooperative in Tchintabaraden recently completed a training project funded last August by FON. The project trained 60 women in local hide and skin tanning techniques, then the cutting and sewing of the skins into nomadic style tents to be sold locally. The objective of the project was to train women "in difficult economic conditions" in new economic skills so they could better support themselves and reintegrate themselves into society.

Many women in Niger, especially in the Sahelian region, now find themselves in dire straits as the result of desertification, loss of male household members, overpopulation by both animals and humans, conservative Muslim ethics, to name a few. The link below describes some of the economic extortion faced by local women.

<http://highline.huffingtonpost.com/articles/en/the-21st-century-gold-rush-refugees/#/niger>

Achet'Akal has asked FON to fund another phase of the same training project. FON will work with Achet'Akal to try to redesign the training program so it can become self supporting. Achet'Akal has been quite responsive to FON communications and input, regularly employing

email and Dropbox. Any member who would like to work with the development of this project should contact President McGehee.



## **2) Nigerien Jewelry Marketing**

You no doubt recall that Niger has wonderfully beautiful, locally made jewelry and other artisanal goods, especially from the Tuareg and Sahel regions. FON has been contacted by a Nigerien entrepreneur who would like to market some of these goods over the web. He needs help setting up and running a web-based marketing organization. Certainly this qualifies as capitalizing on existing expertise and bringing in badly needed income to Niger. Anyone who would might be interested in working on the development of such a project should contact Amy Wilson at [amibula.wilson@gmail.com](mailto:amibula.wilson@gmail.com)



## **3) Making FON Funded Projects Sustainable**

FON is currently funding two training projects in the Niamey/Dosso areas to help destitute women learn new economic support skills. The project in Dosso, being managed by Potentiel Terre, is designed to help poor rural young women learn domestic skills so they can support themselves with salable domestic skills, like sewing and cooking. The project in Niamey, being managed by Bien Être de la Femme Rurale is more closely focused on training women in sewing skills with the idea that they should be able to support themselves as seamstresses. Both projects need business plans so they can become self-supporting. FON has donor funds dedicated to supporting both projects. In the next round of proposals, we want to see plans from them that will begin to make the two projects self-supporting.



For both the projects, we are looking for members who will work with these two organizations to help them think through and develop solid business plans on the order of microenterprise development.



FON Sustainable Projects in Dosso (notice the FON logo  in the upper left corner of the sign!)

## Remember that Friends of Niger has a FaceBook Page!



Thanks to the efforts of Niger RPCV Joel Mayer (1973-75, 78-81) we have the Friends of Niger Facebook Page. It provides updates of news and photos of Niger from Google News searches and from Nigérien sources on Twitter and other Facebook pages, as well as from the Facebook group "Peace Corps Niger," which is not connected to FON. There are also occasional posts from the National Peace Corps Association, of which FON is an affiliate. Find us on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/FriendsOfNiger/>.



## The Passing of Dov Pasternak

We have just learned from Aichatou Salifou of Ainoma in Niger that the great force behind the Eliminating Poverty Agricultural Movement in Niger, Dov Pasternak, has passed away in Israel. Robin Mednick of Pencils4Kids and John Craig of Eliminating Poverty - the two NGOs that have been implementing Pasternak's methodology and who both attended the 3 August 2017 Independence Day NGO workshop hosted by Ambassador Hassana Alidou attended by the Friends of Niger - had been planning on going to Israel to visit him quite soon.

He served at ICRISAT in Niger for a long time and was responsible for many innovative ideas impacting Nigerien agriculture.

Alla ya jikansa! Friends of Niger

## Remember Niger Coalition Strategic Plan

by Ann Sulkovsky

By coincidence, I just happened to meet a woman in DC who was working in Niger. She is founder and CEO of the Remember Niger Coalition (RNC), an organization that is working with host country nationals to set up a private school system in Niger. No, she had not been a Peace Corps volunteer. After graduating from Columbia's master's in international education program at the Teachers College, she set out for Niger.

When I learned she needed a strategic plan for the RNC, we spent several years developing her first plan that is linked to here (both English and French versions). Even with the Peace Corps withdrawn from Niger, due to the extremist groups that surround the country, Kara VanderKamp continues to support the least educated country in the world. She also provides health, nutrition, hygiene support and well digging for the communities where her students live. To learn more, go to [www.rememberniger.org](http://www.rememberniger.org). Read the Strategic Plan in English or in French here: <https://www.rememberniger.org/about/strategic-plan/>

## Projects Funded in 2018

To date, FON funded 8 activities in 2018. Six of the projects were reviewed and approved by the Project Committee and the Board and they totaled \$9,987. Two of the projects were approved by the Board as pass-through designated projects-solar lighting and au Coeur du Niger and they totaled \$9,235. The FON has financed the cost of wiring funds for all projects including those considered pass through.

Projects funded in 2018	\$
BFR rent for training workshop	1,186
BFR Purchase of sewing machines	1,800
Dosso Project-Training of young women and Girls	2,462
Solar lighting of medical clinics	1,950
Au Coeur du Niger	7,285
Sabit well contribution	2,771
Achet' Akai tent hide project	1,268
Payment to Maradi Food Bank	500
Total	\$19,222

## **Solar Lighting for Health Facilities in Kornaka** **By John Hutchison, Projects Committee, FON**

Friends of Niger has been working with dynamic local partners on a number of projects in the Commune of Kornaka in Dakoro Department of Maradi Region. Moustapha Harou, is a Ministry of Public Health Nurse in the rural area providing medical care for many villages. Mr. Harou first came to FON with a proposal to develop nutritious Moringa gardens to benefit women and children.

As we worked With Mr. Harou on those projects he brought to the attention of some of our members the need for sustainable lighting in rural health care facilities where electricity is not available. For the relatively small investment of around \$1,000 per clinic solar lighting could be installed which could have a lasting impact on the lives of hundreds of people living in the Kornaka area.



### **Healthcare Delivery at underequipped sites**

As many of our readers know, healthcare is mainly delivered through rural clinics , Centres de Santé Intégrés (CSI), and dispensaries, Cases de Santé (CS).

Moustapha Harou reports that none of the health facilities have electricity or lighting. Currently, the nurses work in total darkness with light only from handheld flashlights that barely provide enough light. Patients and medical staff are at risk working under these conditions.

A reliable source of electricity would allow staff to charge computers and telephones. They would be able to use the internet for access to information about medications and for crucial communications with medical personnel offsite. Medical reports and records of treatment could be filled out immediately while details are fresh in the minds of staff.

Once electrified, the health facilities will also be protected and secured against snakes, scorpions, and theft which might occur in the night.

## The Need: Electrification Via Solar Power

Solar power is now becoming more economical and available in Maradi, and installation is relatively inexpensive.



Materials needed to electrify each of the clinics include two 130-watt solar panels, two solar batteries, and a converter. Five light fixtures, light bulbs, and electrical cords would satisfy the needs of each clinic while the dispensaries, being smaller, need less.

The total system costs between 435,000 and 429,000 francs cfa per clinic or dispensary. Three FON members have already made donations for solar power lighting systems. One member donated to bring light to the village where the FON member had served as a volunteer in 1963-64. Plaques with the donors' names have been placed on each of the facilities. Anyone interested in donating should contact the Board for more information or make a specified donation.

For less than \$1,000 per site the population of this rural area will realize a big improvement in health care. With improved health they will be better able to take care of their families and contribute to the progress in their communities. (See map of the Kornaka region [next page](#))

\*\*\*\*\*

Take a Look At Guy Immega's Lake Chad Website

[www.savelakechad.com](http://www.savelakechad.com)

*The First Mega-Project to Solve a Major Humanitarian Problem*

**THE SOLAR OPTION IS THE ONLY WAY TO SAVE LAKE CHAD**

After our presentation at the [LCBC Conference in Abuja](#), we believe that the Solar Option is *no longer optional*, but a **necessity**.

Lake Chad needs rapid Inter-Basin Water Transfer (IBWT), or it will go extinct. It will take decades to build the alternative [Transaqua](#) project.

\*\*\*\*\*

6°49'55" 6°59'54" 7°09'53"

DEPARTEMENT DE DAKORO  
COMMUNE RURALE DE KORNAKA  
Carte administrative

N

14°29'51"

14°29'5"

Légende

- Chef lieu de Commune
- Villages et hameaux
- Voie de communication
- Limite Commune

14°19'52"

14°19'5"

14°09'53"

14°09'53"

13°59'54"

13°59'5"

13°49'55"

13°49'5"

Moustapha Harou Djibo reports that yesterday, April 5, 2018, he once again took to the road on his small motorcycle for Maradi for the *Friends of Niger* in search of a map of the Commune Rurale de Kornaka in the Department of Dakoro, Region of Maradi. In spite of the temperature of nearly 108 degrees Fahrenheit (42 Centigrade he reported) and a couple of flat tires, he made it, mission successful. Here is the map he sent us.

Reported by John Hutchison  
FON Niger Liaison & Projects Committee

## Water well in the village of Chintighishen

FON has supported the digging of a well for the nomadic encampment of Chintighishen about 15 km from Tchintabaraden with a donation of 1,344,440 CFA, about 35% of the total cost of the well. Catholic Relief Services in Niger supplied 40% and the rest came from local sources. The well will provide water for about 60 needy women and their milk goats who are associated with the "Milk Goats Projects" that FON has supported over the last 2 years. The water supply situation had turned critical for keeping the goats alive.



## Highlights 2017/2018 End of Year Fundraising

**FON breaks new record raising over \$40,000 in its Year end fund-raising appeal.**

*As indicated below FON was able to raise over \$40,000 between December 2017 and February 2018. We wish to thank the 157 individuals who enabled us to reach this fund-raising goal.*

With the use of Pay-Pal FON obtained over \$4000 from 35 individuals. Three large donations led in part by a donation of \$10,000 from a charitable organizations that wishes to remain anonymous to be used for Moringa Plantations and the Potential Terre Young Women and Girls Domestic Training Project in Dosso, donations raised by Clark Kerr and volunteers from Niger IV and V Groups of \$7,225 for Au Coeur du Niger a school for Albino and orphan children in Zinder, and \$5,000, from Tom and Patsy Lightbown totaled almost \$16,000. In addition two contributions totaling \$1950 were made for the solar lighting of two medical clinics.

The balance of our Year end appeal revenue was for unrestricted contributions totaling \$15,306 to fund various projects approved by the Projects Committee and supported by the Board. The Projects Committee gets funding requests totaling thousands of dollars. We are always looking for small and large donors so that the work of this committee and the Board can support deserving projects.

Date range covered: December 2017-February 2018

<b>Year end Appeal 2017/18 INCOME</b>	
<b><i>Restricted</i></b>	
Niger IV/Niger V Au Coeur du Niger	\$7,225
Foundation and other Grants for Moringa and Potential Terre Dosso project	\$10,950
Lightbown gift	5,000
Solar lights-medical centers	1950
<b><i>Sub-total</i></b>	<b>25,125</b>
<b><i>Un-restricted Income</i></b>	<b>15,306</b>
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>40,431</b>





## Correspondence:

### Greetings from Ambassador Eric P. Whitaker in Niamey

*Greetings to all of the Friends of Niger!*

*I'm delighted to have the chance to return to Niger after having served here from 2008-2010. The number of embassies, UN member agencies, and NGOs have all increased since then as a reflection of broad development partner support for this central Sahelian nation.*



Here is U.S. Ambassador to Niger, Eric P Whitaker, wearing his Friends of Niger T-shirt.

*As you all know well, Niger faces the internal challenges of food insecurity, rapid population growth, and weak health care and education systems while addressing the external challenges.*

*Finally, we just wrapped up the annual Sahelian training exercise, Flintlock, on Friday, April 20, 2018 with Niger hosting the second such regional program, with this one involving the participation of 11 African and 15 non-regional countries.*

*I look forward to hearing from you, and meeting with you when you visit Niamey.*

*Best wishes to all.*

*Eric P Whitaker, Ambassador*

## Speaking of T-shirts -- remaining inventory on sale!

Marked down from \$15 each to \$10 each. No shipping charge. Minimum order is two T-shirts. See order form last page. We still have the following inventory:

<u>Beige T-Shirts</u>	<u>Brown T-Shirts</u>
Small = 8	Small = 5
Medium = 13	Medium = 4
Large = 18	Large = 11
XL = 5	XL = 5
XXL = 5	XXL = 5

We also have 47 copies of the FON-DVD **A Brother From Niger** by Jim Schneider @ \$6 each.

# FRIENDS OF NIGER SUMMARY FINANCIAL STATEMENT

## FON Income and Expenses Summary

Date range covered: January 1, 2017-December 31,2017 (In dollars \$)

<b>INCOME 2017 (\$)</b>	
FON Dues thru FON	498
FON Dues thru NPCA	980
Unrestricted Contributions	26971
Restricted contributions (Lightbowns, Dosso,,Solar clinic lights, Moringa)	8335
Paypal contributions	4893
<b>Sub total</b>	<b>41677</b>
<b>Program Income</b>	
<b>T Shirt sales</b>	45
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>41,722</b>
<b>EXPENSES 2017 (\$)</b>	
Postage/CEX Printing	1258
P.O. Box	234
Conference	56
Advertising face book	50
Licenses-permits	26
Wire Transfer fees	509
<b>Sub total</b>	<b>2133</b>
<b>Project Funding</b>	<b>26071</b>
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>28,204</b>
<b>NET Income 2017</b>	<b>13,518</b>



# FON Board of Directors 2016-2018 (Updated 5/1/2018)

Meredith McGehee, President, Fort Washington, MD, [merremcg@comcast.net](mailto:merremcg@comcast.net)  
Thomas Corcoran, Vice President, Philadelphia, PA, [tcorcoran@drwc.org](mailto:tcorcoran@drwc.org)  
Larry Koff, Treasurer, Brookline, MA, [larry.koff@outlook.com](mailto:larry.koff@outlook.com)  
Penni St. Hilaire, Recording Secretary, Washington, DC, [tommyt@erols.com](mailto:tommyt@erols.com)  
Steven J. Bushell, Webmaster, Providence, RI, [sjbushell@gmail.com](mailto:sjbushell@gmail.com)  
John Baird, Membership Chair, Decatur, IL, [JBairdRPT@cs.com](mailto:JBairdRPT@cs.com)  
John Hutchison, Niger Relations Liaison, Newburyport, MA [hutchisonjohn@gmail.com](mailto:hutchisonjohn@gmail.com)  
Rabiou Yari, Liaison, Niger Diaspora, Cheverly, MD, [variable@gmail.com](mailto:variable@gmail.com)  
Amy Wilson, Projects Committee, Yacolt, WA, [amibula.wilson@gmail.com](mailto:amibula.wilson@gmail.com)  
Seybou Douma, CONUSA, Bronx, New York, [douma2@optonline.net](mailto:douma2@optonline.net)  
Tom Dechert, Projects Coordinator, Clarkston, WA, [tvdechert@gmail.com](mailto:tvdechert@gmail.com)

## **Friends of Niger Membership Form** (Please print clearly)

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_ City/State/Zip+4 \_\_\_\_\_  
Phones: (H) \_\_\_\_\_ (C) \_\_\_\_\_ (W) \_\_\_\_\_  
Email \_\_\_\_\_  
Connection to Niger (RPCV, etc.) \_\_\_\_\_ Dates in Niger \_\_\_\_\_  
Location in Niger \_\_\_\_\_ Program or Involvement \_\_\_\_\_

## **T-shirt and DVD Order Form** (minimum order: two T-shirts)

Beige T-Shirts      Brown T-Shirts (please indicate number of each size you wish to order)  
Small      Small \_\_\_\_\_  
Medium      Medium \_\_\_\_\_  
Large      Large \_\_\_\_\_      Number of T-shirts ordered \_\_\_\_ @ \$10      \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
XL      XL \_\_\_\_\_  
XXL      XXL \_\_\_\_\_  
FON-DVD **A Brother From Niger**      Number of DVDs \_\_\_\_ @ \$6      \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Because there is a limited supply, please don't send payment at this time. If we can fill your order, we will send you an invoice.

*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.*

\*\*\*\*\*  
*Membership dues & donations help fund FON activities – including The Camel Express newsletter, 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.*  
\*\*\*\*\*

You may make a donation at any time. If we haven't received your dues yet for 2018, the first \$20 of your donation will be for your 2018 membership unless earmarked for a specific project. Our annual fundraising appeal for 2019 will come to you in December. You can either go to [www.friendsofniger.org](http://www.friendsofniger.org) to Donate with PayPal, or write a check payable to Friends of Niger and mail to: PO Box 1999, Brookline MA 02446-0017. Thank you very much.

# The Camel Express

Newsletter of the Friends of Niger

October 2018

## Message from the President

---

Greetings Friends of Niger!

You, and we, are part of a very small unique group of people who have ever lived and worked in Niger. Or who even know there's a country called Niger! "Oh, you mean Nigeria?"

Friends of Niger (FON) hopes to help us all stay in touch with our experience there. We also hope to help us stay in touch with each other, and to continue finding ways to help Niger and Nigeriens.

Who are we? Well, there are 803 of us at present (our research genius thinks we can increase that number by about 200 new members this coming year). Many of us are Niger Returned Peace Corps Volunteers. Others have lived or worked in Niger in other capacities, and we have several Nigerien and other international friends.

Your Board of Directors is upping the tempo a bit – holding board meetings monthly instead of quarterly (hopefully shorter meetings!). The Projects Committee is meeting more frequently, and we are planning to send out email communications to you more often (see the notes from our editor, Amy Wilson).

However, caution is called for here! The FON Board, and all of you who help, are all volunteers -- inspired and devoted volunteers! Thank you! But we all have limits of time and energy. As we proceed into the coming year we need to find ways to involve more of you and to keep things as efficient, transparent and simple as possible. We look forward to your encouragement, your support, and your involvement.



Thank you very much for your continued interest and participation,

John Baird [president@friendsofniger.org](mailto:president@friendsofniger.org)

“There is no way to peace; peace is the way.”

## Notes from the Editor, Amy Wilson

---

The Camel Express newsletter is trying out a slightly modified format. We will be sending out more frequent emails, aiming for once a month and sharing content on a variety of topics. We'd

like to get more timely information out to you and streamline the format to reduce volunteer workload.

We are looking for content that falls into these categories:

Niger now | Culture | FON Projects | Niger Diaspora | FON Update | Calls to Action |  
Where are they now? | Did you know?

We want **your** input! Please share any news, ideas, articles and ideas for other categories for your newsletter and let us know what you think of the changes in format and frequency.

Please keep in mind these two resources about Friends of Niger:

- Our website (new webmaster needed): <http://www.friendsofniger.org/>
- Join & follow us at: <https://www.facebook.com/FriendsOfNiger/>

In this issue:

1. FON Board planning retreat
2. FON Member Update - Passing of Brownie Lee
3. Where are they now -Ken Patterson
4. Call to Action - Support a new venture in higher learning in Niamey
5. Europe Benefits by Bankrolling an Anti-Migrant Effort. Niger Pays a Price.
6. Gleaned from FON Facebook
7. Groundwater status, geology

## **1) FON Updates- Board planning retreat.**

---

The Board of Directors is planning to hold a weekend retreat in Boston in January or February of 2019. We plan to use the time to get to know each other better and to discuss issues central to FON in more depth than our monthly teleconference/video conferences allow. Board members and many members who responded to the survey feel that there is potential for us to grow as an organization especially if we continue promoting sustainability in our projects. A retreat will give us more time to explore ideas shared through the member survey last year and to develop a strategic plan.

Once a date is set, we would like to have a get together with any FON members who live near enough or may happen to be in the area.

## **2) FON Member Update - Passing of Brownie Lee**

---

Obituary: Brownie Lee – From Togo Peace Corps News

Brownie Lee passed away on April 27, 2015 (Togo Independence Day) in Benin after a brief illness. Brownie Lee was a Peace Corps Volunteer in the first Togo group from 1962-64, and in Guinea, 1964-1966.

She then taught for twenty years, in Eastern and Western Africa, the U.S., and Jamaica. In 1984, she returned to Peace Corps as APCD (Assistant Peace Corps Director) for Education in Niger 1984-89, APCD for Education and Water Sanitation in Mauritania, 1989-91, and APCD for Education and SED in Ghana, 1991-93. In 1994 she joined Africare as a Project Coordinator for an NGO strengthening program in Benin.

In 1995, Brownie came back to Peace Corps as the Sub-Regional Programming and Training Coordinator for Coastal West and Central Africa. In this latter position, she was based in Benin

but worked throughout the sub-region. She was closely involved in the development of the Girls Education Projects in Togo and Burkina Faso and in the Community Youth Education Project in Niger. In February 2007, Brownie became Peace Corps Country Director in Togo. In August 2009 she became Peace Corps Country Director in Benin.

Brownie has an extended family, which at present consists of Haoua, whom she adopted in Niger and foster children from every country in which she lived. She retired in 2010 and bought a house in Ouidah where she was living surrounded as usual by her girls who stayed with her till her last minute.

### **3) Where are they now - Ken Patterson**

---

**Then.** Ken Patterson is from Dubuque Iowa and served from 1987 to 1990 in a village between Say and Torodi. As an African Food Systems Initiative (AFSI) volunteer, he worked on agriculture, forestry, small lending, gardening, food systems, and equipping people for decision-making. One of the most rewarding things he heard was from the government agency folk who worked with those villages afterward, they said that after the Peace Corps volunteers worked there, the villagers knew what to do, how to work together and make decisions.



Ken then shared his enthusiasm and expertise as a technical trainer and training director, working in Niger, Senegal, and Benin. From 1993-95 he returned to Niger with his wife Cathy to be APCD for the AFSI program and served as training officer and overseer of the training center. Ken demonstrated a gift at languages and was one of the few to mastered Fulfulde and also became conversant in Zarma.

**Now.** Living now in Asheville North Carolina with his wife Cathy and daughter Zoey, Ken is Director of Global Grassroots Advocacy at RESULTS <https://www.results.org/>

*RESULTS is an organization dedicated to bringing an end to poverty by training, supporting and inspiring volunteers to effectively advise policymakers. Their impact, or Results, are multiplied by the power of advocacy they build through volunteer mobilization.*

Ken trains everyday people who care about poverty how to influence and talk to members of Congress on matters of and foreign policy impacting health, disease, nutrition, education, and economic opportunity. Ken says most people do not know how to effectively advocate when they start.

Filling this gap has a huge impact on decision makers and resulting policy. For him this job is a way to ‘finish work that is left undone’ to make progress on ‘global poverty issues’.

This year they worked hard on the Reach Every Mother and Child Act which aims to make it a priority for U.S. foreign assistance to end preventable maternal and child deaths. Also, they are targeting Tuberculosis and experiencing success with Republicans and Democrats, who rejected the large budget cuts proposed by President Trump. He is also optimistic about how in the recent

UN High Level Meeting on TB the US showed up ready to make commitments and support efforts to take control of TB.

“Volunteers doing amazing things to make a difference. I told myself I’d find the most impactful work after PC, and I haven’t found anything where I could be having greater impact. Our volunteers have had a huge part of improving the lives of millions of people.”

### **The influence of your experience in Niger.**

“It is why I do what I do right now and for the past 15 yrs. – I started as a volunteer and it got me to where I am today doing this work. I stay in touch with my village, still speak Fulfulde and French, which helps keep me in touch with other people in the world. It keeps me humble, thankful, and in touch all that I have here. I can’t reconcile imbalances—the inequity of how different it is for those who just happen to be born in the US and those who were not. The job just isn’t done.”

### **What’s next**

Ken has a goal to continue to work to get kids in school and provide them a quality education, improve maternal and child health, reduce poverty and disease and work toward the end of TB. He hopes to build a broader movement of people who know how to influence government, by broadening the reach and base of dynamic volunteers in more communities around the US. He thinks RPCVs would make great RESULTS volunteers. RESULTS will also increase its support for developing nations to take on citizen advocacy. This will be critical as countries graduate out of support programs from the US on and others. Without the capacity to advocate with their own governments, Ken is concerned they may backslide, leaving those in poverty behind. “Advocacy is a new discipline for most people, it gives you something to do that matters and zaps away the sense of powerlessness.”

### **What do you miss from Niger?**

Street food: Lemu hari! (the ginger and lemon drink) & Roasted chicken

*Please suggest candidates for future “Where are they now” features. We are hoping to spotlight representatives from many decades of service and diverse paths. Who do you want to hear about?*

## **4) Support a new venture in higher learning in Niamey**

---

Kader Kaneye a recent graduate of Harvard’s Kennedy School of Government and Meredith Segal, also a recent graduate, have created a new not for profit institution in Niamey called the African Development University (ADU). They have met with board members of FON to share their excitement and recruit support from people who care about Niger. FON Board members were impressed with their enthusiasm and energy and FON has offered to reach out to our members to get the word out about this project.

If you have a background in business, development, or education ADU would be interested in discussing your participation on their faculty. Please see these sites for more information:

<https://ilimi.org/join-the-team/>

[www.aduniversity.org](http://www.aduniversity.org)

ADU is a rapidly growing organization, bringing together the most talented individuals from Niger and around the globe. Explore the websites above to find out more ways to get involved including the following:

**Join the Staff** – At ADU you will have the opportunity to work with extraordinary colleagues, to receive robust feedback, and to achieve rapid professional growth. You will have the autonomy to pilot your boldest ideas and the support to enable their success.

**Teach a course** – ADU hosts visiting faculty from Harvard University, Oxford University, Ashesi University, and other academic institutions around the world. We also welcome leaders of the public and private sector to come deliver a course in an area of professional expertise. Visiting faculty typically spend between 4 days and 1 semester in Niger.

**Deliver a guest lecture** – We invite Nigerien leaders and visitors to Niger to come to campus to engage with our students and share experiences and wisdom with our students and with the broader community. ADU regularly hosts public conferences and speaker series.

**Share your time & talents remotely** – If you believe in the mission of ADU but cannot travel to Niger right now, there are many ways to help remotely. Current needs include document translation (English to French), connecting virtually with Nigerien students, graphic design, and online content management.

## 5) NIGER NOW - Europe Benefits by Bankrolling an Anti-Migrant Effort. Niger Pays a Price.

---

Aug. 25, 2018 Joe Penney for The New York Times

Niger has been well paid for drastically reducing the number of African migrants using the country as a conduit to Europe. But the effort has hurt parts of the economy and raised security concerns. The flow of would be migrants has been reversed in large part, but some are going even farther afield in the desert to avoid detection, taking even greater risks. Some alliances to achieve this have given strength to so called rebel leaders. Read more at:

<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/08/25/world/africa/niger-migration-crisis.html>

**Nigerien soldiers patrolling the Sahara this month in Achegour, Niger.**



**Migrants waiting out the heat to avoid damage to their cars at the Puit d'Espoir (Well of Hope) while traveling south across the Sahara.**





## 6) GLEANED FROM FRIENDS OF NIGER FACEBOOK

---

'A Nest of Spies': Niger's Deserts Become Front Line of Fight Against Jihadism'  
WALL STREET JOURNAL 9/17/18

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/a-nest-of-spies-how-poverty-stricken-niger-is-becoming-a-security-hub-for-the-west-1537176601>

Famine Early Warning System Network Published on 28 Sep 2018  
RELIEFWEB Niger Price Bulletin, September 2018

[https://reliefweb.int/report/niger/niger-price-bulletin-september-2018?utm\\_medium=social&utm\\_campaign=shared&utm\\_source=facebook.com](https://reliefweb.int/report/niger/niger-price-bulletin-september-2018?utm_medium=social&utm_campaign=shared&utm_source=facebook.com)

Niger and Germany - a Questionable Friendship  
ALLAFRICA – OPINION

<https://allafrica.com/stories/201808160187.html>

The Music Of Niger: Sounds Of The Sahel  
WORLD MUSIC NETWORK

[https://www.worldmusic.net/guide/niger/#.W3s-7e9D\\_9g.facebook](https://www.worldmusic.net/guide/niger/#.W3s-7e9D_9g.facebook)

One of the world's biggest paediatric intensive care units is full  
MEDECINS SANS FRONTIER 25 September 2018

<https://www.msf.org/one-worlds-biggest-paediatric-intensive-care-units-full>

No Exit in Niger

NEW YORK REVIEW OF BOOKS, October Issue, Tim Judah

[https://www.nybooks.com/articles/2018/10/25/no-exit-in-niger/?sub\\_key=5bbfb06b284d0](https://www.nybooks.com/articles/2018/10/25/no-exit-in-niger/?sub_key=5bbfb06b284d0)

## 7) Did you know? Groundwater Status in Niger

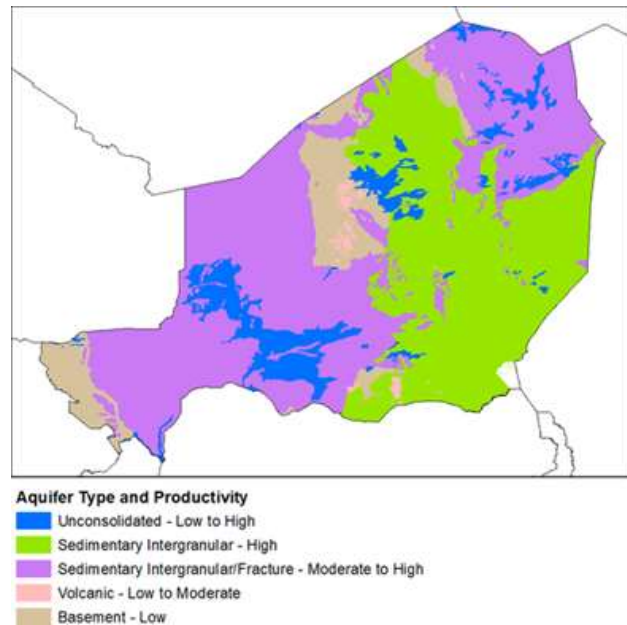
---

Niger has vast quantities of stored groundwater in deep sedimentary aquifers, much of which is likely to be 'fossil' water that is not actively recharged, because of low rainfall. Shallower aquifers, particularly alluvial aquifers in valleys and local weathered (regolith) aquifers in basement, store much smaller amounts of groundwater, but are recharged annually by seasonal rainfall, on which they rely very heavily. In 1995, OSS estimated that Niger used less than 10% of its total groundwater resources; by 2003, this was estimated at 20% (Conseil National de l'Environnement Pour un Developpement Durable).

Some of Niger's groundwater is highly mineralised, related to high evaporation (in shallow aquifers) and/or to age and dissolution of aquifer minerals; however, this is not recognised as a widespread problem (UNICEF 2010). Borehole databases indicate that fresh groundwater occurs across the southern region; there is not enough information for other areas to assess the situation (UNICEF 2010). There are also known local problems of bacterial and nitrate contamination, related to human and animal waste disposal (UNICEF 2010).

Groundwater management and monitoring

A recent German Development Cooperation project, the Integrated Water Resources Management Programme is providing advice to the Niger Basin Authority on groundwater protection. Project work has included the collection and assessment of groundwater data and maps in the Niger basin in order to develop a groundwater database, and to form the basis for future development of a basin hydrogeological map and groundwater modeling. The project also initiated groundwater level monitoring using existing boreholes, using collected data to create groundwater level contour maps for aquifers around Niamey (Menge 2013, Vassolo et al. 2015).



Information on water boreholes and hand dug wells is stored in at least two databases for the central region and the whole country, although there is little information for the north and east of the country. Of a total of more than 24,000 wells and boreholes identified by the Ministry of Water, a UNICEF study (2010) identified some 11,000 for which some information was available. Many of these, but not all, had information on borehole rest (static) water level, but none had geological log or water quality information.

Learn more about this hydrogeology map at:

[http://earthwise.bgs.ac.uk/index.php/Hydrogeology\\_of\\_Niger](http://earthwise.bgs.ac.uk/index.php/Hydrogeology_of_Niger)

## **FON BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

---

John Baird, FON President

Phyllis Dichter Forbes, FON Vice President; Projects Committee Chair

Larry Koff, FON Treasurer; Projects Committee

Cheryl Turner, FON Recording Secretary

Tom Corcoran, Member at large – Projects Committee

Seybou Douma, Member at large – CONUSA

Dale Downes, Member at large – Facebook admin

John Hutchison, Member at large – Projects Committee

Amy Wilson, Member at large – Membership/Bylaws/Camel Express

Penni St. Hilaire, Member at large – Past Secretary/Advisor  
Rabiou Yari, Member at large – Niger Diaspora  
Tom Dechert, Non board – Projects  
Steve Bushell, Non board – Assistant Treasurer

We wish to thank our immediate past President, Meredith McGehee, for leading and guiding FON these past two years, and special appreciation also to Larry Koff and Penni St. Hilaire for continuing their 20+ years of serving on the board.

### Friends of Niger Membership Form (Please print clearly)

---

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ City/State/Zip+4 \_\_\_\_\_

Phones: (H) \_\_\_\_\_ (C) \_\_\_\_\_ (W) \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

Connection to Niger (RPCV, etc.) \_\_\_\_\_ Dates in Niger \_\_\_\_\_

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.*

*Membership dues & donations help fund FON activities – including The Camel Express newsletter, 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. We send receipts so you can take charitable tax deductions.*

### **DUES & DONATIONS**

---

Dues are payable on January 1<sup>st</sup> of each calendar year, but most pay dues and make donations in December after our annual fundraising appeal letter is sent early in the month. You may make a donation at any time. If we haven't received your dues yet for 2018, the first \$20 of your donation will be for your 2018 membership unless earmarked for a specific project. Our annual fundraising appeal for 2019 will come to you in December 2018 with summaries of many projects that FON supports. To make a payment now, you can either go to [www.friendsofniger.org](http://www.friendsofniger.org) to Donate with Paypal, or write a check payable to Friends of Niger and mail to: PO Box 1999, Brookline MA 02446-0017. Thank you very much.

Dues (\$20) ----- (\_\_\_\_\_)

Donation ----- (\_\_\_\_\_)

TOTAL ENCLOSED ----- (\_\_\_\_\_)