

# The Camel Express



Newsletter of the Friends of Niger

**April 2020**

Friends of Niger PO Box 452 Haverford, PA 19041

In this issue:

1. COVID-19
2. Micro loans fostered through FON connections
3. Update on the campaign to seek justice for the family of the hit and run victim- \$5,000 raised!
4. Friends of Niger survey & Board update
5. News –
  - France's Challenge in Africa
  - How can the US help address Africa's youth bulge and turn it into a positive force on the continent?
  - Letter from Africa: 'Why I'm glad I left the UK to go home'
  - Niger army chief fired as terrorists kill 174 soldiers within 2 months, Jan 14, 2020
6. Music & Culture News –
  - Lindsay Rust drumming up world music
  - MDOU MOCTAR touring in US
  - Niger '66 A Peace Corps Diary is now on YouTube:
  - Angelique Kidjo an advocate & ambassador for Africa and women
  - Book recommendation: A Labyrinth of Kingdoms
7. Passing of Geoffrey Geurts 1966 – 2020
8. Enduring Connections – Niger president reunites with his RPCV teacher

From the Editor

---

Dear readers,

Most of us are preoccupied, trying to navigate the unprecedented reality we are experiencing. In addition to thinking about the health of our communities, households and families, as RPCVs and friends of Peace Corps we are reeling from the unprecedented evacuation of all Peace Corps volunteers world-wide. I can only imagine the grueling decision-making that resulted in that conclusion and the unbelievable, herculean task by Peace Corps staff to get everyone home. There's a FaceBook group to support evacuees if you are interested [Returned Peace Corps COVID-19 Evacuation Support]. It is hard to think about other things, but thinking of the future can help us to get through the present. To that end, we are asking once again for your input in a survey. Please share your thoughts freely. We are stronger with your input and participation. Stay home! Save Lives!

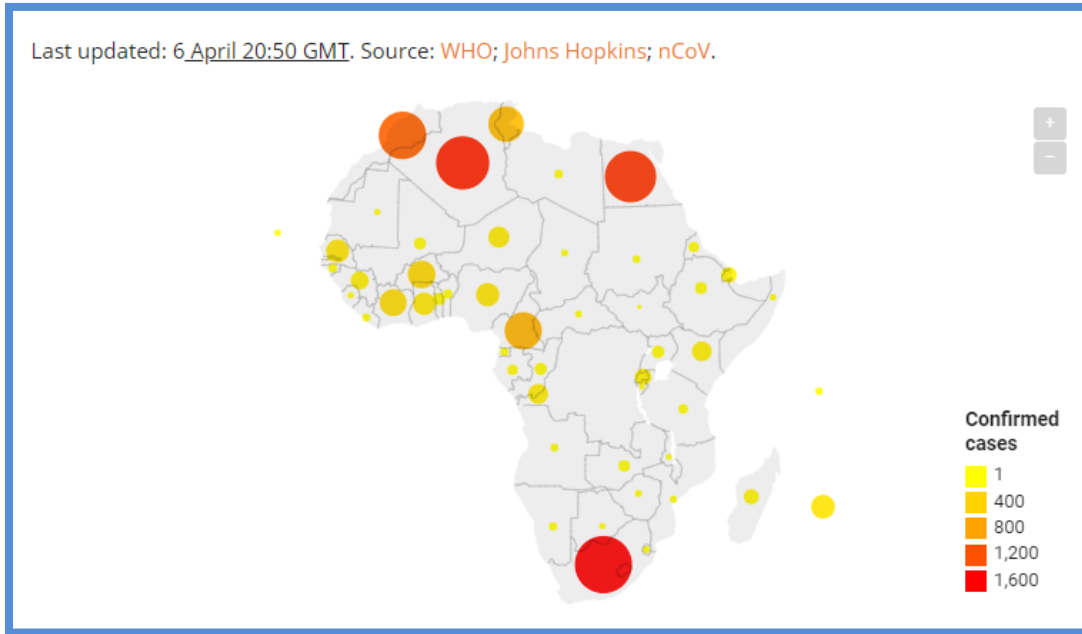
*Amy Wilson, dit Amibula*

# 1) COVID-19

By the time this newsletter hits your in-box anything I write will be outdated. I've been hearing from my friend Morou that Niger is taking the pandemic seriously, issuing stay at home orders—hard to imagine how most households will be able to cope with this. The government is putting out daily statistics. As of April 5 there were 161 patients being treated and 10 deaths attributed to COVID 19. There is a tremendous amount of misinformation flying around via social media.



## VIRUS SPREAD IN AFRICA



Total cases 9,867;  
deaths 482

Here are some links to stories looking at various impacts and implications.



### The other COVID-19 pandemic: Fake news

The global COVID-19 pandemic is happening at a time when sorting facts from fiction is increasingly difficult. In Nigeria, a tsunami of misinformation and disinformation has accompanied the virus' spread, provoking fear and exploiting vulnerabilities. <https://africanarguments.org/2020/03/26/the-other-covid-19-pandemic-fake-news/>

### What Might Africa Teach the World? Covid-19 and Ebola Virus Disease Compared

<https://africanarguments.org/2020/03/17/what-might-africa-teach-the-world-covid-19-and-ebola-virus-disease-compared/>

### Africa's corona response rests on two things: markets and money transfers:

African countries can't just copy rich countries' responses to COVID-19. Here's what they can do instead. <https://africanarguments.org/2020/04/02/africa-coronavirus-response-rests-on-two-things-markets-money-transfers/>

## Africa has a COVID-19 time bomb to defuse

<https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/04/africa-covid-19-time-bomb-defuse/>

## The threat of coronavirus in Africa flags a deeper crisis of global solidarity

<https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/04/covid-19-south-africa-developing-countries>

### 2) Micro loans fostered through FON connections

---

Our project partner Potentiel Terre eagerly engaged with TCP Global after FON made preliminary introductions. Potential Terre contacted TCP Global and together they ran with it. In February after getting seed money from TCP Global, Potentiel Terre issued 34 loans of \$44 each. By late March, by making 2 monthly payments each, they had sufficient repayments to support 6 more loans. These loans built on their program they call Solidarity, Alliance and Work to help vulnerable populations in Dosso, Tillabéri, Maradi, Tahoua, Zinder, Agadez and Niamey in Niger.

Snapshot of one loan recipient:



Zeinabou Mahamadou, dite Habou Salma est une veuve du lutteur de renomme Salma Danrani de Dosso. Après le décès de son époux, elle a installé la préparation et la vente de galette du petit mil et/ou du maïs fermenté appelé localement MASSA. Elle se bat pour subvenir aux besoins de ses enfants encore jeunes. Elle a bénéficié d'un petit prêt de 25,000FCFA TCP GLOBAL à travers Potentiel Terre. «Grace à cet important crédit, j'achète le sac entier qui me permet de faire des économies sur le transport et gagner beaucoup plus sur la quantité. Chaque deux semaine je renouvelle mon stock.

Dieu merci, nous commençons à avoir une alimentation régulière à la maison, » raconte Zeinabou. Zeinabou souhaite aménager son espace et avoir un fond de roulement pour acheter les épices et l'huile en quantité suffisante.

For more information about TCP Global go to: <https://tcpglobal.peacecorpsconnect.org/cpages/home>

### 3) Update on the campaign to seek justice for hit and run victim- \$5,000 raised!

---

Volunteers who served in Niger are particularly tenacious and have deep attachment to Nigeriens. A great example of this is Pamela Britton White going the extra mile to solve a mystery and seek out some justice for her friends. We included the request to donate in our last issue and the result was heartwarming. Pam raised her goal of \$5,000 and sent the money to be hand delivered by Sue Rosenfeld. Please read the full story at: <https://www.gofundme.com/f/seeking-justice-for-Oumarous-family>

*Thanks you again for your generosity to one Nigerien family.  
Please keep Niger and her people -- all of them -- in your thoughts. Don't allow their suffering to be invisible to the outside world.*

*Love to you all  
Pam (Britton White)*

THANK YOU Pam- you do us proud!



Sue Rosenfeld with Mounkaila, Oumarous son

## 4) Friends of Niger survey & Board update

---

The Board has worked hard throughout the last year and has several achievements to their credit: updated bylaws, new board members & committee members, updated policies, updated accounting system and improved working relationships. Much progress was made at our retreat, with greatly enhanced communication and understanding resulting from the time we spent together. The board is hoping to hold a virtual retreat this year around August. With a virtual meeting, we could possibly get an interesting speaker and you could join us—are you interested? Got ideas? Would you like to participate in planning? Please contact the President or Camel Express editor: [president@friendsofniger.org](mailto:president@friendsofniger.org) or [camelexpressnewsletter@gmail.com](mailto:camelexpressnewsletter@gmail.com).

It will soon be time to elect board members. A few **new board members** would be warmly welcomed. New members will be asked to sign on for a two-year term. Interested? Please reply to this email or contact the president or any other board member to learn more.

A new survey is also asking for your ideas and input. We are hoping to hear how you would like to be involved. As a small group of volunteers we depend on your participation and involvement—your donations are awesome!!! of course, but we want to make sure that interested people have a place at the table and that good ideas can be supported and promoted.

Please take the **SURVEY**: [[https://sou.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_6A3uZTPUAIzDT6t](https://sou.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_6A3uZTPUAIzDT6t)]  
Please do the survey even if only to update and verify your contact info—we are also asking your permission to share your info with other members—we hope you will opt in!

## 5) News

---

### France's Challenge in Africa

The Libyan revolution of 2011 brought lasting terrorist mayhem across a broad reach of Africa's former French colonies. Now France needs its allies to help pacify the region — if that can be done.

*French, U.N. and European troops are confronted with a morphing conflict: Groups like the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara feed on local and ethnic divisions, which they exploit to recruit in areas where state structures have disappeared.*

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/02/17/opinion/france-africa.html>, Submitted by Meredith McGehee

### How can the US help address Africa's youth bulge and turn it into a positive force on the continent?

Africa's youth population is growing rapidly and within 30 years the continent will be home to about one-quarter of the world's youth. At a recent congressional hearing, experts discussed how the U.S. government can help create opportunities for youth and turn the "youth bulge" into a positive force on the continent.

<https://www.devex.com/news/how-can-the-us-help-address-africa-s-youth-bulge-96575>

### Letter from Africa: 'Why I'm glad I left the UK to go home'

In common with a lot of Africans who have lived outside the continent, as I neared 60 I started to plan a return home, after spending far too long living in the West.

<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-51428943>

### Journalist Kaka Touda Mamane Goni arrested in Niger over COVID-19 report. March 24, 2020

On March 5, police arrested Kaka Touda, an independent journalist who publishes news reports on his Facebook and Twitter pages, at his home in Niamey, Niger's capital, according to the journalist's lawyer, Boudal Effred Mouloul, who spoke to CPJ via messaging app, and news reports.

<https://cpj.org/2020/03/journalist-kaka-touda-mamane-goni-arrested-in-nige.php>, Posted on FaceBook by Joel Mayer



## 6) Music & Culture News

---

From FON member Lindsay Rust:

Music from Niger is being taught in American schools! My husband and I adapted "Takamba" for publication and now music teachers across the country are sharing it with their students.

#ThirdGoal slam dunk!

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QolsH5r9-  
xc&feature=youtu.be&fbclid=IwAR1qzhnmezcSE37n4xn77bolq9MWfjKw0UUVGTCq3a0qZ4LyPAe  
HIBa4NqA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QolsH5r9-<br/>xc&feature=youtu.be&fbclid=IwAR1qzhnmezcSE37n4xn77bolq9MWfjKw0UUVGTCq3a0qZ4LyPAe<br/>HIBa4NqA)

**Drumming Up World Music (DUWM)** is an innovative, integrated arts program combining ensemble music for drums and xylophones with learning extensions in a variety of subjects, including visual art, dance, geography, social studies, and history. Created by Niger RPCV Lindsay Rust, DUWM aims to inspire a spirit of adventure in students through international discovery, providing a well-rounded experience of the fascinating multicultural diversity of the world.

Check it out at: <https://dancingdrum.com/pages/drumming-up-world-music>



**MDOU MOCTAR** had a tour planned in the US this spring and has rescheduled to the fall—inshalla he may be able to complete the tour and come to a town near you. For tour dates and ticket info: <https://bnds.us/9bubce>

**Niger '66 A Peace Corps Diary** –now on YouTube, check it out!!!  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zfPfvSlme1U> from Judy Irola.  
When I went to YouTube just to check the link, I ended up watching the whole thing! A very well made film!

**Angelique Kidjo** just won Best World Music Album for 'Celia' at the 62nd Grammy Awards, marking her fourth win in the category and fourth Grammy overall. She's also part of the Affirmative Finance Action for Women in Africa which is aimed at bridging the \$42 billion financing gap facing women in Africa.



Check out this short interview:

<https://cheddar.com/media/how-angelique-kidjo-is-working-to-empower-women-in-africa>

(editor's note --I do know she is not from Niger, but she is such an awesome ambassador for the whole continent I wanted to share. Seeing her in concert is fabulous!)

Here she is rocking the Nobel Peace Prize <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1iXVnQkrCk0>

Book recommendation from Mary Ann Matheson

**A Labyrinth of Kingdoms:** 10,000 miles through Islamic Africa, by Steve Kemper

Available Online: At Good Reads <https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/13707567-a-labyrinth-of-kingdoms>; or try Powells Books Portland OR (shamelessly supporting my favorite store) <https://www.powells.com/>

From Barney Smith Since we're all stuck inside, you can go ahead and read my **Peace Corps Graphic novel** for free!

"2 Years" is a graphic novel that satirizes the Peace Corps experience in a way that Peace Corps volunteers and others can relate. Follow John, a Truce Corps volunteer who has been posted in Telafi, the poorest territory on mars with about a dozen other volunteers.



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oKjlqgNiwbQ>

## 7) Passing of Geoffrey Geurts 1966 – 2020



Zacharie and Benjamin Geurts, his children Lori Geurts and Mike Geurts, his sister and brother Robert Geurts, his father Pardiese, his wife are sad to share the news of the passing of Geoff Geurts on Sunday, January 12, 2020, after a long and valiant battle with cancer. Last goodbyes were held at the Crematorium of Père Lachaise, January 2020, and celebrations in the US (Wisconsin and Washington DC area) will be planned this summer.

Geoff was in Niger from 92 to 95 working in the African Food Systems Initiative program in Torodi. Most recently Geoff worked for UNESCO in Paris.

Comments can be left at: <https://www.inmemori.com/ggeurts-e41bg>

## 8) Enduring Connections

Mary Ann Matheson, Niger RPCV 1966-68, was invited in 2017 to NYC to see Niger President Issoufou Mahamadou at the United Nations. He sent her airline tickets and made hotel arrangements for her. She was his teacher in Madaoua when he was 12 years old and he wanted to thank her for the inspiration she provided that led him to the presidency. Quite a positive reunion!

### YOUR DONATIONS FUEL THIS WORK

You may make a donation at any time. To donate now, you can either go to [www.friendsofniger.org](http://www.friendsofniger.org) to use PayPal, or write a check payable to Friends of Niger and mail to: Friends of Niger PO Box 452 Haverford, PA 19041. Thank you very much.

For more about Friends of Niger:

- Our website (volunteers needed to help with the website): <http://www.friendsofniger.org/>
- Join & follow us at: <https://www.facebook.com/FriendsOfNiger/>
- Submit news topics and articles: [camelexpressnewsletter@gmail.com](mailto:camelexpressnewsletter@gmail.com)
- Contact President John Baird, [president@friendsofniger.org](mailto:president@friendsofniger.org)

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

## Last Word

Seyni Kountche preface to a 1978 French 'coffee-table' book about Niger

*Ceux qui ont eu l'occasion – j'allais dire la chance—de visiter le Niger ont tous été frappés par une seule et même réalité : celle de sa très grande diversité. Diversité des régions, diversité des ethnies, diversité des mœurs et des traditions. Toutes valeurs mêlées dans une sorte de syncrétisme millénaire, et qui ont lentement structuré et différencié la personnalité nigérienne. Les images de cet album illustrent, dans une certaine mesure, l'ampleur et la richesse de cette diversité. Mais elles montrent également la décontraction particulière qui caractérise notre peuple, ainsi que certaines scènes et occupations dont la plupart reflètent assez bien les réalités quotidiennes du Niger d'aujourd'hui.*

*Tout au long de ces pages, le Niger apparaît donc comme un pays sobre mais prenant, austère mais digne, démuné mais riche de sa jeunesse, de la fierté et de la sérénité de son peuple, des promesses de ses ressources naturelles à peine entamées.*

*Certains lecteurs auraient peut-être préféré un album plus «alléchant», cédant plus aux subtilités de l'art, qu'à la prestation des faits. Le mérite de celui-ci est d'être «naturel», c'est-à-dire de ne faire aucune place aux montages, d'écarter toute suggestivité agressive, pour s'en remettre à la seule sensibilité du photographe, et de l'art indiscutable de celui-ci de conférer aux images une certaine limpidité qui leur fait leur mérite, et une parfaite netteté qui fait leur force.*

*Je ne doute pas qu'après avoir parcouru cet ouvrage, tout lecteur pour lequel le Niger n'était qu'un nom, aura découvert non seulement un peuple noble et attachant, mais un pays à la fois jeune et fascinant.*



*Lieutenant-Colonel SEYNI KOUNTCHE,  
Président du Conseil Militaire Suprême  
Chef de l'Etat de la République du Niger.*



# The Camel Express



Newsletter of the Friends of Niger

**August 2020**

Friends of Niger PO Box 452 Haverford, PA 19041

In this issue:

1. COVID-19 in Niger - Timeline and Update
2. Introducing the new Board of Directors
3. Member Survey – what you said
4. Naney Inc.– a nonprofit built around solid connections to people
5. Expanding Lives - COVID-19 Response targets young girls, led by young Nigerien women
6. News & Culture
  - Wax print: Africa's pride or colonial legacy
  - The Palgrave Handbook of African Education and Indigenous Knowledge
  - Africa Memoir: 50 Years, 54 Countries, One American Life
  - Hausa books on offer
  - Do you know this artist?

From the Editor

---

Dear Readers,

I don't know about you, but I am ready to come out of the Looking Glass now and back to the real world. Good thing we learned the meaning of patience in Niger—my villagers were constantly admonishing me for not having enough 'suuru'! So we can only keep moving forward and do what we can. One startling thing I heard was that the government of Burkina chartered a flight to help Burkinabey who were “stranded” in the US get home. Let that sink in. Let's all look for simpler, healthier times to come.

*Amy Wilson, dit Amibula*

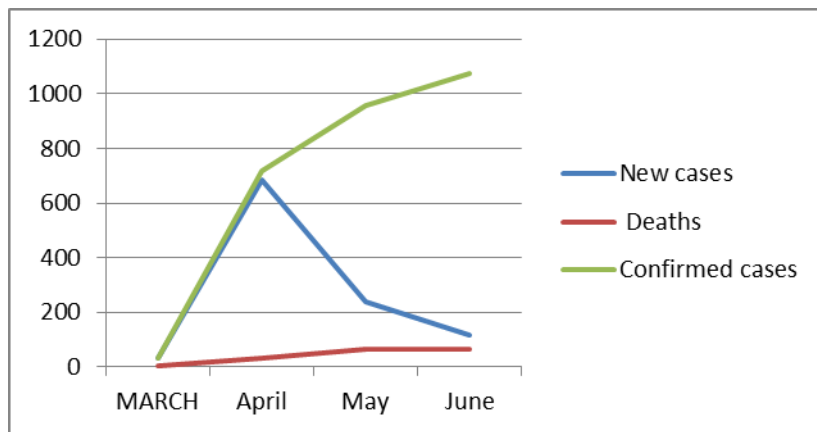
## 1) COVID-19 in Niger Timeline and Update

---

The first case in the Niger was confirmed in Niamey March 19, a 36-year-old man from Nigeria. He had travelled to Lomé, Accra, Abidjan, and Ouagadougou. Following this announcement, the airports in Niamey and Zinder were closed to prevent the spread of the coronavirus. The first death related to COVID-19 in the country was on 24 March.

	New cases	Deaths	Confirmed cases
March	34	3	34
April	685	32	719
May	239	64	958
June	117	67	1075





COVID-19 in Niger Timeline

## 2) Introducing the new Board of Directors



Wahooo! We have a great new slate of board members for the Friends of Niger. Please watch this space! As we think some exciting new things can happen with so much new energy and talent. Thanks to all the newbies and the returning board members for stepping up and offering your time and expertise to this organization. New ideas, new connections, new energy, new skills—we are looking forward to awesome new synergy.

Here is a jumble to test your knowledge of the new board:

### *Match the Board member to the fact.*

Need to go back and study their statements? [Click here](#)

#### Board Members

John Baird, Decatur IL - 1 yr  
 Alix Barstow Fedoruk, Dummerston VT - 2 yr  
 Christy Collins, Washington, DC - 2 yr  
 Phyllis Dichter Forbes - 1 yr  
 Seybou Douma, Bronx, New York, CONUSA  
 Dale Downes - East Lansing, MI - 1 yr  
 Gary Geoghegan, Haverford PA - 1 yr  
 Myriam Kaplan-Pasternak DVM, Nicasio, CA – 2 yr  
 Michael Klinger, Acton, MA - 2 yr  
 Larry Koff, Jamaica Plain, MA, 1 yr  
 Trish Meyer, Redmond, OR - 2 yr  
 Ismaghil Ag Moussa, North Las Vegas, NV - 2 yr term  
 Amy Wilson, Central Point OR - 1 yr term  
 Rabiou Yari, Cheverly, MD - 1-yr term

#### Facts shared about themselves

- Lived 18 years in Niger
- Facilitated Rotary projects in Niger
- Community organizer
- Farmer to Farmer in Haiti
- Trained as an attorney
- Well digging project in Niger
- Promoted dry season gardens
- Maradi Farm School Project
- Manufacturing livestock feed
- Taught Physical Ed in Niger
- MA from Concordia in teaching
- Medical Doctor
- PC Director in Niger 77-80
- Hospital reform consultant in Niger

*Please note that board terms are typically 2 year terms; this time around we used the option of one year terms to get ongoing coverage and overlap on the board.*

### 3) Member Survey – what you said

---

You knocked the survey out of the park – Again! We received 107 replies to the survey- Way to go! We are in early stages of sifting through ideas and looking for ways to incorporate and act on what you shared. Initially we plan to convene a couple of Zoom meetings around the key topics of Engaging Members and Social Activities, Projects/Development, and Education/Advocacy. We will be inviting folks who had specific feedback on those topics and making meetings open to others who are interested. We will probably reach out via email and Facebook to let you know as events get planned. Please reach out to us if you are a meeting planner/facilitator kinda person-- we'd love to have help preparing any and all of these meetings.

Full survey is available to members on request, public version (without personal information) is on our website under MEMBER INFO: [CLICK HERE](#)

Here are some highlights from the survey:

- Almost everyone replied that they would like their contact information to be shared within the group. This is great because we can more easily increase networking among the membership without compromising our pledge to keep your info confidential (as required by NPCA). If you would like to opt in and have not already done so, please reply to this newsletter or contact any board member to let us know—[email: YES- Share my INFO]
- A lot of you had enthusiasm for connecting & engaging, more than 30 people said they would like to be involved in organizing some kind of get-together!! You offered to lead activities such as: Happy hour, Hausa Conversation Club, Events in the Boston area/ other areas, engaging BU program alumni, Reunion.
- You had a lot of specific feedback, ideas and connections related to development activities.
- Several substantive ideas for engaging and involving members and best yet—many of you volunteered to get more involved on committees and the board
- Many great ideas about advocacy will be followed up and reviewed via open Zoom meetings soon
- You are already doing many education activities including classroom presentations, community presentations, tabling, etc. 149 activities checked off- way to go with the Third Goal stuff!! In a future Zoom meeting we hope to explore your suggestions of ways FON members can support each other and promote education.

Thank you again for responding enthusiastically to the survey. We are a richer organization for your active participation.

### 4) Naney Inc.– a nonprofit built by a Niger RPCV around people connections

---

Naney is all about relationships. The NGO, founded in 2017, grew out of Jocelyn Farrington's ongoing relationship with and commitment to the villagers she got to know as a volunteer. After completing her Peace Corps service she stayed in contact with her village, monitoring projects she was involved with during her service. She continued to participate with villagers as they took on new community efforts. In recent years Jocelyn pulled in other volunteers who had served in the area, who incidentally had some fabulous expertise and knowledge themselves, and formalized these efforts by forming a non-profit organization. Naney – which means “trust” in Zarma – is founded on the belief in trust and established relationships with communities in Niger.



After her Peace Corps service, Jocelyn embarked on a career in international development, with now more than 16 years' experience in West Africa, giving her the opportunity to travel to Niger regularly. She has found that long term successes were possible with investments in capital and capacity and efforts based on trust and relationships.

So far Naney's work has been focused in the immediate area around Kirtachi in the Kollo Arrondissement, Niamey Department. Most recently they have established a relationship with TCP to create access to capital in the form of small revolving loan funds.

NANEY starts with solidarity groups that come together and save money that is then loaned out among members in very modest quantities. During this period, beneficiaries invest in their own future and learn how to work together and make shared decisions. Once solidarity groups prove their ability to work together, individual group members are eligible for sheep loans and peanut loans which are managed by participants in groups, self-sustaining and self-generating. NANEY helps facilitate these discussions and reflections while the investments are still managed by the participants. Once established and experienced, the groups are formed into official associations which allows them to access credit and participate in other more formal activities. Naney communities – more than 350 participants – self-manage more than \$15,000 on their own, with 100% repayment.



Naney has no paid staff at this point, yet board members manage to visit Niger most years for onsite monitoring and direct communication with local leaders. In the interim, communication is maintained via regular telephone contact and through WhatsApp and other messaging apps. Their local project leader, Boureima, sends regular updates which take the form of photos and photographed handwritten reports which he then sends via WhatsApp. This is a practical and effective method which allows Boureima to be successful and effective with the technology he has available and without putting unrealistic expectations on him.

This seems like a great model. Naney would like to expand to other communities in Niger and thinks this model is highly replicable. Key ingredients are connections. **THAT'S WHERE YOU COME IN** dear readers. Is there a key individual in the area where you served who might be in a position to help facilitate this work? Are

you willing to do some liaison work and coordinate with Naney? The advent of new communication technologies is making this more and more feasible. It can be hard to imagine depending on how long ago you were there, but even small villages now seem to have cell phone coverage or potential of some sort. Naney uses its local relationships on the ground to monitor the security situation and is exploring partnerships with local organizations to expand their reach despite ongoing security concerns. Naney also appreciates any and all support of its ongoing work in the Kollo area.

Naney Founder Jocelyn Farrington currently lives and works in Dakar Senegal. We spoke with Cara Greger who serves as Secretary of the nonprofit and has been sharing lots of great stories and images on the Peace Corps Niger Facebook page lately. Cara's Peace Corps service was doing bird survey work (job envy here from the editor!!) and now she manages





Big Stone Lake State Park in Minnesota, a Native Prairie/Oak Savanna Scientific and Natural Area—go check it out! Friends of Niger would like to support great efforts by FON members and partners that benefit Niger and Nigeriens. Please let us know about other organizations benefitting Niger which we can profile and promote. For more on Naney, please go to their website: <https://www.naneyinc.org/>

*NOTE 1: TCP is an RPCV-led effort that provides capital for revolving micro loan programs in several countries. See Camel Express August September 2019 for more info on TCP or go to <https://tcpglobal.peacecorpsconnect.org/cpages/home>*

*NOTE 2: Big Stone Lake State Park, [https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/state\\_parks/park.html?id=spk00115#](https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/state_parks/park.html?id=spk00115#)*

## 5) Expanding Lives COVID-19 Response Project



Expanding Lives is working with some of their program graduates to lead projects aimed at COVID targeting girls at risk of early marriage because of the additional economic burden of and pandemic-related education and prevention. They will be working with 100 girls from Safo, Tchadoua, and Ague (outside Maradi), and Tahoua and Madoua. This project is being led by Nigerien graduates of our Chicago-based conference, who will mentor and provide resources to the participants.

This leadership opportunity for the Chicago program participants provides crucial experience for future employment. They will leverage community partnerships and local contacts to provide the girls with masks, soap, and school supplies while conducting routine check-ins to monitor their studies and to help prepare them for the upcoming academic year. When schools reopen, Expanding

Lives will sponsor the mentees by covering their school registration fees.

The workshops will cost about \$50 per girl which includes the leadership skills and project management for our young women. Please consider contributing to Expanding Lives at

<https://www.expandinglives.org/donate>

## 6) News & Culture

### **Wax print: Africa's pride or colonial legacy?**

Fridays are the day to wear “African print” outfits in Ghanaian offices, yet some designers are boycotting such fabrics - arguing they are not actually African. The history behind the designs is complex - and involves several continents. Read more at:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/extra/4fq4hrxvn/wax-print>



**Book Chapter by Nigerien scholar** in: The Palgrave Handbook of African Education and Indigenous Knowledge. Palgrave Macmillan, Cham, Abidogun J., Falola T. (eds). [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-38277-3\\_23](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-38277-3_23). Check out the Chapter written by Nigerien scholar

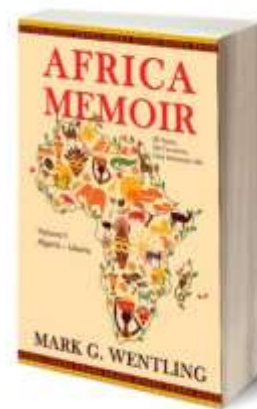
Hima Halimatou. (2020) ‘Francophone’ Education Intersectionalities: Gender, Language, and Religion. *This chapter explores how the language of instruction could empower as much as dispossess children in Niger. Link to her website which is filled with interesting material and links.* <https://halimatouhima.wordpress.com/category/niger/>



**Book coming out soon:** *Africa Memoir: 50 Years, 54 Countries, One American Life: 1970 – 2020*, by Mark Wentling, former PC Niger Director

This memoir tells the incredible lifetime story that takes the reader to all 54 African countries. There is a chapter on each country which describes the author's firsthand experiences and exposes his views on the future prospects of each country. In every chapter, the author offers some eye-opening impressions that no other book on Africa can provide. Big chapter on Niger!

Pre-order at: <http://www.open-bks.com/library/moderns/africa-memoir/about-book.html>



### **Hausa books on offer**

We got a note about some Hausa books to be shared with someone teaching or learning Hausa. For more information please contact Anjali at: [ajctravels@yahoo.com](mailto:ajctravels@yahoo.com)

### **Do you know this artist?**

This and other cute notecards were for sale in Niamey during the early 90s. The artist is Pam Toh, Tracery de Niamey. Please share her contact info with us if you know her regarding permission to use these images. –Thanks!



### **YOUR DONATIONS FUEL THIS WORK**

You may make a donation at any time. To donate now, you can either go to [www.friendsofniger.org](http://www.friendsofniger.org) to use PayPal, or write a check payable to Friends of Niger and mail to: Friends of Niger PO Box 452 Haverford, PA 19041. Thank you very much.

For more about Friends of Niger:

- Our website (volunteers needed to help with the website): <http://www.friendsofniger.org/>
- Join & follow us at: <https://www.facebook.com/FriendsOfNiger/>
- Submit news topics and articles: [camelexpressnewsletter@gmail.com](mailto:camelexpressnewsletter@gmail.com)
- Contact President John Baird, [president@friendsofniger.org](mailto:president@friendsofniger.org)

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



Boula: PCV Michele Miles, RPCV Francie (Pouch) Downes, future PCV Joey Downes, RPCV Dale Downes, Ali Adamou Service d'Agriculture

# The Camel Express



Newsletter of the Friends of Niger

**November 2020**

Friends of Niger PO Box 452 Haverford, PA 19041

In this issue:

- Annual Mailing on its way soon
- Flood Relief and ongoing work
  - Friends of Niger responds to urgent needs
  - US Government humanitarian Support
  - Ruth DeMaio launches GoFundMe Flood Relief Effort
  - Nomad Foundation continues work during pandemic, responds to flooding
  - Request for help with micro-credit projects
- Remembering our friends and colleagues: Jim Schneider, Sue Rosenfeld, Pat Alio
- News
- Music & Culture News

From the Editors

---

Dear readers,

We sincerely hope our newsletter finds you and your families well. FON has been very busy on many fronts: new board members, emergency flood projects and a board retreat. The newsletter welcomes the enthusiastic help of Ismaghil, a new board member who teaches elementary school and lives with his wife and 4 girls in Las Vegas NV. Some of you may know him from his volunteer work with Peace Corps in Niamey.

*Ismaghil Ag Moussa & Amy Wilson*

## **ANNUAL MAILING COMING SOON!**

---

“Niger – where’s that?”

“Go to Nigeria and turn left!”

Dear Friends of Niger,

The proverb “By working together we can achieve great things” is an apt theme for our request to you this year. Last year’s appeal letter prompted this funny story from Peter Easton RPCV 1964:

“In September 1964 when our Peace Corps III group got ready to leave the training site in Carbondale, IL for the trip to Niger, we were strongly advised to label all our air freight carefully “N I G E R.”

“We flew out through Philadelphia, not JFK, with a layover there in the City of Brotherly Love; and, as it happened, that was the same way in which our air freight was routed. So, to be on the safe side, we sent some folks down to the warehouse at the Phillie port to check on things. They found that the shipping company had assigned one old employee to add “-I-A” to every one of our bags! Luckily we saved matters in extremis.”

Peter’s shortcut response to people lost while looking for Niger – “Go to Nigeria and turn left!”

Friends of Niger will be sending out our annual appeal this month. Please be watching for it in your mailbox or inbox, or both! The appeal will contain a report on the projects we have supported and the emergency relief we have sent this year.

“By working together we can achieve great things”. We look forward to your generous support to that we can continue doing great things for Niger and Nigeriens this coming year.

Thank you very much,

John Baird

President, Friends of Niger

## Friends of Niger Flood Response

*Friends of Niger worked through member contacts to identify 5 groups looking for assistance with flood relief work, allocating \$1700 to each group.*

### Preliminary results of FON 2020 Flood assistance:

PARTNERS	LOCATIONS	RESULTS
§ HIMMA	§ Maradi	§ 1420 mosquito nets
§ Cadres et Etudiants du Niger	§ Niamey: Galbal,	§ 3,042,000 cfa / \$5,500 medicine distributed
§ CONUSA	§ N'Doungou	§ 12 mosquito breeding sites sprayed
§ Alliance des jeunes pour un développement endogène/Nurse Volunteers	§ Agadez:	§ 928,750 cfa basic food distributed
§ OVD Tedhilt	§ Mont Bagzam Dept of Tchirozerin, and village of Tchizamene	§ Blood drive
§ Association pour le Développement de l'Education et al Sauvegarde de la Santé (ADESS)		

### ***New FON Board member Ismaghil Ag Moussa shares his experience of coordinating a flood relief project in the north:***

I contacted OVD Tedhilt in September to see if they need help assisting victims of food or malaria; Organization Vie & Development Tedhilt, Tedhilt in Tamasheq stands for help. They responded very quickly and I passed the message to FON.

To coordinate the project, I communicated with OVD a few days a week, mainly on What'sApp. We talked about what to do in order to receive assistance from FON, what to do after they received the funds and after the project.

I think communicating consistently with any team helps get the work done with less mistakes or misinformation and improve the work organization.

After I received the funds from our treasurer Gary, I immediately sent them to OVD via Ria online money Transfer on October 8th. Ria has a branch in any Walmart store, but funds can also be sent online on their website, [riamoneytransfer.com/us/en](http://riamoneytransfer.com/us/en)

I spent some time going through all the agencies (Western Union, Xoom, Money Gram, Ria, etc.). I finally picked Ria because it has the best exchange Rate \$1=550 fcfa and the cheapest fee.

The member of OVD named Zeinabou (seen here distributing the treated mosquito nets to villagers and nomads in Azawad, remote area in Agadez region), worked for Rotary, Oxfam, OIM and Red Cross. As soon as Zeinabou picked the funds on October 9th, 2020, they started running around Agadez looking for the best treated mosquito nets (not the regular ones, that are cheap and don't last long). At the same time, they were going around pharmacies and medicines stores in Agadez buying Malaria Medicines.

After they finished their purchases they traveled to the village of Tchizamene. To get to Dannat region and to Tchizamene village, you have to take a car from Agadez to RTA, on the way to Arlit. Once at RTA which is a small stop with a few shops and food places, you leave the main road and hit a dusty bush road for hours before you get to Tchizamene, a town serving nomads in a wide region with a clinic and school. With the help of the Chief of the Village and the nurse, OVD sent messages to people and nomads within the area. People gathered at the clinic and received treated mosquito nets for their



families. The malaria medicines were stocked in the clinic to treat patients. (Unsafe to directly distribute malaria medicines to villagers and nomads, the vast majority of them can't read).

The midwife, nurse and his assistant work in difficult conditions, they don't have beds for patients. Patients have to lie on the ground with IVs hanging on trees, see pictures. I am impressed with the OVD's reaction and performance on this project. They reacted as quickly as possible to get the work done knowing that a lot of patients are waiting, suffering due the malaria, many have died this year. I am looking forward to continuing working with OVD and helping people in need. OVD is working on another project (they need help getting at least 10 beds in the clinic, 4 solar batteries to keep the electricity running 24/7, etc.,). On behalf of all the villagers, the chief of the village expressed his gratitude to FON and OVD, see video to be posted soon our website.



## **US Government Response**

Niamey, Niger, September 28, 2020 – The U.S. Government, through the United States Department of State will provide \$6.5 million in humanitarian aid to Niger. The U.S. government's Agency for International Development, Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance, will provide an additional 600,000 to assist 8,750 flood-affected individuals comprising 1,250 households in the Maradi region. The department of Guidan Roundji, where the assistance will be focused, is the most affected within the Maradi region. [<https://ne.usembassy.gov/united-states-allocate-humanitarian-and-emergency-assistance/>]



## **Birni N’Konni GoFundMe by Ruth DeMaio**

Returned volunteer Ruth DeMaio (health educator 1970-72) decided to mobilize her own contacts.

She has set up a GoFundMe site to gather relief that she will channel through friends and Birni community leaders who have successfully coordinated similar efforts in the past. If you would like to contribute to her effort to send donations directly through this personal channel, please search <gofundme ruth demaio Niger>. <https://www.gofundme.com/f/flood-amp-famine-relief-for-niger>

*“Na gode. Allah shi barka lahiya,”* Ruth Rakia Sitton DeMaio, RPCV Niger 70-72

## **Nomad Foundation continues work during pandemic, responds to flooding**

After delays because of illness and flooding, we finally were able to complete training 6 new matrones by moving from our Tamesna education center to a nomad's tent. The rains were so heavy no one could get to us so we went to them. I hope our American volunteers will be able to go back in 2021 to check on things, but if we can't, our work will not stop. We have so far trained 51 matrones who have delivered 2500 babies.

<https://nomadfoundation.org/mission-2019-the-work-goes-on-during-the-pandemic>



With all the rains this year, our patient volume at the clinic has greatly increased. Rainy season brings malaria every year, but this is worse than most. We added a second nurse to help and are starting a malaria prevention and treatment program in two communities to see if we can make a difference.

<https://nomadfoundation.org/malaria>

## **Micro credit program looking for a champion**

---

Friends of Niger is looking for a volunteer who will work with TCP and our Board to assist groups seeking micro credit funding in Niger. TCP is a micro credit program that was begun by RPCVs in Columbia. Five groups have already been funded in Niger. It is a successful community building model. TCP and FON will assist interested individual become familiar with program and responsibilities. Please contact John Baird, President of FON or Larry Koff, board member and member of the Project committee if you are interested.

[<https://tcpglobal.peacecorpsconnect.org/>]

## **Remembering our friends and colleagues**

---

**James Bernard Schneider** a member of Niger III Group 1964-1966 passed away peacefully at home in Chelsea, Quebec on March 17, 2020. Jim's leadership and dedication to the Peace Corps and Friends of Niger will long be remembered. After Peace Corps service and participating in some training programs for new volunteers, Jim moved to Canada where he would be involved in labor and social justice movements throughout his life. While he never forgot his early years in West Africa it was not until the 1990's that he truly renewed his connection to Niger. Beginning in 1998 working with Meredith McGee and Terry O'Leary, Jim resuscitated FON. Under Jim's leadership, FON began a newsletter, organized two trips of former volunteers and parents of volunteers in 2002 and 2005, carried out many reunions beginning in 1998 in Minneapolis-St Paul, as well as meetings in Washington DC, and facilitated the production of the video A Brother from Niger. One of the highlights of Jim's organizational abilities was the placing a wreath at the grave of President Kennedy in Arlington Cemetery August 5, 2001 honoring Sue Rosenfeld, President Kennedy and 40 years of Peace Corps service in Niger. The presentation he gave is written up in the September 2001 issue of the Camel Express.

Beloved by the family and friends, Jim will be remembered as one who helped build towards that better world.



Jim Schneider and Sue Rosenfeld place a wreath on the grave of John F Kennedy at Arlington National Cemetery on behalf of Friends of Niger at the event of the Celebration of Niger ceremony August 2001

**Sue Rosenfeld**, 72, a New Jersey native who spent the majority of her life as an educator in Africa, passed away on October 10 in her hometown of Niamey, Niger, after a lengthy illness. She left for Africa in 1977/8 to serve as a Peace Corps volunteer in Joal, Senegal, and would live in Africa for the rest of her life. After years in Senegal Sue was awarded a Fulbright Fellowship and moved to Bujumbura, Burundi, where she would remain until she moved to Niamey. She taught English at the American Cultural Center and served as the coordinator for Boston University's foreign study program in Niamey until the program was terminated in 2010. She remained there as a teacher and educator until her death.

---

In addition to her roles with the Peace Corps and Boston University, she spent much of her life teaching English as a second language (TESOL). She served as cross-cultural facilitator and community historian to many persons and institutions. She is best-remembered for her willingness to connect, mentor and aid others, including assisting several African students to attend college in the United States.

She is survived by her brother, Josh, who remains in Elizabeth, and her long-time companion Ahmadou Mbaye of Dakar, Senegal. She is the cousin of author Judy Blume and also survived by her dogs, and Bebe, a chimpanzee she cared for in Niamey.

Her body remains in Niamey, while her soul remains in all who knew her.

A sharing page has been set up on our website at: <http://www.friendsofniger.org/sue-rosenfeld-in-memorium/>



**Patricia Joy Alio** 78, was from Duluth, Minnesota, the second child of fourteen. She joined Peace Corps at age 22 years old and was stationed in Niamey, Niger. After four years she joined the Niger public school system and taught Physical Education, focusing on organizing girls' sports teams.

It was in Niger that she met and married her love, Dr. Aboubacar Alio, and they eventually had five children. They were married for 29 years until his death in 1999.

Pat taught at College Mariama and CEG III in Niamey, CEG I in Tahoua and CEG XI. She also served as supervisor for the Boston University Student Practicum Program in Niger, taught English part-time at the American Cultural Center's English Language Program in Niamey (where she was Director for 5 years). Her passion for education inspired her to write several workbooks, including a teachers' guide to teaching English in Middle School, English language workbooks for elementary students, and a bi-lingual children's book on dinosaurs from Niger.

Pat helped co-found ABC School in Niamey with her daughter Dr. Amina Alio. In 2015, Pat taught for one year at Porter Elementary School in Tampa, Florida. She helped organize and was an instructor for the ESL Program for First Baptist Church of Temple Terrace.

Patricia, known as "Pat" or "Patty" to her friends and affectionately called "Mammy" in Niger by people of all ages, had an impact on thousands of lives through her teaching, mentorship and community work throughout her life.

Patricia refreshed many people with joy and encouragement. She always emphasized the positive side of any situation and of any person. She also enjoyed a good laugh and had an infectious smile. Two verses that best describe Patricia's life and journey here on earth would be Philemon 1:7 "Your love has given me great joy and encouragement, because you...have refreshed the hearts of the Lord's people" and Proverbs 15:13 "A cheerful heart is good medicine...".

Mourning her death are 10 siblings, her adult children and their spouses, her 15 grandchildren, two great grandchildren, 46 nieces and nephews, and extended family and friends in Niger and across several countries.

*See Camel Express article Jan 2019 'Where are they now: Pat Alio'*

## News

- Joe Biden veut se démarquer de Donald Trump dans les relations avec l'Afrique. [Reactions to Biden's election from African leaders]

La politique étrangère de la future administration de Joe Biden n'est pas encore définie. Joe Biden est resté plutôt prudent sur la politique extérieure que son administration souhaite mener. Mais son équipe affiche des signaux positifs pour un rapprochement avec le continent africain.

<https://www.rfi.fr/fr/afrique/20201107-joe-biden-veut-d%C3%A9marquer-donald-trump-les-relations-afrique>

- In Niger, an Architect Looking to the Country's Design Traditions  
Eschewing a Western definition of modernity, Mariam Kamara instead conceives of buildings and spaces that account for how people really live.  
<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/08/10/t-magazine/mariam-kamara-architect-design.html>
- A phone call and a lesson from Niger in the time of COVID, by William F.S. Miles (RPCV Niger, 1977-1979), Professor Department of Political Science  
Nigeriens reaching out to American friends and colleagues to see how they're doing prompts intercultural reflection.  
<https://www.peacecorpsconnect.org/articles/feature-hide-not-your-sorrow>
- Whatever Happened To ... The Guy From Niger Who Dreamed Of Being A Leather Maestro?  
September 7, 2020  
<https://www.npr.org/sections/goatsandsoda/2020/09/07/909204587/whatever-happened-to-the-guy-from-niger-who-dreamed-of-being-a-leather-maestro>

## Music & Culture News

---

- Peace Corps Libya memoir, <https://www.101arabiantales.com/>

### YOUR DONATIONS FUEL THIS WORK

You may make a donation at any time. To donate now, you can either go to [www.friendsofniger.org](http://www.friendsofniger.org) to use PayPal, or write a check payable to Friends of Niger and mail to: Friends of Niger PO Box 452 Haverford, PA 19041. Thank you very much.

For more about Friends of Niger:

- Our website (volunteers needed to help with the website): <http://www.friendsofniger.org/>
- Join & follow us at: <https://www.facebook.com/FriendsOfNiger/>
- Submit news topics and articles: [camelexpressnewsletter@gmail.com](mailto:camelexpressnewsletter@gmail.com)
- Contact President John Baird, [president@friendsofniger.org](mailto:president@friendsofniger.org)

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

