

# The Camel Express



Newsletter of the Friends of Niger

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**January 2021**

Friends of Niger PO Box 452 Haverford, PA 19041

In this issue:

- Member engagement and new possibilities
- FON flood relief /malaria prevention projects: more results from Agadez
- Presidential Elections in Niger
- Passing of Niger's Ambassador to the United States: His Excellency Abdallah Wafy
- Former Niger President Mamadou Tandja Dies At Age 82
- Passing of Irma Poots 64-66
- News, Music & Culture

From the Editors

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Dear readers,

Happy New Year! We are hoping you are staying safe and keeping hope with these trying times. This letter is an eclectic mix as is becoming our habit. We do want to draw your attention to our member engagement possibilities and encourage you to get back to us with ideas and suggestions. Please let us know how we're doing and what you would like to see in these newsletters.

*Ismaghil Ag Moussa & Amy Wilson*

## **Member engagement and new possibilities**

Friends of Niger represents a treasure trove of skills, abilities, dedication and love for Niger. The mission of the Friends of Niger has always included a focus on engaging and connecting folks with a connection to Niger. We are hoping to take this up a notch with new options to engage you.

FON Mission:

- 1. Connecting and engaging people who have connections to Niger, including diaspora Nigeriens, and people who have worked or are working in Niger.*
- 2. Supporting and promoting development and humanitarian activities in Niger*
- 3. Advocating with Americans and educating Americans for the benefit of Niger & Nigeriens*

We received lots of interest and ideas from you in recent surveys about more things we could do to build on the first mission area--engagement. Keeping up with current events and the conversion to all things online has offered us more tools to move ahead with member engagement. Here are some of the options we are discussing to engage you and inspire your participation.

**Social Get-togethers** - A number of people are interested in convening get-togethers. We hope to hold a zoom session with those folks via Zoom soon to see what ideas come to the fore.

Regional gatherings? Period of service groupings? Local language happy hours? Or ??

**Non-Profit Networking** – We'd like to convene non-profits like us who are mostly US-based and are working in Niger to share notes and look for ways to support each other. Please help us add

to our knowledge base! A partial list of groups we know of is on our website:

<http://www.friendsofniger.org/features/others-in-niger/>

**Panel Discussion: gathering/expanding of the minds.** We are planning to dip our toe in the water with an online session for our members. Perhaps you have some ideas for a theme, topics or panel speakers of interest to our members?

**Please share any and all ideas with us:** [camelexpressnewsletter@gmail.com](mailto:camelexpressnewsletter@gmail.com) Better yet, maybe you would like to join us in the planning of this effort! Please contact us!

**Update your contact info and grant us permission to share you contacts with others.**

As a member of National Peace Corps Association we can't share your information with others if you don't give us permission. Please take a minute to give us that permission: either send an email saying "YES please share my contact with group members", or better yet, go to our website and update your contact and service info at <http://friendsofniger.org/pdf/MembershipFormFillable.pdf>

**Join & follow us on Facebook:** [\(Friends of Niger\) FON](#)

The newly constituted group serves as a forum to connect those who have lived and worked in Niger to share information about Niger and current events affecting Niger. We welcome your participation and only draw the line at prohibiting political or religious propaganda. JOIN US!

### LET'S PLAY JEOPARDY!!

Category:	Notable Niger RPCVs
Clue:	This Oregonian recently appeared on Jeopardy!
Correct Response:	<b>Who is Jill Tucker (2009-2010)?</b>

### 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. Here is another report of results.*

#### **Malaria prevention and treatment in Mont Bagzane Integrated Health Centre – Agadez region.**

This project was facilitated by Myriam Kaplan-Pasternak, new board member and health/nutrition volunteer in Guidimouni, Niger from 1983-85. Through her contacts with ADESS- Association pour le Développement de l'Éducation et la Sauvegarde de la Santé the request for flood relief was funded to provide support to 32 villages in the remote region. Thanks to generous FON donors we sent \$1700 and an additional \$1,000 from DG Educational Services made possible the purchase of medicine and mosquito nets in Agadez and their distribution in the Mont Bagzane plateau region.

The funding provided medicine specifically to treat mild to moderate cases of malaria in three medical facilities with the goal of reducing the number of patients needing to be evacuated for treatment.

Additionally 750 mosquito nets were purchased and given to 600 families to protect 1500 individuals – as typically 3 people sleep under 1 net.

At the end of the season they reported that they were able to treat 208 people for Malaria. And only one person had a severe case of malaria that required evacuation to hospital in Agadez, a very rough 6 hour drive.





The people of BAGZAM greatly appreciated the assistance and hope that members of FON will come to visit someday.

## Presidential Elections in Niger

Summarized by Ismaghil

*Salam Aleykum, Bonjour, Ina koinan ku, Mata Anran Kani, Wayiwan,*

On 27 December 2020, Niger voted in presidential and legislative elections that could see the West African country's first democratic transition of power since independence in 1960. None of the candidates were able to have the majority votes to win. Therefore, a second vote is scheduled in February between Bazoum Mohamed who was the former head of Niger's interior and foreign ministries, and former President Mahaman Ousmane. Bazoum has promised to build boarding schools for girls to encourage them to stay in school longer, which he said would help reduce child marriage in a country with many teenage pregnancies (We'll see, fingers crossed sometimes candidates don't keep their promises).

Some 7.4 million Nigeriens were registered to vote to elect legislators and the successor to President Mahamadou Issoufou who has served two terms. He's stepping down, allowing the first peaceful transfer of power between two elected presidents since Niger became independent from France in 1960. Niger has seen four coups since independence in 1960.

More than 6,800 observers from various organizations (National and International) are deployed around the country to supervise the elections. A peaceful transfer would be significant not only in Niger but also in Africa, where leaders recently have held on for disputed third terms in Guinea, Ivory Coast, Cameroon, Uganda, etc.

### Elections results:

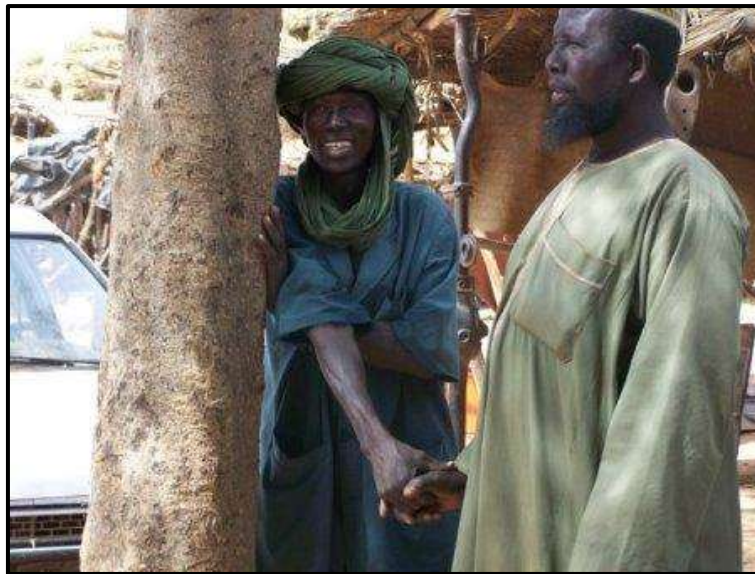
Mohammed Bazoum, of the ruling party, came first with 39.33 percent of the vote. Mahamane Ousmane, placed second with 16.99 percent of votes. Former Prime Minister Seini Oumarou was 3rd, Albadé Abouba, 4th, obtaining 8.95% and 7.07% of the votes, ahead of former Foreign Minister Ibrahim Yacouba, 5th with 5.38% of the votes respectively. Another candidate and also former president Salou Djibo, came in 6th with 2.99% of the vote. Voter turnout was pegged at 69.67%, with 5.2 million voters out of 7.4 million registered voters for a population of 23 million.

The two candidates are seeking alliances before the second round on February 21st.

Read more:

- USAID Report: Elections in the Republic of Niger  
[https://www.ifes.org/sites/default/files/ifes\\_faqs\\_elections\\_in\\_niger\\_2020\\_general\\_elections\\_december\\_2020.pdf](https://www.ifes.org/sites/default/files/ifes_faqs_elections_in_niger_2020_general_elections_december_2020.pdf)

- Elections in Niger: casting ballots or casting doubts  
<https://www.navantigroup.com/news-1/2020/12/18/elections-in-niger-casting-ballots-or-casting-doubts>
- l'ONU exhorte les forces de sécurité à protéger les civils lors du vote  
<https://reliefweb.int/report/niger/elections-au-niger-l-onu-exhorte-les-forces-de-s-curit-prot-ger-les-civils-lors-du-vote>
- A quatre jours du scrutin, la course à la mobilisation des électeurs  
<https://www.rfi.fr/fr/afrique/20201224-%C3%A9lections-au-niger-%C3%A0-quatre-jours-du-scrutin-la-course-%C3%A0-la-mobilisation-des-%C3%A9lecteurs>
- Niger holds historic elections despite jihadist violence  
<https://www.france24.com/en/africa/20201227-niger-holds-historic-elections-despite-jihadist-violence>



## **Passing of Niger's Ambassador to the United States**

*United States Department of State (Washington, DC), By Cale Brown, Principal Deputy Spokesperson*  
We are deeply saddened by the passing on December 16 of His Excellency Abdallah Wafy, Ambassador of Niger to the United States, and offer our sincere condolences to his family and all those who worked with him. Ambassador Wafy was a valued partner and friend who worked tirelessly over the years in Washington, New York, and Niamey, to strengthen the relationship between our two countries.

Ambassador Wafy's long career in law enforcement and diplomacy reflected his strong commitment to public service. During his service with United Nations Peacekeeping missions and as Niger's Ambassador to the United Nations and later to the United States, Ambassador Wafy advanced peace and security for both Niger and the wider region. Through his leadership and skillful diplomacy, he increased understanding of the diversity of the countries of the Sahel and helped forge deeper bonds between Niger and the United States.

The Department of State honors Ambassador Wafy's leadership and service.

<https://allafrica.com/stories/202012220230.html>

Read more about his career at [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abdallah\\_Wafy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abdallah_Wafy)

## Former Niger President Mamadou Tandja Dies At Age 82

By VOA News. November 25, 2020



The West African nation of Niger is observing three days of national mourning following the death of former President Mamadou Tandja at the age of 82. The government said Tuesday Tandja died in the capital, Niamey, but no cause of death was given. Tandja was twice elected president of Niger starting 1999 to 2010 before he was overthrown in a coup for attempting to change the constitution to hold on to power. His ouster paved the way for Issoufou Mahamadou to become president in the 2011 election.

## Passing of Irma Poots 64-66

We note the passing of Irma Poots, who was affectionately called "Poots" by her Peace Corps cohort in the Zinder region. She was a public health volunteer serving from 64-66 in the Niger III group. Please read a tribute and enjoyable ode to volunteer service by Linda Schulman on our website:

<http://www.friendsofniger.org/tribute-to-irma-poots/>

## News, Music & Culture

- **Niger village attacks: Death toll rises to 100**  
Niger's prime minister says 100 people are now known to have been killed in attacks by suspected jihadists on two villages.  
<https://www.cnn.com/2021/01/04/africa/niger-village-attack-100-dead-intl/index.html>
- **Coronavirus in Africa tracker**  
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/resources/idt-4a11d568-2716-41cf-a15e-7d15079548bc>
- Public service announcements for COVID: by actor Nourou Wallam  
**Hausa version:** [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WaKKb-xyovg&fbclid=IwAR3vzNate1EKvF4MYQuhhCxjwNjcdTEK0C\\_JhI5vrZmXOGjTJBz06XVT8eU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WaKKb-xyovg&fbclid=IwAR3vzNate1EKvF4MYQuhhCxjwNjcdTEK0C_JhI5vrZmXOGjTJBz06XVT8eU)  
**Zarma version:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-Gmej-Hof9A>
- **Getting COVID-19 vaccines to West and Central Africa;** How UNICEF is harnessing decades of expertise to deliver COVID-19 vaccines to the region.  
<https://www.unicef.org/supply/stories/getting-covid-19-vaccines-west-and-central-africa/>
- NPCA has an online cache of **articles by Returned Volunteers**. Those specific to Niger can be found here: <https://peacecorpsworldwide.org/tag/niger/>
- **Africa Today Podcast**  
News and analysis from the BBC's Focus on Africa. The Africa Today podcast is published from Monday to Friday. It contains the day's top African stories.  
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p02nrtyw/episodes/downloads>
- **Personal History, My Great-Grandfather, the Nigerian Slave-Trader.** By Adaobi Tricia Nwaubani July 15, 2018 <https://www.newyorker.com/culture/personal-history/my-great-grandfather-the-nigerian-slave-trader/>

- It's time to put an end to supremacy language in international development**  
 It's time to put an end to supremacy language in international development The words we use in NGOs and aid agencies draw imaginary lines between 'us' and 'them,' stifling our imagination. Every industry has its own jargon and code-words that make up a 'universe of discourse' to guide behavior - a common set of terms and symbols designed to share experiences, enable collaboration and create new worlds. The foreign aid industry is no different, but why do those of us who work in it continue to rely on a discourse that reeks of colonialism, militarism and capitalism?  
<https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/transformation/its-time-to-put-an-end-to-supremacy-language-in-international-development/>
- PBS spotlight on a Nigerienne student --** When Amina Abdoulaye came to study in the U.S. from the West African nation of Niger, she had a big goal, become a computer scientist, a Ph.D., no less. Only problem? . . . .  
<https://www.pbs.org/newshour/show/how-the-pandemic-is-propelling-demand-for-short-term-college-degrees>
- Managing for Resilience: Framing an integrated landscape approach for overcoming chronic and acute food insecurity** (academic paper) by Louise Buck, EcoAgriculture Partners , Cornell University, and Ian D. Bailey, Cornell University.  
 To strengthen food security and livelihoods, programs must help vulnerable communities build socially and ecologically resilient landscapes. Landscape-scale management of socio-ecological systems offers a promising strategy for this task.  
<https://ecoagriculture.org/publication/managing-for-resilience/>

**YOUR DONATIONS FUEL THIS WORK**

You may make a donation at any time. To donate now, you can either go to [www.friendsofniger.org/donate/donate-via-paypal/](http://www.friendsofniger.org/donate/donate-via-paypal/) 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:

- Join & follow us on Facebook: [\(Friends of Niger\) FON](#)
- Our website: <http://www.friendsofniger.org/>
- 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.”**

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Newsletter of the Friends of Niger

May 2021

Friends of Niger PO Box 452 Haverford, PA 19041

In this issue:

1. Board of Directors News
2. Grant Making News and Project Opportunities
3. Niger News Roundup
4. Passing of Judy Irola
5. Zinder nonprofit entrepreneur looking for a business advisor
6. Music & Culture News

## *From the Editors*

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Dear Readers,

We send our encouragement to those observing Ramadan, especially those in Niger during the height of the hot season this year. The FON Board is excited about launching a new process for projects and we encourage you to check out the introductory info and ways to get involved below. A full announcement with details about our new grant making process will be coming out very soon and will be posted on our website as well as distributed via a distinct email. We've had fun and informative discussions with colleagues in other 'Friends of' groups like Tanzania, Nepal, Burkina Faso and the Portland Oregon RPCV group. Please help us move ahead with your ideas, feedback and enthusiasm.

*Ismaghil Ag Moussa, Amy Wilson*

## **1) Board of Directors News: grateful for active members!** *from President John Baird*

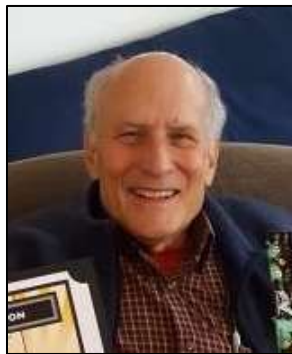
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### **Appreciation of those who have stepped down**

A huge shout out to Cheryl Turner, Larry Koff and Phyllis Dichter Forbes who have stepped down from the board recently after contributing so much to our organization. Cheryl came on the board in July 2018. She volunteered to serve as Secretary and actively supported the Project Committee work. She was a huge help in getting our records more organized and was able to do some on-site work in Niger through her own work travel. Larry has been all in for the long haul, serving for at least 20 years as Treasurer, investing countless hours in overseeing projects and participating in events celebrating Niger and Peace Corps service. Phyllis came to the board in July 2018 also and graciously applied her leadership skills and vast experience in development and project implementation to our Project Committee. She led the charge to a more systematic and committee-oriented approach. The board is very grateful for the dedication and generosity of these three super board members.



Cheryl Turner



Larry Koff



Phyllis Dichter Forbes (and Richard)

Members can be proud that our small, all-volunteer organization, continues to move toward better management practices and accountability as we work together to serve Niger and its people.

### **Anticipation of those who will step up**

Last year we recruited a great cohort of new board members and this year we are eager to recruit a few more. We believe as we fine-tune the organization, it will become easier for members to jump in to serve in various capacities that advance our mission. Engaging members is an important part of our mission and we believe it is vital to maintaining a productive organization which is an honor and pleasure to serve.

Please consider throwing your hat in the ring for a board position this year.

If you would like to dip your toe in the water, consider volunteering on one of our committees to help advance the mission. Committee members need not be on the board.

- **Finance Committee** – advises on policy, budget, and financial accountability.
- **Project Committee** – manages grant making process to support projects in Niger, reviews proposals, tracks implementation and reports results to board and membership
- **Member Engagement & Outreach Committee**– manages Facebook, newsletter, tracks membership and organizes engagement activities
- **Nominating Committee** – recruits board and committee members, assists with orientation of new board members

Please consider joining our effort through one of these committees. We are stronger and have a wider impact with your involvement! Contact me at [president@friendsofniger.org](mailto:president@friendsofniger.org) or reply to this newsletter to connect and discuss possibilities.

## **2) Grant Making News and Project Opportunities**

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Friends of Niger is excited to be launching a call for proposals and competitive grant making process in May. We are moving to a twice yearly cycle to receive applications and award funds after a competitive review. The subtle shift will be toward more of a grant-making organization where our committee focuses on selecting projects to fund and sharing the results back with members, donors and the board. We reached out to other *Friends of* groups to borrow best practices and found that others are also retooling to compensate for the absence of PCVs in their host countries.

We reflected back on input you provided in recent surveys to put forward these values and priorities:

### **FON gives priority to projects that:**

- Address a locally identified need
- Are feasible and likely to be successful
- Benefit many people
- Have community support and contributions
- Have a plan to sustain the benefits into the future
- Build local capacity and leadership
- Involve or engage FON member(s) and Niger diaspora
- Can be replicated and adopted by others

Here are some new opportunities for involvement of FON members in supporting project work.

**PROJECT REVIEW** – First, we will be asking for volunteers to help with the review and selection of projects using the detailed criteria we have developed. This revised process will create the opportunity for more folks to participate in project review without necessarily signing on for project management or oversight.

**APPLICANT MENTORING**—With the recognition that some applications will present ideas with merit, yet may not be ready for funding, we want to offer the possibility of identifying mentors to work with applicants to improve proposals. Mentoring would be a voluntary,



limited assignment to work with an applicant to improve a proposal or project idea. Offering this option to applicants will offer some capacity building and in the long run improve the caliber of applications and projects. We feel that this developmental function is best accomplished outside of the committee structure, leaving the committee dedicated to grant making and reporting.

We look forward to doing a test run of this new process and we welcome your involvement, your comments and suggestions.

**Please note**, at the moment we are focusing our attention on funding regular, planned projects and have not decided how we may proceed with more urgent type requests—stay tuned.

We can't leave this topic without recognizing the fantastic help of JoAnn Lewis, who has provided tons of insight and ideas for this effort. **Thank you JoAnn!**

### 3) Niger News Roundup

#### Elections

The new president, Bazoum Mohamed, 61-year-old former interior minister, won 55.75% of the votes against the opposition candidate Mahamane Ousmane who had 44.25%, according to CENI the Election Commission. Mahamane Ousmane, 71 yrs. old, was Niger's first democratically elected president in 1993 until he was toppled in a coup three years later. He contested the results and denounced an electoral hold-up. Right after the presidential results, violent protests erupted in the country especially in Niamey. Supporters of the losing presidential candidate set several buildings on fire, burned tires, and came into heavy exchanges with police.



This election marks the first peaceful transition of power between two democratically elected presidents in Niger.

Former president Mahamadou Issoufou promised that he will not try to change the constitution to remain in power. On February 21st, Issoufou stated that, "I am proud to be the first democratically elected president in our history who will be handing over power to another democratically elected president."

Former president Issoufou, has been awarded the 2020 Ibrahim Prize for Achievement in African Leadership. The annual prize is granted by the Mo Ibrahim Foundation, named after the Sudanese billionaire businessman and philanthropist who founded it. The prize – which includes a US\$5 million award – aims to showcase exceptional role models from the continent and “recognize leaders who have strengthened democracy and human rights for the shared benefit of their people,” Africa News.

The presidential election was dominated by the deaths of eight election officials in the Tillabéri Region, after a mine explosion. The President-elect faces many challenges, education, health, nutrition, poverty, security and corruption.

Links to related news:

Niger ruling party's Bazoum declared winner of presidential election

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-niger-election/niger-ruling-partys-bazoum-declared-winner-of-presidential-election-idUSKBN2AN0JP>

Niger's Issoufou wins \$5 million African leadership prize

<https://www.africanews.com/2021/03/08/niger-s-issoufou-wins-5-million-african-leadership-prize/>

## Deadly Protests Rock Niger Over Contested Election Result

<https://www.usnews.com/news/world/articles/2021-02-25/violent-protests-rock-niger-over-contested-election-result>

### **Terrorist Attack in Tillaberi Region**

Terrorists have killed around 100 people in two villages in Tillaberi region. The attackers split into two columns to carry out simultaneous attacks on the two villages, which lie seven kilometers (four miles) apart.

The attacks on the villages of Tchoma Bangou and Zaroumadareye occurred on Saturday just as first-round presidential election results were announced. They were waged by terrorists who came riding about 100 motorcycles. The terrorists left 70 civilians dead in Tchoma Bangou and 30 dead in Zaroumadareye. The two villages are 120km (75 miles) north of the capital, Niamey.

The two villages are in the vast and unstable Tillaberi region, which is located in the “tri-border” area, where the porous borders of Niger, Mali and Burkina Faso converge. The area has suffered jihadist assaults for years.

Seven Nigerien soldiers were killed in an ambush in Tillaberi on 21 December. Travel by motorbike has been banned in Tillaberi since last January in a bid to prevent incursions by jihadists riding them.

### **Terrorist Attack in Tahoua Region**

Attacks by suspected jihadists in villages in Niger’s Tahoua region have left 137 people dead, in another massacre that has underscored the huge security challenges facing new President Mohamed Bazoum.

Gunmen arriving on motorbikes attacked the villages of Intazayene, Bakorat and Wistane near the border with Mali, shooting at everything which moved.

Niger's Tillaberi and Tahoua regions, bordering northern Mali, have been facing recurrent armed attacks since 2017 attributed to terrorist groups operating in northern Mali.

Links to related news:

137 killed in deadly attacks on Niger villages <https://www.dailysabah.com/world/africa/137-killed-in-deadly-attacks-on-niger-villages>

100 Civilians Are Reported Dead After Attacks in Niger  
<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/01/03/world/africa/niger-attack.html>

### **School Burning in Niamey**

A fire fueled by high winds swept through an elementary school in Niamey, killing 20 children, hospital officials said Wednesday. The kids were attending class at the time the blaze erupted around 4 p.m. and quickly consumed the huts and damaged adjacent buildings. Straw huts that housed some of the classrooms outdoors were completely burned, while there was significant damage to the building itself, leaving scorched classroom furniture scattered in ash.

Straw huts are commonly used to make additional room for students in overcrowded schools throughout the country in urban and rural areas. Schools chronically lack supplies and furniture to meet the demand, and forced to make do with children seated on the floor, sharing supplies and lacking books.



#### Links to related news:

Niger: 'Total mourning' as 20 pre-school children perish in fire

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/4/14/niger-mourns-death-of-20-children-in-school-blaze>

Niger school blaze: Trapped children die in Niamey <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-56743719>

#### **4) Passing of Judy Irola**

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It is with great sadness that we let you know that Judy Irola passed away February 20, 2021 from COVID-19 complications. After serving in Peace Corps in Niger, Judy had a long, celebrated career as a cinematographer with 17 feature films and 40 documentaries, including many award winning productions. Her film, Niger '66 A Peace Corps Diary, reflects this filmmaking experience with its very professional production of a topic near and dear to us. This film can be viewed at our website: <http://www.friendsofniger.org/features/movies/niger-66-a-peace-corps-diary/>

Her colleague Robert Potter created this tribute for her: [https://youtube/-fO\\_TCV7K1I](https://youtube/-fO_TCV7K1I)

More recognition of her career:

- From the International Documentary Association: <https://www.documentary.org/online-feature/judy-irola-trailblazing-filmmaker-and-educator-dies-covid>
- American Society of Cinematographers: <https://theasc.com/news/in-memoriam-judy-irola-asc-1943-2021>
- MS Magazine: Rest In Power: Judy Irola, Trailblazing Feminist Cinematographer: <https://msmagazine.com/2021/03/26/judy-irola-dead-obituary-feminist-cinematographer-women-film/>
- Imdb profile: <https://www.imdb.com/name/nm0410062/>
- USC cinematic arts awards listing: <https://cinema.usc.edu/search.cfm?tokenS=D44D2D573A367EF24765A2AF2B77200361CD4EB5&q=irola>
- Commentary about Niger '66: A Peace Corps Diary 2010: <https://emro.libraries.psu.edu/record/index.php?id=4215>

#### **5) Zinder nonprofit entrepreneur looking for a business advisor**

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FON member Binta Moustapha, who lives in Zinder, is looking for candidates to act as advisors to her fledgling entrepreneurship program. Ideally candidates would have skills or experience working with design/art work companies or organizations. Her goal is to promote establishment of small scale businesses founded by young Nigeriens based in Zinder, who have acquired a minimum of 10 ten years of formal schooling, an effort she is calling "AFRICAN Street Business School and Entrepreneurship Development Hub". She is planning to provide training followed by placing students in apprenticeship situations in order to provide more local employment opportunities for young people.

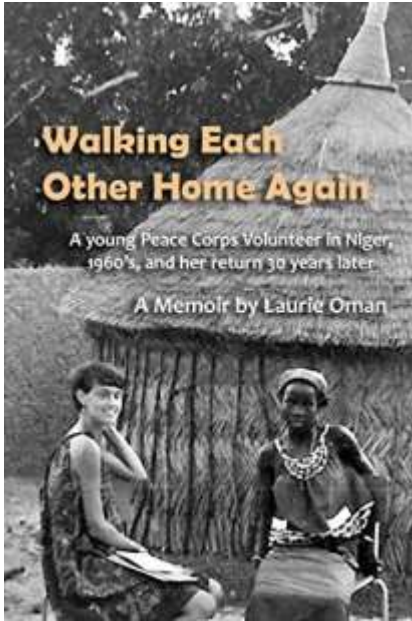
Binta, who is also pursuing a Master's Degree online, is hoping to be able to communicate with her chosen Business Advisors via some internet-based platform about every two weeks to get advice, coaching and mentorship for her program—and she speaks English for those of you whose French may have gone rusty.

Her project outline can be viewed at:

[https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1ttUP\\_VnILUaILwLqRF\\_UvuNcMuQMqMOOtsMrmNPoB2k/e/dit#slide=id.p1](https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1ttUP_VnILUaILwLqRF_UvuNcMuQMqMOOtsMrmNPoB2k/e/dit#slide=id.p1)

Please reply to the Camel Express editor [camelexpressnewsletter@gmail.com](mailto:camelexpressnewsletter@gmail.com)

## 6) Music & Culture News



**Walking Each other Home Again, A young Peace Corps Volunteer in Niger, 1960's, and her return 30 years later**

**A Memoir by Laurie Oman**

**Publisher: Oman Publishing 2021**

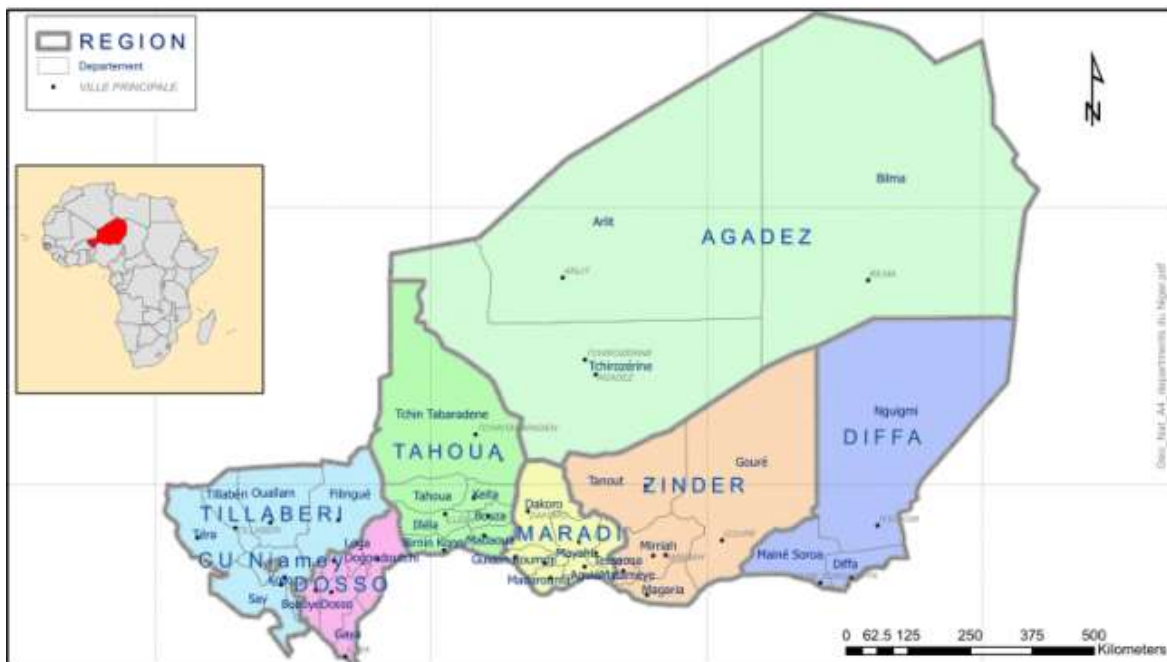
**ISBN 978-0-578-81697-5**

*In her delightful and insightful memoir of a mid-century American girl coming of age as a new bride in a remote Hausa village, Laurie Oman generously shares a unique place and time that will live on in our hearts forever. We are right there with her as she fumbles and faux pas her way into the role of a valued member of the community as a health educator, unprepared emergency midwife, and ultimately trusted friend. So deep were the bonds from her two-year Peace Corps stay in the 1960s, that thirty years later she was invited to return to her beloved village. So we readers get a second chance to meet the dear friends we had come to love, to experience the changes in the village and its inhabitants, and to be with Laurie as her own life is again enriched and transformed by her experiences in Africa.*

## CONNECTING YOU, OUR MEMBERS

WHERE were you?? Can we share?

These are two important questions for which we don't have good answers. Our information for members is spotty and mixed. With updated information about the regions you know and love, we can better help connect and engage members. Please take a moment to go to our website <http://www.friendsofniger.org/about/join-fon/> and fill out a membership form to help provide better info about members. And please indicate if we may share your contact information with other members.



## 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.”***



# The Camel Express



Newsletter of the Friends of Niger

**August 2021**

Friends of Niger PO Box 452 Haverford, PA 19041

In this issue:

1. Board News: Nominate yourself or other friends of Niger to the board
2. Four new projects funded after rigorous selection process
3. Boston University Alumni Corner
4. New Horticultural Center to open in Liboré
5. The Sahel: What Needs to Change, People's Coalition for the Sahel.
6. "Ruminations on the value of the Peace Corps experience "
7. News from Niger

From the Editors

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Dear readers,

There is a lot of great news and activity to share! We just finished up our first round of scheduled grant-making after reviewing 22 requests! Thanks to 12 project reviewers we selected 4 projects to fund this time around. We have board member elections coming up soon, and there are always opportunities to serve on committees and do special projects. Please think about getting more involved with FON soon!

*Ismagil Ag Moussa, Amy Wilson*

## **1) Friends of Niger Board update: Nominate yourself or other friends of Niger to the join the board**

What does the FON Board of Directors do, you may ask?

We are representatives elected by you, and meet regularly to further FON's mission to connect our membership, support development in Niger, and advocate for the benefit of Niger. Our activities in the past year included:

- In the fall of 2020, we responded to the health and shelter needs occasioned by flooding in Niger with a successful special appeal to provide needed items such as malaria medications and bed nets.
- We followed up with multiple long-term projects we have supported in Niger.
- Despite COVID, we managed to gather for a Zoom retreat in October, where we learned more about the realities in Niger in the years since we have worked there, updated our mission statement, and laid the groundwork for an overhaul of the projects process
- We planned and implemented the new projects process, with a successful round in June of our now twice-yearly applications cycle. Our existing board members and committee members were joined by several volunteers from among our FON membership who gave their time to help review project applications.
- Throughout the year, we maintained careful accounting and financial oversight
  - We reached out to you all regularly through the 1) [Annual Member Letter](#), 2) [Camel Express](#), and 3) [new Facebook Group](#)

## Would you like to be part of this interesting and important work?

It will soon be time to elect board members! We are looking for a few new board members to help us continue our existing efforts, and imagine ways to expand and improve the ways we serve our membership and fulfill our mission. New board members will be asked to commit to a two-year term, during which time they will participate in monthly full board meetings via Zoom, as well as work on at least one committee. We also welcome non-board members to help us with committee work, especially the projects committee, where we are in need of regular committee members to keep the projects process moving and improving, as well as volunteer reviewers who participate in 2-3 meetings over a brief period of time to help the committee evaluate the applications we receive. The next cycle of project applications is planned for November.

If you are interested in being a board member, committee member, and/or project reviewer, or in nominating someone else for one of these roles, , please contact the President [president@friendsofniger.org], Camel Express editor [camelexpressnewsletter@gmail.com], or any other board member to learn more.

## 2) Four new projects funded after rigorous selection process

We are thrilled to announce funding for a new round of projects totaling approximately \$16,250\*. Project selection was accomplished through our new, rigorous competitive process. Many thanks to our "Friends of" group colleagues, including Nepal, Tanzania and Burkina, and the Portland OR RPCV group, who shared ideas and information about how they select and fund projects. We cobbled together all the best ideas and we think our maiden voyage was a success. We received 22 applications for funding from a variety of groups and a wide range of projects. After sorting out 3 that did not meet basic eligibility criteria, a team of 12 volunteers reviewed and scored the remaining applications. Following lively debate and discussions, 4 applications were selected for funding. Those that were not selected received feedback on what we liked about their proposals and how they might be more competitive next time.

Many thanks are also due to JoAnn Lewis and Alix Barstow Fedoruk who contributed lots of thoughtful, constructive input to the new process. And **HIP HIP HOORAY** for the review team members: Mary Abrams, Ismaghil Ag Moussa, Steven Anderson, John Baird, Kimberly Dixon, Alix Barstow Fedoruk, JoAnn Lewis, Dane Miller, Yari Rabiou, Cheryl Turner, Pamela White, and Amy Wilson.

*\*Please note \$ amounts shown here reflect the amount requested in cfa and are approximated in dollars; actual amounts are dependent on exchange rates.*

### PROJECTS ACCEPTED FOR FUNDING:

**Tchizamene Clinic Solar Batteries & Beds**, Organisation Vie et Développement ~ \$3,175  
Organisation Vie et Développement demonstrated their cooperation in 2020 by implementing a FON small grant-funded emergency response project, providing medical supplies in the Agadez area. This successful proposal will replace 12 year-old batteries for the solar array for the health clinic and purchase 10 beds and mattresses. The clinic serves about 10,000 people in the Village of Tchizamnene, Commune of Dannat, Agadez Region. There are two nurses, one midwife and her assistant at the clinic. The batteries will improve capacity for refrigeration of essential medicines.

**Bangiya Elementary School Desks**, Bangiya Village Cooperative ~ \$1,401

The Cooperative in the village of Bangiya near Zinder has been awarded funding to supply a new classroom with desks. This project follows the successful implementation of a classroom construction project previously funded directly by individual members of FON in December 2020. FON Board

member Yari RABIOU has already delivered the funds for this project and visited the site while he was visiting in country in July 2021. The grant will fund the purchase of 30 table-benches for the Bangiya elementary school. (A video will be uploaded soon).

#### **Sécurisation contre la chenille mineuse de l'épi du mil.** Potentiel Terre ~ \$4,855

Potentiel Terre will implement a program to breed and reintroduce an indigenous wasp that attacks millet boring insects. The program will also provide training so that it can carry into the future with local people producing and distributing the wasps. As many as 20,000 households hope to benefit from a reduction of crop loss in the commune of Mokko.

#### **Vocational Training for School Dropouts, Incarcerated and Unemployed Youth.** Centre de Formation des Artisans de Maradi ~ \$5,000

The Centre de Formation des Artisans de Maradi is working with prison officials to provide youth training in various vocational programs. A 13-month program will be delivered for up to 20 participants for approximately \$350 each. Training will include literacy, technical writing, basic accounting and entrepreneurship to the trainees.

#### **In other project news –**

A \$10,000 grant to Kirker Foundation/Niger last year helped cover costs for ground transportation and delivery for a significant shipment of medical supplies. As with previous shipments, the medicines and supplies were selected in close cooperation with the Ministry of Health to ensure they are used appropriately throughout Niger's health care system, greatly expanding the capacity to meet the needs during the pandemic. A video of the shipment being received in Zinder can be viewed at

<https://youtu.be/PkIlrYKbRxY>

### **3) BU Alumni Corner**

With Sue Rosenfeld's passing, the glue that previously held the various program years of BU Niger together thinned considerably. Since my academic year in Niamey (2006-2007), I had kept in regular contact with Sue, accustomed to her predawn missives. Through Sue, though not exclusively, I was able to keep a window open to Niger and to the other students who spent time there. It might be an understatement to say that Sue was the head of our informal alumni association. It was a privilege to hear so many different stories during the online memorials held in her honor.

Without our dear *fono nya*, our alumni group may well drift off like the sands of the Sahel. Although Friends of Niger has historically been connected to Returned Peace Corps Volunteers, its membership is not exclusive. We'd like to dedicate space for some of the stories and experiences of the BU Niger alumni, either during their semester(s) in Niger or in the time since, and offer other opportunities to connect for this group. If you were a BU Niger student and would like to share an experience here or learn more about how to engage with FON, please contact Dane "Jadi" Miller at [mucigaba@gmail.com](mailto:mucigaba@gmail.com).

### **4) New Horticultural Center to open in Liboré**

The Dov Center Niger's preeminent Horticultural Training Center opening Spring 2022 in Liboré, will train horticultural technicians to support agricultural cooperatives across Niger, increasing food and economic security for 50,000 farmers, their families and communities over 5 years. Tom & Patsy Lightbown, Niger 1965-67 invite you to join them in helping to furnish classrooms, cafeteria and dormitories.

Read more about the center [DOV Center](#).



## ***The Dov Center: From architect's rendering to reality!***



November 24, 2020—Cornerstone is laid



January 23, 2021—Admin. building



April 8, 2021—Progress!



June 4, 2021—Almost there!

## **5) The Sahel: What Needs to Change, People's Coalition for the Sahel**

Check out this report which was created by the People's Coalition for the Sahel. It's about how governments, NGOs and international partners in Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger can work toward the following:

1. Protecting civilians
2. Addressing the root causes of conflict in the region
3. Responding to humanitarian crises
4. Ending human rights abuses

Although it is a lengthy report, it is well investigated and conceptualized and probably of interest to the Friends of Niger members.

<https://www.sahelpeoplescoalition.org/home>

Shared by Caroljean (Pint) Coventree Niger - 78-80

## 6) Ruminations” on the value of the Peace Corps experience

Most of these appear in Randolph Hobler’s book *101 Arabian Tales: How We All Persevered in Peace Corps Libya*. Write to us with you own thoughts about the value of Peace Corps, and we’ll share in a follow-up article:

- You never understand your own country until you’ve left it.
- Why – if the United States is so serious about “Peace” – is there is no cabinet position designated “Secretary of Peace”?
- (unexpected consequence of participating in international volunteerism) The exposure to other sides of arguments, of realizing other valid points of view...and that in the U.S. on some topics we can be as close-minded as any ignorant person in a third-world country.
- The Peace Corps is the best way in the world to find out what you’re made of.
- We came away with a realization that beauty, goodness, intelligence, and wisdom are pretty evenly distributed around the world, even if healthcare, education, opportunity and freedom are not.
- My faith in the basic goodness of humanity grew during my three years living in a Muslim village in Niger.
- I found that the guys who have it a little rough and who have a lot of contact with the Libyans are most happy. The volunteers who are living with other Americans are the most dissatisfied although they eat American food and have nice houses.
- Thanks to my consciousness being raised about media bias in the U.S., only discovered when I went overseas, has left me forever careful and skeptical of what I read in the press.
- I believe the Peace Corps made us better citizens of the U.S. and in fact made us citizens of the world.
- I realized that wars are never started by citizens; they are always started by leaders.
- Wherever people are in the world, let them be helped; whatever their nationality, let them be fed; whatever their beliefs, let them be educated; whatever the color of their skins, let them be freed from disease. Let there be peace.

Submitted by John Baird Niger 68-71

## 7) News

### • **Aissa Maiga, Filmmaker**

For its 74th edition, the Cannes Film Festival is hoping to inspire further efforts concerning climate change with an environment focus in a special selection. With her film “Above water”, which was shot in Niger, French actor and now filmmaker Aïssa Maïga sends a plea for world leaders to rethink their approach to global development and the climate interconnections between the polluters and those who pay the price. See video interview with FRANCE 24.

<https://www.france24.com/en/video/20210712-at-the-cannes-film-festival-a%C3%AFssa-ma%C3%AFga-gives-a-voice-to-the-voiceless>

### • **Morocco will invest 3.3 billion dollars in the capital Niamey**

A Moroccan investment group will invest 3.3 billion dollars (1.824 billion FCFA) in several industrial and infrastructure projects in the Nigerian capital, Niamey, the city authorities and the Moroccan group announced this week. One project consists of construction of an agro-food complex, including fattening of livestock, fodder cultivation, slaughterhouse, meat processing, milk and poultry farming, and construction of a new town with 36,960 social housing units and a shopping center on 1,050 hectares. Other projects aim to create a smart city along the banks of the Niger River, build an industrial zone (intended for export), and install 20,000 solar street lights made in Morocco.

<https://www.moroccoworldnews.com/2021/07/343254/moroccos-yummy-holding-to-invest-3-3-billion-in-nigers-capital-city>

- **Education Reforms Promised**

Niger President Bazoum promises major reforms in Nigerien Educational System in his message during the 61st anniversary of the country's independence on Tuesday August 3rd, 2021. President Bazoum stated that the weaknesses of the education system "paralyze our possibilities to build up real human capital, capable of taking charge of the development challenges of our country."

Nigerien government is working on developing a major policy to reform the country's educational system.

The reform aims above all to rethink the training policy for teachers and supervisors.

Bazoum explained that, "Boarding schools for young girls will be built in order to keep girls as long as possible in the education system and give them real opportunities for social advancement."

<http://news.aniamey.com>

- **Flooding in Niger: at least 35 dead in Maradi, Agadez and Niamey**

<https://amp.rfi.fr/fr/afrique/20210802-au-niger-la-saison-pluies-a-d%C3%A9g%C3%A0-fait-au-moins-35-morts-et-de-nombreux-d%C3%A9g%C3%A2ts>

- **Niger needs western help to tackle Jihadis, president says** <https://www.ft.com/content/c14f030e-8d7e-4b84-8189-42927112ca30>

- **African Faith Leaders Call on The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to Drop African Green Revolution** <https://foodtank.com/news/2021/08/african-faith-leaders-call-on-the-bill-melinda-gates-foundation/>

- **Senegalese plant circular gardens in Green Wall defence against desert**

<https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/wider-image-senegalese-plant-circular-gardens-green-wall-defence-against-desert-2021-07-28/> Submitted by Mattie Harms

- **Growing Sahelian apples helped Abdoulsalam stay close to his family**

<https://www.wvi.org/stories/niger/growing-sahelian-apples-helped-abdoulsalam-stay-close-his-family>

- **Interview with Niger President Mohamed Bazoum on the importance of keeping girls in school and other current affairs (July 30, 2021)** <https://www.bbc.com/news/av/world-africa-580304>

- **Coronavirus - Niger: United States Donates Second Batch of 151,200 COVID-19 Vaccines to Niger**

The U.S. Embassy in Niamey, Niger announces the donation by the United States

Government of a second batch of 151,200 doses of the single shot Johnson &

Johnson COVID-19 vaccine as part of the Biden-Harris Administration's global efforts to fight the COVID-19 pandemic. In the past week, the Embassy donated 151,200 vaccines from the American people to the people of

Niger. The U.S. government coordinated closely with the African Union, Africa CDC, and COVAX on the country allocations. COVAX supported delivery of these vaccine doses, which arrived in Niamey on July 29, 2021.

This combined total of 302,400 doses is part of the Biden-Harris Administration commitment to share U.S. vaccine supply with the world. As we continue to fight the COVID-19 pandemic at



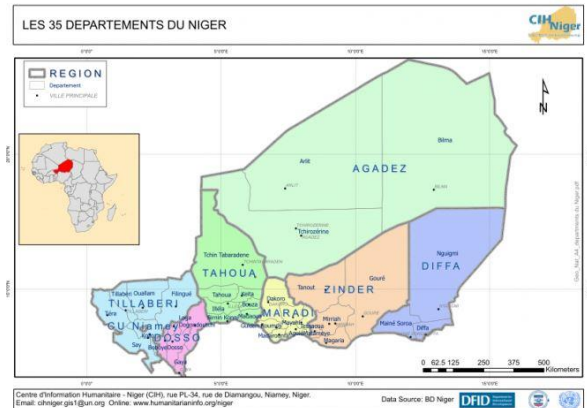
home and work to end the pandemic worldwide, President Biden has promised that the United States will be an arsenal of vaccines.

The U.S. government, through USAID Niger, is also supporting the Ministry of Health's work to ensure Niger can safely and effectively distribute these vaccines. USAID is providing assistance to support training, planning, supply chain logistics, and communications outreach to make certain the vaccines are available for the people of Niger.

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## YOUR DONATIONS FUEL THIS WORK

Friends of Niger is an organization founded by Returned Peace Corps Volunteers to initiate and support activities related to Niger and its people. We pursue three main purposes:

- Connecting and engaging people who have connections to Niger including diaspora, Nigeriens those who have worked or are working Niger,
- Supporting development and humanitarian activities in Niger, and
- Advocating for and educating about Niger

Donations are accepted 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:

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- Join & follow us at: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/676485096587560/>
- Submit news topics and articles: [camelexpressnewsletter@gmail.com](mailto:camelexpressnewsletter@gmail.com)
- Contact President John Baird, [president@friendsofniger.org](mailto:president@friendsofniger.org)

Olympics Tokyo 2021



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



# The Camel Express



Newsletter of the Friends of Niger

October 2021

Friends of Niger PO Box 452 Haverford, PA 19041

In this issue:

1. Board Updates
2. Grant and project updates
3. Engaging and Connecting –
  - 2022 RPCV Reunion
4. Niger News Headlines

From the Editors

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Dear readers,

There is a lot of activity and news to share in this issue. FON is busy prepping for a second round of grant-making at the same time we are welcoming new board members and preparing our annual project report and request for donations. We are wishing you all the best fall possible and, as always, we welcome you feedback and support.

*Ismaghil Ag Moussa & Amy Wilson*

## 1) Board updates

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Six new board members joined us in September and they are already jumping into activities with enthusiasm and new ideas. Among new board members we welcome two Boston University exchange program participants and another member of the diaspora Nigerien. This increasing diversity is great for our organization to widen our reach and impact—especially considering the lack of Peace Corps program in Niger since 2011.

I'm honored the board voted me in as president and I look forward to working with this great slate of officers and board members. Your ideas and input are always welcome—contact me or any board member any time.

Many thanks to outgoing board members Dale Downes and Yari Rabiou. Both Dale and Yari have been big contributors to FON's progress and both have new work situations that nudged them to step down. After retiring early, Dale has thrown himself into teaching elementary school after a career of public health administration—wow – that takes some energy! Yari is also to be congratulated on a new job with African Development Foundation where continuing on a board position is not possible, but he continues to help contribute to our efforts by serving as a project champion and we are confident he will do good things with ADF. Thanks guys!

*Amy Wilson*

### BOARD of DIRECTORS

Mary Abrams, AZ  
Kelsey Andersen, NY  
John Baird, IL  
Paige Pihl Buckley, NH  
Christy Collins, DC, [Sec.]  
Kimberly Dixon, DC  
Alix Barstow Fedoruk, VT, [Vice Pres.]

Gary Geoghegan, PA, [Treas.]  
Myriam Kaplan-Pasternak DVM, CA  
Ismaghil Ag Moussa, NV  
Alhassan Ali Mamadou Souna, MD  
Douglas Steinberg, MD  
Amy Wilson, OR, [Pres.]

## 2) Grant and project updates

Several of the projects funded in July have already made great progress with two of them at or near completion and others off to a good start!

### **COMPLETED: Tchizamene Clinic Solar Batteries & Beds, Organisation Vie et Développement**

The community of Danat, with about 4000 inhabitants, is situated 150 km from Agadez and 100 km from Arlit. The medical clinic has limited supplies and equipment to provide health care which is in even higher demand in the rainy season. In the past due to lack of beds, the patients were treated outside with IV bags hanging from trees and motorcycle handlebars.

Funding from generous Friends of Niger donors provided 10 beds for the clinic as well as updated batteries for solar lighting and refrigeration of medicines. The FON award of \$3418 was sent in August, the purchases have been made and the equipment is installed and in service as of September.

### **COMPLETE - Pending Final Report: Bangiya Elementary School Desks, Bangiya Village**

Cooperative: \$1643

The 30 table/desks have been manufactured and delivered to the village in time for the opening of classes.

### **IN PROGRESS: Bio-control of millet borer, Potentiel Terre**

This project with the potential to significantly help villagers to control a major millet pest is already off and running. The NGO Potentiel Terre started by garnering support from authorities at local and regional levels before launching into village-level outreach and training. The importance of the project was underlined by the active participation of the Maire de Mokko, who not only travelled to villages to help with outreach, but also contributed funding to help distribute wasps in 10 villages this season.

Outreach sessions touched over 200 heads of household, and provided valuable feedback and ideas from villagers about how to best implement the project. Have any of you visited or worked in any of these villages: Sabbu-day, Tibbo-Beeri, Dareki Koira-zeno, Koli-Bagonda, Katize, Djanbaba-day, Dareki Koira-teji, Koirategui-Koli, Cirobi-day, Yawna?

Outreach sessions and distributing wasps.





*Native wasps that have been reproduced in controlled conditions are being distributed to farmers who will release them in fields in the fight against millet borers. Soon villagers will be able to reproduce populations locally for reintroduction against the pests.*

**Thanks to our Proposal Reviewers! -- Getting ready for round 2 of grant awards 2021.**

Many thanks to the dozen or so FON members who have stepped up and volunteered to help review our grant proposals in November. Please feel free to contact the Grants Management Committee (previously known as the Projects Committee) at [kulikuli.fon@gmail.com](mailto:kulikuli.fon@gmail.com) if you too are interested in helping. It is this type of volunteer work that allows us to review and select the proposals best suited to help Nigeriens.

*Mary Abrams*



### 3) Engaging and connecting Friends of Niger

One of our main mission elements is connecting and engaging people who have connections to Niger. We have formed a small working group to sort through some of the ideas and feedback gleaned in two recent member surveys. We are looking for folks who may want to participate in this idea phase or better yet, the implementation phase.

Below are some of the ideas members have shared in surveys:

- ✓ Compile FON contact directory including places and years of service, reconnect returned Peace Corps volunteers and other members
- ✓ Facilitate better communication between individuals in Niger and FON
- ✓ Mobilize and engage the talented and creative membership. Develop a structure that utilizes the human resources of membership.
- ✓ More opportunities to meet in or outside DC or regionally.
- ✓ Get more members involved in projects and activities
- ✓ Be more responsive to and inclusive of members; reach out more
- ✓ Reach more RPCVs including from neighboring countries.
- ✓ Organized group trips
- ✓ Create an on-line scrapbook, organized by year
- ✓ Language conversation clubs: Hausa, Zarma, etc.
- ✓ Engage members in fund-raising for projects
- ✓ Zoom shows of photos or items, or a FON Happy hour for the FON masses.
- ✓ Learn about the Pre-History of Niger
- ✓ Support stateside education efforts, i.e., third goal of Peace Corps, as a way to engage members

It seems as though there has already been some recent progress on some of these ideas. If you would like to participate in these discussions or connect with us to start planning an activity, please contact us at [president@friendsofniger.org](mailto:president@friendsofniger.org)

In the meantime, we are eager to share notices and success stories of reunions like the one below.

#### Upcoming 2022 RPCV Reunion

Planning for a 2022 Peace Corps Niger Reunion of the Peace Corps classes of 1978-1982 has begun! The reunion will take place in and around Baltimore. The dates are still being debated either August 12-14 (1st choice) or August 19-21 (second choice), 2022. Activities will include some or all of the following - a get-together on Friday evening, a Saturday pool party and cook-out and a Sunday departure brunch. Ask that Niger RPCVs from this era who are interested in attending contact Cass Naugle at [cassnaugle@comcast.net](mailto:cassnaugle@comcast.net).

*Mary Abrams*

### 4) News

#### • Cure Salée: Niger's Salt Cure Festival

The Cure Salée or "Festival of the Nomads" is a ceremony that marks the end of the rainy season, which falls in September. Make an extreme journey to the deepest Sahara to watch a beauty contest.

The competition drew racing camels from across Niger – and further afield – to the oasis town of Ingall, the country's traditional gateway to the Sahara and scene of the annual Cure Salee gathering of Tuareg and Wodaabe nomads.

But it was Moussa, 10 yrs old – more used to long, hot days tending his father's cattle in the desert – who won



Saturday's big race. Moussa does not go to school but has been riding camels, the speedy, finicky animals that are a hugely important part of life in the Sahara, since he was three years old. At seven, he says, he began venturing out solo. "I used to be afraid to ride camels alone," he says.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/gallery/2021/9/21/ingall-niger-hosts-camel-race-sahara-desert>

- **Abalak / Tahoua: Bush Fire**

112,333 hectares burned following the fires recorded in recent days.

For several days Abalak has been burning in silence before our eyes. This department needs the help of all who can support it in overcoming this tragedy. We must help Abalak and all the pastors of this country who are now losing a vital resource and who only have their courage and branches to stop the voracity of these fires.

<https://airinfoagadez.com/2021/10/03/abalak-tahoua-112-333-hectares-brules-suite-aux-incendies-enregistres-ces-derniers-jours/>



- **Niger Economy**

Niger has merit. Over the past decade, poverty has declined, and education has increased, as has life expectancy. Successive governments have managed the economy correctly, keeping inflation below 3%, budget deficits below 4% and public debt at around 44% of gross domestic product (GDP), to the point that the Bank World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) describe its risk of debt distress as "moderate".

<https://www.jeuneafrique.com/1214480/economie/niger-un-champion-regional-de-la-croissance-en-puissance/>

- **President Biden -- not the only person meeting the Pope recently:**

The former President of Niger met with the Pope. *L'ancien Président de la République, S.E. Issoufou Mahamadou, lauréat du prix Ibrahim 2020 pour l'excellence en leadership africain, membre du comité de jugement indépendant du Prix Zayed pour la fraternité humaine 2022 et les membres dudit Comité ont rencontré, mercredi dernier au Vatican, Sa Sainteté le Pape François, chef de l'Église catholique, qui leur a souligné « à quel point leur travail est important pour le monde » .*

<http://www.tamtaminfo.com/lancien-president-de-la-republique-s-e-issoufou-mahamadou-membre-du-comite-de-jugement-independant-du-prix-zayed-pour-la-fraternite-humaine-2022-recu-par-le-pape-francois-au-vatican/>



## CONNECTING YOU, OUR MEMBERS



WHERE were you?? And, can we share?

These are two important questions for which we don't have good answers. Our information for members is spotty and mixed. With updated information about the regions you know and love, we can better help connect and engage members. Please take a moment to go to our website <http://www.friendsofniger.org/about/join-fon/> and fill out a membership form to help provide better info about members. And please indicate if we may share your contact information with other members.

## YOUR DONATIONS FUEL THIS WORK

Friends of Niger is an organization founded by Returned Peace Corps Volunteers to initiate and support activities related to Niger and its people. We pursue three main purposes:

- Connecting and engaging people who have connections to Niger including those who have worked or are working in Niger and diaspora Nigeriens
- Supporting development and humanitarian activities in Niger, and
- Advocating for and educating about Niger

Donations are accepted 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 it 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: [\(Friends of Niger\) FON](#)
- Submit news topics and articles: [camelexpressnewsletter@gmail.com](mailto:camelexpressnewsletter@gmail.com)
- Contact President Amy Wilson, [president@friendsofniger.org](mailto:president@friendsofniger.org)

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

