

The Camel Express



Newsletter of the Friends of Niger

August 2001

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FON Commits to Microcredit Project & Teams with MICA to Provide Oxen & Carts



Friends of Niger has formed a partnership with MICA, Inc. (Microcredit Africa) to provide oxcarts to women in villages in central Niger as part of a project whose aim is to “empower women to reclaim their basic rights for education, health care and respect as human beings.”

MICA is a non-profit organization, founded by Haoua Diatta, which seeks to alleviate poverty in Africa by empowering women. Mrs. Diatta is the author of [Shadow of Africa](#) and is the spouse of Nigerien Ambassador Joseph

Diatta.

The flagship activity of MICA is the Oxcart Project which begins with the formation of an association of village women, who then choose their officers (including 2 Financial Managers) from amongst themselves and undergo training as a group. This process is followed by the provision of an ox and a cart to the group. The woman rent the carts to villagers who need transportation for a variety of purposes - as an ambulance, for farmers taking produce to market, for craftspeople transporting goods, etc. Rental revenues allow the women to eventually purchase the cart while continuing to generate revenue. These recovered funds, in turn, allow MICA to purchase additional carts for other women in other villages. The cost of an ox and a cart is \$280.

The Oxcart Project is operating in the Maradi region with active projects in Dan Keri and Aguié and with another four villages at various stages of project development.

Friends of Niger has agreed to fund oxen/cart sets for two villages as well as to package donations from its members and contacts in units of \$280 for the purchase of additional oxen and carts. Information about where and how to contribute can be found midway down the right hand column on this page.

More information regarding MICA, its various projects in Niger, and Haoua Diatta’s book (Shadow of Africa) can be found at the MICA web site - <http://justin.kirk.net/mica/>.

Member Donations Push Oxcart Sets to Six

Financial contributions over the past several months have allowed Friends of Niger to boost its support for the Oxcart Project from two to six sets of oxen and carts .

Contributions to the FON/MICA Oxcart Project should be made payable to **Friends of Niger** and sent to :
Oxcart; c/o FON; P.O. Box 33164; Washington, DC; 20033-0164

Children's Chewable Multivitamins - a Campaign Update -

Friends of Niger continues to receive donations for the purchase of children's chewable multivitamins. As before, these donations are used for the periodic bulk purchase of vitamins as part of the FON/Boston University project which began in 1999. The vitamins are then carried to Niger and passed along to BU's Resident Director in Niamey - Sue Rosenfeld. Sue, in turn, makes sure that the vitamins are forwarded to the National Hospital in Niamey and to the SIM Hospital at Galmi, near Madaoua.

Since the beginning of the FON/BU campaign, almost \$1100 of vitamins have been forwarded to Niamey and Galmi. The next and fifth shipment is scheduled for shipment to Niger in the autumn of 2001.

Financial contributions should be made payable to **Friends of Niger** and sent to:

**Vitamins c/o Friends of Niger
P.O. Box 33164
Washington, D.C.
20033-0164**

FON will continue to liaise between people going to Niger and anyone or any group wanting to make a contribution to the campaign. In this regard, anyone traveling to Niger and finding themselves with room in a suitcase or, better yet, a spare suitcase is encouraged to get in touch with **Jim Schneider** via e-mail at lorenz3@magi.com or by telephone at 819-827-4870. *Remember - it all counts or none of it does.*