

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,

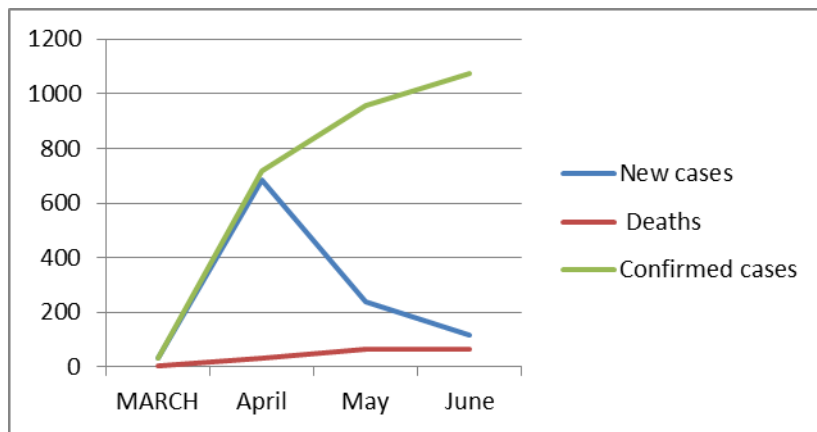
I don't know about you, but I am ready to come out of the Looking Glass now and back to the real world. Good thing we learned the meaning of patience in Niger—my villagers were constantly admonishing me for not having enough 'suuru'! So we can only keep moving forward and do what we can. One startling 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#

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>



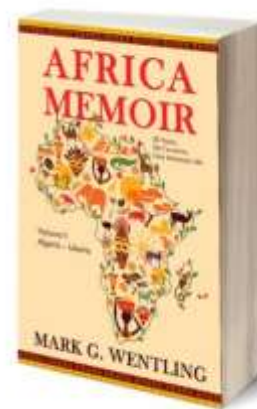
Book Chapter by Nigerien scholar in: The Palgrave Handbook of African Education and Indigenous Knowledge. Palgrave Macmillan, Cham, Abidogun J., Falola T. (eds). https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-38277-3_23. Check out the Chapter written by Nigerien scholar

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>

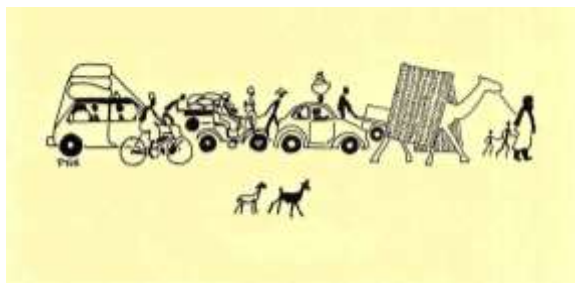


Hausa books on offer

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

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 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
- Contact President John Baird, 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