

The Camel Express



Newsletter of the Friends of Niger

November 2020

Friends of Niger PO Box 452 Haverford, PA 19041 www.friendsofniger.org

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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. As always, we welcome your comments and ideas for the newsletter.

Ismaghil Ag Moussa & Amy Wilson

Membership Note

Please let us know if we can share your contact information with other members; as members of National Peace Corps Association we cannot share your information unless you give us permission. You can reply to this email or go the website and update your contact info: <http://www.friendsofniger.org/about/join-fon/>

Facebook Update

Sign up for our new Facebook group “**(Friends of Niger) FON**”

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:

LOCATIONS	RESULTS	PARTNERS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Maradi ▪ Niamey: Galbal, N'Doungou ▪ Agadez: Mont Bagzam Dept of Tchirozerin, & village of Tchizamene 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 1420 mosquito nets ▪ 3,042,000 cfa / \$5,500 medicine distributed ▪ 12 mosquito breeding sites sprayed ▪ 928,750 cfa basic food distributed ▪ Blood drive 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ HIMMA ▪ Cadres et Etudiants du Niger ▪ CONUSA ▪ Alliance des jeunes pour un développement endogène/Nurse Volunteers ▪ OVD Tedhilt ▪ 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

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. Ruth 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. Ruth has already sent over some of the funds she gathered resulting in distribution of mats, rice, cooking oil, mosquito repellent. 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>

Shown here, grateful recipients holding signs that say:
Merci Corvallis, Mun Gode!



“Na gode. Allah shi barka lahiya,”
Ruth Rakia Sitton DeMaio, RPCV
Niger ‘70-’72, pictured here with
friends from Niger visiting her in
Corvallis, OR



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 2,500 babies. “





“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.”

See more Nomad Foundation news and updates at <https://nomadfoundation.org/blog>

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/>]

Let’s meet online! Looking for ideas for speakers, panels, topics

Friends of Niger is forming a working group to discuss more ways to get together, engage and interact with members. We're thinking about convening some panel discussions, and we will be reaching out to discuss possible get-togethers –virtual now and in future in-person--with those of you who told us in the survey that you were interested in social activities. Please share any ideas for speakers and topics that you think would be interesting for our members. Want to help with any of these activities ? Have ideas for something different to bring us together?

We'd love it! Please reply to the Camel Express editor: camelexpressnewsletter@gmail.com.

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 McGehee 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 & Culture

- 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>
- *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 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 (sign up for the newsletter by joining FON): <http://www.friendsofniger.org/>
- Join our FaceBook group: “(Friends of Niger) FON”
- 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.