

The Camel Express



Newsletter of the Friends of Niger

April 2022

Friends of Niger PO Box 452 Haverford, PA 19041

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From the Editors

Dear readers,

FON is about to complete our third round of grant making with our new process. The participation of volunteers in the review process has so many benefits. Our workforce is multiplied by involving members, the decisions are based on a wider field of expertise and we have more confidence that the decisions we are making as a board are well aligned with our donors. The Friends Rendez-Vous which took place online via Zoom on March 5 was a great start to new things. The assembled group did some productive brainstorming and enjoyed a moment of fellowship—read more about it in the following.

Merci, Fofu, Mungodey, Tanimert, Foma, Thank you

Ismaghil Ag Moussa & Amy Wilson

1) Grant Program Update

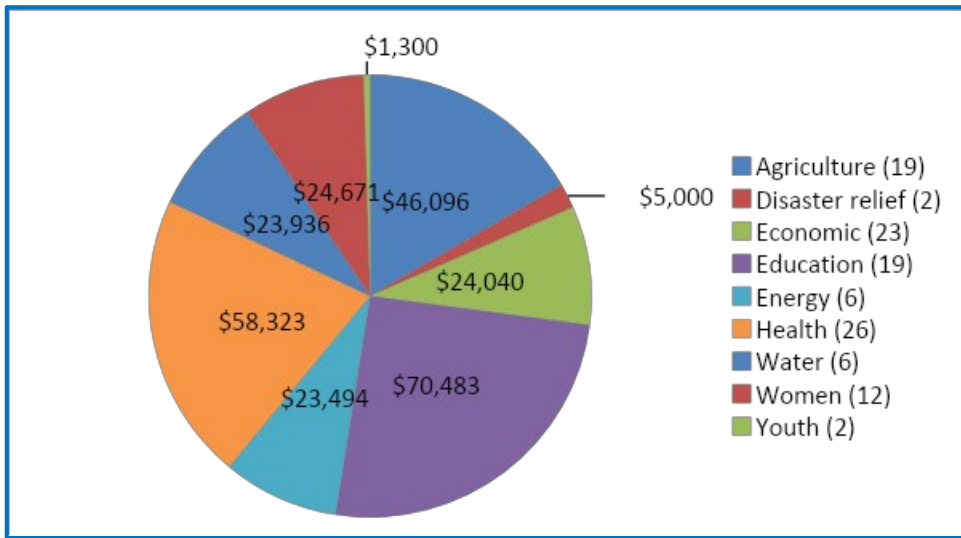
We have completed two full rounds of grant making and we are about to complete our third round of reviews. In our new process we do modest outreach, mostly networking through our members and connections in order to let people know about the grant program. So far this outreach is yielding a diverse range of proposals in a manageable quantity. The volunteer proposal review teams have worked hard to evaluate all the proposals and rate them based on our criteria, recommending the best candidates to the board for funding. Once the decision is made, we make a sincere effort to relay feedback to the applicants when their proposal is not successful. For each proposal, we briefly describe what we liked and what might make the request more competitive.

Here are the stats so far for the new process.

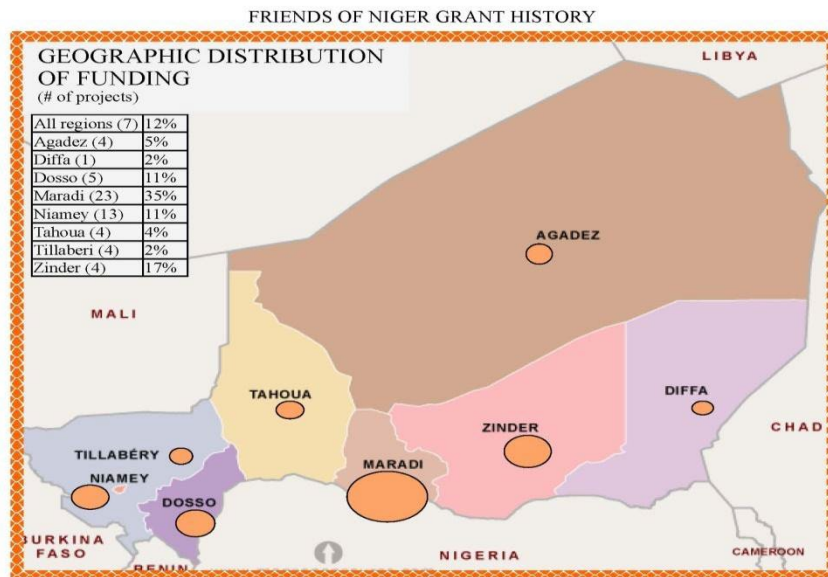
	<u>Round 1</u>	<u>Round 2</u>	<u>Round 3</u>
Applications received	22	10	26
Funds requested	\$95,500	\$59,000	\$116,362
Volunteer reviewers	13	16	11
Projects funded	4	3	??
Funds granted	\$15,430	\$12,713	??

As we gain experience, we have made some refinements and improvements and plan to have a thorough focused discussion with the board in May. We'd love any feedback from members, reviewers, recipients and partners as we move ahead.

We've also been looking back at the rich history of FON grant making. The following charts are the result of preliminary information we have been able to pull together showing the range of projects funded and where they were located (going back to 2001).



Project purpose: total \$277,343; (number of projects)



Geographic distribution of projects

Friends of Niger members are encouraged to contribute to the effective grant-making in several ways.

- **Get the word out.** Share the grant announcements with people you know.
- **Mentor applicants.** We think our application process is straightforward, but we also recognize some applicants could use a helping hand in developing good proposals.
- **Be a reference.** Lend your name to good proposals.
- **Be a Project Champion.** Each funded project is assigned a Project Champion to facilitate communication and act as liaison between the applicant and FON.
- **Review grant applications.** Members help make our process rigorous by reviewing proposals and making recommendations to the board.
- **Donate!** Your donations support these grants. Thank you!

RECENTLY COMPLETED PROJECT

The good folks at the Assemblée des Formateurs et Animateurs des Associations used your donation of \$4,998 to build a classroom en “semi-dure” in the village of Tchinzizni in the Agadez region. The classroom will serve more than 40 students and 650 families.

The new building is a huge source of pride for the community and demonstrates a tangible commitment to education. Parents will be thrilled to leave behind the annual ritual of re-building straw huts to make classrooms.



Thanks from: Assemblée des Formateurs et Animateurs des Associations. . .

« est particulièrement satisfaite de la réalisation de ce projet qui était une préoccupation majeure pour les communautés locales et celle de leurs enfants malgré quelques difficultés liées à l'insuffisance des fonds alloués à ce projet. La collaboration qui a prévalu au cours de

ce projet entre le partenaire financier FON et AFAA a été une réussite totale et très exemplaire. C'est le lieu de joindre, ici, nos remerciements à ceux des populations bénéficiaires à l'endroit de tous les membres de FON et plus spécialement à notre champion [Board member Ismaghil Ag Moussa] qui a fait preuve de disponibilité et de patience tout au long de ce projet.

L'association AFAA espère que la collaboration entamée avec FON se poursuivra longtemps encore.

2) Member Rendezvous

More than 30 FON members gathered online via Zoom March 5. The rendezvous was both social AND productive. FON asked the assembled group representing all decades of Peace Corps presence in Niger to brainstorm ideas for connecting and engaging FON members and to identify some volunteers to lead future activities. As you'd expect, members who tuned in had lots of good ideas. The main themes were as follows:

TO BUILD MEMBERSHIP

- ✓ Recruit and engage diaspora
- ✓ Target outreach to professional connections (like academics, NGOs and USAID) and organizations with potential members, like West Africa Research Association
- ✓ Maintain web presence, newsletters and promote networking to expand our membership

TO MAINTAIN EXISTING MEMBERSHIP

- ✓ Virtual meetings/presentations with knowledgeable speakers on current affairs in Niger and topics of interest to our members
- ✓ Facilitate members being able to find each other

To ENGAGE MEMBERSHIP

- ✓ Encourage more member work on educational outreach activities here at home by providing a speaker toolkit, developing materials and programs to share



A working group for educational outreach was formed to include: Dane Miller, Justin Smith, Dale Downes, and Chris Huh. We'd love to have more folks join this working group. Their first job will be to review the more detailed ideas shared at this recent meeting and prioritize some immediate activities. Contact us if you are interested in joining us and stay tuned!

3) BU Alumni Corner by Dane Miller

There is often a special affinity between friends who were part of the same BU cohort in Niger. I have heard from multiple alumni that they are still in regular contact with their fellow students. This bond can be stronger when we live in close proximity to each other, allowing for occasional get-togethers. What started as short-term friendship in Niamey evolves over time as our lives overlap and intertwine. Sometimes, we come to learn more about Niger after the fact from the experiences of those who were there with us. One example: I have a friend, Felicity Doyle, or "Dommo" as I knew her in Niger, who lives across the river from me in Brooklyn. At least once a year, we try to meet up, usually for a walk in Prospect Park. On our last walk, I learned more about an internship she had while in Niger...



Dommo worked with La Compagnie Espoir, whose mission was sensibilisation (awareness raising) around reproductive health issues. At the time, the troupe was focused on condom use for the prevention of STIs (sexually transmitted infections) and unwanted pregnancies. Given cultural sensitivities, the group could not address the topic explicitly, but had to use symbols to convey their message. Condoms became "hats" and much of the humor revolved around remembering to wear your hat. The troupe performed for diverse audiences, including high school students and one particularly memorable experience in a women's prison. Dommo, a theater student at the time, was able to participate in the shows, though she was typecast as the "American girlfriend" of one of the characters.

Reflecting on this experience 15 years later, Dommo didn't feel like her time with La Compagnie Espoir has had a direct connection to her work as an actress nor has she participated in this type of awareness raising theater since. Like many experiences when moving between cultures, things don't always translate. She was glad for the opportunity, however. In theater, as in life, we are constantly accepting the conditions, only to move past them.

4) Niger News

Niger to Recruit 5,000 Soldiers to Counter Militants

The military said the recruitment of men aged between 18 and 25 would be done in May. Niger is grappling with Boko Haram fighters in the south, near its border with Nigeria,



and militants linked to Islamic State groups and al-Qaeda in the west, bordering Mali and Burkina Faso. The recruitment comes as France plans to withdraw its troops from neighboring Mali - potentially leaving a vacuum - after nearly a decade in the fight against extremist groups in the Sahel region. Niger President Bazoum had hoped the French troops would be redeployed to his country, but that has yet to be agreed on. (By Khalid, BBC News).

<https://www.bbc.com/news/topics/cvenzmgymgt/niger>

Communities in Niger Adapt to a Climate Change

Communities in Niger adapt to the changing climate and to the displacement. In a region hit by rising displacement and temperatures, one town in northern Niger is harnessing the cooperation of local and displaced communities to find solutions. Women in bright shawls walk among the rows, checking irrigation pipes and adding a splash of water to any thirsty-looking specimens. (UNHCR News)



<https://www.unhcr.org/news/stories/2022/2/6206891a4/communities-niger-adapt-displacement-changing-climate.html>

African Nonprofits Want to “decolonize” Donor Funding

International development funding to Africa has a “colonial” approach that favors Western organizations at the expense of local civil society organizations (CSOs), a new independent report funded by the Vodafone Foundation says.

Most donor resources go to intermediary non-governmental organizations (NGOs) based in the northern hemisphere, the report says, describing the system as one that is designed to make African institutions forever dependent on international donors. (By Mureithi, Quartz Africa).

<https://qz.com/africa/2066091/african-nonprofits-want-to-decolonize-donor-funding/amp/>

-- Shared by Yari Rabiou



Children’s Book recommendation:

The Water Princess by Susan Verde, Georgie Badiel

Based on supermodel Georgie Badiel's childhood, a young girl dreams of bringing clean drinking water to her African village With its wide sky and...

<https://www.penguinrandomhouse.com/books/317197/the-water-princess-by-susan-verde-with-georgie-badiel-illustrated-by-peter-h-reynolds/>

Shared by Mattie Harms

Sad, breaking news

We have just received word that Steve Reid [1979-1981] and his wife Wende were murdered in their hometown in the U.S. Most recently Steve worked for Tetra Tech ARD and had previously worked in Burkina and Senegal.

This information was shared by his family with local news:

"Steve served four years in the Peace Corps in West Africa right after college. He met his future wife and soulmate Wendy, who was from West Africa, while she was studying in Washington D.C. on an athletic scholarship. They bonded over their mutual love of adventure and fitness.

"Steve and Wendy had returned three years ago to his hometown of Concord to enjoy a well-deserved retirement. Steve's thirty-plus year career as an international development specialist in service to the world's most vulnerable through USAID humanitarian projects could not have been made possible without the love, care and support of Wendy, who also helped recently-resettled refugees acclimate and thrive in the United States.

"As requested by the police, we ask for your support by providing any information that would be helpful to the ongoing investigation.

Lindsay and Brian Reid, and the Reid/Forey Families."

<https://www.cbsnews.com/news/stephen-reid-djeswende-reid-missing-couple-found-shot-to-death-new-hampshire/>;

<https://www.wmur.com/article/no-updates-concord-double-homicide-case-new-hampshire-42422/39807466#>

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 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/groups/676485096587560/>
- Submit news topics and articles: camelexpressnewsletter@gmail.com
- Contact President Amy Wilson, president@friendsofniger.org

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

