

The Camel Express



Newsletter of the Friends of Niger

March 2025

Friends of Niger 4865 Hwy 234 Box 180, White City, OR 97503

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Dear Readers,

There is so much going on in the world, it is a bit hard to focus. Our modest effort to support Niger seems more important than ever. It was great to see folks in our Annual Member Meeting and we plan to make more opportunities to gather virtually. We loved the chance to meet with you! Our sincere thanks to everyone who participated, asked questions, and shared your thoughts. Speaking of the current upheaval in US-international activities, we are dismayed at the current trend to draw back from our international role. Many FON members have made significant contributions to people around the globe through international work and you have our heartfelt sympathy.

Merci, Fofo, Mun gode, Tanimert, Foma, Thank you --

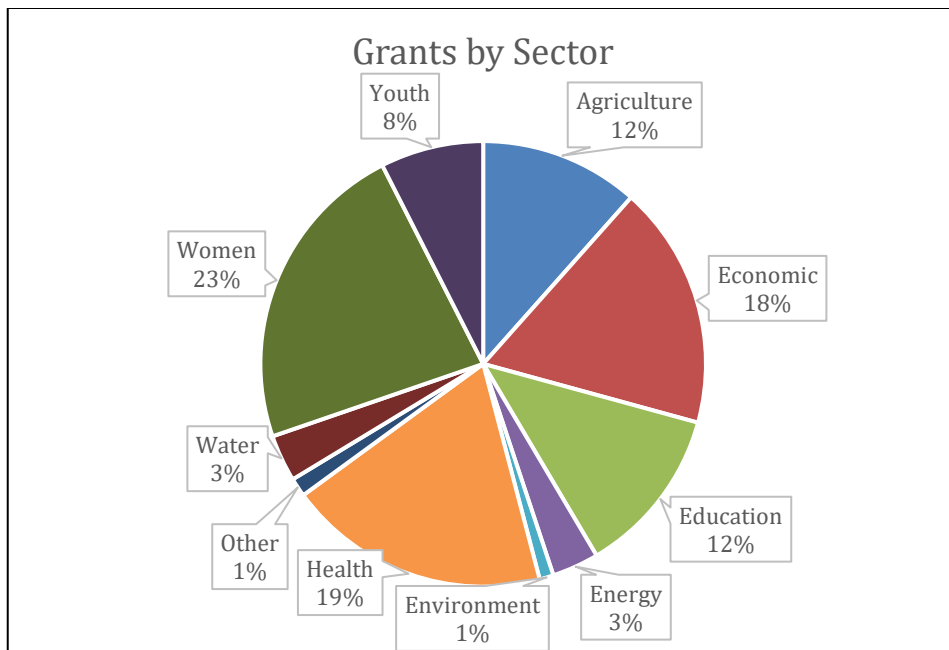
Amy Wilson & Scott Youngstedt

1) First Annual Virtual Member Meeting *Scott M Youngstedt*

The member meeting of February 19, 2025, was attended by roughly 50 members! FON President Amy Wilson started out with a brief overview of the status and stats of 2024. The introduction concluded with a retrospective view of grant making all the way back to the beginning of the organization.

Grant Making since 2001

- Over 185 grants awarded
- Funds to projects in Niger: \$547,204
- Supported projects led by more than 75 organizations



Then, we broke into three chat rooms: Current Events, Grants, and Talk to the President. Doug Steinberg ably opened our Current Events chat group with an overview, before Alhassan Ali Mamadou Souna and Scott M. Youngstedt contributed their perspectives to a lively conversation with many members. Mary Abrams skillfully narrated a slideshow, offering detailed reports on recently completed projects that were beautifully illustrated by FON Intern Madalynn Paquette. It was the most widely attended chat room, indicating that our members are serious about our impact. The Talk with the President room led to thoughtful dialogue on a variety of issues. In summary, the Annual Member Meeting was an enormous success as we communicated about our operations and benefitted from engaging dialogue with and between members.

2) Special grants for Capacity building

Amy Wilson

This past year we received some extraordinary donations. The windfall prompted thoughtful discussion among the board. How do we accomplish more without necessarily “doing” a lot more? As an organization we are poised at a delicate point where our volunteer resources are well-suited to our program. Our volunteers are a precious commodity and we have to be mindful of what we can do as volunteers without overtaxing ourselves and burnout. The donations received last year were almost double the norm. It was clear we could not expect volunteers to do twice as much, so if doubling our workload was unrealistic, how could we convey more support to Niger?

We considered and rejected the possibilities of holding back money for a rainy day and distributing larger grants. The option we chose was to provide grants using a different mechanism than the open call for proposals and with a slightly different aim. We developed a one-time process of offering capacity building grants on an invitational basis. This effort would be focused on organizations which had already demonstrated excellence in project implementation and was not competitive in nature.

Admittedly, when we fund project proposals, we like to focus on the work itself and leave very little margin for organizational support, overhead or organization development. This offering took direct aim at those organizational needs that we otherwise don’t support. We asked a select number of

former grantees to propose budgets for activities that would benefit their organizations by building organizational capacity.

The proposals did not disappoint. They identified things that were holding them back and strategies to get ahead. The special capacity grants provided staff training, computers, software, equipment (knitting machines, etc.) and even motorcycles for those who were spending lots of time using public transport.

These special capacity grants have given encouragement and support to organizations who have a demonstrated track record. We look forward to following their progress and sincerely hope this extra boost positions them for even more success in the future.



3) Get ready for the grant making cycle of 2025- volunteers still needed

There is still time for YOU to participate in the grant-making cycle this year! It is a fun way to stay connected, do something for Niger and support FON.

Members can participate in several ways.

1. Share the Info - email the grant information to potential grant applicants
2. Help Develop a Proposal – work with someone in Niger to help them develop a competitive proposal
3. Volunteer on the Grant Review Team – work with a small group to review a batch of proposals and make funding recommendations
4. Volunteer to be a Project Champion – each funded grant is assigned a champion to act as liaison, coach and mentor—it is EASY and FUN

Please share this information with potential applicants. The forms and information are available in French on our website under the tab “A nos amis Nigériens” <https://friendsofniger.org/a-nos-amis-nigériens/infosubventions/>

4) Project Results *Madalynn Paquette, FON Intern*

Developing and Producing Formula for Children and Breastfeeding Women in Guéchémé

Access to infant formulas is a barrier for many families in remote, rural regions. This project developed an accessible, nutritious formula for both young children and adults. The NGO Begue trained twenty women to utilize local ingredients to produce “VitaLocal”, an infant formula intended to supplement infant nursing. This methodology of grinding and mixing the formula also taught these women marketing skills by packaging and selling the product. The project exemplified the importance of organizational management skills through monitoring the quality and production of the formula. To

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complete this project, equipment and tools were purchased to mill and roast the formula's ingredients. Extensive research was conducted to find the best local ingredients, like Chakti millet, peanuts, sesame nuts, white voandzou, and tiger nuts to be combined in the composition of this formula. The formulation of Vitalocal uses these rich locally grown crops capable of preventing nutrient deficiencies among the most vulnerable, like young children, lactating and pregnant women, and the elderly. This project not only addressed child food insecurities but also better channeled women into the agri-food industry.

Note: this project was sponsored by Joel Neuberg. See June 2024 Camel Express for more info on how members sponsor projects through FON <https://friendsofniger.org/about/camel-express-archives/>



Adding Value to Agriculture Products in Agadez

With the support of NGO Tamakrast Niger and the Telite Azine cooperative, fifty women were provided the equipment and training to process abundant garden produce. The project consists of strengthening the technical and material capacities of the Telite Azine cooperative. Training topics like financial management, conservation techniques, and processing were taught to these women in a classroom setting and through hands-on experiences. To aid in conservation efforts, tools like a solar-powered dryer, a freezer, a flour mill, and accessories were purchased. Utilizing processing and conservation techniques helps avoid the waste of perishable vegetables like onions, whose peak sales run from October and January. This technique mobilizes women members of the cooperative to continue carrying out this activity and build equity over time.



Tchadoua High School Latrines and Improved Hygiene for Students



Tchadoua High School had four old and inadequate latrines, which created a serious hygiene problem for all students and for girls in particular. The existing latrines were neither covered nor clean. Additionally, privacy concerns arose as the latrines were not separated, thus it was not uncommon for a boy to enter while a girl was using it, and as a result girls would often just leave school. Working very closely with the school, MICA led this project to the benefit of 1,196 boys and 1,015 girls. To improve safety and hygiene conditions, the project built new latrines and handwashing stations. It created a long-term maintenance plan, trained students on sanitation techniques, and promoted positive behavior regarding hygiene use. Spanning across a year, two blocks of latrines with three cabins each were built with locally purchased construction materials. To ensure a protective environment was established, boy/girl blocks were separated by drawing a painted line on the privacy wall of the latrines. To establish a long-term maintenance plan to promote positive behavior surrounding sanitation, a hygiene club was established with the training of fifty student members, and two teachers were designated to oversee the club. Also, a school guardian became responsible for the daily cleaning of the latrines. For the girls, hygiene kits were provided to promote healthy female hygiene practices.

5) Niger-related News & Info

Niger coup leader sworn in as president for five years

Niger's military ruler has been sworn in as the country's president for a transitional period of five years. Gen Abdourahamane Tchiani has led the country since 2023, after he deposed Niger's elected President, Mohamed Bazoum. On Wednesday, Gen Tchiani took the presidential office under a new charter that replaces the West African country's constitution.

<https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c241e1151610>

A historic milestone! WHO verifies Niger free of onchocerciasis as the first country on the African continent - World Health Organization (WHO) (River Blindness)

<https://www.who.int/news-room/feature-stories/detail/a-historic-milestone!-who-verifies-niger-free-of-onchocerciasis-as-the-first-country-on-the-african-continent>;

Niamey, Monday, March 19, 2025: U.S. Embassy Niamey Resumes Routine Consular Services

[Niamey, Niger] – The United States Embassy in Niamey is pleased to announce the full resumption of consular services following a temporary closure. <https://ne.usembassy.gov/>

6) African Cultural Events & Festivals *Scott M Youngstedt*

African Cultural Festivals in the U.S. in Spring/Summer 2025: Enjoy this partial list of African cultural festivals. Many Nigériens participate in these events.

- Pan African Festival 2025 (Atlanta, GA), **April 24-27**: <https://tubmanmuseum.com/pan-african-festival-2025/>
- Pan-African Festival Weekend 2025 (San Antonio, TX), **May 2-4**, 2025: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/pan-african-festival-weekend-2025-tickets-1230573009999>
- Spirit of Africa (Seattle, WA), **May 10**, 2025: <https://www.seattlecenter.com/events/featured-events/festal/spirit-of-africa>
- Bimbé Cultural Arts Festival (Durham, NC), **May 17**, 2025: <https://dprplaymore.org/281/Bimbe-Cultural-Arts-Festival>
- 2025 Pan-African Festival (Houston, TX), **May 24**, 2025: <https://shape.org/panafrican-cultural-festival>
- Africa in America Music, Dance, and Culture Festival '25 (Inglewood, CA), **June 7-9**, 2025: <https://africanamericallc.com/new-events/aiafest24>
- African Heritage Festival (Orem, UT), **June 28**, 2025: <https://culturelearningcenter.org/african-heritage-festival>
- African Cultural Festival (Milwaukee, WI), **July 12**, 2025: ?
- Africa World Festival (Detroit, MI), **July 18-20**, 2025: <https://www.thewright.org/africanworldfestival>
- Saginaw African Cultural Festival (Saginaw, MI), **August 8-10** 2025: <https://www.saginawacf.com/>
- African Festival Boston, (Boston, MA), **August 16-17**, 2025: <https://www.facebook.com/africanfestboston/>
- Minnesota African Cultural Festival, **September 13**, 2025: <https://onetikaronepeople.org/minnesota-african-cultural-festival-2025/>
- A Glimpse of Africa Festival (Grand Rapids, MI), see website for dates: <https://www.aglimpseofafrica.org/festival-highlights>

7) In Brief

A note from Daniel Chirot

I was sorry to find out that Dr. David Nicholas had died a couple of years ago. He was our PC doctor (1964-66) and I remained friends with him when he was doing further study in New York afterward and I was a graduate student there. I guess it is that time in our lives when old friends are dying. I will never forget the experience toward the end of our stay when he wanted us to have a blood test to see what we might have caught. It was at the French run hospital in Niamey, but the nurses and assistants were locally trained. I went in to get my blood drawn. The male nurse had a dirty table with two obviously used syringes on them. He took one to draw my blood. (No disposables there.) My father was a doctor and I'd worked in his hospital, so I knew that this was very bad practice. I said so, and the nurse said, "Don't worry, I'll use the one I only use for whites." When I told Dr. Nicholas he rushed over to the hospital to try to train nurses there. He was quite upset that somehow the main French doctors working there had never bothered to train the staff properly. Dr. Nicholas was a good man. Just that one intervention probably saved a good number of lives.



Tee shirts still available:

We still have a handful of tee shirts available in medium, large, and extra-large—get them while they last for \$25 each (includes postage)! Please send an email to president@friendsofniger.org to request an order form.

YOUR DONATIONS FUEL THIS WORK

Friends of Niger is an organization to initiate and support activities related to Niger and its people. We pursue three main purposes:

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

Friends of Niger is an all-volunteer tax-exempt organization under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. EIN 65-1267451. To donate write a check payable to Friends of Niger and mail to
NEW ADDRESS: Friends of Niger 4865 Hwy 234 Box 180, White City, OR 97503,

OR go to www.friendsofniger.org to use PayPal.

Board of Directors

Officers: Amy Wilson/President, Alix Barstow Fedoruk/Vice President, Mary Abrams/Secretary & Grants Management Committee, John Baird/Past President; At Large Board members: Paige Pihl Buckley, Alhassan Ali Mamadou Souna, Douglas Steinberg, Nafissa Salihou, Scott Youngstedt, Soufiane Younoussi

For more about Friends of Niger:

- Our website <http://www.friendsofniger.org/>
- Join & follow us at: [\(Friends of Niger\) FON](#)
- Submit news topics and articles: camelexpress@friendsofniger.org
- Contact President Amy Wilson, president@friendsofniger.org

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

