

The Camel Express



Newsletter of the Friends of Niger

May 2025

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

In this issue:

1. Supporting our members caught in the current chaos
2. Grant cycle 2025 kicks off with a bang
3. National Peace Corps Association Conference July 18-20 Washington DC
4. Grantees implement Special Capacity Building Grants
 - Tamakrast
 - MICA
5. Niger-related News
6. In Brief
 - Tee shirts available

Dear Readers,

We'd like to take a moment to thank our intern Madalynn Paquette, and congratulate her on her recent graduation from Saginaw Valley State University with a degree in History & Black Studies. Madalynn has been working behind the scenes to help us organize our records and do a better job telling the stories of good work accomplished with your donations. She has offered to stay on as a volunteer while she continues her studies toward a Masters of Public Administration. With her help we hope to be able to share more of the great videos, photos and stories shared with us by grantees.

FON is still staying out of politics, but we are hoping that you don't. We have all participated in the important work of soft diplomacy and know it is valuable for building international relationships. We hope that you are finding opportunities to communicate and educate others about the value of this work and the unique role the US plays. Not all FON members were Peace Corps volunteers, but I think most would agree that no other country has ever created a program that captures the essence of the Peace Corps. Programs like Peace Corps and USAID make the world a safer and more humane place.

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

Amy Wilson & Scott Youngstedt

1) Supporting our members caught in the current chaos

We are heartsick to hear about so many of our members whose lives and careers have been abruptly derailed. The dismantling of USAID has impacted the careers of employees and a huge number of organizations who relied on grants and programs led by USAID. The impact is rippling through the development community affecting many of our members who have developed distinguished careers helping people around the world. Our work in Niger gave us skills and insights that prepared us for many other international challenges. Working in Niger taught us the importance of connecting with people and learning what dreams, skills and abilities they have.

Friends of Niger is not in a position to offer employment or financial support, but we can offer fellowship and compassion. We'd like to offer to host a virtual meeting for folks who may want to network and commiserate. Can you think of other ways we might be able to assist? We have very sparse information about the current occupations of our members, but it is safe to guess that there is a lot of expertise and opportunity among this group.

Would you like to help organize a virtual meeting? If so, please get in touch.

president@friendsofniger.org

We are eager to hear other ideas for supporting our members and friends.



Here is a resource created by RPCVs for RPCVs : <https://rpcvnexus.org/>

We don't have any direct knowledge of their results, so if you try it out, please let us know.

2) Grant cycle 2025 kicks off with a bang

We are currently very busy reviewing grant applications. We received a record 88 applications across a wide range of sectors including agriculture, water, women's empowerment, health, and others. As a matter of practicality, our screening for eligibility has gotten more stringent. To make the best use of our volunteer time and improve our chances of funding projects that are successful, we winnowed the group of applications to be reviewed by our teams to 42—still a lot to review! While many worthy ideas were presented, the two most common disqualifiers were asking for too much money and providing inadequate description of how the work would be accomplished.

The review teams are led by Mary Abrams, JoAnn Lewis, Alix Fedoruk, Scott Youngstedt, Amy Wilson and Douglas Steinberg. Each team has 2-3 additional volunteers and they will each review 7-8 proposals. Preliminary reviews indicate that we have many strong applications and therefore will have some difficult decisions to make.

Grant Management Committee Chair Mary Abrams offered an orientation for reviewers via Zoom on May 28. We are very pleased that 20 FON members have volunteered to review applications! Each volunteer will spend a few hours reviewing and scoring the proposals which have all been translated into English. Then the six small groups will meet from June 15 to June 20 to discuss their findings and make recommendations to the Grants Committee. The Board will make final decisions in early July. After final vetting of recipients, applicants will be notified of our decisions no later than August 16.

There is still a great option for you to participate when we assign Champions to each grant. If you are interested in acting as liaison and mentor to a funded project, please contact us at projects@friendsofniger.org. It is a fun way to connect and support good projects.

3) National Peace Corps Association Conference July 18-20 Washington

NPCA is organizing Peace Corps Connect: Building Bridges at Home and Abroad at Washington School of Law, American University, Washington DC.

Many activities are planned including speakers, a job fair, a service opportunity, embassy visits, Hill Day to educate lawmakers and more. Affiliate groups—THAT'S US—will have a room set up for tables to tell their story and connect members.

Douglas Steinberg will represent Friends of Niger at the affiliate group meeting. We have also secured a table. There's talk of selling souvenir coffee mugs—but you'll have to go to find out if we made it happen!

June 2025 The Camel Express, Newsletter of the Friends of Niger www.friendsofniger.org

Are you going to the conference? Are you willing to help with the table? Do you want to help organize some kind of low-key social event? Do you want to make an embassy visit?

Please contact us ASAP if you are planning to go or have ideas for our participation.

<https://www.peacecorpsconnect.org/pcc2025/>

4) Grantees implement Special Capacity Building

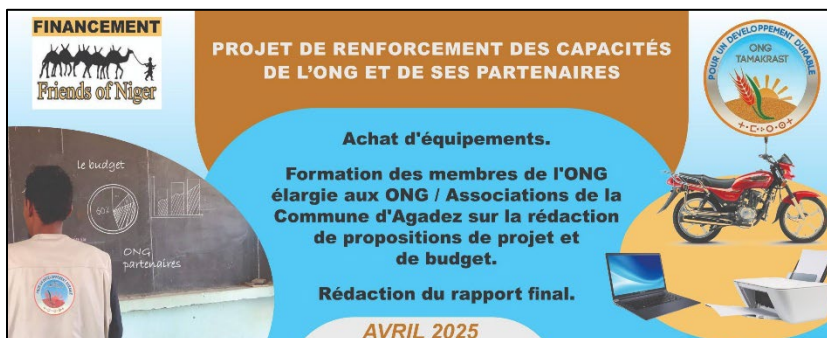
Several of our special capacity grants have been completed and reports have been provided. These special grants were provided through a non-competitive process where recipients were chosen based on the proven track record with funding we provided. Each recipient was asked to submit a plan of how they would use the funding, which we then approved with some adjustments, suggestions and feedback where needed. This one-time targeted funding was a great way to support good work and build capacity.

25-03 Special Capacity Tamakrast *write up by Madalynn Paquette*

Recent strong performances in grant implementation made Tamakrast an obvious choice for a special capacity grant. In our first joint venture they demonstrated their mettle by finding a workable solution when a garden borehole came up dry. After that initial project they have completed two excellent projects working with women's groups to add value to agricultural products and market them.

To strengthen their scope, Tamakrast developed a multi-faceted capacity-building initiative that targets both material and human resource development. The intervention addressed critical organizational needs through strategic equipment acquisition, including a motorcycle for field monitoring and organizational mobility. To enhance administrative efficiency and workload, essential office supplies such as computers and printers were purchased.

Central to the project was an extensive training program on project proposal development, which engaged not only Tamakrast's members but also extended to broader network partners and volunteers. The training component proved to be



the most successful aspect of the project, attracting twenty participants from various NGOs and associations in the Agadez region and generating significant satisfaction among attendees. The initiative's impact extended beyond the immediate training, fostering ongoing collaboration among participating organizations through the establishment of a WhatsApp group for information sharing and joint project development. This collaborative network has continued to function, with participants sharing funding opportunities such as the Friends of Niger grant calls and expressing strong interest in future training sessions. The positive feedback demonstrates the project's lasting value in strengthening the local NGO ecosystem's capacity for proposal writing and partnership development.

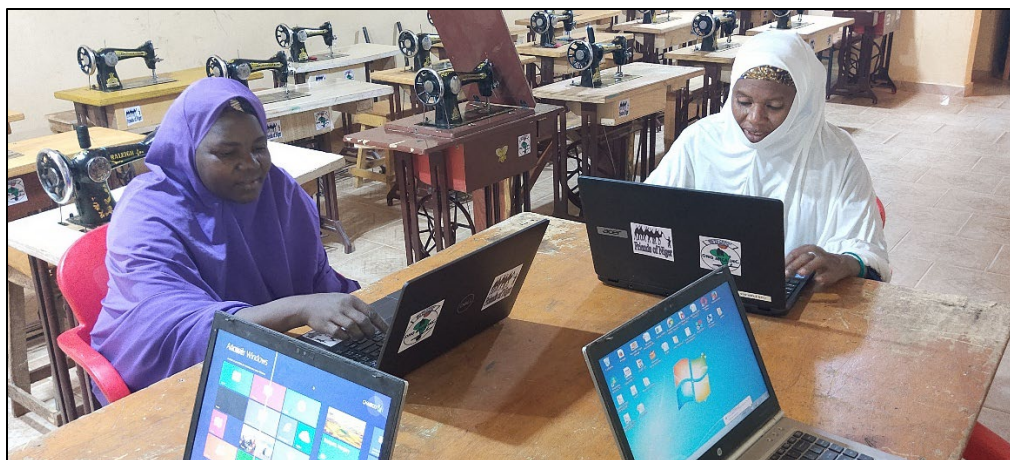


25-02 Special Capacity MICA

FON has a long-standing relationship with MICA, dating back to support for oxcart projects in the 2000s. Most recently we have supported their mentorship work with teenage girls in partnership with Expanding Lives [<https://www.expandinglives.org/>], a successful school latrine project in Tchadaoua and a training program on income generating activities for young girls who were serving as guides for family members engaged in begging as a means of income. All of these projects have been very successfully completed.

MICA has always shown creativity, integrity and determination in meeting their mission. With that in mind it was easy to select them as a recipient of a special capacity grant. This grant was a way of recognizing their organizational achievements and helping them be even better positioned for success.

When offered the opportunity they elected to improve the capacity of the training facility through the purchase of new sewing & knitting machines, a gas stove, laptops, benches and renovating existing equipment. They also provided training tailored to the needs of core staff in using computers and instructional methodology. Lastly, they purchased two motorcycles which will allow staff to move around the city to conduct business and provide support and follow-up with program participants.





The purchases and activities were all quickly completed and photos, videos and “factures” were provided. The director sent this note on completion :

Sachant que les impacts seront mesurables à long terme, nous vous assurons de vous faire part des résultats obtenus du projet . . . Merci pour votre soutien. CHAIBOU ABDOU

NOTE- we are working on getting more reports and videos up on the web site and still looking for volunteers to help with this fun task.

5) Niger-related News & Info

Hausa Becomes the National Language of Niger. Niger’s government has made Hausa the national language of Niger, replacing French. In addition, English and French are now the “working languages” of Niger and nine other languages are recognized as “spoken languages.”

https://www.barrons.com/news/niger-adopts-hausa-as-national-language-replacing-french-3b8b5b40?refsec=topics_afp-news

Swiss Woman Kidnapped in Agadez. Claudia Abbt, a 76-year-old Swiss national, was abducted in Agadez. She and her Nigérien husband lead an artisan support association. Abbt is the second European kidnapped in Agadez this year.

<https://www.rfi.fr/fr/afrique/20250416-niger-les-autorit%C3%A9s-lancent-une-enqu%C3%AAted-envergure-apr%C3%A8s-l-enl%C3%A8vement-de-la-suisse-claudia-abbt>

Algeria Deports 1,845 Migrants to Niger. On April 19, the government of Algeria deported 1,845 West and Central Africans to the Nigérien Sahara 15 kilometers from the nearest town. In recent years, Niger has become the primary corridor for West and Central African migrants seeking to get to North Africa and Europe. Migrants have faced frequent expulsions from Algeria and serious problems in Libya where many have been enslaved and killed.

<https://www.rfi.fr/fr/afrique/20250424-plus-de-1100-migrants-expuls%C3%A9s-d-alg%C3%A9rie-vers-le-niger-en-une-seule-journ%C3%A9e-un-chiffre-jamais-vu>

Terrorists Kill 58 Nigérien Troops in Eknewane, Tahoua Region. On May 25, Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS) attacked a military base in Eknewane, near the border with Mali, killing 58 Nigérien soldiers and looting weaponry and supplies. Security has deteriorated in Niger in the last two years, as ISGS, Al Qaeda, and affiliated jihadist and terrorists have killed hundreds of troops and thousands of civilians.

<https://www.rfi.fr/fr/en-bref/20250526-ouest-du-niger-au-moins-une-quarantaine-de-soldats-des-forces-sp%C3%A9ciales-tu%C3%A9s-%C3%A0-eknewane-dans-une-attaque-jihadiste-selon-des-sources-non-officielles-et-s%C3%A9curitaires>

Miss Niger 2025. On May 25, Farida Farouk was coronated as Miss Niger 2025. She was selected on the basis of her elegance, intelligence, and social engagement. Farouk is a second-year university student majoring in communication.

<https://nigerdiaspora.net/?view=article&id=21603:miss-niger-2025-farida-farouck-remporte-la-couronne-et-seducit-par-son-charisme&catid=33&highlight=WyJtaXNzliwibmlnZXliXQ==>

Niger Celebrates Tabaski. On June 6-7, Nigériens celebrated Eid al-Adha, or Tabaski as it also known in West Africa. In addition to religious observances, Nigériens marked the occasion with calls for peace and national unity as well as music concerts and comedy shows.

<https://nigerdiaspora.net/?view=article&id=21631&catid=333>

Red Cross closes Niger offices and foreign staff leave after junta's expulsion order

The International Committee of the Red Cross announced the closure of its offices in Niger and the departure of its foreign staff, four months after the ruling junta ordered the organization to leave the country.

<https://apnews.com/article/niger-red-cross-office-closure-junta-098f73ff07c905b7f8443a2d585de274>

6) In Brief

Remaining Summer Festivals *if you attend any please send us a report.*

- 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>



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)!

Email 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.”

