

The Camel Express



Newsletter of the Friends of Niger

April 2026

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

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Dear Readers,

We have lots of news and opportunities to engage this spring! We have rescheduled the **Virtual Annual Member Meeting to April 16** after the technological glitch that prevented folks from tuning in last month. Our sincere apologies for the frustration of that experience! Next up is the **FON Rendezvous**, an in-person **member social** in **Washington DC** on **Saturday, April 25**. A private penthouse, catered Nigerien food and seeing you will make it perfect! Please [RSVP](#) even if you are unsure.

It's time to volunteer to help with grant reviews and being a project champion. If you can donate a few hours, please contact Mary Abrams projects@friendsofniger.org to volunteer; it just requires a little time in May and June. We are thrilled to add Adriane Seibert to our grants team. She has volunteered to help out with processing grant applications and facilitating the review process. Many hands make light work and we look forward to her insights and contributions.

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

Newsletter team: *Scott Youngstedt, Brittany Gallagher Amy Wilson*

1) DO-OVER Virtual Member Meeting April 16 @ 7 pm Eastern/4 pm Pacific

Please join us April 16 for a second-attempt at an annual meeting. Last month we had a tech foul-up and our meeting link did not work. It was so frustrating for everyone!! We sincerely apologize for the confusion. We are not throwing in the towel and we have rescheduled this meeting.

The purpose of the meeting is to provide an update of the organization give you an opportunity to meet some of the board, ask questions and provide feedback. One of the main strengths of FON is the enthusiasm and support of the membership. We want to meet with you and keep you up to date.

2) FON Rendezvous: Member Soirée in DC April 25 *RSVP very important*

You are invited! Please join us April 25 for an evening of socializing and celebrating our common love of Niger. Doors will open at 6 and authentic Nigerien food will be available after 7. Soft drinks, beer and wine will be provided—all we need is you! RSVPs are requested: [Please register here](#).

We have extended an invitation to Niger's ambassador to the US and we welcome your suggestions on any other VIP or friend of FON who might not be on our mailing list. Big thanks to member Daryn Warner, who is hosting us in the penthouse of his apartment building.

April 25, 6 pm
Rigby — Penthouse Level
1220 3rd Street NE
Washington, DC 20002

Transportation and event details are all provided at the sign-up link

www.myevent.com/fon_rendezvous . If you have any difficulty signing up please RSVP directly by sending an email to president@friendsofniger.org

3) Volunteers needed to review Grants and act as Champions

We are preparing to review grant applications for 2026, and we need **your** help!

Friends of Niger takes our grant process seriously. After proposals are screened for eligibility and translated, they are divided up among groups of volunteer reviewers. Each small group will review a handful of proposals using established criteria. Small groups meet virtually, discuss and recommend the best proposals to the grants committee. This year, the review period will last from late May to mid-June. **Please contact Mary** projects@friendsofniger.org **if you'd like to volunteer!**

Review Process



1. Each group assigned a batch of proposals



2. Each proposal assigned a Lead Reviewer who presents summary to group

3. Each Reviewer reviews all proposals assigned to their group



4. Groups discuss / agree which proposals to recommend for funding & forward decisions to Grants Committee

Even if it has been a while since you have implemented projects in Niger, we're confident your experience and involvement will be valuable. From the many thoughtful and interesting grant applications we receive, our charge is to select those that show the most promise for success and the greatest benefit.

Another rewarding way to participate is to be a project champion. Once a grant is selected for funding a FON designated champion acts as liaison while the project is being implemented. This is a chance to connect with some community-spirited Nigeriens and support the implementation of beneficial projects. The champion acts as the point of contact, staying in communication and sharing progress

reports. WhatsApp and Google Translate make this easy even if your language skills are rusty. The champion is the immediate representative of FON and facilitates our ability to monitor grant implementation. Being a grant champion is a rewarding and easy way to reconnect with Niger.

4) Partner spotlight ---Mise en lumière sur l'associé MICA

Based in Maradi, MICA focuses on women's empowerment and children's education. Our first contact with MICA was in support of oxcart projects many years ago. In recent years, our collaborations have included a training program aimed at providing income generating opportunities and training for girls who are guides for the blind who beg, solar electrification for the Dan Kori Village Health Hut, building toilets at the Lycée de Tchadaoua, and "My Sister-My (role) Model," an approach that uses mentoring and financial support to keep girls in school.



Latrines and hand washing stations at Tchadaoua School



Au courant de l'année académique 2022- 2023, 100 filles scolarisées du niveau secondaire ont bénéficiés du projet " ma sœur mon modele" dans trois (3) localités du Niger grâce au financement de Friends of Niger



25 filles qui auparavant ne dirigeaient que des mendiants aveugles ont développé des compétences avancées en couture, en littérature, tricot, broderie, culinaire, arts, transformation alimentaire et fabrication de savon

Chaibou Abdou répond à nos questions

Quand la MICA a-t-elle été lancée ?

MICA (Microcrédit en Afrique) a été officiellement créée le 26 février 2002. Dès le départ, notre ambition était claire : agir concrètement pour l'autonomisation des femmes et l'éducation des enfants, notamment des jeunes filles issues de milieux vulnérables.

Qu'est-ce qui vous a inspiré pour le créer ?

Nous sommes partis d'un constat simple mais préoccupant : de nombreuses femmes n'avaient pas accès aux ressources financières ni à la formation, et beaucoup de jeunes filles abandonnaient l'école faute de moyens.

Face à cette réalité, nous avons décidé d'agir sur plusieurs fronts : le microcrédit pour soutenir les activités génératrices de revenus, la formation aux métiers porteurs (couture, arts culinaires, cosmétique, broderie, tricotage) dans notre centre féminin, l'alphabétisation des femmes en milieu rural, l'appui scolaire aux orphelins et le développement du leadership féminin.

Notre conviction est restée la même depuis le début : former et autonomiser une femme, c'est transformer toute une communauté.

Quels sont vos plus grands atouts, à quoi attribuez-vous votre succès ?

Notre principal atout est notre fort ancrage communautaire. Nous travaillons directement avec les femmes dans les villages et les quartiers, ce qui nous permet de répondre aux besoins réels du terrain. Nous avons également développé des partenariats stratégiques avec Expanding Lives, ProLiteracy International et Friends of Niger, qui offrent aux jeunes filles nigériennes des opportunités de leadership, d'échange culturel à Chicago, d'alphabétisation et de formation aux métiers. Enfin, notre approche intégrée constitue une force majeure : nous combinons autonomisation économique, éducation, agriculture et développement personnel.

Nous attribuons notre succès à cette combinaison entre proximité communautaire, partenariats internationaux solides et accompagnement durable des bénéficiaires.

Quels ont été vos plus grands obstacles ?

Notre principal défi reste le financement, car les besoins des communautés dépassent largement nos capacités actuelles. La demande en formation, en appui scolaire et en accompagnement économique est croissante.

Nous avons également fait face à certains obstacles socioculturels liés à la scolarisation et à la formation des filles. Toutefois, grâce au dialogue communautaire, à la sensibilisation et aux résultats concrets obtenus, les mentalités évoluent progressivement en faveur de l'éducation des filles.

De quoi êtes-vous le plus fier ?

Nous sommes fiers d'avoir depuis 2002 :

- Soutenu 5880 femmes à travers le microcrédit
- Appuyé la scolarisation de plus de 3639 jeunes filles
- Formé 3493 femmes aux métiers (couture, transformation agroalimentaire, pisciculture, etc.)
- Vu d'anciennes bénéficiaires devenir étudiantes universitaires, médecins, Dr agronomes, officiers de l'arme, sages femmes, opérateurs économiques, enseignantes ou leaders communautaires

Voir ces jeunes filles devenir des modèles est notre plus grande récompense.

Qu'est-ce qui vous a le plus surpris dans le processus d'élaboration du programme et organisation ?

Ce qui nous a le plus surpris, c'est la capacité de résilience des femmes rurales. Même sans instruction formelle au départ, elles développent rapidement des compétences entrepreneuriales impressionnantes.

Nous avons également été marqués par l'impact du leadership chez les jeunes filles : après leur formation, leur confiance en elles et leur vision de l'avenir évoluent de manière spectaculaire.

Comment avez-vous trouvé/motivé le personnel, les bénévoles et les sympathisants ?

Nous avons principalement mobilisé notre personnel et nos bénévoles à travers notre ancrage communautaire et notre réseau local. Beaucoup ont été identifiés au sein des communautés bénéficiaires, tandis que d'anciennes bénéficiaires sont devenues à leur tour collaboratrices ou ambassadrices de nos programmes.

La motivation vient du terrain : lorsque l'on constate l'impact réel sur la vie des femmes et des jeunes filles, cela crée un engagement naturel et durable. Cette dynamique interne renforce fortement l'esprit d'équipe et le sentiment d'appartenance à une mission commune.

Quelles opportunités voyez-vous à l'horizon ?

Nous voyons plusieurs opportunités stratégiques pour renforcer notre impact :

- L'augmentation de la capacité de notre centre de formation, afin d'atteindre au moins 150 femmes formées par an, grâce à l'extension des infrastructures et à de nouveaux partenariats.
- Le développement de filières porteuses (couture, arts culinaires, cosmétique, broderie, tricotage) qui répondent à une demande croissante sur le marché local.
- La mise en place d'un programme structuré permettant d'accompagner chaque année 200 orphelines collégiennes vers la réussite scolaire dans des conditions optimales.

- L'intérêt croissant des partenaires techniques et financiers pour les initiatives axées sur l'éducation des filles, la sante et l'autonomisation économique des femmes.

Notre objectif est clair : construire une génération de femmes économiquement autonomes et socialement influentes.

Selon vous, qu'est-ce qui est différent et spécial dans votre organisation ?

Notre spécificité réside dans notre approche intégrée qui combine :

- L'autonomisation économique des femmes
- L'éducation et la protection des filles
- Le développement du leadership féminin
- Une ouverture internationale à travers des partenariats stratégiques

Contrairement à une approche purement assistancielle, nous investissons durablement dans le potentiel humain afin de créer un impact transformationnel au sein des communautés.

5) Grant Results and Updates



ONG Récupération des Mendiants (RECUP) successfully completed their Operation Clear Vision project that provided cataract surgeries for 100 Nigériens. Priority was given to the elderly, women, low-income households, and marginalized groups. Four post-operative check-ups with each patient confirmed that all the surgeries were successful. Hundreds of family members benefitted from reduced caregiving burdens. In addition to the surgeries, the project

offered community awareness activities on cataract prevention, symptoms, and treatment, empowering beneficiaries to serve as peer educators. The project also offered valuable experience to two local health care workers in patient screening, surgical preparation, infection prevention, operating room assistance, and post-operative care management.

The Sarrounia Hoops Academy, organized by Hoops4Kids, Inc., is a basketball-based program designed to strengthen basketball skills as well as to foster community, teamwork, confidence, emotional well-being, and essential life skills among girls.

Twenty-five teen girls benefitted from basketball clinics combined with leadership development workshops. Players' and coaches' attendance and performance were carefully monitored. The program benefitted from partnerships with La Fédération Nigérienne de Basketball, La Ligue de Basketball de Niamey, the municipality of Niamey, and a public high school in Niamey.



Latrine Construction in Koubia Kaina and Bafoundou

Two FON-funded latrine-construction projects have made school a healthier place for more than 1,000 students in the Koubia Kaina and Bafoundou quarters of Niamey.



At the Bafoundou secondary school, 300 students had been sharing a single block of three latrines in poor condition, and Koubia Kaina primary school's 716 students had no access to a latrine at all. Students at both schools were in the habit of defecating out in the open, with unhealthy consequences for hygiene and health for the students and surrounding community. Friends of Niger contributed \$5,000 toward the construction of latrines and handwashing stations at each school.

The **Association Nigérienne pour les Services Humanitaires** led the construction of the block of four new latrines -- two for boys and two for girls -- as well as a handwashing station at Koubia Kaina primary school. At Bafoundou secondary school, the **Association des Jeunes Professionnels pour l'Eau et l'Assainissement** (AJPEA, the Association of Young Water and Sanitation Engineers) constructed the block of three new latrines for students. Upon receiving funds, both groups completed their projects in less than three months, and when the facilities were ready for use, project sponsors presented hygiene education sessions for students and held ceremonies recognizing the importance and value of the improved sanitation.



6) Niger-related News & Info

Spinosaurus species discovered in the central Sahara

The first indisputable evidence of a new species of Spinosaurus in over a century belongs to *S. mirabilis*, named for its scimitar-shaped crest and found at a locality far from the ocean's edge.

- <https://biologicalsciences.uchicago.edu/news/new-scimitar-crested-spinosaurus-species-discovered-central-sahara>
- <https://www.nbcnews.com/science/science-news/fossils-new-dinosaur-spinosaurus-hell-heaven-niger-rcna259866>
- <https://www.sci.news/paleontology/spinosaurus-mirabilis-14571.html>

Fire Destroys Central Market in Tillabéri

During the evening of March 25, the central market in Tillabéri was destroyed by a fire. This follows recent market fires in Niamey, Maradi, Tahoua, Zinder, and Diffa. Although no one was killed in the fire, at least eight police officers were killed earlier in the day at a post near Tillabéri.

<https://www.lesahel.org/incendie-au-marche-de-tillaberi-dimportants-degats-materiels-aucune-perde-en-vies-humaines/>

Niger Joins U.S. Global Health Strategy

On March 4, Niger signed on to the United States Global Health Strategy designed to strengthen health systems in Niger. This important international cooperation in public health reveals ongoing diplomatic relations between Niger and the U.S.

<https://www.actuniger.com/politique/21810-cooperation-sanitaire-le-niger-adhere-a-la-strategie-americaire-america-first-du-president-trump.html>

Here are some sources of information to peruse and bookmark:

- ActuNiger: <https://www.actuniger.com/>
- Sahel Research Group – [sign up for email](#):
- RFI in Hausa: <https://www.rfi.fr/ha/nijar/>
- Agence Nigérienne de Presse :<http://www.anp.ne/>
- <https://www.infos-niger.com/>
- <https://tamtaminfo.com/>
- <https://www.lesahel.org/>
- www.nigerdiaspora.net

7) In Brief

Call For Writers

NPCA's Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA) Committee is seeking short personal essays (250–350 words) for *Cultural Celebrations 2026*, connecting Peace Corps service to observances like Black History Month and other cultural celebrations.

Your reflection might come from your time in service, your return home, or how Peace Corps continues to shape how you see the world.

Cultural celebrations observed by NPCA throughout 2026 include:

- *Women's History Month*
- *Earth Day*
- *AAPI Heritage Month*
- *Mental Health Awareness Month*
- *LGBTQIA+ Pride Month*
- *World AIDS Day*
- *International Day of Persons with Disabilities*
- *and many more*

Selected essays will be featured across NPCA platforms in 2026.

Please share this opportunity with your network, and consider submitting your own story.

LEARN MORE: <https://peacecorpsconnect.us13.list-manage.com/track/click?u=da0844e699a37a1d6718a0345&id=815a4eb523&e=02a4fbc9cd>

African Cultural Festivals in the U.S. in 2026

If you are missing the markets of Niger, attend an African cultural festival. Many traders from Niger attend these festivals.

Macon, GA, April 23-26: <https://tubmanmuseum.com/event/pan-african-fest-2026/>

Seattle, WA, May 16: <https://www.seattlecenter.com/events/featured-events/festal/spirit-of-africa>

Durham, NC, May 16: <https://www.dprplaymore.org/281/Bimbe-Cultural-Arts-Festival>

St. Louis, May 23-25: <https://stlafricanartsfest.com/>

Philadelphia, June 7-14: <https://www.odundefestival.org/>

Brooklyn, NY, July 3-5: <https://www.iaafestival.org/>

Detroit, MI, July 10-12: <https://www.thewright.org/african-world-festival>

Columbus, OH, Jul 18-19: <https://www.columbusafricanfestival.com/>

Saginaw, MI, Aug 14-16: <https://somo.social/e/58th-annual-saginaw-african-814>

Seattle, WA, Aug 22-23: <https://www.seattlecenter.com/events/featured-events/festal/festival-sundiata>

Nashville, TN, Sept: <https://www.africanstreetfestival.com/>

Montgomery County, MD, Sept: <https://panafestusa.org/>

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: Brittany Gallagher, Paige Pihl Buckley, Alhassan Ali Mamadou Souna, Douglas Steinberg, 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.”

