

The Camel Express



Newsletter of the Friends of Niger

August 2026

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

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 - Announcing the passing of Ron Dube, Rich Elwell and Peter Easton, Tom Corcoran, and Gaston Kaba

Dear Readers,

Your generosity in the past year made it possible for FON to fund 24 projects for a total of \$113,876! In addition to supporting beneficial work, these grants are a symbol of our continued connection to Nigeriens. The activities you supported aim to impact over 20,000 Nigeriens, many in the rural areas so many of us came to love.

While we catch our breath after the giant grant season, we also welcome 3 new board members. Yes, that is how many we had to recruit to replace John Baird! Aly Cameron and Carrie Bland are neighbors in the Washington DC area and bring incredible skills and expertise to the board. Adriane Seibert, living in Pennsylvania, joins the board after playing a big role in the recent grant cycle and tackling various administrative chores.

We have over 1800 on our member list, but details are spotty. Please update your information by filling out this [form](#). Our only goal is connecting with you and we do not share your information outside of our membership.

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

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

1) Grant program exceeds 100k\$

This year FON received **166 applications** for funding. Initially, 24 did not meet basic eligibility criteria, such as incomplete applications and requesting too much money. Those ineligible requests did not advance in the review process. The remaining 142 applications went through a preliminary review by our small group leaders. Reading over 20 proposals each, the group

leaders narrowed down the pool to 56 proposals to be reviewed by volunteer teams. After scoring and sharing results, the teams recommended 24 projects for funding for a total of \$113,876.

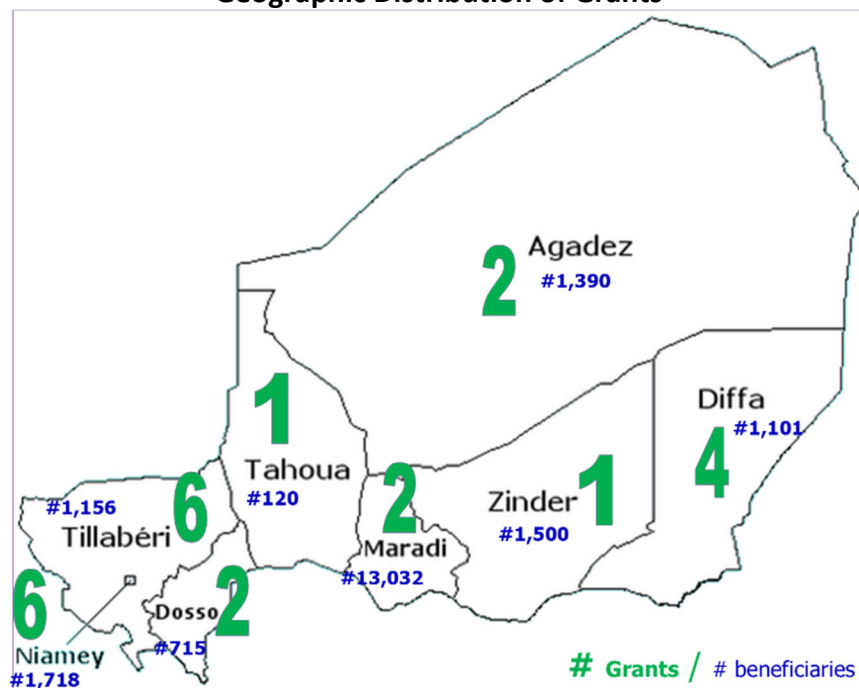
Volunteers. We are very grateful to the volunteers who make this all possible. Twenty-six volunteers stepped up to work in small teams to review, rate and recommend proposals. Special thanks to Adriane Seibert who answered the call to help with the labor-intensive intake process: screening for eligibility, translating and logging them in to a workable list.

Let's hear it for our volunteers!!

Abdoul Barry	Jennifer Yanco	Mohamoud Mouta
Adriane Seibert	JoAnn Lewis*	Paige Pihl Buckley
Alhassan Ali	John Baird	Pamela White
Alix (Barstow) Fedoruk*	John Heylin	Sarah Singletary
Amy Wilson*	John Klingler	Scott Youngstedt*
Brittany Gallagher	Kathy Tilford	Soufiane Younoussi
Dane Miller	Leah LaCivita	Susan Susanke
Douglas Steinberg*	Mary Abrams*	Tom Shaw
Eric Ames	Mary Lou Haag	*group leaders

The 24 awarded grants will support activities in all seven regions of Niger. As proposed, the projects intend to impact more than 20,000 people through a variety of activities.

Geographic Distribution of Grants



Types of Projects Selected

SECTOR	# Grants	Projects Types
AGRICULTURE	3	Fish farming with youth, chicken husbandry with disabled youth, market gardening with women
ECONOMIC	7	Mentorship and training for women's savings groups, sewing groups, weavers, installing a grain mill
EDUCATION	5	Classroom repair and construction, purchase of desks, literacy for artisans
HEALTH & WATER	7	Constructing latrines, providing menstrual supplies to girls, solar electrification of a clinic, borehole installation and water pumping systems
WOMEN	2	Training mothers to be champions deterring early marriage, mentoring girls to avoid gender violence

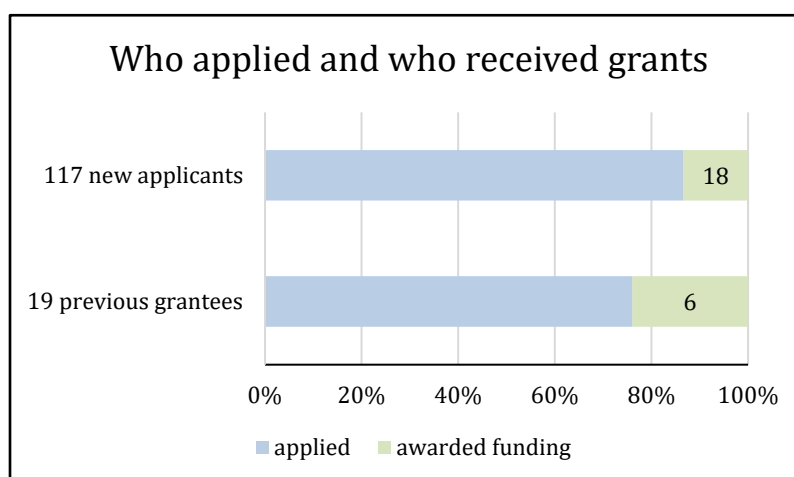
Feedback for applicants. FON has made it a priority to provide feedback to unsuccessful applicants, honoring our commitment to capacity building. Board member Douglas Steinberg tackled this step of the process this year using the ratings and comments from reviewers to let applicants know where their proposals could improve. Several applicants took the time to reply and let us know that the effort is appreciated and helpful.

Some responses:

- *Bonsoir chers amis du Niger, Nous vous remercions pour votre retour et vos commentaires sur notre candidature. Nous saluons votre courage d'avoir pris le temps de diagnostiquer notre proposition, ce qui est rare chez certains partenaires. Nous vous assurons que cela nous va droit au cœur et nous servira certainement de leçons apprises pour les propositions que nous aurons à vous soumettre. Nous vous souhaitons un bon succès avec les projets sélectionnés. C'est toujours le Niger qui gagne !*
- *Nous avons bien reçu votre mail et nous prenons acte. Nous félicitons tous ceux qui sont retenus et nous adressons nos sincères encouragements pour le travail abattu pour la sélection. Nous sommes conscients de la complexité de votre tâche vu le nombre élevé des dossiers soumis. plein succès à toute l'équipe FON. merci*
- Nous vous remercions chaleureusement pour le temps et l'attention accordés à l'évaluation de notre dossier, ainsi que pour les observations constructives transmises que nous ne manquerons pas de prendre en compte.

Outreach.

Word of mouth and sharing has put us in contact with 372 people who are interested in our grant program! This year we received 117 applications from 'new-to-us' organizations and we selected 18 of those proposals for funding.



2) Boston Gathering Brings Community Together

On July 25, Friends of Niger brought together approximately 15 people in the Boston area for a fun and informal evening celebrating our shared connection to Niger.

We were fortunate to be hosted by Bill Miles, a former Peace Corps Volunteer in Niger and now a professor of political science at Northeastern University. Bill generously welcomed us to Northeastern and provided a wonderful setting for the gathering.

The evening was exactly what we hoped it would be: an opportunity to reconnect with old friends, meet others with a connection to Niger, share stories and memories, and learn more about Friends of Niger and its work supporting community-led projects.

Of course, food was an important part of the evening! We enjoyed suya, jollof rice, cassava leaf stew, beef samosas, and homemade ginger juice and bissap. A homemade dégué rounded out the meal.

Most importantly, there was a great sense of community and enthusiasm for doing it again. The gathering gave us an opportunity to begin reenergizing the Friends of Niger network in the Boston area and to connect people who share a common interest in Niger. We welcome the involvement of Boston University program participants, USAID connections, other NGOs and those with an academic connection to Niger.



A big thank you to Bill Miles for hosting us, and to everyone who came, helped organize, invited friends, and helped make the evening such a success.

We hope this is the first of many Friends of Niger gatherings in the Boston area!

3) Tuareg Diaspora annual meeting in Pennsylvania

The Third Annual Meeting of the Tuareg Diaspora of America *(Summarized version, click below for full report)*

The Tuareg Diaspora of America (TDA) held its third annual meeting in Orrstown, Pennsylvania from July 24th to 26th. The gathering continues to serve a dual purpose: it is a warm family reunion for the Tuareg diaspora in North America and an open invitation to the wider American public to discover, engage and connect with our rich culture.

Bridging the diaspora with the homeland we hosted a virtual panel connecting community leaders and participants across the U.S., Europe and beyond. Centered around the theme "Tuareg Unity: Beyond Tribal, Social and Political Divisions," the discussion tackled the realities facing our people today.

Community members led a workshop designed to help newly arrived families and refugees navigate the day-to-day realities of life in America.



The critical situation of our relatives in refugee camps across Mauritania and Algeria weighed heavily on everyone's mind throughout the weekend. We will soon launch an online campaign so supporters worldwide can contribute, with 100% of all funds will be directly used to supply life-saving essentials, including food and medicine to families living in the camps. To learn more and contribute please go to <https://tdina.org/our-mission/>

The meeting included the introduction of The Tamashek Language Project, involving a comprehensive Tamashek language database. This digital foundation will soon serve as an educational tool to help our children in the diaspora learn, speak and carry forward their mother tongue.

Of course, no Tuareg gathering is complete without music. We were fortunate to have Mdou Moctar with us this year a second time, making the woods of Orrstown, Pennsylvania vibrate with his signature hypnotic guitar notes.



In an effort to keep our living heritage thriving we held traditional coming-of-age ceremonies for a young man and a young woman stepping into adulthood. Creating an unapologetic space where our community can revive, discuss and celebrate ancestral traditions is one of the core missions of the Tuareg Diaspora of America.



To stay updated on our initiatives, support our refugee relief efforts or get involved visit us at tdina.org and follow our Facebook page at [Tuareg Diaspora of America](#). *Ahmed Ag Kemil TDA member*

Editors' note: Friends of Niger contributed \$500 to this event to help connect Nigériens with people who care about Niger and to educate people about Niger. The full report from TDA is available on our website [HERE](#).)

4) Project briefs – solar panels for a health clinic in Kournawa

Projects funded this month are already well under way. Solar panels have already been purchased and installed at a remote clinic in Zinder region, providing power for fans, refrigerators for medication and lights for evening consultations. FON assistance included recommendations to purchase high-quality equipment and assure the competence of technicians hired to install it. Grantees appreciate having a Project Champion, a dedicated FON member to communicate with--in this case board member Alhassan Ali Souna

*Bonjour notre champion,
Nous vous remercions très
sincèrement pour vos conseils, vos
orientations dans la réussite de ce projet. Nous
allons vous transmettre le rapport final ainsi
que les factures. Veuillez transmettre à Friends
of Niger au nom des populations bénéficiaires
tous nos remerciements pour cet appui très
bénéfique et qui améliorer la santé de la
population. merci*



5) Volunteers are the key

We thrive on an active engaged membership. There are many possibilities to support the mission and get involved with Friends of Niger. The bookkeeper position is perfect for someone who likes to balance their checkbook and maintain good records. It is not difficult, yet it is an important support role for everything we do. See the details of the bookkeeper position and more opportunities below.

Volunteer Position: FON Bookkeeper

Friends of Niger relies on donations to fund grants to support community-driven projects in Niger. Recordkeeping and grantee accountability are crucial to maintaining our non-profit status and being accountable to our donors.

The Bookkeeping role consists of reviewing receipts, logging donations, and tracking expenses on a monthly basis, entering details in a spreadsheet and allocating them in QuickBooks. All records and processes are online and do not require advanced experience with the software.

Qualifications & Skills: Affinity for numbers and record-keeping; Basic computer skills

Time required: Bookkeeping for FON works best as a regular monthly activity. Exact time required will vary depending on the time of year; generally expect to spend 1-3 hours per month from March-November and 5-8 hours in the months of December - February.

Other possibilities for involvement throughout the year include:

- Publicist - compile success stories, videos of completed grants to be shared with members and public
- Guest lecture series – work with committee to host interesting speakers
- Member recognition and support- send out thank you letters, update member lists
- Les Amis newsletter - help with news aimed at Nigerien partners, grantees, applicants
- Regional organizer - get people together for events, activities

Please let us know if you are interested in any of the ongoing support activities. Write to president@friendsofniger.org

6) Niger-related News & Info

Kevin Rideout, American Missionary, released after nine months. Kevin Rideout, who worked for Society for International Missions (SIM), was released in good health on August 14 after spending nine months in captivity. No group has claimed responsibility for kidnapping Rideout at his home in Niamey near the Presidential Palace.

<https://apnews.com/article/niger-kidnapped-us-missionary-released-268cdcbb3da14744d0129f30513ad5a8>

World Hausa Day celebrated on August 23. World Hausa Day, or *Ranar Hausa*, was observed in Hausaland and in many global Hausa diaspora communities on August 23, 2026. *Ranar Hausa* celebrates the Hausa language, culture, history, and global impact.

https://www.modernghana.com/news/1522344/from-daura-to-the-diaspora-hausa-day-and-the.html#google_vignette

Niger security forces repel attempted coup d'état on August 29. Niger's security forces foiled an attempted coup d'état in Niamey on August 29. In fighting that lasted several hours, mutinous soldiers attacked key sites in the city, including the Presidential Palace, the Plateau neighborhood, and the airport. This was the third attack on the airport this year. Jihadist terror groups claimed responsibility for the first two.

<https://www.dw.com/en/nigers-failed-coup-exposes-cracks-in-the-military-and-russias-influence/a-78572278>

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2026/8/30/nigers-military-led-government-says-it-contained-mutiny-what-next>



7) In Brief

We have lost several valued friends of Niger:

- **Ron Dube, Peace Corps Volunteer in 1964-1966, worked in agriculture and forestry in Kollo and Maradi**

Ronald Normand Dube passed away peacefully February 23, 2026, at age 83. Ron graduated from the University of New Hampshire in 1964. Then, he served two years in the Peace Corps in Niger, from 1964 to 1966. Upon returning home, he earned a master's degree at Rivier College and began a career that spanned over 40 years of teaching science in public schools. He wrote seven books featuring interviews with World War II, Korean War, and Vietnam War veterans. Ron worked many years as a part-time photographer and reporter for *The Nashua Telegraph*, the *Manchester Union Leader*, and *The Monadnock Ledger*. Consider sending some support to the nonprofit Ron supported: the Humane Society of Greater Nashua: kateland@hsfn.org or HSFN, 24 Ferry Road, Nashua, NH 03064.



- **Richard Elwell, former Peace Corps Niger Director**

Richard Rhea Elwell, of Chevy Chase, MD, died on October 16, 2024, at 98 years. Born and raised in Iowa, he enlisted in the U.S. Army in 1943 and served in combat in Europe and in the occupation of Japan. He attended Drake and Stanford Universities, marrying and settling in California. He worked as a carpenter, reporter, writer, and editor in the private sector and in the civil service. He came to Washington, DC, in the early days of the Peace Corps to serve as an evaluator and later as Director of the Peace Corps in Niger **1966-67**. He also served in the Office of Economic Opportunity and the Department of Education.



- **Peter Easton- Peace Corps volunteer in Madaoua 64-68, Maradi 68-71; academic work Niamey 83-84**

An appreciation from John Baird: "I'm guessing all of us benefitted greatly from knowing Peter Easton. In my third year, I saw Malam Peter at least every two weeks. Once, in May 1971, Peter came to Chadakori and stayed overnight -- he slept on the roof of my house where it was cool. The next morning, I climbed the ladder and took a picture just as he was clearing out the cobwebs.

Once in Niger, when I was traveling at night in the back of a big transport truck, maybe 30 of us sitting on top of the cargo in open air, we all saw a bright shooting star. Someone said, "Wani mai girma ya mutu" (some great person has just died). Did you see the shooting star on August 11? ---John Baird"



photo by John Baird#

#

Read the full announcement at #

<https://www.dignitymemorial.com/obituaries/tallahassee-fl/peter-easton-13000900>

- **Gaston Kaba, Peace Corps trainer, Associate Director of PC-Health, Renowned Rotarian**

Gaston Kaba passed on the 14th of July in Niamey. When Gaston was a student at UCLA, he got a job training the second group of Peace Corps volunteers headed to Niger. He impressed the trainees with tales of his acquaintance with the star basketball player Kareem Abdul Jabbar. After graduating from UCLA he went on to post graduate studies at State University in New York. He had a long and successful career as a professor of English rising to be head of the English department at the University of Niger. Gaston also spent many years at USAID.



After the death of Mamadou Issa, Gaston became the Deputy Country Director and APCD for Health in 2002. Gaston played a key role at Peace Corps until 2010 when the volunteer program was suspended for security reasons. As a life-long educator, Gaston helped many Americans prepare to be effective at their work in Niger and develop a love for the people. Throughout his life he was actively involved in Rotary. He helped launch 3 clubs in Niamey, encouraged young people to form Rotaract clubs, attended many international conventions and spoke to US Rotary clubs. He was a people-person who made connections to develop partnerships with clubs around the world and encouraged Rotarians to sponsor projects benefitting Nigeriens. Truly a member of 'la grande famille du Rotary', his home club wrote an homage:

C'est avec une profonde tristesse et une grande émotion que le Rotary Club de Niamey-Gaweye rend hommage à la mémoire de Gaston KABA, disparu le 14 juillet 2026.

Gaston KABA fut un Rotarien engagé et fidèle aux valeurs du Rotary. Ancien membre de notre Club, il a également eu l'honneur de servir le Rotary au niveau du District en qualité d'Adjoint du Gouverneur, mettant son expérience, sa disponibilité et son sens du service au profit des clubs et des Rotariens. [Read more](#)



- **Tom Corcoran, friends of Niger Vice President 2016-18**

Tom was a Peace Corps volunteer in Chad and went on to become a Country Director in Benin. He had an illustrious career in community and economic development in Camden, New Jersey.

Read his full obituary [HERE](#)

<https://www.fosterwarnefuneralhome.com/obituaries/thomas-corcoran>

YOUR DONATIONS FUEL THIS WORK

Friends of Niger initiates and supports activities related to Niger and its people through three main strategies:

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

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/emeritus; At Large Board members: Carrie Bland, Paige Pihl Buckley, Cameron, Brittany Gallagher, Adriane Seibert, 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
- Update your membership info [HERE](#)

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

