

The Camel Express

Newsletter of the Friends of Niger

Volume 29 Issue 1



April 2014

Sahel Food Crisis Overshadowed by Regional Conflict

BY MATTHEW NEWSOME, 28 MARCH 2014(IPS) from allafrica.com

Niger's severe food shortages due to recurrent drought have also been compounded by conflict in neighbouring countries. Half of the country's 17 million people are without adequate food all year round, while one in 10 is unable to feed themselves for three months of the year. Conflict in northern Mali, southern Libya, northern Nigeria and CAR has put pressure on Niger's resources to deal with its food crisis as thousands of displaced civilians take refuge in the country due to its porous borders. Since 2012, Malian refugees have regarded neighbouring Niger as a safe haven. According to the U.N. Refugee Agency, over 51,000 refugees (47,000 from Mali and 4,000 from Nigeria) have entered the country as a result of regional conflict.

Last year's rainy season in Niger, which lasted from July to October, was disappointing says the country's Minister in the President's office for the national strategy for food security and agriculture development, Amadou Diallo. "The situation is dire and has not been improving for several years. We are unable to meet the food demand. The problem is that demand is growing from rising population numbers and incoming refugees, in addition to terrible drought our food supply is being compromised," he told IPS.

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FON Provides Funds for Well Repair in Touloukh

FON has received photos of the recent well repair in Touloukh taken by the Nigeriens who worked on the project. This is the second completed well repair partially financed by FON. This well repair provided work for Nigeriens and a much-needed source of water for the people and livestock of this region. There are still many more wells that were damaged or destroyed by the flooding in 2012. FON hopes to have the final report from Ghabdouane Mohamed, the Mayor of Ingall, for the next edition of CEX. *Additional photos on page 10.*



Peace Corps Niger

Letter from the FON President

April 2014

Dear Friends of Niger Members,

The Board of Directors of Friends of Niger is pleased to announce nominations and elections for the FON Board of Directors 2014. The term for board members is two-years.

For the 2014 spring elections, the current FON Board members are seeking additional FON members who would like to participate in the FON Board activities including quarterly phone conference meetings. The FON Board members oversee the activities of FON which include the content and publishing of the Camel Express Newsletter, maintenance of the FON Website and webpages, the selection of projects to support in Niger and the collection and disbursement of funds collected by FON for these activities. To participate in the election process for the FON board, we encourage you to submit your name and brief resume following the guidelines on the attached page. Deadline for receiving nomination forms is May 31, 2014. An electronic or paper form of your self-nomination is acceptable.

FON member Lorrain Krusa has agreed to serve as our "third party" to collect nominations. Please forward your nomination and bio (see below) to Lorrain by post or email:

Lorrain Krusa

27 Rose Ct.

Glen Carbon, IL 62034

email: lorrainekrusa@gmail.com

After responses from this "call for nominations" are collected, we will send a ballot of nominees to FON members in good standing by the end of May, 2014.

Thank you for your continued support of Friends of Niger and our FON activities.

John W. Soloninka

President, Friends of Niger

Board of Directors Friends of Niger

John W. Soloninka, PRESIDENT

Gabriella Maertens, VICE-PRESIDENT

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The Camel Express is the periodical newsletter of **Friends of Niger (FON)**. FON can be contacted via the post at

P.O. Box 5823

Washington, D. C. 20016-9998

Or by e-mail at

president@friendsofniger.org

and you will find FON on the web and this newsletter in **FULL COLOR**

at:

www.friendsofniger.org.

Editor: Joel Neuberg

Assistant Editor: Jude Andreasen

Please send address changes and corrections, as well as any queries to **The Camel Express** at the address above.

IN MEMORIUM

from Joel Neuberg

Beginning with this issue, The CAMEL EXPRESS will publish brief notices regarding Friends of Niger who recently died. Please send any notices for future issuers to: jneuberg@santarosa.edu

Michael U. Parrish (11/13/1945-2/8/2013) passed away in Los Angeles after a brief illness. A longtime resident of Los Angeles, Michael was an adjunct lecturer teaching nonfiction writing for the Annenberg School of Journalism at the University of Southern California. He was a licensed private investigator, a career he turned to after a career in journalism.

Michael had a longstanding tie to Niger, having served as a Peace Corp Volunteer from 1966 to 1968. While in the Peace Corps, he helped build wells in desert villages. Michael returned to Niger to do a major feature for Life Magazine in 1985, and returned again in 2008 with fellow former Peace Corps volunteers for a documentary: Niger 66. Michael is survived by his wife, Judie Lewellen, and daughter, Suzie Lewellen, his mother, Lona Parrish, and his sisters, Mrs. Wayne (Pat) Lee, Ginny Parrish and Mrs. Jim (Dorothy) Mills. See more at: <http://www.legacy.com/obituaries/saltlaketrribune/obituary.aspx?pid=163392349>

Diana Dolan (9/8/1941-2/7/2013), a sociologist, died peacefully in Santa Monica, California. She lived in Niamey in 1974 and was married while there to Brian Dolan, the Peace Corps Physician (1973-1974). Diana worked on various health projects in Western Niger. She had previously done pioneering research on U.S. Urban race riots and had worked in the Kennedy/Johnson Administration in DC. Following her work in Niger, she was a UCLA School of Public Health faculty member. She is survived by her husband, Brian, four children, and four granddaughters.

Niger Liaison Activities

From John Hutchison, FON Board Member

Archive of the Republic of Niger: The Boston University African Studies Library is hoping to launch the archive officially this year. The members of the FON are encouraged to increase their submissions to the archive, in the form of journals, letters, documents, memorabilia, reports, etc. Here is how to access the online form through the Mugar Library of Boston University where AREN has its own url: Submission Form (including a link to Boston University's Deed of Gift form and other information): <http://tinyurl.com/NigerArchiveSubmission>

Through the Boston University African Studies Librarian (Beth Restricks), Hutchison has now met with the Collaborative Africana Materials Project (CAMP) which held a meeting at BU recently. A funding application is in process and if funded this project will help archive masters' memoirs in departments like linguistics and lettres modernes at the Université Abdou Moumouni, as well as the publications of researchers, faculty members, and research institutes like IRSH and CELHTO (the African Union Center).

Possible New England consortium of Niger-oriented non-profits: Hutchison (ALMA/FON), Koff (FON) and Palmisciano (RAIN), plus Michael Klinger who runs a non-profit sister city program with Guidan Roudji, and CONUSA representatives, hope to establish regular meetings every few months of organizations like ours that are working in Niger for the purpose of discussing avenues of collaboration.

Translation of human rights documents into Nigerien languages: Hutchison and the ALMA Project are also working with another nascent women's NGO that wants to work on human rights for children, girls, and women. An initial effort using funds supplied by ALMA will be used to translate human rights documents like the ACHPR Charter of Women's Rights into at least 5 of the languages of Niger.

Plan for the Centre Communautaire de la Technologie et la Documentation for Maïné Soroa: While in Niger, Hutchison and colleagues from the Ministry of Education and the President of KAMRA in Niger, Gremah Boucar, established a groupe de réflexion on the establishment of a community technology and archiving center for Maïné Soroa. This is an ongoing project that will apply for funding subsequently.

Proposal for a website for the Artisans of the Musée Nationale de la République du Niger The Friends of Niger hope to be able to help the Artisans of the National Museum of Niger to set up an internet-based way for the artisans to accept orders and receive payment. Tourism is of course dwindling so this would be a significant contribution.

Video recorded interviews of RAIN Mentors: In mid-March, Larry Koff & John Hutchison met with Bess Palmisciano of RAIN in order to pursue possible avenues of collaboration. RAIN has nearly 200 women mentors who guide young girls and young women in keeping with RAIN's education program. Recordings of the mentors will be used for educational purposes and funding will be applied for from FON and other sources.

Schools are nothing without quality teachers !

In 2010, YOU helped **Les amis de Hampaté Bâ** secure a permanent spot on GlobalGiving!

Today, we need your help to supplement the wages of 14 teachers at the Amadou Hampaté Bâ School.

There can be no educational development without well trained and effective teachers. To reduce the high turnover rate and have a stable and motivated team of teachers, the school must offer decent salaries and professional development without increasing either class sizes or school fees.

That is why your help is needed.

If 78 supporters make a **recurring donation of \$20/month** (\$240/year) to this appeal, every one of the 14 teachers will receive the Nigerien national average salary for a teacher and school fees will stay as low as possible allowing the school to give quality education to families most in need.

Les amis de Hampaté Bâ would like to send \$1550 per month to the Hampaté Bâ Middle School to start with. Are you one of the 78 generous and heroic people we need to make a recurring donation of **\$20 per month**?

Also, presently, Microsoft is matching new recurring donations to our project! But this will not last for long! So please do not let this great opportunity go!

By supplementing the wages of a teacher for \$20 a month, you will greatly improve the quality of education for 350 low income children at the Hampaté Bâ School.

TO DONATE PLEASE GO TO :

<http://www.globalgiving.org/projects/provide-low-fee-quality-education-for-students-in-niger/>

**THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR YOUR
COMMITMENT AND GENEROSITY !**



KAMRA

Honoring Bill and Barbara Kirker

from Vince Farley

As a retired Foreign Service Officer, I have met many outstanding Peace Corps volunteers over the years – but Bill and Barbara Kirker have to be at the top of the heap. My wife and I got to know the Kirkers in Niger in the late 1960s. They were a remarkable couple even then – a legend in their own time. But even more extraordinary was their return to Niger in 2007 (when they were in their early seventies) to continue the work they had started over forty years earlier. When Carolyn and I arrived in Niamey in 1969 for our first overseas posting, we were around the same age as most of the young PCVs we met as we traveled all over Niger, and so we had a lot in common. The biggest difference was our comfortable living circumstances in the capital, compared to the bare-bones existence of the PCVs out in the villages. (The most requested items we would bring to our Peace Corps friends when we visited were jello and cake mix.) We soon heard about Dr. Kirker and his wife Barbara, who had been serving in Maine-Soroa for three years at that point. After their two-year Peace Corps stint was up, they stayed for six more years on a Niger government contract. They were tasked with building a sorely-needed hospital in Maine-Soroa to replace the small medical clinic, with its crude and rudimentary equipment, which they had found upon their arrival. At the same time, Bill treated and healed the people of the district. Bill field-trained Barbara to assist him in surgery and as an anesthetist. Barbara was also the hospital's nutritionist, cooking three meals a day in her own kitchen. Despite his busy schedule, Bill found the time to found an NGO dedicated to providing medical assistance to Africa, which he named "AFRICARE." He asked his old friend, C. Payne Lucas, to become the head of AFRICARE, which is still doing important work today.

Unfortunately, because of a coup in Niger in 1974, the Kirkers were not allowed to stay in Niger, probably because the hospital operation was associated with the previous regime. The Kirkers returned to the U.S., where Bill was a practicing physician for the next 33 years. Then in 2006, the newly-elected President of Niger asked the Kirkers to return to Niger – Bill and Barbara were told that the people of Maine-Soroa wanted them to come back and to rebuild the hospital. Although they were not the young PCVs they once were, the Kirkers responded to the challenge and returned to Maine-Soroa in April 2007. The town had grown from 900 to 15,000 residents, while the district had mushroomed from 12,000 to over 202,000.

Bill and Barbara got to work. Four new hospital treatment buildings were added, and the hospital went from 42 beds to 142. All the patient rooms are now air-conditioned. Bill was seeing about 100+ outpatients per day, and the hospital averaged about 60 to 75 patients. Patients from Chad, Cameroon, and Nigeria also made their way across borders to the Kirker Hospital (so named in their honor by the Nigerien government). Meanwhile, Barbara Kirker saw the need for a kind of "catch up" school to educate children who had not been able to start school at a normal age, or who had been out of school for awhile. She started a "Second Chance School" for children ages 8 to 12 or 13 who do six years of the national curriculum in four years' time and are able to matriculate back into the national system with their age peers. To support the Kirkers' work in Niger, some of their friends were inspired to start in 2007 an NGO called **KAMRA (The Kirker African Medical Relief Association)**. KAMRA is a 501(c)3 organization headquartered in Columbia, SC, and I am honored to be the President of this NGO.

Also in 2007, Nigeriens in Maine and Niamey established the Kirker Foundation, whose Board is all Nigerien, which has been responsible for clearing and transporting to Maine and elsewhere in Niger all KAMRA shipments. KAMRA has thus far been able to arrange for and facilitate the shipment of over \$50 million worth of medicines, medical supplies and equipment, and school books to Niger. The pharmaceuticals were provided by MAP International, based in Brunswick, Georgia, and included, among many other vitally needed medicines, antibiotics, pre-natal vitamins, and nutritional supplements for children. The Kirker Foundation has shipped most of these medicines to the Kirker Hospital, but has also shared the medicines with the hospital in Diffa and the national hospitals in Zinder and Niamey. The medical supplies and equipment came from MedShare, an NGO located in Atlanta, Georgia, and included, for example: surgical instruments, upgraded anesthesia equipment, three new ultra-sounds, surgical and exam gloves, surgical scrub outfits, beds, IV set-ups, and an EKG machine. Books for Africa, an NGO whose main warehouse is in Atlanta, provided books for Barbara's Second Chance School.

KAMRA continued

In 2010, after three years of back-breaking work, Bill (then aged 75) and Barbara decided it was time to turn the operation of the Kirker Hospital and the Second Chance School over to others and returned to Columbia, SC. They remained very active, however, in promoting the work of KAMRA, until Barbara was diagnosed with a life-threatening illness in May 2012. After a valiant fight, with Bill by her side every step of the way, Barbara succumbed to her illness in October of 2013. She is sorely missed, but her friends and loved ones are still inspired by her loving and giving nature, and KAMRA continues its work to support the needs of the people of Maine-Soroa, with the aspiration to expand its reach to other parts of Africa.

In 2013 and 2014, many Nigerians living in northeast Nigeria have fled the violence there and sought safety in Maine. The hospital has successfully expanded its operations to care for this influx of new patients. The patient load is now over 300 patients a day. In December 2013, thanks to generous donors who wanted to honor Barbara, KAMRA purchased and shipped to Maine, 10 computers which have been installed in the school, now teaching 150 students. In January 2014, John Hutchinson, a returned PCV who worked with the Kirkers when they were first in Niger, agreed to fund the establishment and continued support for internet services for the school. In February 2014, a UNHCR team surveyed the situation in Maine and offered to build three new classroom buildings at the Barbara Kirker School. The Kirker Foundation has accepted this offer and is now coordinating the expansion of the school.

MAP has found a sponsor for a new shipment of needed medicines, and KAMRA has agreed to raise the necessary \$12,000 for the transport of this shipment which left the US at the end of March 2014. Donations are urgently needed to fund this transport. KAMRA has supported two MedShare shipments to Maine in 2007 and 2010. It is seeking support to sponsor and transport a new MedShare shipment as supplies are running low. With the expansion of the Barbara Kirker School, KAMRA would like to ship additional books from Books for Africa to support the expanded student body.

If you would like to become involved in KAMRA's mission, or to make a donation to continue its work, please contact me at vincefarley@bellsouth.net (cell 404-983-7851) or Abdou Gagara, KAMRA Vice President for Development at a_gagara@yahoo.com (803-331-3699). Go to our website (www.kirkerfoundation.org) for more info on our work or to make a contribution. We have an ambitious agenda and could really use advice and counsel from Niger RPCVs regarding where we could find support.

UGANDA (and Niger) FOCUS ON EDUCATION AS PATH TO SECURITY

Niger RPCV (1965-1968) **Clark E. Kerr** sends us a NYT article about a boy in Uganda rescued from life as a terrorist by vocational training. "Uganda is not Niger (or Senegal). But there are some similarities -- the rising threat of terrorism and its draw on young men, the increasing involvement of the US military [and the continuing problems of development]. The author makes a strong case for the importance of education and economic opportunity -- far less expensive than military ops and far more effective at keeping terrorism at bay (not to mention moving a country ahead). The "Skilling Uganda" program seems especially interesting. Maybe the traditional education programs in Niger and Senegal could be modified along similar lines -- with an increasing emphasis on vocational, agricultural, and basic business skills. A more practical educational system for all, more girls finishing schooling and marrying a little later = a brighter future even in an environment of outside terrorist threat. More promising and much cheaper than a principally military response. More for us to think about." Here is a link to the story: http://www.nytimes.com/2014/05/02/opinion/ugandas-ticking-bomb.html?_r=0

Niger Reunion

The Niger III group who trained at the University of Southern Illinois at Carbondale in the summer of 1964 will reunite for the first time since their training and the beginning of their service 50 years ago at the YMCA at Estes Park, Colorado. This is a joint reunion with their fellow trainees, the Senegal IV group, and will be held from September 29 to October 2, 2014. Meeting nearby during the same week will be the Niger IV-Senegal V group and since there was overlap of these two groups, a joint social is planned. This reunion is mostly a social event to reconnect with fellow trainees but the reunion committee is also planning events to help reconnect with Niger and Senegal. A website is being established for the Niger III-Senegal IV group and all are urged to submit their biographical

Friends of Niger has a Record-Breaking Year in Both Income and Spending

Given the drought, heavy rains, and on-going challenge of life in Niger, the Board has pursued and received numerous requests for aid over the past year. In response, Friends of Niger has exceeded all prior years in both fund raising and program support. The Board would like to thank the membership, Ambassador Sidikou, Program Chair/vice President Gabriella Maertens, Pam White and the supporters of the Hauser Memorial Fund, and the leadership and membership of CONUSA for their efforts.

As noted below in the 2013 Financial Statement, Friends of Niger was able to spend over \$13,000 on a wide array of projects utilizing income from membership, contributions, and past savings. Overhead expenses, primarily postage and printing of the newsletter, accounted for just 12% of our costs. Projects funded this past year include well repair in Ingall, Chewable Vitamins (Galmi Hosp., National Hosp., Notre Dame Orph., and Yencabihali Clinic), Plumpy Nut (BESO),-Expanding Lives (Girls Leadership Conference/Seminar),-Nomad Foundation (Sewing Machine and training),-CONUSA Emergency Aid Shipment (Transport costs),-RAIN: women's education and credit Project Tilliberi.

Since the start of 2014, Friends of Niger was able to raise \$11,500, again a record in fund raising. The Board is currently reviewing requests for funding and continues to try and identify local initiatives in support of health, agriculture, economic development and young girl's education.

FRIENDS OF NIGER SUMMARY FINANCIAL STATEMENT 2013

Date range covered: January 1, 2013-December 31, 2013

INCOME 2013	(In dollars \$)
FON Membership	1,040
NPCA Membership	1000
Unrestricted Contributions	940
Sub total	2700
Program Income	2070
T Shirt sales	60
Transfer from FON Savings Accounts	10,057
Total Income	\$14,887
EXPENSES 2013 (\$)	
Postage/CEX Printing	1088
P.O. Box	124
Web	
Conference	125
General Adm.	
Wire Transfer fees	135
Sub total	1472
NPCA memberships	280
Project Funding	13,135
Total Expenses	\$14,887
ACCOUNT BALANCE end of 2013	\$9,916
Interest Savings Act.	6,000
Checking Act.	3,916

Peace Corps Niger Board Elections

FON by-laws: Board nominations/elections scheduled every two years in the Spring

As required by the bylaws every two years, nominations for Board members shall be solicited in writing from all members of the FON. The five candidates receiving the most votes shall be elected to the Board. Board members must be a member of FON. If no nominations are received, there will not be an election and all the current Board members will continue in office.

The Current Elected FON Board as of 01/2014 are noted below:

John Soloninka - *President*

Gabriella Maertens - *Vice-President*

Penni St. Hilaire - *Recording Secretary*

Larry Koff - *Treasurer*

In addition to these four members, the Board has selected additional members to fill key responsibilities that the board feels are needed as noted below:

Joel Neuberg, - *Newsletter Editor*

Jude Andreasen - *Assistant Editor*

John Baird - *Membership*

Steve Bushell - *Webmaster*

John Hutchison - *Niger Relations-Liaison*

Bob Jackson - *At-Large*

Abdul Kadir Kaigama - *CONSUA National President*

Rabiou Yari - *CONUSA National Secretary*

If you have a suggestions for undertaking an assignment that is not currently covered by the Board, please let us know. (see nomination form below).

NOMINATION FORM Friends of Niger Board of Directors Elections 2014

I. I am a member of Friends of Niger, and I would like to stand for election to the Board of Directors of FON. If elected, I am willing to participate in up to four quarterly phone conference meetings (dates vary) with other FON Board members:

Name: _____

My contact information:

Address: _____

Address: _____

Email address: _____

Phone: _____

II. Tell us about yourself. (This information will be shared with the FON voting membership).

Dates that you lived, worked, or served in Niger: _____

If you worked in Niger, for which organization did you work? _____

Other information about your experiences in Niger or life experiences that you would like to share.

III. What experiences, ideas, service, or vision would you be willing to bring to the table as a member of the Board of Directors of FON? (Please limit your response to one-half a page).

Continued from page 1

SAHEL FOOD CRISIS

Niger's refugee crisis escalated last year after neighbouring Nigeria launched a military offensive against Islamist terror group, Boko Haram, causing 10,000 people to flee northern Nigeria into south-eastern Niger and Cameroon. Of the 25 countries listed by the U.N. as being vulnerable to becoming failed states, 13 are in the Sahel. Breaking the cycle of recurrent food crises in the region is next to impossible while there is limited security says Gerda Verburg, chairperson of the Committee on World Food Security. "In the Sahel we have the solutions. We have the capacity. We have the willingness. However, as long there is insecurity then food production and access to food is at risk. There is not enough reliability and stability for us to adequately address food insecurity in the Sahel," she told IPS. See the complete article at: <http://allafrica.com/stories/201403290033.html>

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FON Provides Funds for Well Repair in Touloukh Top: Before Repair; Bottom: After Repair



2013-2014 FRIENDS OF NIGER MEMBERSHIP FORM

**FON Dues are payable in January but if you missed that date,
please pay anytime during 2014.**

Name(s) _____ Date _____

Address _____

City/ State _____ Phone(h) _____

Zip _____ Phone (w) _____

E-Mail Address _____

Connection to Niger (RPCV, etc.) _____

Dates in Niger _____ Location in Niger _____

Program or Involvement in Niger _____

*Membership Dues & Contributions Help Fund **FON** Activities - including The Camel Express,
the **FON** website, the **FON** Archives, and local Nigerien Projects .*

The Friends of Niger is a tax-exempt organization under section 501(c)(3).

Membership and contributions to Friends of Niger are fully tax deductible.

Please Check Appropriate Boxes

☐ Enclosed is \$20 for an Individual Membership in FON

☐ **\$55 to cover Individual Membership in both FON & NPCA**

☐ Enclosed is \$35 for a FON Family Membership (2 Members at One Address)

☐ I am a new RPCV or new to FON, entitled to a one-year free membership

☐ 2 members at 1 address

☐ In Addition to my Membership, I have enclosed a General Contribution of _____

☐ Instead of Joining FON at this time, I have enclosed a General Contribution of _____

☐ Instead—**Project Funding / Donations**

☐ I would like to support ☐ education; ☐ wells; ☐ health; ☐ agricultural;

☐ microcredit projects in Niger (check all that apply) _____

☐ Please send paper copies of the Camel Express by U.S. Mail

☐ Please send links to PDF version of the Camel Express by e-mail.

Merchandise

☐ Please send _____ Friends of Niger T-Shirts at \$15 each (Shipping Included) _____

T-Shirt Sizes: S _____ M _____ L _____ XL _____ T-Shirt Color: _____ brown _____ beige

TOTAL AMOUNT ENCLOSED _____

**Make Check or Money Order Payable to Friends of Niger and mail with this
form to: P. O. Box 5823, Washington, D. C. 20016-9998**

PRIVACY POLICY

*Your contact information is requested and maintained by FON so that we can contact you in
the future. FON does not share your contact information with any third party other than with
the National Peace Corps Association with whom we have a reciprocity agreement.*

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newsletter and previous editions
can be accessed at**

<http://www.friendsofniger.org>



Camel Express

Newsletter of the Friends of Niger

