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# The Camel Express



Newsletter of the Friends of Niger

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Volume 24 Issue 2



August 2009

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## Young Girls Scholarship Program Report

By Daryn Warner

As I wrap up my service in Peace Corps/Niger, it a pleasure to update you on the Young Girls Scholarship Program (YGSP). The incoming coordinator, Lisa Spencer, will send her introductions soon. Until then I hope you will share our excitement at the successes and the lessons we've learned in the last year.

As you know, we strive for a modest program with a big impact. And this year another five scholars have finished their studies. We're proud of them and the 15 girls advancing one step closer. Together, they are an impressive group of young women.

As always there are the usual ups and downs but this year strikes hit the system hard. The year was extended into July for those taking tests (*certificat*, *brevet*, and *terminal*) to make up for some of the missed weeks before testing. Exams are finished but, unfortunately, political rallies and public holidays for Republic Day and the referendum have delayed the results. What we do know so far, is that 85% have met their scholastic obligation to the scholarship program. In spite of the challenges leading up to exams, their averages placed YGSP students in the top 10% of their class. Obviously this success is linked to the students' personal motivations but we focus on how to provide the basic study skills and materials as well as the volunteer's mentorship. Even more, we find that building "communities of practice" has been helpful in shaping a successful community environment for the students.

A first step in building these communities of practice has been the Young Girls Scholarship Conferences. Again this year, we invited all scholars to skills building workshops. Team Maradi hosted Hausaphones and Team Tillaberi hosted Zaramphones in Niamey. At the conference the scholars received experience in:

- Peer education, with a special focus on HIV/AIDS prevention;
- Career building skills, including shadowing successful women;
- Understanding money matters; and
- Study skills.

As a second step, we are working to cluster YGSP students. In the past, a student was likely to be the only scholarship recipient in their area. We've found that when a club of scholars can be created all of the students do better. It also allows students and school directors to better utilize the tutoring allowance.

We are hopeful that we will be able to support basic education needs in the communities that host these clusters. Next year we will pilot an effort to provide basic library and public study materials to the scholars' classrooms. This will be in addition to the personal books and materials included in the scholarship.

The next academic year will mark YGSP's 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary. We will continue to focus on the point at which girls are likely to drop out: when they must leave their home village to continue on to middle school. For many, graduating from middle school, at about age 16, is the end goal. But YGSP is also working to address the second point at which girls are likely to drop (Continued on page 2)



**Front: Haoua Maman, YGSP participant.**



(YGSP Report continued from page 1)

out: when they must move to an even larger community to pursue a high school education. To that end, Peace Corps/Niger's Gender and Development Committee is working with Pencils for Kids (a Canadian NGO) to fund a pilot project with *lycée* students in the Libore Commune. Six girls in high school will be selected to begin next year. The *lycée* program will be much the same as the *collège* program but recipients will receive increased support to meet the greater academic demands as well as be expected to tutor primary school students. These successes and plans for the future are largely thanks to the Friends of Niger. On behalf of all PCVs, I thank you for your support last year. If you have any questions please don't hesitate to contact the YGSP Coordinator at: SidaGadNiger@gmail.com. We look forward to many more years of collaboration. Barka da kokari!

Daryn J. Warner

### Message from the President of FON

Dear Friends of Niger,

We've heard some great news about Peace Corps over the summer. The new director, Aaron Williams, is an RPCV who served in the Dominican Republic, and there is a possibility that Congress will be increasing the funding allocated to the Peace Corps this fall. This news has been welcomed by all of us who support the Peace Corps goals and initiatives. The board of Friends of Niger continues to hear from our partners in Niger whom you have generously supported; we've included some of their news in this issue. We are also privileged to be part of the work of so many Niger RPCVs carrying on the 3<sup>rd</sup> goal. Every month we receive emails and letters of RPCVs connecting their local communities with what they learned in Niger, and in several cases, even traveling back to Niger to reengage with many of their Nigerien counterparts of years ago. With the advent of YouTube, we can see the news and good works of people around the world. The YouTube videos from Niger are also growing in number and we have linked a few to our FON website for you to enjoy. The Nigerien movie, *Au Centre de la Terre des Puits et des Hommes*, by Ingrid Patetta, continues to be positively received around the world. <http://cameranomade.net/> In August, this movie was featured in the Underground Outdoors Rooftops Movie series in NYC. Also making movies, Judy Irola, FON member and Niger RPCV, has informed us of her Niger movie project on the journey her "stage" group made to Niger and back to the USA in 1966-1968 <http://www.niger66.com/> We continue to be so proud of the work, efforts, and contributions made by all our FON members. Please let us hear from you!

John

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

**[www.friendsofniger.org](http://www.friendsofniger.org)**.

**Editor: Jude Andreasen**

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



## 50th Anniversary

### Peace Corps 50th Anniversary Digital Library

The 50th Anniversary Digital Library provides a searchable collection of electronic Peace Corps materials from 1961-present, including:

- Photos and stories contributed by Volunteers and RPCVs, using an online submission form
- Digitized newsletters, speeches, annual reports and other key agency historical materials
- Contributions of photos and historical documents from country posts
- Brochures, posters, audio and video clips, and marketing materials from each decade of Peace Corps history.

Peace Corps invites current and returned Volunteers to share a story and/or photos from your Peace Corps experience. Stories will be collected from Volunteers serving in each generation of the Peace Corps, from the 1960s, 70s, 80s, 90s, and on through to the present. By sharing a story and photos that reflect your unique experience in the place and time you served, you will help enrich Americans' understanding of what it means to have been a Peace Corps Volunteer. Many of the stories and photos submitted to the digital library will be used to honor and celebrate our legacy of service during Peace Corps' 50th anniversary celebration in 2011. Digital library materials will be accessible to the public through the Peace Corps website, and will be shared with the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA).

We are currently accepting electronic submission of stories and photos from current and returned Volunteers only. If you are a Volunteer or RPCV, please read the complete [photo submission guidelines](#) and [story submission guidelines](#) for details on what we are collecting and how to submit your materials. If you are not a Volunteer or RPCV but would like to submit material to the Digital Library, please contact us at [digital@peacecorps.gov](mailto:digital@peacecorps.gov).

Please review the [Peace Corps 50th Anniversary Digital Library Project Material Submission Authorization and Agreement](#) before continuing. Contributors must accept the terms of the agreement during the submission process in order to upload items to the archive.

For more information on what the digital library is and is not, download [Using the 50th Anniversary Digital Library: a guide for the Peace Corps community](#) (PDF).

You can also read our [Suggestions for Individual RPCVs and Affiliate Groups](#) (PDF) for additional ways to help document and preserve Peace Corps history.

#### Ready to contribute to the 50th Anniversary Digital Library?



*Above: Boys at play in Niamey.*

*Left:  
Kennedy Bridge Over the Niger River.*

# Peace Corps Niger Update

By Mary Abrams, Director, PC Niger – July 24, 2009

Greetings,

Welcome back to PC Niger and our ongoing efforts to build a partnership between Niger and the US. I last wrote in 2008 and much has happened on both ends in the meantime. The US elected President Obama and while Nigeriens obviously didn't vote in the election, if they had they would have added significantly to his votes. It was truly fun to have so many Nigeriens following US politics and the victory celebration filled the streets of many Nigerien cities. Ambassador Allen provided an evening fete and invited all Americans and many Nigeriens to celebrate President Obama's inauguration. Even the chatter of Nigerien greetings quieted as the President took his oath.

Politics here have taken a slightly different turn with President Tandja dissolving both the National Assembly and the Constitutional Court as well as several parts of the constitution itself. Things are currently mostly at a standstill but the President's referendum to re-write the constitution is scheduled for 4 Aug which will presumably bring things to a head. The situation is definitely tense and there have even been a couple of physically violent demonstrations but for the most part things are calm. I continue to remind myself and the Volunteers that Niger's democracy is incredibly young so it is not surprising that there be some active discussion about the best path forward.

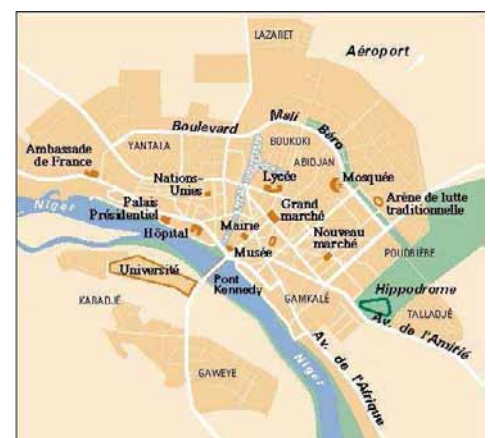
Both elections have had an interesting affect on PC Niger. First of all President Obama's interest in increasing funds to Peace Corps looks like it will result in a healthy increase in our FY'10 budget. Our strategic plan includes, if funds are available,

- expanding to the east (eastern Zinder and Diffa Regions);
- clustering PCVs from our different program sectors within the new local government structure (communes);  
and linking their work directly to the commune development plans;
- increasing the functionality of our Eastern Regional Office so it can better support PCVs programming, training, medical, and security needs;
- Increasing our numbers from around 120 to 130 Volunteers on the ground.

The Nigerien political maneuvering has had a slightly more complicated effect on Volunteers and PC Niger. As always, we are remaining apolitical in the ongoing debate around the constitution, referendum, and elections. And as always, it is hard for our Volunteers to be an integral part of their community and not get caught in these discussions. This is particularly difficult for our new Municipal and Community Development (MCD) Volunteers who are charged with working with commune governments and community groups to support the still very young move to decentralization. This resulted in a lot of work by our new APCD for MCD to develop talking points and scripts in local languages to help Volunteers finesse this delicate balance.

In addition to working our way through the political dance given our apolitical nature, there have been several instances when we have had to restrict Volunteer movement. With the upcoming referendum vote, we anticipate more security issues but honestly hope this resolves itself peacefully. In the meantime, Volunteers continue to do amazing things. With their communities and other partners they continue to (among many other things):

- Provide health extension work on nutrition, birth spacing, fistula, AIDS prevention and treatment, and basic hygiene;
- Plant thousands of trees that provide shade, nutrition, soil protection, gum Arabic, and firewood;
- Fund and help implement projects to build community wells, millet grinders, schools, and health clinics;
- Work with after school clubs and girls fairs to teach kids about computer/internet use, life skills, hygiene, learning/studying techniques, natural resource/science information, and basic English language skills;



*(Continued on page 5)*



- Provide gardening space, wells, tools, and materials for gardens that provide improved nutrition and some income generation to schools, women's cooperatives, and communities;
- Provide new communes with maps of their commune, better record keeping, and assistance in finding funding sources for projects in their commune development plans;
- Plan and implement student government elections in primary and CEGs around Niger;
- Provide coaching and general support for sports for kids, particularly young girls;
- Develop and produce radio shows on agriculture extension, hygiene, civic education.

The basic work of a Volunteer in Niger in 2009 has changed some since I arrived as a Volunteer in 1979 but it is still extremely challenging and rewarding. To quote an old Peace Corps marketing tool, it is still the Toughest Job You'll Ever Love.

Sai Wata Rana!

Mary Abrams, Country Director - PC Niger

*EDITORIAL NOTE: Mary's letter came to us on July 24. On August 7, Niger's electoral commission released provisional results showing the President of Niger can extend his rule for years past the constitutional limit.*

### NOTEWORTHY

**Congratulations to new National Peace Corps Director RPCV Aaron Williams (Dominican Republic 67-70), unanimously confirmed on August 7, 2009.**

**Five 1966 Niger RPCVs returned to Niger in 2008 and are producing a documentary that is worth seeing, funding, and disseminating. More in the next Camel Express, but meanwhile, see <http://www.niger66.com> for the trailer.**

## NEW FRIENDS OF NIGER T-SHIRTS



Lisa Krusa-McLaren, a talented graphic designer and daughter of a Niger III Peace Corps Volunteer, designed and donated this lovely T-shirt logo to FON. They are best quality shirts with silk screen colors that won't fade. This first run is being offered at \$15 including postage. They are available in beige, which would have the design as 3-colors, or brown, which would mean the 2-color design would be on a brown shirt background. To order yours, send your size (S, M, L, XL) and \$15 to FON at the address on the ORDER FORM (p. 7).

## Third Goal

Dear Friends of Niger,

This summer, answer President Obama's call to serve by volunteering to speak about issues from your country of service! Give a presentation about international children's health issues to a faith-based youth group or in the children's section of your local library. Visit [www.serve.gov](http://www.serve.gov) for opportunities to volunteer and share your host country cross-cultural insights. Visit [www.peacecorps.gov/thirdgoal](http://www.peacecorps.gov/thirdgoal) as your one-stop shop for how-to tips and resources for planning a great Peace Corps Third Goal activity! Don't forget to register your Third Goal participation online. Your official participation counts in helping the Peace Corps gain greater support from Congress.

With warmest regards,  
The Third Goal Team  
For more information:  
Peace Corps Third Goal  
Domestic Programs  
Second Floor  
1111 20th St. NW  
Washington, DC 20526



## WEDDING ANNOUNCEMENT

On July 18, 2009, Dr. Christopher Zoolkoski, of Galmi Hospital in Niamey, Niger, married Nancy Beltramo in Portland, Oregon. Dr. Zoolloski lost his wife last year, and Nancy lost her husband to cancer seven years ago. Nancy was a supervising pharmacist at Emmanuel Hospital in Portland, and has volunteered at clinics in India, Honduras, and Guatemala. They invited FON members to their wedding, and board member Gabriella Maertens was able to attend. The Zoolkoskis and Chris' children will return to Niamey after Christmas. The FON Board donated \$200 for children's chewable vitamins for Galmi in honor of their marriage.



## UPDATE ON SECOND CHANCE SCHOOLS (AAWEL)

Dear Friends of Niger,

Greetings to all of you. I am pleased to share with you some very good news about the Second Chance schools. With your sponsorship, we are able to provide effective technical support. This is the first year that the second school fifth graders were able to participate in the national achievement examination. All the students from the five schools that AAWEL and ONEN support successfully passed the test. This is a first in Niger!

We at AAWEL and ONEN believe that the extra-curricular support, which includes both academic and leadership skill development, has enabled us to enhance students' competence with regard to literacy, mathematics and critical thinking. Some of the students scored such high marks that they won prizes. The award ceremony, at which the Minister of Education will present the prizes, has been delayed due to political activities. We are preparing our annual report and will include statistics and information on the ceremony in our next communication. We now have a solid foundation for continuing our work in both the second chance schools and the deaf school. We will continue to focus on the literacy, life skills and leadership skills, and we also have sewing machines and materials for the poultry project.

Once more, I would like to thank you so much for your support to AAWEL. It means a lot to us, and more importantly, to the students who are given hope for a second chance. We hope we can count on your support for the coming year.

Best regards, Hassana Alidou, AAWEL

## FRIENDS OF NIGER

### 2009 MEMBERSHIP & ORDER FORM

Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_

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 **Projects** such as Those Listed Below.*

**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.**

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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 current Niger PCV, entitled to Free Membership
- ☐ I am a New RPCV, entitled to a 1-Year Free Membership

New and renewing members are entitled to one FREE copy of *Brother from Niger*

Format Choice: DVD \_\_\_\_\_ VHS \_\_\_\_\_ No Thanks \_\_\_\_\_

- ☐ 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 \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ I want to support FON's Young Girls' Scholarship Program (YGSP) activities with  
a Contribution of \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ I want to support FON's Microcredit in Niger activities with  
a Contribution of \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ I want to support FON's Youth Education activities **through a NEW PARTNER, AAWEL**  
with a Contribution of \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ I want to support the FON Chewable Vitamin Campaign  
with a Contribution of \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ Please send \_\_\_\_\_ copies of *Brother from Niger*/DVD  
Format Choice: DVD \_\_\_\_\_ VHS \_\_\_\_\_  
at \$20 (2 for \$35) (Shipping Included) \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ Please send \_\_\_\_\_ Friends of Niger T-Shirts  
at \$15 each (Shipping Included) \_\_\_\_\_  
T-Shirt Sizes: S \_\_\_\_\_ M \_\_\_\_\_ L \_\_\_\_\_ XL \_\_\_\_\_

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



### ***FON Participation Menu***

Indicate your interest with a check mark. Or add something new at the bottom. Tell us how to reach you on Page 11.

- ☐ Will help set up local FON group
- ☐ Would participate in local FON group
- ☐ Will be local FON contact person
- ☐ Would be FON contact person for potential PCVs to Niger (contact us at the address on page 11 or via e-mail at [j.soloninka@sbcglobal.net](mailto:j.soloninka@sbcglobal.net))

***Other*** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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An electronic **FULL COLOR** version of this newsletter and previous editions can be accessed at

**<http://www.friendsofniger.org>**



**Friends of Niger**

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**Address Correction Requested**



**There is no way to peace.  
Peace is the way.**