

The Camel Express



Newsletter of the Friends of Niger

Volume 29 Issue 3



December 2014

Friends of Niger Supports Local Programs: Member Contributions Needed

The FON Board has committed to matching \$4000 for 6 programs in education, health, and small business development, much of the focus on girls and women. With your year-end contribution please help us match or exceed the funds we have agreed to commit to the following highly qualified programs discussed in this newsletter: 1) CONUSA and Cholera \$1000; 2) Soccer \$500; 3) Goat project \$700; 4) Bien-Être (BFR) \$500; 5) Hampaté Ba School \$250; 6) Rain \$1000.

It's time to support FON with your dues and donations!

January is our once-a-year push to raise funds to support FON and the many projects that help the people and country we came to love during our time living there.

How many Friends of Niger are we? As of last count, we are a group of 612 (see the list on pages 7-11)! Incidentally, if you see familiar names of folks you would like to reconnect with, contact John Baird at JBairdRPT@cs.com and we will facilitate the contact in a confidential way — both parties giving consent.

We usually send the newsletter by email, but this time we are placing paper copies in your hands, hoping that the Camel Express will lie around on your coffee table for a few days and get picked up and read several times! For details on how you can continue your support, please see page 3.

Thank you for supporting FON!

FON & CONUSA Collaborate to Help Communities Hit by Cholera Near Maradi

FON (Friends of Niger) and CONUSA (a group of Niger Diaspora from throughout the USA, and an organization that now has two representatives on the FON Board) have agreed to work together to launch a cholera prevention program. With the help of CONUSA and especially Yari Rabiou, a representative to the FON Board) an anti-cholera program will be designed for the Maradi area, which is most impacted by the disease. This will be a cooperative effort spearheaded by the NGO Himma, including a representative of Maradi Hospital, local medical experts, as well as traditional and religious leaders. CONUSA has made a \$1000 contribution to match FON's donation. A general contribution will underwrite FON expenses for this effort. Sufficient funds have been now been raised with the support of CONUSA to film and broadcast the program on Niger National TV (Tele Sahel) and regional radio. Credit will be given to CONUSA and FON.

Over a succession of days in September, cholera cases were declared in Southern Niger, causing over 20 deaths. The epidemic is spreading primarily to those areas without access to clean water, trash collection, and proper toilets. It is important to organize awareness campaigns in affected villages to educate people about the symptoms of cholera so that those infected will come to treatment centers.



FON Urges Support for Kaouritel Association Dairy Goat Project

**Submitted by Gabriella Maertens,
VP of FON and Projects Coordinator**

FON has received a request from Ortoudo Bermo, President of the Women's Group of the Ajangafa Kaourital Association in the commune of Tchintabaraden for funding of a dairy goat operation. The FON Board is asking its members and friends to help fund this project with their generous donations. FON will match the amount up to \$1000 (the amount requested is 750,000FCFA). The need is urgent because the association wishes to purchase the animals at a good price during the dry season (from November to May), and benefit from the new births during the rainy season immediately following.

After several successive droughts in Niger many families in this region lost their entire cattle herd. Survival became very difficult with no means of livelihood. The degradation of natural resources (water, farm and pasture land, and forest) strongly contributed to the vulnerability of the people, and women were the most affected. To the already chronic food shortage was added social inequality because cattle constitute the only means of subsistence in the department of Tchintabaraden. All these factors contributed to the impoverishment of the people. The small village of Ajangafa, located 45 km from Tchintabaraden is one of the most affected areas. That is why the Kaourital Association's local partner in the village planned, in solidarity with the members of the community, to help the women from the most vulnerable households who had lost all of their cattle. In summary: The project will assist 12 women in the Ajangafa area in the commune of Tchintabaraden to begin to support their families by giving them a pair of goats (milking goat and kid). In 18 months there will be an accounting and the reimbursement will allow additional women in the group to receive animals in a revolving operation. This system will allow women to rebuild their lost herds and to have the means to sustain their families.

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and you will find **FON** on the web

and this newsletter in **FULL COLOR**

at:

www.friendsofniger.org.

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

Funds needed to Support One World Football Soccer Program

Mike Mitchell, President of "One World Futball" and former Peace Corps volunteer in Niger, announced that 10,400 balls have been distributed in the Tilliaberri region involving 100,000 kids in conjunction with the Canadian Pencils for Kids Program. At our request, the new on-site Project Play Niger Coordinator, Ibbo Daddy, has distributed 1,100 balls for primarily the Maradi and Zinder regions. Funding is needed to cover the cost of these balls and to support the Project Coordinator. Mike Mitchell will be on the East coast next summer and is looking for opportunities to do fund raising events.



It's time to support Friends of Niger (FON) with your DUES and donations!

Please send your \$20 dues by January 31

Dear friends, we are a small and unique group of people who know Niger intimately from having lived and worked there. FON provides ways we can continue to help and honor those esteemed people who hosted us and with whom we developed friendships.

HERE'S HOW DUES AND DONATIONS CAN BE SENT:

Preferred Way #1 -- If you receive a paper copy of The Camel Express (CEX)

Please use the enclosed remit envelope. With this option, you have all the choices: Besides paying FON dues, you can also make a general contribution to FON, and you can elect to support FON projects in the areas of education, wells, health, and agriculture. Then there are **FON Matching** projects which fund RAIN, BFR, Soccer, Hambate Ba, and microcredit (see articles in this issue). Finally, you can buy T-shirts, and you can choose to pay dues to the National Peace Corps Association (NPCA).

Preferred Way #2 -- If you receive the CEX by email

Please print out the Membership Form and mail that in with your payment. Here you have all the same choices as above.

If you want to use Paypal

Go to the Friends of Niger website, www.friendsofniger.org, and click on the Donate button. The first \$20 you send will be your dues; anything above that will be a general contribution.

If you want to use a credit card

Go to the NPCA website, peacecorpsconnect.org. Here you can pay NPCA and FON dues. The Friends of Niger is a tax-exempt organization under section 501(c)3 – all contributions are fully tax deductible. All contributions are acknowledged with a written receipt.

Please make checks payable to Friends of Niger and mail to: PO Box 5823, Washington DC20016-9998. Please keep in mind that in addition to the projects listed, your dues and donations also support The Camel Express newsletter, the FON website, and the FON Archives.

Bien-Être de la Femme Rurale (BFR) Project Seeks Support for the Replication of Their Project in the Region of Say

from Gabriella Maertens, FON V-P & Projects Coordinator

Thanks to funding from FON earlier this year, Madame Alhassane Nafissatou, founder and coordinator of the NGO Bien-Être de la femme Rurale (BFR), was able to train 30 women (expanded from 20 originally proposed) because of the interest of the women in the Say region. After training in the transformation of peanuts, the women began producing peanut oil and peanut butter. The highly nutritive residue is sold to mix with cattle feed.



An important change has occurred in the lives of these women. Now they are engaged and earning money and are learning ways of using this money for small business activities to benefit themselves and their families. This project has given the women hope and increased their confidence to become leaders in their village. The women have made a great start and Madame Alhassane Nafissatou hopes, with your help, to expand her project to more women in the village and to other villages in the region of Say. The cost of her proposal for funding for this expansion would be \$1000 total for the bags of peanuts, the containers and stickers. The NGO's contribution would be \$350 for the mats, the training and the wood. FON has pledged \$500 and hopes that its members and friends will match that amount so that the project can be completely funded.

This project was specifically designed to respond to the needs of the rural women of Niger who have been displaced by drought or poor harvest and now live in the outskirts of Niamey without the means to earn a living. The project would start in April, 2015 and would last six months. During this time the women will be involved in the production of peanut oil and the training and revenue will enable them to return to their village

to establish a small business enterprise. This project was successful in the region of Say and will be duplicated for the displaced women living on the outskirts of Niamey.



2014 NIGER / SENEGAL 50TH REUNION AT ESTES PARK, COLORADO

The Niger III /Senegal IV training group gathered at Estes Park, Colorado Sept. 29-Oct. 2 to celebrate their 50th reunion. They trained at Southern Illinois University in the summer of 1964. Thirty-eight RPCVs and spouses attended — 22 from the Niger group, 18 from the Senegal group, including spouses and partners. Tammy Liberman and Steve Liberman were double-counted because she served in Senegal and married Steve, who went to Niger.

A full (15 page detailed) report on the reunion, including summaries of presentations on health, literacy, and welfare in Niger given by: **Peter Easton, Dr. David Nicholas, Tom Hale, Charlie Stover, Warren Enger, Jamie Thomson, and others** will be accessible from the FON website in January.

Niger Rural & Nomadic Students Find Opportunity at Agadez Learning Center



Only 2% of girls in Niger complete high school. The numbers are not much higher for boys. To prosper, a country needs a broad base of educated citizens to participate in government and business. To this end, RAIN partners with rural desert communities to promote access to education. Enrollment is rising in partner primary schools, and we're seeing the first girls *ever* graduating from these schools. For most, this accomplishment leads no further. Most rural and nomadic students live many miles away from the nearest secondary school – making attendance impossible. Since January of 2013, RAIN's Agadez Learning Center (ALC) provides safe access to secondary school education for girls and boys (ages 13-17) who would not otherwise have the chance to attend.

Located in the city of Agadez, Niger, **The Agadez Learning Center** houses nomadic students from seven rural communities. A safe and supporting place to live, uniforms, school supplies, and healthy food to eat are just the beginning at the ALC for 25 students of the Tuareg and Wodaabe ethnic groups from the vast surrounding Agadez region. Counseling, guidance and peer-to-peer and professional tutoring helps students acclimate from village to city life and develop leadership skills while succeeding in school. Normally rural students fall far behind their urban peers in academic performance. This year, 10 of our 13 10th grade students, including all our girls, not only surpassed their peers but aced their government exams, which were harder than ever.

Continued on page 6

HELP TO EMPOWER UNDERPRIVILEGED GIRLS IN NIGER

**By Homa Kombo, Founder and
General Coordinator of the Hampaté Bâ School**

The challenging empowerment program at Amadou Hampaté Bâ Middle School in Niamey aims to instill strength, critical thinking, and positivity in girls so that they regain their self-esteem due to harmful cultural traditions. Our girl students learn that education does not automatically lead to empowerment as culture and custom also influence whether they are able to exercise their knowledge and understanding. They learn that mentalities and attitudes need to change as well. To end gender inequality, we believe everyone must be involved, and so our male students also learn gender awareness. This means learning to recognize the negative impacts of gender inequity. When you donate to our project, you give underprivileged girls access, duration in education, and empowerment: Sponsorship gives underprivileged girl students access to secondary education, a bespoke remediation program keeps them in school, and a special empowerment program provides the means for them to overcome the obstacles they face in their everyday lives to attain full access to their human rights. Now is the time to act. We need you to help make a difference and transform lives. Thank you for your support!

The FON Board has voted to approve an additional \$250 to be matched by FON members and friends. The link to this project is:

<http://www.globalgiving.org/projects/secondary-education-for-200-adolescent-girls-in-niger/>

Continued from Page 5 **RAIN Agadez Learning Center**

A Family Atmosphere RAIN provides the students with a safe and healthy environment, including full scholarships, room and board. Tutors work with students in groups and individually to improve their understanding of challenging academic concepts. Halima Aboubacar, RAIN Specialist for the Promotion of Women and Children, serves as a mentor and advocate for the students, meeting with them at least twice weekly to discuss their personal and academic needs and concerns. Her constant presence allows her to continually monitor their academic and social progress - and the results indicate that her hard work is effective. Brian Nowak, RAIN Director of Programs, is an educator who works closely with our tutors to provide individualized help to students 3 nights per week. Halima and Brian are viewed with respect and affection. They bolster the students' confidence and motivation with warmth, praise and gentle demands for greater effort. Together they create a family atmosphere, helping these rural students navigate the social mysteries common to middle and high school-aged students throughout the world.

Performance Results This academic year was a success, thanks to the hard work of Brian, Halima, the tutors, and of course, the students themselves. Despite the especially difficult exams this year, ALC students had a passing rate of 77%, well above the average for their school and for students at private schools. Adamou Moussa, Professor of Mathematics at the students' middle school and a RAIN tutor, noted that our ALC students were, on average, twice as successful as their counterparts at the local private school. Among the notable improvements throughout the year were several girls and boys who responded to demands for improved concentration and attention after reviewing midyear exam results. Many showed marked improvement over previous years when the center was under different management, with some leaping from merely passing to excelling. These remarkable results support our conviction that with the right support, rural students can outperform urban students living and studying in their hometowns.

The Hopeful Legacy of ALC Graduates

In mid-July, the students returned to their home communities or nomadic encampments in Agadez - immersed in their nomadic traditions - helping to herd their families' goats, sheep and camels across long distances to find food and water. The rains came late - wells were dry - girls and their mothers had to walk miles in search of water for their families. During this time, Brian and Halima received numerous text messages from students thanking them for the time and effort devoted to their education and life at the center. Assalama wrote, *"Thank you so much for everything. I will never forget all of the special times I spent at the center. Thank You, Thank You!"*

For \$200 per month, per student, we bring education and lasting change to those beyond the reach of other assistance, one student at a time. RAIN plans to enlarge the ALC to serve 50 children - extending this gift to twice as many, for less per student. And we look to introduce this wonderfully successful program to other locales in the Tillaberi and Agadez regions. Your donation of any to enlarge the ALC to serve 50 children - extending this gift to twice as many, for less per student. And we look to introduce this wonderfully successful program to other locales in the Tillaberi and Agadez regions. Your donation of any amount will bring rural children of Niger a mile closer to education and better

futures.

LEFT: Beth in Agadez.

The Niger III and Niger IV Reunion attendees at Estes Park, Colorado chose to fundraise for this project and as of December 1, 2014 the amount raised is \$1200. The reunion committee is seeking funds from all Niger III and IV volunteers. FON has also pledged to match funds received from FON members and friends. Please be generous with your contributions to the Agadez Learning Center.



Fatima (right), a bright and engaged ALC graduate, is attending an agricultural technical school in Kollo, south of Niamey. With class credits completed, she is writing her dissertation on growing onions during the rainy season in Agadez. She recently visited the RAIN office to tell us about her work. We are thrilled with her success.

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Inside *THE CAMEL*...

Page 1 - Project funding
Page 1 - CONUSA and cholera
Page 2 - Kaouritel Dairy Goat Project
Page 3 - One World Soccer Program
Page 4 - Bien-Être de la Femme Rurale
Page 5 - RAIN Agadez Learning Center
Page 5 - Reunion in Colorado
Page 5 - Help to Empower Girls
Page 6 - RAIN Agadez Learning Center
Page 7 - Niger RPCV List
Page 8 - " " "
Page 9 - " " "
Page 10 - " " "
Page 11 - " " "

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