

The Camel Express

Newsletter of the Friends of Niger

Member Donation and Dues Drive

At this time of year we ask you to renew your membership and make a contribution to support local health, education and community development activities.

FON has received project proposals for well digging, a goat funding, and more which exceed our budget. We are hoping with your support we can continue to fund local projects at or in excess of the level obtained last year. We will be soliciting proposals, depending upon funding received. Many of last year's recipients are eager to receive continue funding from FON to continue with their life changing work.

**We are hoping to
again raise \$25,000.
Help us get there!**



Above is a picture from 1970. Does this remind you of your Peace Corps time? Share your experiences in the next Remembrances CEX section.

Hi Friends of Niger,

It is all my pleasure as President of the Nigerien community in the USA to know what a wonderful job Friends of Niger is doing to help the Niger population so far from the USA. You guys are for me the true heroes of Niger. The Niger government should officially recognize you as heroes.

The finances of CONUSA are very limited, but I wish that together as a group, or as individual Nigeriens and Americans, that people in the US will put a lot of effort to cooperate with Friends of Niger to have more effect on those whose lives you guys are saving.

The only thing I can say, I pray that God will reward you with millions times what you guys deserve.

Thank you very much,
Saley Tahirou

Hampaté Bâ Complex Proudly Opens New High School

The exciting news about Hampaté Bâ is that it has been approved by the Nigerien Ministry of Education to expand into a HIGH SCHOOL SECTION. On October 5, 2015, the school opened its doors to welcome its first class of 10th graders. Even better news is that of the 22 new high school students, 18 are GIRLS!

Nine of the 18 girls receive scholarships and have been supported for the last four years by the non profit “Les amis de Hampaté Bâ”. Entering middle school in 6th grade, the girls were functionally illiterate but through discipline and hard work—along with the unique quality education provided by Hampaté Bâ—they have been able to develop their potential. With your support we can help support these girls for the next three years until they graduate from high school!

Girls still face challenges in Nigerien society, challenges that boys do not, but these Hampaté Bâ girls are determined to continue their education, despite the barriers they face. They have gained confidence in themselves and have realized that girls and women are capable of accomplishing



“These girls still face challenges in the Nigerien society that their brothers do not”

many jobs in society, especially with the support of a good education.

This year, students will receive extra instruction after school in numeracy and literacy. For the girls, this is instrumental for increased understanding of difficult subjects such as chemistry, physics, mathematics, and French.

Your donations will save the Hampaté Bâ girls from early marriages and keep them in high school. Your generosity will allow them to become educated and open-minded future citizens helping to combat ignorance and fanaticism.

Please consider donating to make these dreams come true and to make our world a better place through education.

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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. 20016-1423. 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. Please send address changes and corrections, as well as any queries to The Camel Express at the addresses above.

2015 FON Funded Projects

Multi Function Platform: Total \$5,101 In the town of Diribangou the women-led NGO FIFED purchased a multifunction platform (PFMF) to remove chaff from millet and to grind corn and manioc for flour. The PFMF can charge cell phones as well! This multi-purpose piece of equipment will provide financial independence and management experience for the female members of FIFED. It is hoped that the utility of this equipment and the model of the FIFED management committee will spread to other villages.

RAIN Agadez Learning Center: \$3,000

Scholarship assistance allowed 25 rural and nomadic students to live in the Learning Center, receive tutoring, take after school classes, receive hygiene and civic responsibility training, and participate in cultural and recreational activities.

Hampata Ba School: \$1,035 Educational assistance was provided for 200 adolescent girls to attend a school that offers a curriculum focused on critical thinking, self-esteem, empowerment, and remediation programs.

Banche Village Project: \$1,800 Funds were provided to purchase grain and to construct a storage facility in assistance with HIMMA, a local NGO

Soccer ball program including Mayahi and Maradi: \$1,000 FON has facilitated the expansion of the "One World Football" soccer program started by professional soccer player and former Niger PCV Mike Mitchell. The program is offered in the regions of Kolla, Tilliberi and Tera and was expanded into the Maradi region using FON funds to deliver soccer balls to the village of Mayahi and the city of Maradi.

BFR: \$1,000 The replication of the previously funded peanut oil project for the village of Say. This project trains 30 women in the production of peanut oil and peanut butter with the residue sold as a mix for cattle feed.

Rice transport: \$1,941 Niger spends 85 billion CFA annually on rice imports from Asia even though Asian rice not particularly liked by Nigeriens. FON paid for the shipment of six bags of seed varieties from Texas and Arkansas to be grown in test plots in the Tilliberi region under the direction of Abdo Kasso, a US-trained agronomist working in Niger with INRAN (the National Agronomical Research Institute). Mr. Kasso and INRAN are testing to see if these American varieties can be grown locally and yield a crop more pleasing to the Nigerien taste bud.

NGO AAWEL (Jane Huser Maxwell Fund \$2,500) This fund supports "Girls' Leadership Academies" in four Niamey-area schools: Lazare and Gamkale bi-lingual schools, Second-Chance School, and the Deaf School. Together, the Academies provide 150-200 adolescent girls training in leadership skills, critical thinking and communication skills, and empower young women to think for themselves and make wise and informed decisions about their life-choices. There is also a goal to establish another such program in a small village school in the Dosso area.

BFR Sewing Project: \$1,380 The current project, located near Niamey, is a workshop that trains 45 displaced women from various nearby villages to sew using a sewing machine. With sales and contributions BFR bought two additional machines.

Kaourital Association Dairy Goat project: \$2,900 Women in this program receive a dairy goat and her kid. The kid is sold after 18 months and the mother goat provides a couple liters of milk per day. Women also have the opportunity to raise additional goats from the mother while paying back the loan from the sale.

OURZP Sheep project: \$1,820 Like the Kaourital project twenty women in the Arahmat Region were given a sheep and her kid to raise through this program.

BFR soap project: \$1,200 Through this project, 30 women, mostly Malians living in a refugee camp in Ayorou, were trained over a six-month period in how to make soap (liquid, perfumed, laundry, Omo, etc.) which they then sold in the Ayorou market.

For additional information see the For additional information see Projects Continued on page 10.

**Total project funds
disbursed in 2015:
\$24,677**

Women of Diribangou

by Amina Kaza, President of the NGO Filles, Femmes et Développement

The women of Diribangou mobilized themselves to work for their autonomy and the development of the village through the implantation of a multifunctional platform with the backing of Professor John Hutchison and the Friends of Niger. Conscious of the importance of the interplay in the



implication of women in the development of the country, but, also conscious that the weight of the domestic tasks is a major obstacle to the schooling of girls and the autonomy of women, the NGO Filles Femmes et Développement has resolutely engaged itself to accompany and support the efforts of the women of Diribangou.

The NGO, one of whose specific objectives is the autonomy of the women, is in the process of installing multifunctional platforms, in order to lighten the daily household tasks of these women. This will allow the women to have more time to devote themselves to revenue-generating activities, and thus to fight against poverty and liberate young girls to pursue their education. One platform has already been installed in Diribangou, to the benefit of this village as well as the surrounding hamlets.

The components offered by the multifunctional platform in Diribangou consist of a flour mill serving to grind cereal grains like millet, corn, sorghum and wheat ; a decortication apparatus to decorticate and remove the chaff ; an alternator for electrification, recharging of the population's portable telephones, and for soldering. This initiative would not have been possible, if it had not been for our making contact with John Hutchison of Boston University and the Friends of Niger, who believed in the project of establishing the NGO FIFED, and who was prepared to get involved and to put his « hand into the tuwo » so to speak. In this light, a partnership was established between the NGO FIFED and Professor John Hutchison. From that time on, he tried to do everything he could in searching for a way to finance the purchase of a Multifunctional Platform (MFPF) for the town of Diribangou. He had learned of the capability of this apparatus from Professor Brenda MacSweeney,

“These women have already begun to take the functional literacy course”

holder of a U.N. Women's Studies professor position at Boston University. She was familiar with the impact that it can have, and also with its success elsewhere, particularly in Burkina Faso. In this way, the Friends of Niger became a partner in this dance. The Friends of Niger did not hesitate to rise to the occasion in order to contribute to the realization of the MFPF project for Diribangou, to the benefit and the happiness of the women and girls of Diribangou. The Friends of Niger were joined by David Nikkel and Lois Ferguson who also contributed to this project. It is thanks to the installation of this machine that the women, trained in how to manage the apparatus, and to take on

responsibility for their own financial well-being. They are relieved from the crushing weight of the labor intensive activities such as the processes of grinding and pounding grains like millet and corn manually. Another advantage of the MFPF and the impact of its accoutrements that the women have benefited from is the accompanying training that has been implemented in functional literacy. The women also now have more time to follow and watch over the schooling of their daughters. The grains and the chaff which are produced through the use of the MFPF are resold in the market of Tera. The profit that is garnered is used for the purchase of articles relevant to the commercial enterprises of the women's group. In essence, the women of Diribangou are

organized into a group and they foresee the carrying out of various income-generating activities. They have now invited the women of Samyanta, a neighboring village, to associate themselves in this project of the management of the MFPP. These women have already begun to take the functional literacy course. This is a sign that the MFPP has the potential to considerably reduce the difficulties of women's lives and we hope and trust that their financial autonomy will also result.

Furthermore, the MFPP in Diribangou has enabled the NGO FIFED to sign a contract of entitlement so as to benefit from collaboration with the MFPP Project managed and supported by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP). The MFPP of Diribangou is today acknowledged as an example and a model to be emulated by other villages.

It is here now that we want to express our gratitude and reiterate our thanks to Professor John Hutchison and the Friends of Niger, as well as David Nikkel and Lois Ferguson, who have contributed to the promotion and empowerment of the women and girls of Diribangou.

This gesture has been highly appreciated by the local authorities of Téra, expressed at the time of the launching of the MFPP with the words, "Many thanks to John Hutchison and the Friends of Niger who had the consideration to do this for our small village of Diribangou. Long live the collaboration between the populations of Diribangou, the NGO FIFED, and the Friends of Niger."

Activity Report on the Sewing Workshop for Displaced Women

By Nafisatou Alhassane, Coordinator of Bien-Être de la Femme Rural

In Niger women represent 51% of the population. This important segment of our society is fighting daily for their survival and well-being. The situation leaves no segment of society, and particularly no women, unaffected and has helped focus on the issue of women's rights. This question is central to governance in Africa. Indeed the role of women leaves much to be desired when we know that in Africa and particularly in Niger socio-cultural and economic barriers limit the involvement of women in decision-making.

It is to overcome this situation that the NGO BFR in collaboration with the NGO Friends of Niger continues to conduct training sessions for income generating activities for displaced rural women for their empowerment. So apart from training women in the Say region through the production of peanut oil, the women trained in the Niamey region are still producing oil from groundnuts and selling the by products.

We also trained women refugees from Mali living in the camps in Ayorou in the production of liquid soaps. The current project with Friends of Niger is a sewing workshop for displaced women from various nearby villages who are in search of a better life. We estimated 20 women but we are now at 45 with a total of from three machines provided by Friends of Niger. But with sales and contributions we were able to buy two other machines so that these women can work even though it is insufficient. Still, we continue to support them and follow them until these women can benefit not only from the training but also with a machine at the end of the training. To that end a contribution of 2000 F CFA per woman was introduced at the end of each month not only for the upkeep of the machines but also to provide those who have finished the training with a sewing machine. A brown and white outfit was imposed on the trainees, estimated to be the colors of the Friends of Niger. Besides sewing these women also make smelling salts and pearl bead jewelry.

FON Note: Nafisatou noted that the project has one problem: The training takes place in a schoolyard whose owner may at any time tell them to leave. They need to rent a house until the women are independent and can take care of the rent themselves. You can help these women have a stable, comfortable workshop by contributing to this BFR project. Your funding will be matched by FON.

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.

Paper receipts are mailed for all dues and contributions. Those received by December 31, 2015 are tax deductible in 2015.

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.

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 unless you contact us to specify particular projects.

If you want to use a credit card

To pay FON dues with credit card through NPCA, please contact us for further instructions.

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 DC 20016-1423. Please keep in mind that in addition to the projects listed, you dues and donations also support The Camel Express newsletter, the FON website, and the FON Archives.

Thank you for supporting FON!

Project Play soccer project

“The test of our progress is not whether we add more to the abundance of those who have much; it is whether we provide enough for those who have too little”

-MIKE MITCHELL, PROJECT PLAY SOCCER

dream is to have coaches, uniforms and nets for goals.

From Maradi: • The Director of Bagalam primary school, one of the poorest neighborhood in Maradi, Mr Mahamadou Kounda told me this morning that the balls donated by the friends of Niger were well received and much appreciated by the students and their teachers.

• Mahamadou organized for the first time a soccer game between the school's 4th and 5th graders and the winner (4th graders' team) won a trophy given by Rabiou Yari from the USA.

• Mahamadou mentioned however that the game left out female students because they do not play soccer like their males counterparts (something to do with the local culture).

• He suggested funding programs like sport uniforms and shoes plus additional balls for a team of the boys and a group of girls so that they can practice the required physical fitness activities held in the school 2 hours a week for each physically fit child.

Mahamadou extends again his greetings to the FON. Mungodé sosai!

By Rabiou Yari With the receipt of 25 “indestructible” soccer balls which do not need to be inflated, the Bagalam Primary School in Maradi and the Mayahi Primary School now have the start of a soccer program. These balls were provided by Mike Mitchell, a former PC volunteer who played in Niger on the National Team and started Project Play which designed and fund raised to manufacture and distribute the balls world-wide in various soccer programs which he started. With FON funding and the efforts of Yari Rabiou and Ibrahim Boukary we were able to organize the delivery of balls to the two schools in the Maradi region. We hope through additional fund raising by Project Play Soccer and matching funds from FON we will be able to develop a soccer program in the Maradi, Zinder and Dosso regions. A



Zogala (Moringa)

By Rabiou Yari From Mr Moustapha Harou, the certified nurse who initiated the moringa project:

• Harou told me that the project will cover in total 32 villages and would help an estimated 4000 malnourished children between the ages of 6-24 months.

• For now, they have started with 6 villages and they are at the planting phase. In each of the 6 villages, they plant 1000 plants of moringa over a half hectare. A group of local women have been tasked to the work of watering and taking care of the plants. It usually takes 2 months for the plants to fully grow and be ready for harvest.

• Harou told me that they have an urgent need for fencing to protect the plants against grazing animals and wild camels that destroy crops in the region. The estimated cost to fully fence in a half hectare and plant the crops is \$1,600 or 800.000 CFA, all included.

He thanks Friends of Niger for making this project a priority and looks forward to working with us to implement the project; of course one step at a time. Nagodé

Remembrance

A place to remember your time in Niger and the people you served with



Thanksgiving Pie-Bake Jamboree in Maradi

November 1970. A recent email exchange with Peter Easton (Niger III and then some: 1964-1971) brings up some deep memories for early PCVs:

“There seems to be rather little to give thanks for in a year of such trauma in France, the Sahel and the MidEast,” he remarks, “not to speak of the loss of dear friends and the vicissitudes of senior living. But maybe a memory of a Thanksgiving past (and hopes for future ones) will tide us through. Believe it or not, we are coming up on the 45th

Anniversary of the gala

Thanksgiving and ‘First Annual Mid-Niger Pie Bake Jamboree’ held in Maradi in November 1970 – a diabolical scheme dreamed up by the largely bachelor crew of PCVs and associates then living in central Niger to lure in more female presence and create new causes for rejoicing.” Quite a number of Nigérien and Nigériennes friends were invited to the festivities that evening as well, and to better acquaint them with the holiday, Peter et al. wrote and produced a skit portraying the arrival of the pilgrims in the “new world” and the hardships they faced from cold and “snow.” (Newspapers torn into shreds and thrown up in the air provided the snow.)

Top photo: Back row left to right: unknown, Tom Gulick, Biruta Akerbergs, Dale Puffenberger, Steve Isom, Peter Easton, Sudi Bliss, Chaibou. Front row: Ruth Sitton, Jon Otto, Shula Raney, unknown, Clifflyn Bromling.

Right photo: Making cranberry sauce out of some Niger plant that wasn’t cranberries!



Biography of Daniel Chirot - Author of November’s CEX Reflection on Religious Extremism Article

Daniel Chirot, PCV Niger III 1964-66, Ph.D., Columbia University, 1973 Herbert J. Ellison Professor of International Studies at the University of Washington. Daniel writes: I was in Niger II (1964-1966). I worked (not very successfully) for Adult Literacy, then did research for the Ministry of Agriculture. I turned in a long report about the rural economy around Birni N’Konni that may have contributed a tiny bit to the irrigation project eventually built there. I went to graduate school intending to do my PhD research in Niger, but changed to Eastern Europe and wrote my dissertation on Romanian social history. I’ve been a professor ever since. I’ve done some consulting work in Eastern Europe and in West Africa, mostly for CARE in Côte d’Ivoire during the first years of their civil war. If you type in "Daniel Chirot Amazon" into a search engine the front covers of most of my books come up. My most recent one, *The Shape of the New: Four Big Ideas and How They Made the Modern World*, co-authored with a colleague, came out this year. I’m very pleased that it was just listed by the NY Times as one of the 100 most notable books of 2015. The brief article you published in *The Camel Express* was based on the research I did for the chapter I wrote on radical Islam in that book. A New York Times book review can be found by typing in "Chirot NY Times".

Biography of Steve Anderson - Author of November's CEX Diffa article

Steve Anderson, also known as Ari in eastern Niger, served as a Peace Corps Volunteer from 1987-1991 in the town of Diffa, in the Kanuri part of Niger. Subsequently, Steve did not come home. He remained in the area. A native Californian, he has studied Law at the University of California at San Francisco, and he majored in Anthropology and History at the University of California at Santa Cruz. His career has involved his staying on in eastern Niger for nearly 25 years. Steve has lived in Diffa, and also in Geskerou, and has traveled with his neighbors and friends, throughout Kanuri and Tubu country in eastern Niger from Lake Chad through Bilma. His career has involved his near lifetime commitment to the peoples of eastern Niger, and has entailed caravan marches, camelback transport trips, helping people to improve their goat and sheep breeds through hybridization, and cultivating his fields and gardens together with his Nigerien neighbors. Steve's other career has been in working as an expert and a consultant with USAID, founding member and consultant of the Nigerian NGO Karkara, and he has lived in communities throughout eastern Niger where as a photographer he has documented the people he worked and lived with, and their lives. Were it not for radicalism, the subject of Steve's CEX article, Steve Anderson might still be living in eastern Niger where he had decided to spend the rest of his life. He came to the realization however that his presence among his family and friends there, might in some way threaten the well-being of those he held so dear. Today he has returned to the US and has been working on publishing his massive collection of photographs in a constructive manor, and now he lives in Nebraska where he works as a director of an Americorps (formerly Vista) program there.

by John P. Hutchison, Member of the Board, Friends of Niger

For many of us, our volunteer experience in Niger was life-changing

-- impacting our life's direction, our career choices, our world outlook. We were immeasurably enriched, and Niger and her people remain in our hearts. Over the years, we have found myriad ways to give-back to Niger in ways great and small -- donations to Friends of Niger (FON), contributions to NGO's doing valuable work in Niger, working with (or founding) non-profits and foundations, contributing to famine relief, returning to Niger to work on a host of various projects,, etc. The list goes on.

Funding The Grassroots

One such effort -- the Jane Huser Maxwell Memorial Fund (RPCV 1967-69) -- recently surpassed the \$10,000 mark of funding small grassroots efforts on the ground in Niger. The Fund (under the umbrella of FON) was established by a small group of Jane's (many) friends in her memory, after her death in 2009. Its specific goal was to fund small projects (and small NGO's) outside the purview of large NGO's -- to provide direct-pipeline funding to Nigeriens doing good work. And in line with Jane's passions, we chose to focus this support on women, children, and education.

At least annually, we each make a contribution to the Fund in Jane's memory, and welcome contributions from others as well. We then make decisions regarding disbursement(s), and work with the FON Treasurer to facilitate the disbursals.

The first contributions were made to FON-selected famine-relief organizations during the 2010 hunger crisis (the Nomad Foundation and Doctors Without Borders). Subsequent contributions (now totaling \$10,100) have gone to: AAWEL, for their work with Second-chance schools, girls' leadership academies, and women's village-based micro-credit activities; The Danja Fistula Center, established in Niger by the Worldwide Fistula Fund, to provide corrective surgeries for women suffering from fistulas; ODI, for their work with Niger's

disabled and "handicapped" populations, primarily children; and RAIN, for their work promoting girls' education in remote desert communities.

(If you support the focus of this Fund and would like to make a contribution, checks payable to FON, with "Jane Huser Maxwell Fund" on the memo line should be mailed to: Pamela White, 1296 E. Woodbury Rd., Pasadena, CA 91104. After the amounts have been logged-in to the Fund [we help out with this record-keeping], the checks will be forwarded to FON's Treasurer.)

Caring Made Concrete

As Niger is increasingly prominent in today's headlines, Niger and her people are on our minds. How to channel our love for Niger into concrete support? Friends of Niger provides a valuable vehicle.

It is possible to establish a dedicated Fund, as we did, in commemoration of an important life event (graduation, retirement, etc.) or in memory of a loved one. Choose a focus, fundraise among your friends, and direct your contributions to the specific Nigerien projects/activities most dear to your heart.

And/or donations directly to FON will support the general fund.

And/or make donations directly to some of the NGO's (small and large) that are on-the-ground in Niger, doing work you support.

And/or make provisions in your Will or estate to support work you value in Niger.

There are many ways to turn our caring into concrete support. CHOOSE ONE! CHOOSE ALL!

Pamela Britton White

pamelabwhite@gmail.com

IN MEMORIAM

Elizabeth 'Liz' Gillis, 51, of Battle Creek, Michigan, died May 23, 2015. Liz joined the Peace Corps and was stationed in Niger, West Africa from 1986-89. There she built cement drinking water wells, introduced more resilient crops and livestock, and developed a deep and lasting respect for Africa and its people. <http://www.legacy.com/obituaries/battlecreek/obituary.aspx?pid=174954675>

Projects Continued

FON Goat / Sheep Projects

FON's goat project, which involved Bororo women and was held near the town of Tchintabaraden was very successful. Our partner NGO, Kaourital, would like to replicate this project with another group of women. In addition to supplying goats, Kaourital would like to provide a feed store for the animals to ensure the success of the goat-fattening project. Kaourital has asked FON for support and with your help we could expand this project to help more women. This would require a huge investment on our part. If our members contribute half of the amount needed—about \$1000—together we can make this feed store a reality.

FON has also received an update from our contact Sabit, from the NGO OURZP, about the project we support in collaboration with OURZP; a sheep fattening project to aid vulnerable women in the Department of Tchintabaraden. To date, FON funds have been used to purchase 20 sheep and 40 bags of cotton seeds and OURZP has distributed two sheep to every woman. OURZP will send photos and a detailed narrative report to FON.

OURZP has identified a new project for women; the fabrication of leather tents which are used for shelter during the seasonal migration. Fabricating a leather tent is estimated to cost 150,000 CFA but purchasing that same tent would cost at least 300,000. Further, these sturdy tents are in demand. If you are interested in helping to fund any of these projects, indicate Goats on the donation form.

Tidène Well Project

The Tidène NGO intervenes in Niger for the most disadvantaged nomadic and sedentary populations. Tidène's projects facilitate access to water by building wells and providing access to potable water to reduce infant mortality. Tidène also offer access to education by building schools, and provides health care, basic assistance and emergency food support. In collaboration with The Desert Wells, another nonprofit, Tidène has already rehabilitated and built more than 217 wells in the Tidène Valley and further south in Niger. The goal is to build 400 total wells in the region. Recently, Tidène requested FON support the building of a well. The total cost is estimated at more than \$20,000 and FON would like to commit to support this project at \$5,000. To do this, FON needs the support of our members. The FON Board proposes to match what our members and donors can contribute, up to \$2,500. In the past FON has assisted with the rehabilitation of several wells thanks to the support of our members. Wells are so important for the people of Niger and especially in the Tidène Valley. This region lies in the heart of the Ténéré in the Air range, one of the world's hottest and driest places.

The Banché Food Bank Project

This is a report about a FON member taking her own initiative to fund a project in her former village.

RPCV Rebecca Mandell (Fati) lived in Banché in 2002 but became ill and had to leave early in her service. Even though her stay in Niger was short, she came to know and love the people of Banché. She had a high degree of respect and admiration for the village chief Malam Bawa Mati. She always wished that she could have stayed longer and done more in partnership with the residents of Banché. That was why she and her husband, Asaf Peres, decided to make a donation to Banché in 2015 in celebration of their engagement and marriage.

Banché is a small village south of Maradi, Madarounfa, and very close to the border with Nigeria.

Rebecca contacted Friends of Niger wanting to do something that would benefit the people of her village. She didn't know if the village chief Bawa Mati was still there so FON board member M. Rabiou Yari and Professor Abdou Illia made some phone calls and discovered that he was indeed still there! They even talked for 15 minutes! Yari reports that Bawa Mati "was delighted to hear about Fati-Rebecca and the initiative."

Through the significant donation of Rebecca and her husband, plus donations from three others, \$1,800 was raised. Funneling the donations through FON made them tax deductible.

Through further discussion Yari was able to determine that the best use of these funds would be to strengthen Banché's Food Bank, which helps alleviate the hardship that villagers face during the dry season. Banché villagers buy millet, sorghum, and corn at the end of the rainy season when prices are low and store the supplies in the food bank building. By the time the dry season approaches, many farmers have used up all their crops and market prices are too high for most to afford. However, Banché villagers can buy these crops through the Food Bank at more reasonable prices. Those who cannot pay are given what they need as a loan to be paid later when they can afford it. The Food Bank also sells low-priced fertilizer to local farmers.

Yari was able to arrange for delivery of the funds to Bawa through the NGO Himma. FON's friend in Maradi, Mourtallah Idy Gondah, traveled to Banché to greet the people on behalf of Rebecca and the project, and he sent us this pictures of Bawa and the village.

From Rebecca and Asaf: "Thank you so much to John Baird, Rabiou Yari, Abdou Illia, and FON for coordinating this project, to Himma and Mourtallah Idy Gondah for all of their work on the ground, and to Bawa Mati and everyone in Banché for partnering with us on this! We are so happy that this idea was able to become a reality with all of your help. Mun gode! Sannu da kokari!"

Chewable Vitamins Project

In 2015 FON was able to send chewable vitamins to Niger via a SIM container shipment, John Hutchison, who traveled to the country in, and January with the staff of Rain for the Sahel and Sahara. Because shipping costs are prohibitive, we focus on sending small amounts with FON members who are traveling to Niger. If you are traveling to Niger and could take a case (220 2-piece samples), please contact FON Board member Joel Neuberg at jneuberg@santarosa.edu. Laura Haus, Joel's niece, is currently providing sample cases of chewable vitamins through her company, Smarty Pants while Joel is covering the internal shipping costs. FON is seeking contributions for our chewable vitamin project in case future shipping possibilities are available to us. FON will match your donations to keep this program operating.





Friends of Niger
P.O. Box 5823
Washington, D.C. 20016-1423

Address Correction Requested

There is no way to peace.

Peace is the way.

- A.J. Muste

Thank you, Friends of Niger, for supporting RAIN's Agadez Learning Center for Tomorrow's Leaders (ALC) in the city of Agadez! The ALC provides a place for 25 nomadic students to live, study and pursue their dreams of an education.

Rural and nomadic primary school graduates in Niger have almost no hopes to continue their studies, as rural education does not go past grade 6. The ALC provides this opportunity for achieving and motivated students to live in our Agadez dormitory. The rural students, despite their good grades in primary school, find themselves lagging behind their city-educated classmates. The support offered them at the ALC includes nightly tutoring with their schoolteachers in key subjects, a peer to peer counseling program, a woman mentor for encouragement and support as well as recreational and craft activities. A favorite is movie nights with Brian Nowak, RAIN's director of programs. Brian shows documentaries from all over the world on subjects ranging from cultures to animal life.

Among last year's 12 graduates, 10 passed with good to very good grades with 2 failed to graduate. Among our 2015 graduates we have girls studying to be teachers or nurses, a boy who is working as a volunteer teacher in his community, and another boy hired as a teacher by the state. This last is a real accomplishment for him but speaks to Niger's dire need for schoolteachers. Other ALC graduates currently attend university or high school with RAIN's continuing support. One young woman obtained a BAC in agriculture; we're hoping that she will continue to university.

In October, the ALC Director, Alhassene Aboubacar, took an arduous 10-day journey in the Air Mountains to recruit students for this year's 7th grade class. He told communities about the unique opportunity the center offers to continue to secondary education. Alhassene introduces himself and RAIN to the village chief, who calls a meeting for all the parents to attend. Alhassene discusses the rules and offers a chance for the parents and students to ask questions. He passionately believes that "during the village meeting it is very important that each participant can express his or her opinion." Listening carefully to the community members ensures that we select students who are committed to their studies, and whose parents understand the benefits offered by the ALC. The selected students begin in 7th grade with the educational support that can take them all the way through college.

Many thanks to FON and all of its supporters. If you'd like to contribute to RAIN and the ALC, please visit our website donation page at www.rain4sahara.org and click on the donate button.

Submitted by Bess Palmisciano, Rain for the Sahel and Sahara, PO Box 1503, Portsmouth, NH 03802.

Membership Form

Annual Friends of Niger



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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 information with any third party other than with the National Peace Corps Association with whom we have a reciprocity agreement.

Please send paper copies of The Camel Express newsletter by US Mail

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Membership dues & donations 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

In addition to my membership, I have enclosed a General Contribution of \$_____ OR

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I would like to support FON Matching projects: Goats, RAIN, Well, Banche food (check all that apply) \$_____

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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:

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To pay FON dues with credit card through NPCA, please contact us for further instructions.