

The Camel Express

Newsletter of the Friends of Niger

February 2019

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Message from the President

Dear Peace Corps Niger Friends – younger and older!

Yes, we span the entire era of Peace Corps Niger. From Dan Mainwaring, Forestry, 1962, to those of you, volunteers and trainees, who learned in January 2011 that the PC Niger program was being terminated. By coincidence, I was with several of you at the Maradi hostel when the text message came through on your cell phones from the PC Office in Niamey that you would either be reassigned to a different country ... or going home.

What life-changing experiences we had! How our worldview deepened!

I love staying in touch with you! And with our collective history in Niger.

From January last year to February this year, I sent out thank you notes to 243 of you to acknowledge your donations – with personal notes. Either I know you personally or I can see from our records when and where you served. I am just impressed with how you still care! During that period, you donated \$52,674 for Friends of Niger projects (including \$6,370 from Niger III & IV for albino children). Thank you!

Your FON board is all-volunteer, and frankly many of us are in the older category. We recognize a need to refresh our ideas and strategies, and we are taking a first step at a retreat in April to launch a new era. We look forward to delving into your survey ideas and suggestions. And we are always looking for ways to bring in new people and new ideas. Please continue to reach out to us and share your ideas.

Please stay in touch and please continue with your support.



Sincerely, John

John Baird president@friendsofniger.org

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

Notes from the Editor, Amy Wilson

We are always looking for content. Please share any news, ideas, articles and categories for your newsletter, and do let us know what you think of the changes in format and frequency.

Please keep in mind these two resources about Friends of Niger:

- Our website (new webmaster needed): <http://www.friendsofniger.org/>
- Join & follow us at: <https://www.facebook.com/FriendsOfNiger/>

1) FON Updates; Join us for a social in Boston

Attention anyone in the Boston area -- You are invited! Sunday, April 7, 2019, from 2-4 p.m., we invite you to come socialize with the FON board and with each other. Event location TBA; details will be forthcoming soon.

2) Recommended Reading

“JFK: The Last Speech”

In October, 1963, three weeks before he was killed, JFK gave a memorable speech about poetry and power and public service at a dedication of the Robert Frost library. Kennedy's speech honoring Robert Frost motivated many Students at Amherst to join the Peace Corps and go into careers of public service. After their 50th reunion, members of the Amherst Class of 1964 wrote a book "JFK: The Last Speech" and launched a larger effort to bring Kennedy's message about public service into today's civic discussions. Check out the project web site for more info on the book, the companion documentary, and other Kennedy and Frost related

history. www.jfkthelastspeech.org/the-book/

Contributed by: Charlie Stover, PCV Niger 1964-66

“A History of Niger 1850-1960” Finn Fuglestad, (Cambridge University Press, 1983)

Although academic and a bit boring in places, this book has a lot of interesting information. While very sympathetic to its people, the book shows how violent and disruptive the history of the 19th century, before the arrival of the French, really was. It also relates how brutal, harmful, and largely incompetent French colonialism was. Finally, it explained why the class of French speaking elites who took over from France were so disconnected from the interests of Niger's people and how they exploited their new power for their own self-interest. Like many other PCVs in the 1960s I got to talk with Hamani Diori quite a few times. In his earlier days I think he meant well and did some positive things, but ultimately, his rule was not just undemocratic but also exploitative and a disaster.

Contributed by Daniel Chirot, PC Niger III; adult literacy program and Ministry of Rural Economy. Currently, Herbert J. Ellison Professor of International Studies at the University of Washington. Daniel has authored books about social change, ethnic conflict, genocides, Eastern Europe, and tyranny. He co-authored “Why Not Kill Them All?” about political mass murder and is the author of Modern Tyrants (both published by Princeton University Press).

3) Call to action- follow-up on Pump Project

Here is a follow-up on the project in our last issue: Pump Project in Ourogo, Say Arrondissement, Niger. Check out this nice video showing the results of this joint effort of Water Charity, NPCA and Ken Patterson to repair 3 foot pumps.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d_bfUPDTWRE&fbclid=IwAR0ry7KBVETPDeR627Hn0GWH_8Tt8DPHiP6G87Tfj2wfZ5dqJZMu15Cytvs



4) NIGER NOW – Drones, cure Salee and Crossing the desert

Drones and technology helping to evaluate flooding in Niger:

Evaluation par drone des inondation du fleuve Niger, janvier 2019, Niamey, Gamkalley, Libore. Mission commanditée par la DGPC (Protection Civile), exécutée par Drone Africa Service, avec l'inspection de l'ANAC (Aviation Civile). <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mbyUB-IoVnI>
<http://www.drone-africa-service.com/>

From the Christian Science Monitor – thanks to John Grettenberger:

Check out this photo gallery: **Cure Salée: Niger's nomad oasis**

[https://www.csmonitor.com/Photo-Galleries/In-Pictures/Cure-Salee-Niger-s-nomad-oasis/\(photo\)/1072750](https://www.csmonitor.com/Photo-Galleries/In-Pictures/Cure-Salee-Niger-s-nomad-oasis/(photo)/1072750)

Read this story from the reporter's notebook: **In the Sahara, a vast emptiness etched with a thousand paths**

<https://www.csmonitor.com/World/Africa/2019/0111/In-the-Sahara-a-vast-emptiness-etched-with-a-thousand-paths>

5) Did you know? That Hamani Diori was a founding member and co-chair of AFRICARE?

“The task undertaken by Africare is immense — as immense as the continent of Africa itself, which must confront problems unimaginable to people who have not lived in African settings.” **Hamani Diori, President of Niger, Co-Founder and Chairman of Africare 1972**

Africare, fittingly, was conceived in Africa — in the Republic of Niger. Niger had gained independence in 1960, and Hamani Diori became its first president: an office he held until 1974. By 1970, drought was raging in Niger and the suffering was extreme. Two Americans — William O. Kirker, M.D., and his wife, Barbara (a nurse), who had worked at Niger's Maine-

Soroa Hospital since 1966 — sought to help by forming a charity “to provide medical services and health care to the people of Africa, beginning in ... Niger.” That charity, named “Africare,” was incorporated in Hawaii on Sept. 20, 1970. Diori endorsed the venture. Bill Kirker became its president.

Within months, Diori and Kirker saw that the fledgling Africare needed to regroup. C. Payne Lucas, then director of the Peace Corps Office of Returned Volunteers in Washington, had known the president of Niger for some years. Diori sent Oumarou Youssoufou, a diplomat from the Nigerian embassy in Washington, to recruit Lucas to help. Also joining the Africare working group was Joseph C. Kennedy, Ph.D., former Peace Corps director in Sierra Leone.

What emerged was a reconstituted Africare:

1. It would support, not only health work, but all types of development and relief programs.
2. It would assist, not only Niger, but any African country.
3. And significantly, it would serve as a bridge between Africans and Americans, especially Americans of African descent.

In May 1971, “the new Africare” was permanently reincorporated in Washington, D.C. Diori (as chairman), Kennedy, Kirker, Lucas and Youssoufou were the founding Board members. Lucas took the helm as executive director. The Embassy of Niger donated office space. Aid to the Maine-Soroa Hospital became Africare’s first project — soon followed by drought relief in six countries. READ MORE AT: <https://www.africare.org/who-we-are/history/africare-early-1970s/>



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Friends of Niger Membership Form (Please print legibly)

Name _____ Date _____
Address _____ City/State/Zip+4 _____
Phones: (H) _____ (C) _____ (W) _____
Email _____
Connection to Niger (RPCV, etc.) _____ Dates in Niger _____
Location in Niger _____ Program or Involvement _____

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.

Membership dues & donations help fund FON activities – including The Camel Express newsletter, 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. We send receipts so you can take charitable tax deductions.

DUES & DONATIONS

Dues are payable on January 1st of each calendar year, but most pay dues and make donations in December after our annual fundraising appeal letter is sent early in the month. You may make a donation at any time. If we haven't received your dues yet for 2018, the first \$20 of your donation will be for your 2018 membership unless earmarked for a specific project. Our annual fundraising appeal for 2019 will come to you in December 2018 with summaries of many projects that FON supports. To make a payment now, you can either go to www.friendsofniger.org to Donate with Paypal, or write a check payable to Friends of Niger and mail to: PO Box 1999, Brookline MA 02446-0017. Thank you very much.

Dues (\$20) ----- (_____)
Donation ----- (_____)
TOTAL ENCLOSED ----- (_____)

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