

## President Issoufou Mahamadou hosted by Boston University



### President Issoufou Mahamadou and Ambassador Hassana Alidou speak at the Archive of the Republic of Niger Opening Ceremony

Close to 100 guests attended the inauguration of the Archive of the Republic of Niger at the Boston University Mugar Library on Friday morning, April 3, 2015. The attendees included His Excellency, President Issoufou Mahamadou, Niger Ambassador to the United States, Dr. Hassana Alidou, representatives of Boston University, numerous alums of the Boston University Niger Program, FON Board members, the Conseil des Nigériens aux USA-CONUSA members, and a large group of Nigerien students from the Boston area and throughout the US, including Sani Mahamadou Abba, son of the President of Niger currently studying at the Fletcher School.

The inaugural event highlighted the personal and professional connections of staff and representatives of Boston University, the Université Abdou Moumouni (Niamey), Nigerien officials, FON, and CONUSA as well as their combined commitments to use the Archive program to enhance cultural, technical, and community development ties between the people of both countries. The Archive highlights over 50 years of these personal connections including artifacts donated by the first groups of Peace Corps Volunteers to Niger and students who participated in the Boston University Niger Program. Boston University officials also spoke during the ceremony. Welcoming and introductory comments were presented by Boston University Provost Jean Morrison, the Director of African Studies Professor Timothy Longman, and the Founder of the Archive Program Professor John Hutchison (RPCV-Niger).

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## Message from the FON President

The President of Niger, SEM Issoufou Mahamadou, visited the United States in April. His stops included Washington D.C., and Boston. In Boston, in addition to visiting Harvard, and MIT, the President spent one morning of his official visit to the US at Boston University to officiate the inaugural opening of the BU hosted Archive of the Republic of Niger (AREN). Several of our FON members were in attendance including the founder of the AREN John Hutchison. Both John and Larry Koff, our FON treasurer, spoke at the event. Traveling with the President was the new Niger ambassador to the US, Dr. Hassana Alidou, a former student of RPCV John Hutchison. How exciting! Read all about the event in this issue of the Camel Express. We have more information about the BU event posted on our website.

We dedicated several pages of this Camel Express to the Boston event in hopes of not only calling your attention to the good things happening at Boston University but also to hopefully encourage you to consider making a material contribution of photos, books, artifacts, or other appropriate Nigerien materials to the AREN collection. Please visit the online Archive to view the contributions already collected and be inspired. The AREN donation webaddress is on page 5.

In the December issue of CEX, we appealed to you to consider financially supporting several projects and programs recommended by the FON Board of Directors. I am pleased to report that our goal of \$4,000 was exceeded and almost doubled; all the projects/programs were fully funded. Some of these projects/programs have already reported back to us and two of them the Himma Cholorea awareness campaign and the Hampate Ba girl's school are included in this edition of the Camel Express. It's not too late if you weren't able to donate last December as we are gearing up for another round of funding and support to these projects/programs and new ones that we will report on in the next issue. Meanwhile if you haven't submitted your 2015 FON dues, or would like to contribute to any of our FON supported projects/programs, please use the form at the end of the newsletter. And if you would like to contribute a news article to the Camel Express, please include it with your membership form.

On behalf of the FON Board of Directors, Thanks again for all your continued support. John Soloninka (Niamey, 1990-96)

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## INTRODUCING DR. HASSANA ALIDOU, NIGER'S NEW AMBASSADOR TO THE UNITED STATES

Submitted by John Hutchison and Pamela Britton White

Dr. Hassana Alidou was recently appointed as Niger's ambassador to the US. This is wonderful news for Niger (and for Friends of Niger as well)! As today's headlines bring Niger more to the forefront of America's consciousness, Dr. Alidou will be a strong, articulate, dynamic voice representing Niger -- her people, her values, and her interests -- to the greater American public. She will also be a strong ally of Friends of Niger and the grassroots work we support on the ground in Niger. We are all fortunate indeed to have her in this position.

Dr. Alidou -- an accomplished scholar in both the US and Niger, and a world-recognized expert in the field of language and education policy in development -- has a long history of commitment to underserved populations in Niger, particularly girls and women, and to expanding educational opportunities for Niger's children. (She has spear-headed several projects featured in the pages of Camel Express, often with FON support.)

Hassana Alidou and her twin sister Ousseina were born in Niamey in 1963. Orphaned at a young age, they were raised by a grandmother and educated initially in a local Catholic convent in Niamey. They faced much adversity in their early years, but both excelled academically at every level. They quickly developed the skill to transform challenges into learning experiences. Today, both are accomplished scholars in their respective disciplines, widely recognized for their contributions to their own and other African countries.

After completing her Bacclaireate, Dr. Hassana Alidou completed her License and Masters degrees at the University of Niamey, majoring in the field of linguistics. John Hutchison (FON Board member) counted the Alidou twins among his students at the University, and was an important mentor to both. They both came to share his deep commitment to the documentation of Niger's languages and cultures. They also developed a deep commitment to bi-lingual education for Niger's primary students, using mother-tongue languages as the medium of instruction.



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## INTRODUCING DR. HASSANA ALIDOU

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Following completion of their Masters program in Niamey, both Hassana and her twin sister Ousseina were awarded AFGRAD Fellowships, a program enabling qualified Nigerien university graduates to complete doctoral studies in the US. Hassana received her Masters and Ph.D, in socio-linguistics from the University of Illinois, Champaign-Urbana in 1997, as well as an Advanced Certificate in ‘gender roles in international development.’ Her dissertation topic, *Language Education Policy and Bilingualism: The Impact of French Language Policy on Primary Education in Niger*, uniquely captured her future career trajectory.

Dr. Alidou taught at Texas A & M University, and is currently a full professor (on leave) in Education and Cross-Cultural Studies, and the Alfonso T. Yuchengco Professor in Intercultural Leadership, at the Graduate School of Education at Alliant International University, San Diego, California. She has also authored books and numerous articles on the subjects of education policy, language and gender.

In addition to her career as a respected scholar, Dr. Alidou has wide experience in international development, international education, and diplomacy, having served most recently in Abuja, Nigeria, as the Regional Director of UNESCO for eight West African countries. She has worked throughout Africa as a specialist in educational and cultural policies and strategic planning, in international development and diplomacy, gender and transformative leadership, multilingualism and multiculturalism, and peace education. She also has a long history of work on African language textbook development.

Notwithstanding this formidable career as a scholar and international dynamo, Dr. Alidou is deeply embedded in the life of Niger. Every year she spends several months in Niger, working at the grassroots level to better the lives of children, women and families. This is perhaps her deepest passion. She and her sister Ousseina, along with partners in the US and Niger, established the NGO ‘Alliance for Women’s Education and Leadership’ (AAWEL), which focuses on leadership for girls, and partnership with schools in poor areas.

In the educational realm in Niger, Dr. Alidou has been a champion for bi-lingual education, continuing her lifelong commitment to the use of Nigerien languages as the language-of-instruction for primary students. She works closely with several bi-lingual schools, and has organized summer programs to enrich educational opportunities in poor neighborhoods, and to increase student retention. Her NGO AAWEL, in partnership with ONEN (Nigerien Organization of Innovative Educators), has had extraordinary success with its Second-Chance Schools program tailored especially for older-entering students, ages 9-14 – children who were initially un-served by Niger’s formal educational system. (see the Dec. 2010 article in Camel Express: [www.friendsofniger.org/pdf/CEX\\_Dec\\_2010.pdf](http://www.friendsofniger.org/pdf/CEX_Dec_2010.pdf)). This program, now expanded to Niamey’s Deaf School as well, has been a life-changer for many girls and boys previously “left behind” educationally.

Dr. Alidou and AAWEL also work in support of various community-based organizations in Niger, and are involved in women’s empowerment issues. One such initiative seeks to empower rural women through their village-based Women’s Association, supporting their group gardening/farming initiative with a rent-free parcel of land and numerous other resources.

We are all indeed fortunate that Dr. Hassana Alidou has assumed the post of Niger’s Ambassador to the United States. Her dynamic spirit and her tireless dedication to bettering the daily lives of Niger’s people, embodies the spirit we strive for, in our own small way, in Friends of Niger. We look forward to working with Ambassador Alidou.

*Pamela Britton White (RPCV 1969-70) works closely with several of AAWEL’s projects in Niger. She worked in school-based projects with both AAWEL and ONEN during visits to Niger in 2006 and 2008, and continues to work closely in support of several village-based Women’s Associations.*

## AREN–The Archive of the Republic of Niger Background and History

The Archive of the Republic of Niger or AREN, was conceived by FON Board Member John Hutchison in 2012 in consultation with the FON, the BU African Studies Center, Ambassador Maman Sidikou then Ambassador of Niger, and BU African Studies Librarian Beth Restricks. There is a relationship which dates to the 1960s between Niger and the US, thanks to the Peace Corps, and dating back to the 1980s between the Université Abdou Moumouni (UAM) and Boston University (BU), due to the BU-Niger study abroad program.

As of now, the Archive consists of nearly 1,000 digital photographs, 320 books, and other written and printed materials including documents, academic journals, newspapers, ephemera, maps and personal correspondence. The print collection is housed in the African Studies Library Reading room. Digitized maps may be accessed through the collection guide: [www.bu.edu/library/african-studies/aren](http://www.bu.edu/library/african-studies/aren)

If possible, through AREN, we envisage with Niger, collaborative projects of archiving and digitization. Our librarians can help facilitate the acquisition of inter-institutional funding with the possibility of shared open access. We could, for example, propose such a collaboration in digitization between our two libraries, between our African Studies Center, the West African Research Association, FLSH (Faculté de Lettres et Sciences Humaines), IRSH (Institut de Recherche en Sciences Humaines), and CELHTO (Centre d'Etudes Linguistiques et Historiques par la Tradition Orale), among others. We all have documents and recordings endangered by time and climate.

We also hope that the Archive can be used as a space for research and interaction amongst scholars, professionals and nonprofit organizations involved in addressing contemporary issues of culture, health, education, technology, and economic development in the Niger Republic and more broadly in the Sahel and West Africa.

Contributions to the Archive are welcome. To date the Archive includes artifacts donated from several members of Friends of Niger and others including: Larry Alice, Carrie Allen, John Baird, Phoebe Kitson Davis, Cathy Della Penta, Thomas Hale, Larry Harms, Mason Hults, John Hutchison, Guy Immega, Judy Irola, Gail Lyon, Susan Josenhans, Larry Koff, Russell G. Schuh, James Thomson, and Jennifer Yanco. If you would like to donate your digital photographs, books or other written and printed materials, please contact the BU library:

<http://tinyurl.com/NigerArchiveSubmission> or contact the African Studies Library at [asl@bu.edu](mailto:asl@bu.edu)





Continued from Page 1 **Opening Ceremony: Archive of the Republic of Niger**



**SEM Issoufou MAHAMADOU**

President de la Republique du Niger, Chef de l'Etat



**HE Professor Hassana ALIDOU**  
Ambassadeur du Niger



**Above:** FON Members  
Steve Bushell, Yari Rabiou, Prof. John Hutchison, Saley Tahirou, and Larry Koff

**Right:** Prof. John Hutchison, Yari Rabiou, Michael Klinger, Prof. Pearl Robinson, Saley Tahirou, Jennifer Yanco, Larry Koff, Emily Nolan, and Steve Bushell



## Archive of the Republic of Niger

Wurin adana kayayyakin al'adun gargajiya na Kasar Niger (AREN in Hausa)

by John P. Hutchison

*The following is a summary of some of the highlights of the presentations given during the inaugural ceremony of AREN. The full text of the various presentations are posted on the FON web site. [www.friendsofniger.org](http://www.friendsofniger.org)*

Professor John Hutchison, founder of AREN, spoke of his participation in Crossroads Africa Niamey in 1965, and how inspired he was when he met Yazi Dogo in the 70s in Zinder in the first Hausa language primary school of the country, and how during the 80s and 90s how he worked in language reform of the education system, teacher training, and Nigerien language documentation. In 1984-85, on leave from BU, Professor Hutchison taught as a Fulbright Lecturer in the linguistics department of the University of Niamey (U. Abdou Moumouni) in 1984-85 as the first Fulbright Lecturer to that department. Among his students were twin sisters Hassana Alidou and Ousseina Alidou who are today the Professor Ambassador to the US from Niger and the Professor and Head of African Studies at Rutgers University, respectively.

Professor Hutchison recalled the origins of the Boston University program in Niger which resulted in BU's establishing a USIS-funded affiliation grant which involved a faculty exchange that brought Karen Boatman of BU's School of Education to Niamey. Karen Boatman proposed and launched in 1987 the international professional linkage program that led to BU's 25-year study abroad program in Niamey, which until 2011, was capably directed by Susan Rosenfeld.

Professor Hutchison closed with a memory from his Peace Corps service. While a volunteer he had a small tape recorder with him for recording various storytellers. Once, a child, Ali Abdoui, had heard the tape recorder and approached him to say: "Monsieur John, I would like to get inside of your radio!" John recorded him and he was happy. This is what we wish for the future of AREN – we want everyone to get inside of the radio and we want their voices to resonate. AREN is an archive that will tell our stories and inspire the hopes of others.

Larry Koff, Representative of the FON Board of Directors, noted that The Friends of Niger organization embodies the spirit of service and dedication of the more than 3,000 Returned Peace Corps Volunteers who were fortunate to have served in Niger beginning in 1962 for 49 consecutive years. We are reminded by President Issoufou Mahamadou's presence that the Peace Corps goals are even more significant and important today to both the USA and the Republic of Niger than when the Peace Corps was initially established in 1962. Peace Corps' goals are: *"To foster development, to promote international cooperation, and to contribute to the education of America and to more intelligent American participation in the world."*

During his remarks, President Issoufou Mahamadou discussed the importance of the relation between the US and Niger as exemplified by the Peace Corps and also by the inter-university connection linking our two countries. He was clearly impressed and touched by the speeches that included references to Nigerien languages and cultures, experiences in Niger, research projects in Niger, and even the use of three Nigerien languages by some of the speakers. Emily Nolan's speech in French, Hausa and Zerma, included anecdotes about her adventures in Niamey and travels through Niger, her work with her Nigerien teachers and acquaintances, and a description of the life of her Nigerien mother resulting from her homestay there. The President spoke of the importance of the example set by American Peace Corps volunteers and university students both while in Niger and afterwards in their continued commitment to service and work in Niger, and talked of Peace Corps volunteers who had taught him in Niger and the impact they have had on countless Nigeriens.

In addition, the President discussed the present security situation in Niger and Niger's role in combating those who threaten Niger. He reassured the audience that he and his administration are taking steps to secure Niger's future free from terrorism and spoke to the basic tenets of Islam which prove the drastically misplaced and misguided arguments being made by various organizations threatening the peace and wellbeing of the country. And finally, he praised the importance of the connection being made via AREN between Boston University and its counterpart organizations in Niger, and how this inherent respect for Nigerien culture and values is important to all Nigeriens.



## A Heartfelt Thanks to FON Members for Supporting Girls' Education



A big thank-you to FON Members for your positive reaction to our article in the December issue of Camel Express. Your generous donations to our girl empowerment project at Amadou Hampaté Bâ School will help make it possible for our school to transform lives. Without YOUR support, our school would not be the special place it has become for our girl students. Many of our students may not have been able to pursue their education, feel respected, safe and important. These students are now receiving a bespoke education in a girl friendly environment thanks to YOUR generosity. Every student suc-

cess story I will ever share with you concerning education for underprivileged girls has its roots in the faithful encouragement and financial contributions from donors like you, who believe in our projects and the potential of our girls. Your help in educating these girls is especially crucial in today's climate where fanaticism and obscurantism place all of our students, but especially our girls, in a difficult position. We need to open minds and hearts, and your donations will help us do just that. I can never say it enough: THANK YOU!

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

### MENINGITIS IN NIGER by Saley Tahirou for CONUSA

“An outbreak of meningitis with ‘unpresented features’ is spreading rapidly in Niger” according to the World Health Organization. Meningitis is common in the dry season between December and June in Niger but vaccines have been in short supply. Niamey has been especially affected by the outbreak during the month of May. Hundreds of children have already died of the current meningitis outbreak.

CONUSA, the Counsel or Nigeriens in the USA (a 501(c) 3 non-profit) has established connections with an organization in Niamey and is sending 500 vaccinations which will cost us about 3,000,000 francs cfa, or about \$6,000. We are accepting contributions, and we sent our first contribution in May, and will send another one in June and July. \$10 (6000FCFA) can save a child in Niger from Meningitis, which has caused hundreds of deaths in cities and villages.

The Nigerienne diaspora in the US has decided to act by sending a vaccine donation to our brothers and sisters who suffer and die of Meningitis in Niger. Thus, the assistance and contribution of all in this noble cause is more than important, it is vital. Together we can make a difference and in sha Allah we will do it, because in Niger we are all brothers and sisters with loving hearts and affection for others. Let's help our country, helping children victims of Meningitis. With \$ 10 save the life of a child in Niger.

You can contribute via PayPal account: [birdson6@yahoo.fr](mailto:birdson6@yahoo.fr) <https://www.paypal.com/us/webapps/mpp/send-money-online>



## Update from Maine-Soroa

*by Vincent Farley*

The Government of Niger declared a state of emergency in the region of Diffa as a result of repetitive attacks from Boko Haram in February. Suicide bombers targeted markets, schools, and public administration buildings. Additionally rockets were launched from the Nigerian side of the borders. Thousands of civilians fled their homes in the southeastern region of Diffa. The area is struggling to accommodate and feed some 150,000 refugees, who have fled the violence in Northern Nigeria and is now being emptied of its residents. More than 10,000 local residents left for towns like Zinder, some 280 miles West. Families in major Central and Western Niger, so far spared by violence now struggle to host dozens of internally displaced people.

Maine-Soroa, 40 miles west of Diffa, and 10 miles North of the Nigerian border witnessed waves of displacement not only among civil servants, but also indigenous community members who feared for their lives. On Wednesday, February 18, Boko Haram carried out three attacks on the town. The gendarmerie brigade, the customs brigade, and the prison have simultaneously been attacked. No civilian casualties were reported.

In light of these activities, The Barbara Kirker Second Chance School has temporarily been shut down for safety reason. The school was targeted because it accepted refugee children from Nigeria as students. The principal of the school was advised by the local police to close the school and leave town, after she reported suspicious activities, and a probable conspiracy to attack the school. The Kirker Hospital continues to operate despite obvious threats. Some of the medical personnel decided to stay, and continue providing care. A MAP shipment, which left Brunswick, Georgia late December made it to Niamey, and is expected to make its way to the Diffa region for distribution to medical facilities in southeastern Niger. These medicines will surely provide a great relief not only to refugees, but also to local residents, now directly affected by the imported violence.

In an effort to secure civilian populations in the region, Niger Government deployed hundreds of troops to counter the militant group after attacks started in early February. The military presence is on active patrol.

If you would like to help KAMRA provide emergency medical assistance and educational opportunity to refugees, their children, and local communities victim of Boko Haram violence visit our website, [www.kirkerassociation.org](http://www.kirkerassociation.org), to make your contribution. You can also send your contribution by check to:  
KAMRA  
4840 Forest Dr.  
PMB 216  
Columbia, SC 29206



## **HIMMA CHOLERA AWARENESS SESSIONS IN 5 QUARTIERS: 3 MUNICIPAL DISTRICTS AND 2 IN THE CITY OF MARADI**

by Saley Tahirou

The Association "Himma" (Hausa for “commitment” and “willingness”) was established in August 2003 by nineteen members including six women. The objective of the Association is to lay the foundations of a fair and sustainable development of towns and villages in Niger. There are now twenty-eight regular members and twenty-two associate members organized around economic interest activities such as cereal banks, savings and credit unions. The vision of Himma is a Niger where women, men, and youth living in cities and the countryside realize their aspirations for a dignified and fulfilling life continuously maintaining the hope of a better future. The mission of Himma is to overcome urban and rural poverty by strengthening the skills and competencies of men, women and young people to take charge of their development in the areas of food security, community and public participation, and basic social services

Himma has a Strategic Multi-Year Plan (PSP) including action on hygiene and sanitation in the city of Maradi; awareness sessions on cholera are part of this action. In this context, Himma received financial support from FON and Nigeriens from Maradi living in the United States to conduct a cholera awareness campaign in five areas of Districts II and III in the city of Maradi: The old quarters of Bagalam, Hassaw, Yandaka, Limanci and Maradaoua due to the proliferation of diseases such as cholera in these areas because of poor hygiene and sanitation observed by the inhabitants. Research showed these areas are the most affected, predominantly by cholera. Himma's objective is to contribute to a change in behavior of people living in the old quarters, to fight against the cholera epidemic in the city of Maradi. Specifically, this health activity aims to involve religious, administrative, traditional and other local groups in the fight against cholera, reduce the prevalence of cholera in the town of Maradi, strengthen hygiene and sanitation practices in the old quarters and raise awareness on preventive measures and the consequences of cholera.

The campaign was initiated and residents of the neighborhoods responded to awareness sessions and participated in rich discussions of behaviors contributing to unhealthy neighborhoods. At this level, citizens discussed issues of proper (and improper) use of latrines by some neighborhood residents; neighbors who empty their septic tanks at the door of their neighbors; and other non-hygienic practices. Throughout the campaign residents became more aware of the relationship between cholera and hygienic practices.

Himma is following-up with local authorities to design a project that will resolutely undertake hygiene, latrine use, sewage, and sanitation actions in the city of Maradi— while this project will require a lot of time and money, Himma will continue with their local cholera awareness raising campaigns among the population.



# 2015 Friends of Niger Membership Form

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Location in Niger \_\_\_\_\_ Program or Involvement \_\_\_\_\_

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☐ Please send links to the PDF version of The Camel Express by email.

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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.

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

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# Camel Express

Newsletter of the Friends of Niger

