

# The Camel Express



Newsletter of the Friends of Niger

April/May 2019

Please note we have changed our mailing address to [PO Box 612, Decatur IL 62525](#)

In this issue:

1. Board Retreat surpasses all expectations
2. Members Pitch in for Fire Relief near Dosso
3. FON supports Feeding program for nomad children
4. Kirker Foundation of Niger improving health services in Diffa Region
5. Culture spotlight – comedy on YouTube
6. Kola nuts & link to the 70's hit tune "Goro City"
7. News –
  - *The Niger that I know* By RPCV Bill Miles 77-79, Christian Science Monitor
  - *Dispatch from Timbuktu*, The Economist
8. *More Retreat Photos*

*From the Editor*

*Dear readers,*

*Please excuse the delay of our monthly news. April was a busy month for FON! We continue to try new things with format and content and your feedback is most welcome. As always, please send items of interest to share in future newsletters! - Amy Wilson, dit Amibula*

## ***1) Board Retreat surpasses all expectations!***

The first weekend in April, board members travelled from Washington State, Michigan, Illinois, Washington DC and Vermont to spend a weekend together discussing all things FON in Boston. Spending a few days together turned out to be just what the doctor ordered.

FON board members are all remarkably engaged and motivated. We got to know each other much better and learned more about what each person has to offer.

We concluded the main purpose of Friends of Niger is to connect people. We connect people who served in Niger with each other and help them stay connected to Nigeriens. We connect people who want to support projects with people who want to implement them in Niger. We share our connection to Niger with others who have not been so lucky to have been there.

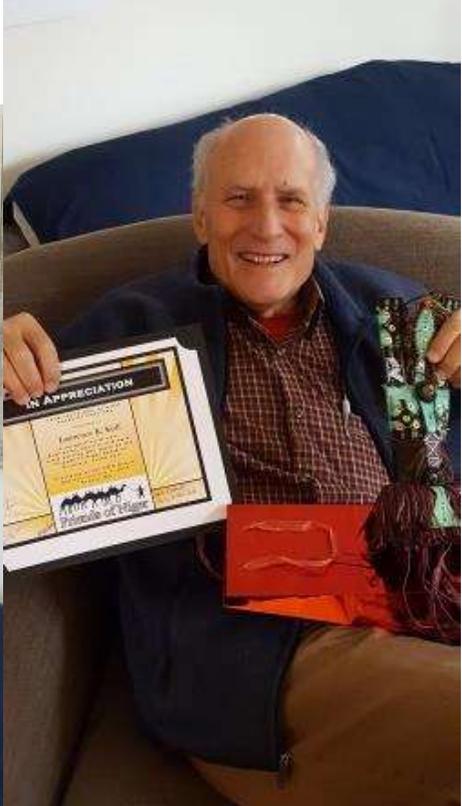
As the first step in developing a new FON Mission Statement, the Board developed three areas for focus in the coming years: 1) Connecting/Engaging Members; 2) Supporting Development through Projects and Partnerships; 3) Education and Advocacy. If these topics are important to you and you want to be part of the exciting next steps in developing new FON activities, please let us know and consider lending your ideas and expertise to a committee. We are specifically recruiting for Finance, Nominating, and Membership Committees as well as looking for a Webmaster.

Board members paid their own travel to the meeting and a generous donor agreed to cover our lodging and meeting space costs. Ken Patterson graciously donated his time to do a fabulous job as our facilitator and maximized the productivity of our time together. The board recognized Larry Koff for his years of service as Treasurer, see photo, and we found out that Phyllis is a fabulous cook and hostess!

The only question remaining at the end of the retreat was *when and where are we going to meet again!?*

We also committed to having more fun on the board and we'd like you to join us! Interested folks should contact me at [president@friendsofniger.org](mailto:president@friendsofniger.org)

John Baird , **“There is no way to peace; peace is the way.”**



## **2) Members Pitch in for Fire Relief –Thank you!!!**

In February, 2019, a disastrous fire destroyed over half of the village of Koli Koiri Tegui (Koli), displacing 72 families, including 345 children. Potential Terre, a FON project partner, appealed

to us for funds to help with immediate support and repair needs estimated to be on the order of \$10,000. Many of the girls and young women in the Potentiel Terre training programs we have supported came from the affected village, Koli. The FON board pledged \$1,000 from general funds and appealed to you our generous members for additional donations. You enthusiastically rose to the challenge, donating another \$3,000!!!

M. Zakari Hassane of Potentiel Terre, has done a remarkable job providing support to the affected families in Koli. He arranged for over 2 tons of maize to the village for immediate food needs and housed and fed many of the families of his trainees at the training center. The associated picture shows the sorts of supplies organized by Potentiel Terre for distribution to the affected families. FON recently provided Zakari with the last installment of funds collected by FON, so he is still out there trying to meet needs in the village.

Comments from donors:

- *"Irkoy ma boriandi!"*
- *"So sorry to hear this devastating fire in Dosso. Happy to donate to the people of Niger that I will be forever thankful for their support and love to Volunteers in Niger."*



See more photos of the fire and rebuilding efforts [here](http://www.friendsofniger.org/over-4000-donated-for-fire-relief-in-koli-koira-tegui). <http://www.friendsofniger.org/over-4000-donated-for-fire-relief-in-koli-koira-tegui>

### **3) FON Supports Feeding Program for Nomad Children.**

When some nomadic parents leave the northern reaches of Niger with their herds, they leave their children in the village with others to look out for their welfare. The children sleep in the house of the village chief, and do benefit from being able to attend school, but most have no means of support or regular meals.

In this northern region, the Achet'Akal women's cooperative was initially funded by FON to help disadvantaged women develop economic activities. Now that they have had some success making and marketing handcrafts, they proposed taking on the project of helping some of these practically abandoned children.

The school at Wambouzou serves many of these extremely disenfranchised children of nomads. The Achet'Akal Cooperative requested funding from FON to provide meals for 80 of these students during the current school year. The women oversee the distribution and assist with preparing the food for the children.

FON will be working with Achet'Akal to find a better solution for student nutrition and for ways to improve the condition of the school.



More photos of the school can be seen [HERE](#):

<http://www.friendsofniger.org/achetakil-womens-cooperative-supports-children-in-wambouzou>

#### **4) Kirker Foundation of Niger improving health services in Diffa Region**

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In February, FON approved a project with the Kirker Foundation of Niger (KF/N) for \$4,000 to help them deliver critically needed medicines and medical supplies, strengthen KF/N advocacy for health services in Niger, and increase local government inputs to promote long-term sustainability of KF/N efforts. These funds will help with the internal Niger costs of clearing the first MAP International shipment of medicines of 2019, over \$20 million of medications including antibiotics, eyeglasses and accessories, vitamins as well as medicine for cancer and heart disease, and delivering the medicines to approximately 12 hospitals in Niger. It is due to arrive in Niamey in early May. Just to provide some context, two MAP shipments of medicines in 2018 provided one third of all medications used by the hospitals in Niger.

While we are supporting KF/N in this first MAP shipment through the FON grant, a number of former Niger PCV's have been helping finance other shipments in earlier years.

Read more about the work of Kirker and the Situation in Niger by following this link

<http://www.friendsofniger.org/support-for-relief-efforts-in-eastern-niger-with-kirker-foundation-of-niger-may-2019>



Offices of Doctors Without Borders burned in Maine Soroa, April 2019

#### **5) Culture spotlight**

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On a far less serious note: Here are some short videos—a tomato paste commercial!! The lead actor Nourou, and others act in both the Hausa and Zarma versions. Search Nourou on YouTube to find other comedy routines in both languages. Enjoy---

Zarma version - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AiOpjsFRO7M>

Hausa version - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bNW781tsr9w>



## 6) Did you know? Kola Nuts

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Kola nut, the one thing that unites 140 million Nigerians – and possibly their neighbors to the north. Read more at: <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2012/05/kola-nut-nigerias-seed-of-togetherness/>



*Cola acuminata*. General description (Wikipedia)

The kola nut is a caffeine-containing nut of evergreen trees of the genus *Cola*, primarily of the species *Cola acuminata* and *Cola nitida*. *Cola acuminata*, an evergreen tree about 20 meters in height, has long, ovoid leaves pointed at both the ends with a leathery texture. The trees have yellow flowers with purple spots, and star-shaped fruit. Inside the fruit, about a dozen round or square seeds develop in a white seed-shell. The nut's aroma is sweet and rose-like. The first taste is bitter, but it sweetens upon chewing. The nut can be boiled to extract the caffeine.

Kola nuts contain about 2- 4% caffeine and theobromine, as well as tannins, alkaloids, saponins, and flavonoids.

Kola nuts are an important part of the traditional spiritual practice of culture and religion in West Africa, particularly Niger, Nigeria, Sierra Leone and Liberia. The 1970s hit "**Goro City**", by Manu Dibango, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UwmjNvnHjFs> highlights the significance of kola nuts (called "goro" in the Hausa language) to the capital of Niger, Niamey. Kola nuts are used as a religious object and sacred offering during prayers, ancestor veneration, and significant life events, such as naming ceremonies, weddings, and funerals.

## 7) In the News

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“The Niger that I know.” *US friends worry about safety in Niger; Nigerien friends worry about US school shootings.*

By Bill Miles (RPCV Niger, 1977-1979), Professor of Political Science at Northeastern University, Boston

<https://www.csmonitor.com/The-Culture/The-Home-Forum/2018/0516/The-Niger-that-I-know>

“My whirlwind tour of Timbuktu.” If Timbuktu’s glory days were long gone by the 19th century, the Timbuktu of 2019 is an even sorer sight. Decades of neglect by the Malian government and desertification in the surrounding countryside has left it impoverished.

<https://www.1843magazine.com/dispatches/dispatches/my-whirlwind-tour-of-timbuktu>

*Submitted by Tom Dechert*

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