

ASSOCIATION



Niger Zinder, February 2018

Jean-Philippe Rapp and His Team's Third Documentary Film in Zinder!



Filming of the third documentary with Jean-Philippe Rapp, journalist and Association sponsor, Ian Jaquier on camera, and Lardia, Nigerian television on sound!

What a pleasure to welcome our dear sponsor, Jean-Philippe Rapp, for the shooting of his third documentary film at the "Après-demain" Centre in Zinder, where he joined 225 children and our local staff. The surprise was great for both children and girls, their welcome overflowing with smiles and shy words in French. The sun came out against a beautiful blue sky, with March temperatures sitting around 42°!

Valiant and sweaty, the very efficient film crew met with the inhabitants of the Centre, inaugurated in February 2014.

Things have evolved over the past four years, to the point that a new documentary film was deemed necessary. The film has proven an essential tool for presenting our activities and projects that aim to help Zinder's street children in need of education and training.

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Moved by the firsts edition, our director gave a poignant overview of his career and work at the Association Centre, first as a teacher, then as the school director, and finally as the director of the Centre, a position he has held for three years!

We look forward to presenting this documentary film at an upcoming evening in support of the Association! In addition, there will be some images in preview at the next General Assembly in April in Romont.

For now, quiet, the team is editing

A new minibus for the students of the Centre!



Our former 19-seater van, generously donated in 2014 by MSF Switzerland and which was extremely useful in Niger, was on the verge of collapse. Its advanced age and condition required a quick change before it completely broke down.

Members of the Lions Club Vallorbe - Vallée de Joux were touched by the children at *Au Coeur du Niger* and swiftly purchased a new van! Our new 32-seater second-hand minibus (10'000 km) travelled from Libya to Niger, where it was parked in a sheet metal shed. Both students and girls are enjoying the large and comfortable minibus; they pile up to 60 persons on each trip for their beginning and end of the week commutes, and for students who do not have their family's permission to sleep at the Centre during the week.

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The minibus also allows outings for recreational and educational fieldtrips, included in Niger's national programme. The visit of the Sultanate of Damagaram has been scheduled for the shooting of the third film.

Construction of a new building on two floors!



Just above the children, a two-storey building will soon rise from the sand.

Our college students (Saadou, the young albino) will benefit this fall from a new building where they can continue their studies in college and high school! There will be 50 students as of October 1! We want to give them the best learning opportunities possible. Public school standards are not only poor, the school is regularly on strike, so we will hire additional teachers to give courses at the Centre.

An efficient and dedicated civil engineering and building technician from Switzerland recently met the contractor and engineer who provided us with one of the three quotes for this new construction. Meetings were long, well-prepared, and constructive under the hot, 42° sky. Two floors will accommodate a large sewing room, spacious computer room, and a theory room upstairs.



With 225 orphaned children, albino children, young mothers, and married girls at the Centre, the space available for sewing and computer science is getting tight, especially since that number continues to grow. There are still so many needs! So, this new two-storey building helps to expand our capacity and gives impetus to local staff to continue in the great human cause for their Zinder children!

Working under the best conditions and in a proper framework contributes to collective success, bolstered by dignity and mutual respect! We are on an endless quest, but the effort is worth pursuing. We have a common goal; we are united. MY THANKS to everyone who has taken the time to read my letters, and believe in this project!

The daily life in Zinder

Every day I spend in Zinder allows me to collect new orphaned children, often in poor physical and mental condition. The solidarity and attention of the other students, the supervision of our staff, and a good dose of daily affection allow the inner music of these children to play once again!

A 10-year-old boy came to the Centre one morning in February with his aunt. Maman (the name of the boy) was born without his left forearm. His father and mother, living in a bush village hundreds of kilometres from Zinder, "gave" the child into the care of a barren aunt in Zinder. Maman grew up in the best conditions, thanks to this aunt. Aging and without income, she came to the Centre to ask us to care for and educate the boy. Maman quickly found his place among other students, either younger or older than he! His smile blossomed and began to gain confidence!

A few days later, another mother came to the Centre with three of her eight children. Every morning a dozen mothers, grandmothers, or neighbours wait with a swarm of children in front of the red gate. This mother brought her three youngest children, two boys, and one girl, from five to 11 years old. After verifying the children's birth certificates and father's death certificate, the nanny took them by the hand to show them their dormitory and their new classroom! Unfortunately, we had to send the biggest boy home the next morning. Because of a lack of education and extreme poverty, we discovered that the mother had failed to set the best example in her tiny, 4m2 banko hut that groups the whole family in one room. The boy was in the habit of inappropriately touching his younger sister. The supervisor caught and reported him in the early morning hours. We summoned the mother to explain why we could not keep her boy, urging her to be more discreet and vigilant at home when welcoming men. Children must not see and hear everything because they emulate actions without understanding their gravity. Unfortunately, poverty and ignorance lead to this kind of behaviour. We are working hard at the Centre to educate children and adults in this regard.

Fire...

Children were finishing their dinner in their respective dining halls, under the vigilance of their supervisors. Suddenly, two girls came running and shouting: "Fire! Fire!" The Director was called. He discovered smoke coming out of one of the six, locked classrooms. Breaking down the door, he saw flames coming out of a metal cupboard at the back of the classroom, licking the walls and the ceiling. He seized an extinguisher and brought the fire under control.



An investigation is being conducted since a metal cabinet does not catch fire so easily. The police, too busy to be of any use, showed up five days later. Perhaps one day we will find out who, out of revenge or ignorance, set out to harm the Centre and the people who live here.

1'000 km by car

As the saying goes: "A captain always goes down with her ship."

After the safe return to the capital of Jean-Philippe Rapp, his team, and the civil engineering technician, a few sunny days later the wind of the *harmatan* had other plans for the founder. A plan B became necessary after waiting and hoping for six hours in the small "airport", which appears nothing more than an empty and cracked hut in Zinder. At 4pm, it was clear that visibility was insufficient for the humanitarian aircraft to land on a cluttered, un-lit runway. From Agadez, they decided to go back to Niamey, leaving arriving and departing passengers to fend for themselves! Two hours later, I found myself on the thin back seat of a vehicle, rented at the last minute to reach the capital, at night! The adventure continued on roads more and more dilapidated by the constant passage of trucks and vehicles of all kinds. The director was kind to accompany me again, acting as my protector and co-pilot! He and the driver drove 2'000 km in 30 hours!

Upcoming Events:

Wednesday, April 11, 2018

8th General Assembly of the Association

8 pm Romont Town Hall

Testimony of Jean-Philippe Rapp, journalist and sponsor who came to shoot the 3rd documentary film with his team in Zinder in February.

Everyone welcome!

April 25 and 26, 2018

SALON DU LIVRE in Geneva

9:30am-7pm

Payot Booth

Signing and sale of the illustrated book, *Des Mots pour Grandir*

May 25 - June 3, 2018

ROMONT FAIR

Signing and sale of the illustrated colouring book.

Sale of handcraft from Niger.

Opening times on our website.

Thank you for your visit!

I will close with a special thought and immense gratitude for our dear honorary president, Dr. Rolland-Yves Mauvernay, who took his leave on November 2017, after having sought out, discovered, watched over, protected, humanized, loved, and given back to this Earth. His star has led him to a peaceful world

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The wonderful *Après-demain* Centre in Zinder, with its 225 orphaned children, albinos, child-mothers, and 27 local employees, continues on in the great human adventure, designed with so much hope and so many dreams, and built with our dear Dr. RYM!

"To love is to risk rejection,
To live is to risk dying,
To hope is to risk despair,
To try is to risk failure,
To risk is a necessity.
Only the one who dares to risk is really free ..."
Paulo Coelho



Warm thoughts of gratitude from our children, full of the 42° sun and smiles of Zinder!

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With my compliments.

Isabelle Macheret
Association Founder
Zinder Niger, February 2018
www.aucoeurduniger.ch