

ASSOCIATION



Niger Zinder, June 2017

### **School's Out for Summer at the *Après-demain* Centre**

The 200 orphan children, albino children, scholars, and young seamstresses of the Association participated in an exciting end-of-the-year party! We took advantage of my time in Zinder, despite temperatures hovering around 48 to 52 degrees celcius, to organize a beautiful celebration and distribute prizes to the Centre's most deserving and assiduous pupils and young girls! A beautiful colored fabric was chosen by the instructors specifically for the occasion so that everyone could make a new party dress! Thanks to the small weekend allowances that the students receive for their help in the kitchen, vegetable garden, goat pens, laundry, and for sweeping, they were all able to create beautiful festive outfits. Their pride was tangible as they made their way home dressed to the nines in frocks that they're sure to wear nearly day and night!



Smiles of happiness to close the school year - May 2017



Awards for the most assiduous and deserving students - May 2017

The six classes at the Association Centre host from 15 to 28 pupils each, and so many children deserve awards for attendance, effort, and good grades. During the Swiss Cooperation Office's visit to Niger last February, one of the visitors noted a higher level in reading among children at the Centre than in children attending public school.

Fifty-five girls and boys received awards for having placed among the top four students in their class with special prizes for good behavior, smiles, cleanliness and hygiene, most congenial, and the most committed to improvement.

In collaboration with the director of the Center, the educational staff, and a teacher from the State of Niger, awards were distributed to students in the presence of a proud public, including widowed mothers and grandmothers:

Fatma Zara, Issoufou, Fassouma, Salima, Ibrahim, Mahamadou, Abdul Rachid, Mariama, Kadija, Zaberou, Aïchatou, Ayouba, Aïcha, Oumarou, Ouma, Zeinabou, Ramatou, Ousina, Absatou, Amina, Safia, Jamila, Samira, and Hadjara.

Award for the most hardworking and disciplined girl:

Aïchatou Nanzir

Award for the most hardworking and disciplined boy:

Ayouba Moussa

Award for the most helpful and devoted to housekeeping tasks:

Aïchatou Moussa

Award for a smile:	Fatma Zara Ali (pre-school) Fatma Zara Ibrahim
Award for physical cleanliness and hygiene:	Fassouma Ousmane Aïchatou Lawali
Award for best attendance:	Ousmane Ibrahim Isamel Abdoul
Award for the most committed to improvement:	Mahamadou Ataher
Award for solidarity - congeniality:	Fatma Zara Nanzir
Pre-school award:	Mariama Thomas
Braille learning award:	Farida (albino girl, 7 years old)
French course award:	Aïchatou Issaka Chamsia Maman Absatou Lawali Bassira Nassirou Rabi Issaka Saadou Inoussa Halima Abdou
Technology award:	Rabi Issaka Mariama Sani Abdul Karim Balkissa Aboul Aziz

THANK YOU to all the generous donors in Switzerland who gave or sent gifts to be used as end-of-school-year prizes! Boxes of colored pencils, drawing books, illustrated books, notebooks, calendars, calendars, jump ropes, board games, puzzles, towels, washcloths, cotton panties, cotton blouses, backpacks, and so many other useful items that brought so much happiness to students of all ages.

The morning ended with a succulent and festive chicken dinner, albeit with poultry that's a bit less plump than in Switzerland. The meal was much appreciated, and the children licked their fingers and gnawed on the tiny bones, which cracked under their very strong teeth!

Public school exams will be completed by June 16. All 12 girls in the CM2 at the Association Centre passed their tests and will soon be able to begin their studies at the Public College this fall, under the supervision and responsibility of the Association and its staff. Starting in October, 36 young girls and 1 boy (albino) will attend classes in Zinder's Public School system.



## Life in Zinder

The academic year has wound gently to a close in Zinder, under burning temps of 48 to 52 degrees celcius. I've heard it's hot in Switzerland?



In this little corner of Niger, Zinder, 52 degrees on May 28, 2017, it is also the period of Ramadan, which began on May 27. Everyone moves more slowly, unable to drink or eat from sunrise to sunset, even though the heat is unbearable.

People, animals, and vegetables eagerly await the rain. The rainy season is expected to begin this month of June, and end in September-October. Even the 100m-deep well shows signs of exhaustion and it would seem that the water table, in which the pump is used, has decreased significantly.

Everything seems tired at this time of year: the electric transformer that supplies the neighbourhood where I live exploded. Thousands of people are without electricity, with temperatures soaring into the 50s! How can one be expected to sleep past 34 degrees, without a fan, without air? The generator is not functional at night because it prevents people sleeping on the ground from having a peaceful night.

## **Unexpected death of the headmaster**

Our dear school principal, appointed in 2015 at the same time as the director, died suddenly on April 17. He had been complaining of a stomach ache, headache, and was having more and more difficulty moving one of his legs. Malaria had struck him a few days earlier but he seemed to be recovering well. Over the weekend, his children took him to the Zinder hospital. After a few exams, they administered medication. He grew steadily worse until he could no longer urinate. The hospital gave other, stronger drugs. And then he died.

Never get sick in Niger, otherwise "you're doomed" ....

Life expectancy in Niger is 53 - 54 years. Our principal was already 56 years old. We sincerely regret his absence and were very happy and grateful to have benefited from his great knowledge, calm personality, and wisdom during the five years of good and faithful service he gave to the school-house we rented, and then to the Association Centre.

Following his death, some were swift to neglect their work and take advantage of the situation. We will need to find a good and reliable replacement for the principal quickly, in order to support the director of the Centre. Some of the staff and schoolgirls sent a young albino boy to run errands under a sun that was too hot for him, though the rules forbid students from leaving the campus during school hours. Laxity was shown by the guards at the entrance of the Centre, who allowed the young children of staff to leave for the weekend without recording their names in the book of arrivals and departures, and let staff leave with material that belongs to the Centre. A good refresher course was necessary in order to start off on the right foot once again.

I also had my share of surprising mishaps during this last stay in Niger! Anything else would have been abnormal, of course. When I landed in Niamey, the capital of Niger, I was scheduled to take a plane the next morning to Zinder, 960 km from the capital. The booking is always made weeks in advance, by mail and direct payment. That morning, I arrived at 5 am, glad that I would soon see "my" dear children in Zinder! After handing over my booking and payment information for the flight, I was told that my name was not on the list. I couldn't understand it. Desperate and tired, I waited until everyone else was checked in, 2 hours later, recalling how many prayers I'd sent up just to get a seat on this tiny 29-seater airplane! In the end, I owed my trip to a passenger who failed to show up for boarding - lucky for me and the children at the Centre! There are no daily planes in Niger, and driving 1,000 km by car is not such an easy and pleasant trip...

During my stay, the car broke down when I was visiting our second 10,000-m<sup>2</sup> field. It refused to restart under 48 degrees, and while waiting for the tow truck in that heat my water supply was quickly gone.



These five boys came to us in 2010, when they were four and nine months old, with their young mothers aged 14 and 15 years. Thanks to a good education and schooling at the *Après-demain* Centre, they will now know how to respect and love women!

*"No existence without trial,  
No affection without abandon,  
No connection without separation,  
No society without solitude."*

Boris Cyrulnik, psychiatrist, wrote these words in his book, *Ivres paradis, bonheurs héroïques*

**illustrated colouring book *Des Mots pour Grandir (Words to Grow by)***

An illustrated colouring book is being created by the young designer Arnaud Dousse, with texts by Isabelle. This playful and educational book, based on the letters of the alphabet, will enable young and old to discover how the population and children live in Zinder and the Association Centre! We hope to have it available for sale this fall! Thank you in advance for your interest and enthusiasm.

**May 2017**

**RTS Reportage "Ensemble"**

With Isabelle and the *Au Coeur du Niger* Association

Link: [www.rts.ch/tv/emission/ensemble?id=121763](http://www.rts.ch/tv/emission/ensemble?id=121763)



**Upcoming events:**

**Sunday, June 11, 2017**

**Walking Rally in Nyon**

Organized by the Club Soroptimist of Nyon  
Continuous departure from 10 am to 2 pm,  
from the Place du Château  
Fr. 5/person - Fr. 10/family

**Saturday, September 30, 2017**

**Fall market in Ursy from 10 am to 4 pm**

City Hall  
Stand of the Association with sale of Niger products  
And sale of the new illustrated colouring book, *Words to Grow by*

**7 and 8 October 2017**

**Salon Agora - Multi-purpose Hall in Porsel**

Organized by Christiane Kolly

The 200 orphan children, albino children, mother-daughters, and 26 local staff at the *Après-demain* Centre in Zinder join me in wishing you all a very nice and enjoyable summer!

With my warmest and grateful thoughts, filled with sun and smiles from Niger,

Isabelle Macheret

Zinder Niger, June 2017  
[www.aucoeurduniger.ch](http://www.aucoeurduniger.ch)