

ASSOCIATION



Niger Zinder, June 2018

The construction of a new two-story building!



During my latest visit to Zinder I was able to follow the construction of our new two-story building, which will allow our 50 schoolgirls and Saadou, a young male albino student, to attend classes safe within the walls of the Centre, as of the beginning of this school year. Frédéric, our new, efficient, and motivated technical aid, made a huge impression during his stay at the Centre! Workmen were multiplied by three from the day after his arrival, and work continued uninterrupted from dawn to dark! Fortunately, the sun goes down around 7 pm in Zinder ... but it peeks over the horizon at 6:10 am!

Frédéric got his first lesson in local habits and customs, when confronted with construction practises and attendance at work! Letting go, a good dose of patience, and a lot of perseverance are key concepts in Niger. Just like they are in other countries, no doubt

He discovered that it was possible during the sale of a property in Niger to negotiate a VAT exemption certificate to allow for a second tax exemption. The building was built quickly, the floor finished before the rainy season settled in!

The rainy season is the perfect time to start building. Bricks and walls are washed naturally during the infernal 45° to 52° weather, and rain is a welcome relief for workers out sweating from morning to night. During Ramadan, everyone has to stop working around 3pm to rest and recuperate before eating and drinking with the setting sun.



Some of the young students studying in the new, two-story building!

Jörg, our precious and faithful technical leader, is carefully preparing a well-stocked container for Niger! The OC of Bulle generously offered 100 desks for our students. Chairs, manual sewing machines, sewing and knitting items, as well as general school supplies were very graciously provided for the 230 orphaned children, albinos, and school girls! These things will delight young people at the Centre and contribute to their general education. The local staff can thus work under the best conditions, with quality equipment supplies; Swiss-made is recognized and much-appreciated in Africa!

Four classrooms on the ground floor will allow college students to obtain their diplomas swiftly, under the guidance and authority of our Director and the reliable and effective teachers we work hard to find and hire. We're not quite there yet,

however, since even young teachers failing to obtain a sufficient mark during their public school exams still receive their teaching diplomas.

The second floor of the new building will house young mothers and married girls. A large sewing room, computer room, and classroom will be used for their professional training. Having obtained the authorization of the Ministry of Vocational Training of Niger, we will be able to award the diplomas ourselves following a series of exams with certified experts.



End of the school year party

The Centre's six classes welcome 15 to 28 students each. So many of them deserve a small prize for their attendance, effort, and good grades. Sixty-nine girls and boys have received awards for placing among the top five best students in their class, along with special mentions for good behaviour, smiles, cleanliness and hygiene, solidarity, motivation, attendance, and learning Braille. The Director of the Centre presented awards in the presence of the teaching staff and the Educational Psychologist of the State of Niger.

Charifa, Mahibatou, Souley, Abdoulaye, Mariama, Youssouf, Rabiou, Jasmina, Fatma Zara, Halima, Ibrahim, Mahamadou, Hadiza, Amina, Aichatou, Fatma Zara, Yassin, Karima, Fassouma, Ayouba, Aicha, Oumarou, Farida, Firdaoussi, Ouma, Mariama, Sakina, Fassouma, Aichatou, Mariama, Chamsia, Bassira, Mariama, Aichatou,

Ousseina, Chamsya, Gaicha, Assana, Absatou, Halima, Ramatou, Zeinabou, Mariama, Ouzefa, Bouchara, Iman, Nasser, Rayana, Samira, Faiza, Maamoura, Mariama, Amina...

Most hardworking and disciplined girl:	Aichatou Nanzir Aichatou Lawali
Most hardworking and disciplined boy:	Ismael Saadou
Most helpful and devoted to housekeeping tasks:	Fatma Zara Nanzir
Most smiles:	Fatma Zara Ali Falila Mahamadou
Best physical cleanliness and hygiene:	Fassouma Sani
Best attendance:	Ousmane Ibrahim Mariama Abdou
Most committed to improvement:	Rabiou Tsahirou (1 arm) Harira Amadou
Solidarity, congeniality:	Soueba Amadou
Best behaviour:	Amina Issoufou
Pre-school award:	Mariama Thomas Ouzefa (garcon albinos) Bouchara Ado Iman Isabelle
Sewing:	Rayana Souley Samira Saley Faiza Maman Maamoura Moudaha Mariama Abdou Bodo

Braille learning award:

Farida (albino girl, 8 years)

IT award:

Rabi Issaka
Absatou Maman
Nafiou Ayouba Moussa
Mariama Nassirou



Prizes for the most diligent and deserving students of the Centre! June 2018

Daily life in Zinder

Our first mangos were ready on my arrival in June! What a delight for the palate and the soul to reap the fruit of a long labour, with all the self-denial needed to get there. New lemon and mango trees will be planted in the garden of the Centre and carefully watered for the next big harvest. In the meantime, the children and local staff have been enjoying this year's bounty.

The Boko Haram tragedy continues to pursue its victims all the way to Zinder. For a year we have been seeing an increase in displaced people from Diffa to Zinder. Diffa is a region located in the south-east of Niger, close to Nigeria, where attacks regularly occur against the population and the military.

Since the fall of 2017, mothers and grandmothers have been coming to the Association Centre to beg for help for their children, who were forced to flee the region under the threat of the Nigerian group, Boko Haram. Unfortunately, we cannot take care of them. These families are in exile, passing through, and will return one day in their village. We want to bring stability to the children we welcome to enable them to go to school and gain education and training for several years, until they reach an age of majority. These are dire situations, but we neither have the authority nor the adequate structures to welcome them. We would need a different structure that includes psychological and pedagogical follow-up for these adults and children that have been uprooted and are victims of violence. I regret the situation very much, and can only encourage them to continue their journey and find help.

Never 2 without 3

I had to make the 1,000 km trip by car for the third consecutive time, stuck in the back seat for 15 hours of endless roads and pot holes. By the time I got to Niamey, the infernal African rhythm was deep in my bones; I would feel the jolt of it for days! The return from Zinder to Switzerland was no better. The small humanitarian plane that transported us shook violently several times during the flight because of thunderstorms! I literally took off from my seat! The plane landed for a few moments while the storm subsided and we could breathe deeply and reclaim a sense of courage!

Then another disappointment: Air France is no longer as reliable and committed to quality as it once was. Before we reached Niamey, the plane coming from Paris broke down, followed by a small technical issue in Togo. After five hours of waiting in an overheated, mosquito-infested hall, an announcement was made that a thunderstorm was making its way through the capital, keeping the plane from landing to take us to Paris. Our silent implorations were finally heard, and the plane landed two hours later. Eyes gleaming with fatigue, our backs begging for rest but with hope renewed, we were able to catch our two-layover flight to Geneva, where my valiant technical manager Jörg was waiting for me, three beautiful and fresh roses in welcome!

Upcoming Events

Samedi, September 29, 2018

Fall walk in Ursy from 10am to 4pm
City Hall

Association Booth with the sale of products from Niger and the illustrated colouring book, *Words to Grow By*.

2009 – 2019

In 2019, *Au Coeur du Niger* Association will celebrate 10 years of activity in Niger on behalf of underprivileged children! The third documentary film by Jean-Philippe Rapp, humanist and sponsor, and Ian Jaquier (cameraman), is currently being edited. An eight-minute teaser was presented at the Association's 8th General Assembly last April. We are looking forward to discovering this third edition, which tells our story starting with the day we welcomed our first five or six children, to the 230 we have today!

The film explores our beginnings from a small building belonging to the Sisters of the Assumption, to a rented school house, following the construction of the *Après-demain* Centre, and finally the construction of our new, two-story building in 2018! And while our efforts are just a drop of water in a bucket, what is an ocean if not many drops of water? Our thanks to everyone for their wonderful drops that join me in this vast Ocean of Life!



Keep building and making the world a more beautiful place!

With my warmest regards for a wonderful summer. Sanou!

Isabelle Macheret
Founder of the Association
Zinder Niger, June 2018
www.aucoeurduniger.ch