

# Connections

REMEMBER NIGER COALITION NEWSLETTER | SUMMER 2020



Emergency Food Relief Program

**453**  
students & families fed

**3000+**  
individuals fed

**\$53**  
cost to feed each family

**10**  
schools

**\$38,000**  
total funds raised

[www.rememberniger.org](http://www.rememberniger.org)

Go to our new website to learn more about the Emergency Food Relief Program.

PHOTOS • VIDEO • STORIES

## Your donations fed 453 students and their families!

by Ibrahim Abdou, Remember Niger Coalition, Niger

Dear friends,

Your support is truly an act of love. All the beneficiaries of the food relief program are very grateful and send you their warm thanks. God bless you.

This time of year is already difficult for my fellow Nigeriens. Harvest was in the fall and by April most families were running out of food. This year was particularly bad because insects attacked our crops right before we harvested them last year. And, the flow of imported goods slowed almost to a stop because of the impact of COVID-19 and the border closure. Food costs rose making it difficult for the majority of Nigeriens to feed themselves and their families. Many of the families that Remember Niger (RN) supports already struggle to feed their children under normal circumstances. Very often the only meal the children receive during the day is at school, and with schools closed they are at high risk of hunger and malnourishment. Through the Emergency Food Relief Program, you gave hope and a life line to students and their families. *Continued- See "FOOD", page 8*



***"The families were overjoyed to receive the food! One man told me that his family did not have 'even a grain of rice' before the relief arrived."***



Students at the Niamey School for the Deaf cheer over the news of the new middle school!

# A place to belong— Secondary school for the deaf is under construction!



*The pandemic has not stopped construction of this inclusive middle school for the deaf and hearing impaired. Set to open in September 2020, the school will meet a critical need in the community and surrounding areas.*

Workers broke ground on the Niamey Secondary School for the Deaf at the end of March. The new school building will house the middle and high schools and will be constructed in two phases.

Phase one will include four middle school classrooms, which will be completed in September 2020 for the first day of the new school year.

From the beginning of our partnership, the Nigerien deaf community in Niamey has identified the construction of a secondary school as a top need and priority. The primary school was established in 1980, and since then, fewer than 100 students have moved on to the public middle school and even fewer students have attended high school. In fact, the first student to pass the high school exam and graduate did so last year. The low rate of academic success is a direct reflection of the lack of accommodations and assistance provided to students who are deaf or hard of hearing in the public-school system.

One of the exciting elements of the new school is that it will be an inclusive community school run by the



*Four classrooms for secondary school students are under construction at the Niamey School for the deaf.*

Deaf Association. This means that all students will be welcome and accommodations will be provided to students who need them. Remember Niger, the Niger Association for the Deaf and the Nigerien Department of Education are working together to ensure that teachers have the necessary training and to provide interpreters for students who are deaf or hard of hearing.



*We extend our sincere thanks and appreciation to our partners **MoneyGram Foundation** and **Entrepreneurs for Knowledge** for their support of the Niamey Secondary School for the Deaf.*

# A whole new world for Boubacar

by Kara VanderKamp,  
Remember Niger Coalition Executive Director

There was a look of wonder on Boubacar's face when he entered the classroom. He was mesmerized by the scene taking place in front of him. The 1st grade teacher at the Niamey School for the Deaf was at the chalkboard communicating with sign language and her students signed in response. I can only imagine the thoughts that were racing through Boubacar's mind. Although this was his first visit to the school, it was clear that he was eager to stay. A whole new world was opening up to him in that moment.

Boubacar lost his hearing when he was two years old. His mom explained that he became ill with a high fever. On the second or third day of his illness she noticed that he was not responding when she spoke to him. It soon became clear that he could not hear. They didn't know what would become of Boubacar. His parents created simple signs for things like "hungry" and "thirsty", but otherwise, there was very limited communication.



Remember Niger Executive Director, Kara VanderKamp often sees Boubacar when she visits the Niamey School for the Deaf.



***"I will never forget the look of wonder on Boubacar's face when he entered the 1st grade classroom."***

Now, at 8 years old Boubacar's world was changing. It was a new world in which he would be able to communicate, learn and become the person God created him to be.

An estimated 16,000 Nigeriens are deaf or hard of hearing. Often, deafness occurs during childhood. Many infectious diseases in Niger cause high fevers which can lead to hearing loss and deafness. It is a life altering occurrence that mostly has negative effects on individual lives. Jamila, a young teacher at the Niamey Primary School for the Deaf, described it this way: "One day I was a normal child who went to school, did my chores and played with my friends. Then, I became sick with Malaria. I went to sleep with a fever and when I woke up I could not hear well. Suddenly, my friends wouldn't play with me because they thought I was stupid. I wasn't happy again until I came to the School for the Deaf. The first day I came here, I couldn't stop crying."

Annually, there are about 160 children who have the opportunity to attend the Niamey Primary School for the Deaf. These children see themselves as lucky because they have found a place to belong.

[www.rememberniger.org](http://www.rememberniger.org)

I invite you to visit our website, where you will find a more detailed story about Boubacar's life from the perspective of my friend and colleague Carrie Blake.

# A Father's Love – “We came so that we could thank you.”

by Linda Haveman, Board of Directors, Remember Niger

*When we interviewed the fathers of students, we learned about their unique and difficult journeys and how happy they are that their sons and daughters get to go to school. The pandemic has made it even harder to find work, and they struggle to provide for their families.*

**K**ara and I had the opportunity to meet with fathers of students that Remember Niger supports during our trip to Niger in February. It was an amazing experience to sit with them and hear their stories which are so different from ours. As we talked, they sat at the desks – many of them for the first time in their lives since they had never attended school. Yet, they were passionate about their children's education. This is a transcript of our conversation with fathers at the primary school in Tahoua. I hope you are able to feel like you're there with us in that classroom.



Remember Niger Board Member, Linda Haveman pictured with Barnaba, one of the students she sponsors.

**Q: You are from nomadic families. How is it that you came to live and settle in Tahoua?**



**A:** Yes, we all grew up caring for our livestock and moving around to find food for them. Since we were very young we have cared for our families' animals. Our lives changed quickly when most of our animals died because of drought. The land where our animals can feed has been shrinking our entire lives. We traveled long distances to search for food for our animals, but we were not able to save them.

**Q: How did you find the Salama School where your children now attend?**

**A:** An elder in our community told us about this wonderful school that provides sponsorships to students so that they can attend school. (This caring man is the guardian of the school, and he continues to guide families in enrolling their children.) We are very thankful for the sponsorships because without them, we could not afford the tuition.

**Q: Did you attend school when you were young?**

**A:** We never had the opportunity to go to school because our parents didn't see the need. We know how to take care of our animals. It's our way of life.

**Q: Why do you think it's important for your children to go to school?**

**A:** The world is changing. We can see that. We don't want our children to be caught in the same situation we were. They need to have skills in addition to taking care of animals. We want them to learn so that they can get jobs and feed their families.

**Q: How do you earn money to buy food for your families?**

**A:** It's difficult. Some days we eat, and some days we don't, but God always provides.



*“We came so that we could thank you and the sponsors for the gift of education that you are giving to our sons and daughters.”*

*“We don’t want our children to be caught in the same situation we were. They need to have skills in addition to taking care of animals. We want them to learn so that they can get jobs and feed their families.”*



# Offering HOPE to Nigeriens – TOGETHER

*Chesterbrook Taiwanese Presbyterian Church (CTPC) in Virginia has been partnering with Remember Niger since 2010. The congregation provides a strong foundation for support in Niger through Church missions, sponsorships, the Rally for Niger, and the Emergency Food Relief Program.*



*Chesterbrook Taiwanese Presbyterian Church participates each year in the Washington DC Rally for Niger.*

*“Because we have personal contact with Kara, there is a felt connection with the ministry because we know for sure that every child that comes under the care of RNC is being nourished in body and mind.”*

*- Stacy Chen, CTPC member*

*“Over the past 10 years, we have partnered with RNC mainly through providing student sponsorships and general financial support, and participation in Rally for Niger to raise funds and awareness for RNC’s ministry. Additionally, a member of our congregation had the opportunity to join Kara on an actual trip to Niger to see in-person what God is doing through RNC’s ministry!”*

*- Martin Tsai, CTPC deacon*

*“Our church first learned about Remember Niger Coalition in February 2010 when Kara visited us to share about the needs and challenges faced by the people of Niger. She told us about Remember Niger’s vision to reach some of the most vulnerable groups in Niger by partnering with local churches to provide high-quality Christian education to the children there. After hearing about their ministry, we felt called to support this important work as a church in whatever ways we could.”*

*- Martin Tsai, CTPC deacon*

*“We choose to work with RNC because of the meaningful and tangible effects the ministry has in one of the most impoverished countries on earth. God has been coworking with Kara and Remember Niger to build schools for Niger’s children, providing them an education and more importantly, hope.”*

*- Teresa Lin, CTPC member*

*(l-r) Chesterbrook Taiwanese Presbyterian Church members Ariel Lai, Richard Lin, Teresa Lin, Christine Shiau, Jean Wu pictured with Kara VanderKamp at the Remember Niger 10th Anniversary Celebration.*



**Visit our new website**  
[www.rememberniger.org](http://www.rememberniger.org)



**O**ur website has a new look and new material you won't want to miss. Visit [www.rememberniger.org](http://www.rememberniger.org) to see pictures, sign up for our e-newsletter, read our blog, and learn about our programming.

## Will you send Abdoulai or Rahila to school?



**Abdoulai, age 8**



**Rahila, age 7**

**T**he Remember Niger sponsorship program makes it possible for preschool - 6th grade children in Niger to attend school. The children in the program are from the most vulnerable groups in Niger, including orphans, girls, children with disabilities and children from very poor homes. They cannot afford the fees associated with going to a Remember Niger supported school. Abdoulai and Rahila are two of our students who need sponsors to go to school this fall.

[www.rememberniger.org](http://www.rememberniger.org)

Visit our new website to learn more about the sponsorship program and how you can provide a sponsorship for Abdoulai or Rahila.



*Chesterbrook Taiwanese Presbyterian Church member Jean Wu had the opportunity to meet the students the church sponsors when she traveled to Niger.*

*“To be able to see how RNC’s work has transformed lives in Niger is something that is very valuable to us ~ since we are a lot more privileged than these Nigerien children. In the U.S., education is seen as a gateway to success, so most young children receive education regardless of their parents’ financial status. In Niger, education is still a concept unfamiliar to many. With that, the fact that with our sponsorship we can equip tens of thousands of Nigerien children to be the leaders of their generation, it is very encouraging and an honor of ours.”*

- Jean Wu, CTPC member

*“I still remember Kara’s discussion on breaking the “cycle of poverty” and education being one of the major factors in contributing to helping that. The fact that the church can come alongside the people of Niger and provide for this basic, fundamental need is what drew me to participate with RNC in this work.”*

- Allen Hou, CTPC elder

*“We always look forward to the visits from Kara to hear the first-hand accounts of how God is using RNC to reach and minister to the children and their families in Niger. It is amazing to see how God has expanded RNC’s work from the initial handful of schools being supported to the diverse range of programs RNC is involved in today, and it was an honor for our church to be able to celebrate God’s faithfulness through the years at RNC’s 10th Anniversary Celebration last year! ”*

- Martin Tsai, CTPC deacon

FOOD, continued from page 1

In early April, Remember Niger established the **Emergency Food Relief Program** to provide immediate food relief to the most vulnerable students and families in the schools we support. These children include orphans, the disabled, girls and the very poor. Thanks to your support we were able to act quickly.

Together with our partners in Niger, we purchased and delivered food and hygiene supplies to over 260 families. While visiting with the families, I had the opportunity to talk to them about the importance of hand washing and how to wear the face masks. The families were overjoyed to receive the food! One man told me that his family did not have “even a grain of rice” before the relief arrived.

Since that time, directors of six more schools that RN supports contacted me about providing food to their most vulnerable students. We added 189 more students and their families to Phase 2 of the emergency food relief efforts. That means that thousands of people were touched and impacted by your sacrifice, generosity and compassion.

May God bless you,

Ibrahim Abdou  
Remember Niger Coalition- Niger



Students and families from the Niamey School for the deaf met us at the school to pick up the food and hygiene supplies.

## Looking ahead in 2020

### This summer- ZOOM Presentations

We have several presentations lined up and would love to talk to your group too! Email Julie Frye at [jfrye@rememberniger.org](mailto:jfrye@rememberniger.org) for more information.

### July- School Yearbooks

SPONSORS! We are currently assembling yearbooks and we can't wait for you to see and learn more about where your student goes to school. Watch for an email in late July.

### October 1-School starts in Niger

Summer break will end and students will return to school on October 1. The Niamey Middle School for the Deaf is currently under construction and will be ready for students!

### October and November- Virtual Rally for Niger and School Spirit Run for Niger

We are disappointed that we cannot hold these events in person due to the pandemic, but we are excited about new opportunities to engage with you. Stay tuned for more details.

You are the heart of Remember Niger and we can not accomplish our mission without your support. Thank you for the many ways that you engage with children in Niger through our programming. We encourage you to learn more about the Emergency Food Program and other ways to get involved by contacting us or visiting our website at [www.RememberNiger.org](http://www.RememberNiger.org).

