



RCA Missionary Update

from the Johnsons

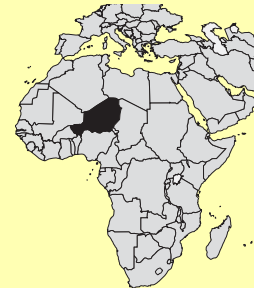
The Evangelical Church of the Republic of Niger (EERN is its acronym in French) is the RCA's mission partner in Niger. Founded shortly after Niger's national independence in 1961, EERN is the oldest and largest Protestant denomination in this Muslim-majority (98 percent) country.

Located in the Sahara Desert, Niger is the world's poorest country (177th out of 177 on the United Nations Development Program's Human Development Index, a composite measure of life expectancy, education, and living standard), and 50 percent of its population is under the age of 15. EERN ministries reflect this context: they focus on evangelization, education, health, and community development.

Tom Johnson, an international development specialist, and his wife, Aïchatou, represent RCA missions in Niger. They have two daughters, Marie-Florence and Laurey.

Niger facts:

- Population: 11,361,000
- Size: 1,266,700 square kilometers (slightly less than twice the size of Texas)
- Major religion: 98 percent Muslim



MINISTRY

Community Development

LOCATION

Niger

PARTNER

Evangelical Church of Niger,
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

CONTACT

BP 250
Maradi 4000
Niger
Email: johns632@yahoo.com
Skype: tajohnsons

Dear Friends,

September 2007

Greetings from the U.S.! We've arrived in Iowa for a five month home assignment (until the end of January 2008) and we hope that we can see many of you while we are here. Of course we plan on enjoying some relaxation and to visit friends and churches, but we also need to replace the support from the Presbyterian Church USA that will end in 2008. That will occupy some of our time back in the States.

We left Niger at the end of August, when much of the Sahel region (south of the Sahara) was experiencing an abundance of rain—too much in many places, in fact. While crops looked very good at the Dogon Gao Bible School where we're based, there are other places that have lost their crops due to flooding. Mud-brick homes don't do well with heavy rains and a heavy downpour can quickly cause a whole village to collapse. Roads also don't handle

flowing water well and we noticed that Niger's highways were in the worst condition we've ever seen in our six years here. Two large stretches of road are being replaced this fall, but that just meant driving during the rainy season posed some real logistical challenges with roads underwater and even sections washed away.



Steve relaxes with the Dogon Gao students and their families

Since our last letter to you in June, we had several visitors pass through our remote Bible school! Our presence at Dogon Gao has certainly resulted in greater exposure to this once-isolated, rural institution. For roughly seven weeks, Steve DH, a Northwestern College senior from Pella, Iowa spent a Summer of Service (SoS) with us. One must believe that the Lord knows your needs before you do, because Steve is a National Guard mechanic and has spent three previous summers working for a

plumbing and electrical contractor, despite the fact that his career plans include full-time ministry. We used all of Steve's skills in Niger as he and our assistant, Usman, essentially put the adjacent apartment (which will be used for future volunteers) in good working order with all of the plumbing and electrical systems now functioning. They even figured out a system for increasing our water pressure (useful for taking showers!), using an on-demand pressure pump that was surprisingly made available to us when some other missionaries left Niger. They also worked on our Toyota Land Cruiser, as the bad roads wear down the suspension system and it was time to replace some worn-out parts. Steve was a bit surprised to learn how valuable these "hands-on" skills can be on the mission field—not that we want to discourage him from seminary if that is where God is calling him to.



Tom with library volunteer Anne B.

After Steve left us another volunteer who came. Anne B. is a graduate student in the University of Michigan's library science program. Her father was in Niger in 2006 to attend the grand opening of the Words of Hope recording studio. When he visited the EERN's community library, he commented that his daughter should come and see this, particularly since she had been a French major in college. That started a process that brought Anne to Niger. For three weeks she helped the Nigerien librarian improve various aspects of the library. They also prepared a list of future goals. Their crowning achievement was to create a system for loaning out materials, since previously the library had primarily served as a reading room with nothing in place to guarantee that circulating materials could be tracked. Anne and Steve are just two examples of how a short-term mission experience can help young people learn that they have talents and skills that God can use for His glory in ministry!

I also need to mention Ted and Eleanor, RCA volunteers who visited Niger for the fourth time this summer. These retired educators are conducting seminars as part of a

larger ministry team for showing Nigerien teachers from Christian backgrounds how education can be a Christian vocation. Many of these educators simply saw teaching as little more than a respectable way to get a government job and to earn a regular paycheck. Now they are realizing that they can show the Light of Christ in their classrooms, while others are feeling called to teach in Niger's expanding Christian school network. This couple has faithfully given their time and God has used them as catalysts to help spark a new Christian education movement in Niger!

Lastly, I need to report on the first fruits of the EERN's recording studio that has been in operation since September 2006. Nigerien Christians are producing five programs each week in Hausa and French, and with Words of Hope ministry funds have been placing them on over 12 private and community radio stations in Niger. On the one-year anniversary of the first broadcast, a rural villager went to an EERN church in Zinder (his region's capital) to confess Jesus Christ as his Savior at a Sunday service. He credits these radio broadcasts, which he heard on a Zinder station, as providing him with the knowledge of Christ. These radio transmissions can go where there have never been churches or even visits by evangelists. This man believed in Christ, not because of an RCA missionary, but because the RCA began a partnership with a Nigerien Christian church, which shares a commitment to bring the Gospel to their fellow countrymen and women.

PRAYERS AND PRAISES

- Please pray that our home assignment will be full of good benefits like renewing friendships, sharing God's work with others, restoring our strength, and growing closer as a family.
- Please pray for the radio ministry in Niger and that the recording studio team can meet the daily challenges of producing and airing solid Christian programming. Give praise for the new believer!
- Give praise for our summer volunteers in Niger and pray that God will continue to show them how they can use their gifts to further the Kingdom of God in Niger.
- Pray for Jeremy and Susan Beebout and their two young girls, who will join us as RCA missionaries in Niger, as they adjust to a new life on the mission field. They will arrive in the country on October 7 and will work with agriculture, volunteers (Jeremy) and health (Susan) ministries with the EERN.

In Christ,

Tom and Aïchatou

Tom, Aïchatou, Marie-Florence and Laurey.