



# 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 (182nd out of 182 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 three daughters, Marie-Florence, Laurey and Elisabeth.

## 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

### PARTNERS

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

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## 2011 Yearly Report to Supporting Churches from the Johnsons

### **In one sentence, what is your ministry's primary goal?**

My ministry's goal has been to assist our Nigerien partner denomination, the Evangelical Church of the Republic of Niger, in strengthening its ministry capacities, particularly in training pastors and evangelists at its Dogon Gao Bible School.

### **Over the past year, how have you seen God working in your ministry? Please share both the progress and the setbacks with respect to your ministry goals. Please include your joys, challenges, and/or disappointments.**

2011 was our fifth year at the Bible School, so we could step back and evaluate some of our accomplishments. We have dramatically improved the infrastructure of the school during this time with new classrooms (including a preschool building for the children of our students), student housing, latrines and some practical infrastructure (goat pens and irrigated gardens), as well as introducing some cost-effective appropriate technologies (pressed brick) being used. However, we have experienced problems with lightening taking out 3 pumps in the past 3 years, meaning that we can't irrigate our gardens. Also, our goat herd manager resigning at the end of December, thus nullifying some of our three-year investment in him.

This year brought to the forefront the importance of working with and investing in quality individuals for advancing the ministry. It is frustrating to know that some actions will not succeed simply because the wrong people are involved. That is also true of our Bible School students, a portion of which enroll without first properly demonstrating their calling to ministry. While there will always be "tares in the field", there must be better means of identifying and working with the most promising individuals to grow the church in Niger. I'm constantly thankful for Ayouba, who assists us with repairs and maintenance, as his dedication and work ethic inspires us and is a model for many here.

### **Share any physical or spiritual health issues that have impacted your ministry during this past year.**

Aïchatou's health has steadily improved, although in the middle of the year, her previous medicine was starting to give her some serious and undesirable side effects. We were able to change her prescription to another psychiatric drug, but this must be brought from America as it is not available in Niger. Once she switched to the new drug, her condition became much better and she has been able to return to some of her interests that she's neglected for several years now. Whether she can return to medicine or not is a matter for prayer.

A Nigerien that we have worked closely with at the Bible School has constantly demonstrated his unsuitability for ministry, which has impacted what can be accomplished here. We have prayed for a change and, at this writing, it looks like he will soon be replaced. We are hopeful that his departure will usher in a more conducive spiritual environment at the School.

**Briefly discuss any goals, dreams, and/or changes you would anticipate in your ministry for the coming year.**

I'd like to do more training of existing church leaders, particularly those who manage church institutions (schools, ministries, etc) or otherwise have key responsibilities and thus I would have less direct contact with the Bible students, as many of our younger students don't always seem "ready" for what I have to share. I think I'd be more effective with mature and experienced students.

Similarly, I'd like to help our partner church evaluate its existing efforts in preparing disciples, evangelists and pastors to see if there aren't alternative methods to employ to achieve these goals.

I was able to take two distance education courses from Fuller Theological Seminary in 2011 and I would like to continue these studies, as I found them quite helpful to my work, but our poor internet makes this very difficult.

**Share any specific project related needs and other ways supporting churches might be able to assist you.**

We need funds to identify and equip Nigeriens to become teachers at the Bible School and leaders in other ministries, particularly in vocational and managerial subjects. Alternatively, we have identified organizations that could come to Niger to carry out intensive trainings in certain subjects, if we could mobilize the resources to bring them here.

We also need funds for building and equipping a teaching workshop (mechanics, welding, carpentry, etc) and one for sewing and teaching food preparation techniques.

**Please tell us about ongoing as well as special prayer needs you may have at this time.**

Please pray for wisdom and courage for our Nigerien partner church as they consider and carry out important decisions and reforms to better position the church for future witness in Niger. Pray that God will call the right people into ministry and discourage those with less than ideal motives for entering Christian service.

Pray that our family will continue to recruit volunteer teachers for our girls so that we can remain in a rural and isolated setting.

Give thanks for 10 years of ministry in Niger (arrived on January 27, 2002). Pray that God will continue to direct our lives, careers and call.

Pray for Niger and its neighbors. With a new president implementing new policies and upsetting old interests in Niger, political turmoil in Libya and North Africa, religious violence and extremism in Northern Nigeria and increased crime and banditry in the sub-region, safety is always an issue for us.

**In one sentence, please thank all those who pray and support you and your RCA ministry.**

We want to thank all our supporting churches and the many individuals who have taken time to drop us a note, whether through the mail (*BP 250, Maradi 4000, NIGER*), an email (*johns632@yahoo.com*) or a Facebook post (*Search: tajohnsons*). It is always humbling to know that our family is in your thoughts and prayers for this ministry. We're grateful for your continued financial support in these difficult economic times and we do our best to steward these resources carefully.



Please visit [www.rca.org/johnson](http://www.rca.org/johnson) for more information about us, prayer items for our ministry, and donation information.

To order prayer cards for us and our ministry, please contact Nancy Ellens at (800) 968-3943 or [nellens@rca.org](mailto:nellens@rca.org).