



## RAIN

December 2009

### Share the passion.

- Girls and women learning together make better lives for themselves and their families.
- Women artisans earn livelihoods and support their children's schools.
- Women who earn and learn are proud and empowered.
- School market gardens generate food for students and cash crops for income.
- Nomadic children live at school. If there is no food, they can't attend.
- For many schools, RAIN is the only hope for gardens and food.
- Agriculture and herding are traditional livelihoods we're improving with technology and knowledge.
- School is the key: the place where communities come together to make life better for their children.
- Learning and earning go hand in hand with **greening the desert.**

## Niger: the poorest country in the world



Dear Friends,

The United Nations Development Fund has named Niger as the country with the lowest human development index (HDI). The HDI provides a composite measure of three dimensions of human development: living a long and healthy life (measured by life expectancy), being educated (measured by adult literacy and gross enrollment in education), and having a decent standard of living (measured by income).

In short, the average person in Niger is less educated, lives a shorter life, is less likely to be literate and has less income than the average person on any other country on earth.

Despite such hardship, the nomadic women, men and children who partner with us to improve education, food production and water security are inspired, motivated and hardworking. Their lives abound with family love, generosity and good humor. Their spirits call, RAIN must respond.

Niger is facing a severe food shortage this year just as the United Nations, strained by the global economic crisis, is cutting food aid.

*Thank you to those who have donated to the RAIN Annual Appeal. If you haven't yet, now is a great time to help. Please offer a piece of your heart to the world, by giving to RAIN.*

40% of Niger's children are underfed. For \$60, RAIN provides lunches for a year for a child in school. This program saves many from severe hunger, or worse. And it encourages parents to send their children to school. \$250 can pay for a girl's school fees, lunches, mentoring, practical skills training and tutoring.

## How do you double the Girl Effect? Add Women!

**Women Artisans give 50% of profits to schools.**

*We are happy to earn this money for our children's schools - our husbands don't understand the value of education or that we must keep our children healthy.*  
-Djumare, MCV Co-op

**90% of young women invest earnings in their families.**

**Girls in RAIN's mentor program are less likely to drop out of school.**

*I counseled her about the dangers of too-early marriage. She understands now, and decided to stay in school.* -Hadiza, Mentor

**Girls who attend school for 7 years marry 4 years later and have fewer children. RAIN-mentored girls are learning ways to earn.**

*She wasn't doing well in school; her parents weren't interested. Her mentor changed their minds. Now she does well, and is learning to weave straw. She wants to go to college.*

-Ghaichitou, Mentor

**One extra year in school boosts a girl's future earnings by 10 - 20%. The cumulative effect on a poor country's economy is significant.**



## RAIN's heart: our volunteers in the U.S. and Niger



*Angie Drenkhahn, recent UNH grad and RAIN volunteer in Niger. (Yes, she rode the camel.)*

Angela Drenkhahn, UNH '09, volunteered with RAIN for a year before taking the plunge - a month in Niger. RAIN is infinitely grateful to Angie, who worked long hours all summer to finance her November trip to Niamey and Agadez. Angie called on her innate sense of style, working with our Wodaabe women's cooperative to come up with a great line of tee shirts and table linens. Look for them at RAIN sales. Tanemeert, Angie!

**AND BACK IN THE USA:** There's not enough space to list the tens of volunteers who make our crafts sales, annual event and all our activities possible. We are grateful to all and give special thanks this month to our office volunteers: Sally Barber, Ruth Kane and Barbara Winter, who give us such a weekly energy boost. Sally is a great reader, and has worked her way through the RAIN library. Her special recommendations:

*Men of Salt* by Michael Benanav: "You're right there on a camel caravan from Timbuktu to desert salt quarries."

*Shadow of the Sun* by Ryszard Kapuscinski: "An introduction to the struggles and cultures of modern day African nations."

*Sahara* by DeVilliers and Hirtle: "Waterfalls in the desert! For many other fascinating surprises, read this."

### MOST RAIN VOLUNTEERS DON'T VISIT NIGER... THEY LIVE THERE!



- Each RAIN school market garden is overseen by a volunteer parent committee. Parents harvest vegetables and cook school lunches.
- Women artisans give half their cooperatives' profits to schools.
- Mentors receive only an allotment of tea and rice each month to be counselors, advocates and teachers of after school classes in traditional skills.
- Parents dig wells, build garden fences, make bricks to build classrooms and much, much more!

*Bess Palmisciano with mentors in Arlit.*

### NIGER'S TUAREG NOMADS RETURN TO THEIR HOMES IN THE AIR MASSIF

Until recently, political insecurity has limited travel in the region of Agadez, site of RAIN's first programs and of so many of our Tuareg friends. People have returned to their homes in the Air Mountains, schools are re-opening, tourists are on the way. Despite the difficulties still to be overcome, there's a sense of joy and hope. RAIN mentors and artisans, friends and advisors, staff and volunteers are at work, making life better, step by step.

**We are eager for the promises of the new year to be realized. RAIN is gearing up to renew, expand, revitalize. We wish the very best to all of you who are making it possible for us to bring RAIN to Niger.**

#### RAIN Goals 2010

- Ten new school market gardens
- A Women's Weaving Cooperative in Tilabery
- Twenty more Girls Mentoring and Scholarship Programs
- Animal Husbandry and Temoko: traditional livestock sharing program

**Niger! Such a lovely country and people, yet so often beset by drought and poverty. They are easy to love, hard to forget.**

**Thank you for your support. If you haven't yet, please give to our 2009 Annual Appeal today!**

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