



ANNUAL REPORT 2009

Mission Statement: Rain for the Sahel and Sahara (RAIN) works with nomadic peoples of West Africa to improve their lives through education, water security, agriculture and income-producing activities. These locally rooted programs promote literacy and empowerment while sustaining nomadic traditions throughout the Sahel and Sahara.



Halima Orte, a member of the MCV Wodaabe women's embroidery cooperative, working with Bess at RAIN's Agadez office.

Prepared by:
Bess Palmisciano
Executive Director

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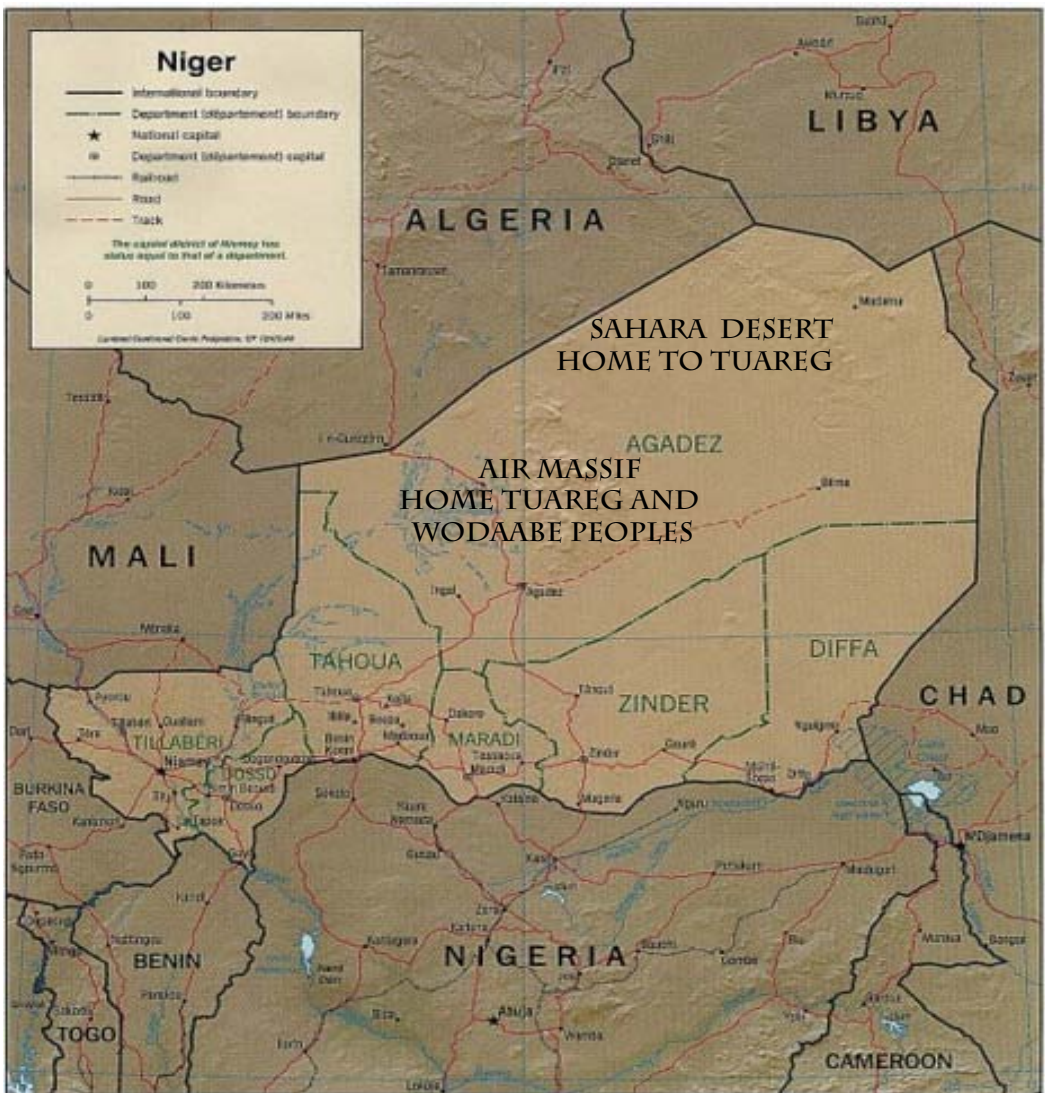
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NIGER is a landlocked country, approximately the size of France, located in West Africa. While all of Niger is subject to drought, the green band in the southern tier receives adequate rainfall to support agriculture without irrigation. The northerly regions of Niger are Sahel (receiving 4 – 8” of rain per year) or Sahara (with less than 3” of rain per year). These rains fall sporadically, and only during the summer months.



Letter from the Executive Director



Bess Palmisciano of RAIN with women of Arlit who serve as volunteer mentors and counselors. They help encourage girls succeed in school and teach them traditional crafts.

Dear Friends,

This October the people of Niger celebrated the signing of a truce between the factions seeking equitable distribution of funds from the sale of Niger's plentiful uranium. The violent protests and military responses had closed the Air Massif to all foreign travel for more than two years. Tuareg people from affected communities throughout the Air Mountains left their homes for the safety of Arlit, Agadez and other cities. Without their animals or gardens they had no way to produce food or earn livings; they suffered terribly. RAIN – at times the only international NGO continuing to work in the region – provided aid and education programs to these displaced families.

In 2009, RAIN invested much time and effort choosing other regions of Niger to target for our agriculture and education programs. Our staff traveled throughout the Tillaberi region, an agro-pastoral zone in southern Niger bordering the Niger River. It is home to many Tuareg, Wodaabe and others, whose sources of food – from agriculture and herding – are at risk from recurring droughts. The poor in Tillaberi are considered one of the most food insecure people in Niger. We surveyed schools and community needs, and talked with parents and school directors to determine their goals and motivation. From these assessments, we chose ten schools at which we are currently installing school market gardens and/or sponsoring girls' mentoring programs. We also completed gardens in nomadic areas bordering the Air Massif – the regions of Ingall and Aderbissinant.

We progressed toward our goal of bringing all RAIN programs to sustainability. Our school supporting businesses are generating substantial help for their local schools. Women's artisan cooperatives have earned over \$17,000 to share with their schools to support school children.

We are grateful for 2010's peace. People are returning to their homes – and RAIN is right behind. Together, we are restoring damaged wells and gardens, starting new mentoring programs, and teaching adult literacy. Our expansion in Tillaberi will continue, improving education and food security in a threatened and underserved region. In the Azawak plains of the Wodaabe nomads, we will improve herding practices for more reliable livelihoods for nomadic people living in regions not suitable for agriculture.

With kind regards and gratitude for your continuing support,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Bess Palmisciano".

Bess Palmisciano
Executive Director

NIGER and its NOMADIC POPULATIONS

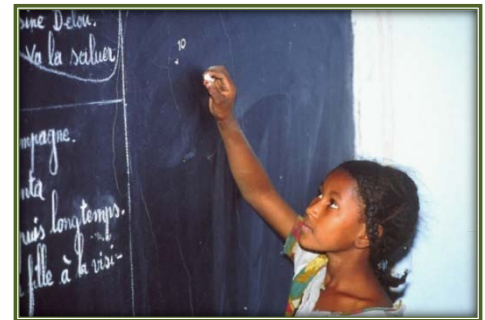
LAND & CLIMATE: Niger, consistently rated among the five poorest countries in the world, is a large landlocked nation. Its climate is arid with only 12% of the land in cultivation; the remaining 88% is not arable – much is desert. The nomads of Niger live in the northern regions where there's almost no arable land. They are herders of sheep, goats and camels.



Niger is one of the hottest, driest countries in the world. In the Agadez region, home of many nomadic Tuareg and Wodaabe, rain is limited to an annual maximum of 6 - 10 inches, falling during a single two-month period. Yearly totals vary greatly, and there can be great discrepancies within regions.

In 2009 Agadez city experienced disastrous flooding, while nomadic communities just a few hours away did not have enough rain for their pasturelands to come to life.

EDUCATION: While Niger's 43% literacy rate for boys under the age of 15 is dismal, girls the same age lag far behind -- only 15% can read and write. These rates are skewed by relatively high levels of school attendance in cities. Rural and nomadic children are far less likely to attend school or be literate. *Each RAIN school garden increases enrollment by about 25%.*



Education is minimal: the average boy in Niger attends school for 4 years; girls, 3 years. *Children with RAIN mentors stay in school longer than their peers.*

HEALTH: Educated girls marry later, earn more money and have healthier families. Lack of education for Niger's girls contributes to tragic statistics of life and death -- one in 13 pregnancies results in infant deaths, while 18% of Niger's children die before the age of 5. *In 2009 over 500 children and adults learned about hygiene, disease prevention, sexuality and gender roles at RAIN meetings.*



Malnutrition plagues 44% of children under 5. *RAIN school gardens are a sustainable path to food security.*

RAIN 2009 PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The 50/50 Rule for Community Development

A Niger proverb addresses development programs:

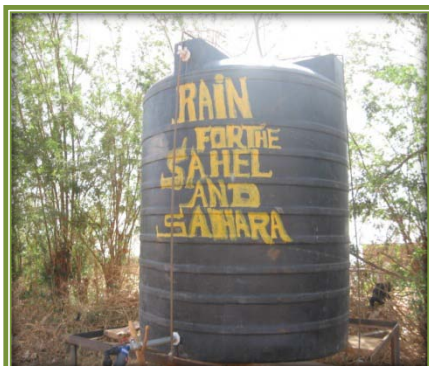
“When the dog was told that there was food for everyone at the wedding feast, he replied, ‘We’ll check that out at the ground level!’”

In truth, there can be all kinds of nourishment on the table at a feast, but unless and until it gets down to the ground, the dog has no part in it.

RAIN creates programs that are generated by community needs, are owned by the population, and are enduring. Nomadic children often live in state-run residential schools while their parents move, seeking pasture for their herds of goats, sheep and camels. These schools are often sorely lacking food. Providing this essential element of daily living is seen as the foundation of a well equipped school. Therefore, agriculture and herding are core programs in RAIN’s approach to developing community supported schools.

Women approached RAIN, asking to help them earn money to support their children. In response, we proposed that RAIN might help fund needed equipment and business training for them to pursue their money making ideas. Would they agree to invest half their profits in their children’s schools? The response was an enthusiastic “yes.” Our first community enterprise, a grain grinding mill, was born.

Our most lucrative school-supporting businesses are women’s artisan cooperatives. Wodaabe and Tuareg women have traditionally produced beautiful leather and woven straw goods and embroidered fabric. Women often sell to merchants who pay them very little for their handwork, and profit greatly reselling their products in Europe or the United States. RAIN returns all profits (the sales price less cost of materials and training) to the cooperatives. Fifty percent of the profits are used to help support the women’s local schools; the remaining fifty percent is shared by the cooperative members.



“Through their school gardens, cantines and other activities in the communities, the organization [RAIN] is very well respected and has developed methods and programs that are sustainable, involve the communities wholly and have clearly generated behavior change and, often, a change in the standard of living...”

RAIN Performance Monitoring Report, March 2006 by Lisa Kays, Implementing Partners’ Technical Advisor for USAID Ambassadors’ Girls’ Scholarship Program

WHERE WE ARE AND WHAT WE DO

RAIN is beset by requests from communities seeking our help. We now work with nomadic, as well as recently sedentarized communities, in many regions of Niger. Our program map below highlights agriculture programs in the Air Massif, Aderbissinant and Tillabery regions. Animal husbandry programs were started in 2009 in areas not conducive to agriculture, such as the Azawak and parts of Aderbissinant.

IMPACT 2009

- 1,000** students received school supplies from RAIN.
- 700** children attended free pre-school and received lunch there every day, through a RAIN/UNICEF partnership.
- \$6,846** was raised by sales of women's cooperative goods. Women earned money; children received scholarships and clothing.
- 36** Mentors enrolled in RAIN classes to learn to read and write.
- 239** students were supported and encouraged by mentors.
- 4** new self-sufficient gardens generated food for students.

2009 PROGRAM MAP



SCHOOL-SUPPORTING BUSINESSES ***Agriculture: Producing Food for Profit***

When RAIN built its first school gardens, the government of Niger and the UN World Food Program provided staple foods to many nomadic schools. The gardens we installed supplemented students' diets with fresh vegetables. Sufficient cash crops were produced to make each garden self sustaining.

Now, both the government and UN programs are being phasing out. RAIN's gardens must achieve profitability to meet the increasing need. RAIN's gardens are organic; we're seeking markets in the expatriate community, among hotels, restaurants and other institutional buyers.

Drip irrigation systems save water and energy while delivering the ideal amount of water uniformly throughout the garden. Fruit trees will, in time, augment our profits with lemons, tangerines, pomegranates, guava, mango and other desirable crops that travel well.

Cost of one school market garden: RAIN: \$5,400 Community: \$990

About 85% of Nigeriens are subsistence herders or farmers. Their earnings are meager. The *CIA World Factbook* states that an estimated 78% of the population earns less than \$1.25 per day.

SCHOOL-SUPPORTING BUSINESSES: ***Women's Artisan Cooperatives***

RAIN works with women artisans to improve their skills and develop products suitable for western markets. We sell the women's products in the U.S., with the cooperative receiving 100% of the profit from these sales. The women give 50% of their profits to help support their children's schools; the remaining 50% is shared by the artisans.

Metier, Chance Vivre: Wodaabe Women's Embroidery Cooperative

MCV members are traditional Wodaabe women. Their embroidery skills are excellent, now they are learning to measure and replicate their designs. The women said they couldn't learn to measure. I told them our goal is for them to be independent, to be able to produce embroidered crafts from start to finish, and improve their families' livelihoods - not to have to wait for a man to help them. Binbiya (right) and a friend immediately raised their hands: "We can learn."



Binbiya Marafa learning to measure.

Niger is a landlocked nation in Western Africa with some of the poorest education indicators in the world. It has the world's lowest female literacy rate (12%).

The education system faces enormous challenges in access, quality, and achievement, particularly in a context of reduced government financial support to education. –UNICEF

In Sub-Saharan Africa, the social return on girls' education is estimated at 24.3% for basic education and 18.2% for secondary education, the highest rates in the world. –FAWE

THE LITERACY LOOP: Women and Girls Learning Together

Education -- especially for girls -- holds the key to equity, health and improved livelihoods for nomadic people. Fewer than 10% of nomadic women are literate; involving them in schools raises their interest in education and increases self-confidence. RAIN's mentoring programs feature illiterate community women encouraging girls to stay in school. We offer our women mentors training in health, sexuality, the problems arising from too-early marriage and pregnancy, roles for women in society, and more. The mentors are eager to share their skills in traditional crafts with the girls and teach weekly after-school classes in these practical skills.

The mentors attend RAIN-sponsored literacy classes and they are now learning to read and write in Tifinagh, the written language of the Tuareg, and French. Now, they report with pride, they are viewed by their communities as respected advisors.

RAIN's mentoring programs were originally funded by USAID. That five year program came to an end in June of 2009. RAIN adopted the program – reducing costs and seeking ways to make the program financially sustainable. In the fall of 2009, we embarked on a plan to start eleven new mentoring programs during the 2009 – 2010 school year.



“This is Zeinabou Takar. When we met, she wasn't interested in anything. She left home mornings, telling her parents she was going to school, but it was not true. Now I am teaching her how to sew and she listens to my advice. At school she studies and is much changed.”

COST: \$250 supports a scholarship student for a school year.

Mentors receive an allotment of rice and tea each month. In 2009 RAIN supported 5 mentor programs; in 2010 we plan to add 11 more.

“In Niger, schooling for girls was deemed unnecessary for a very long time. Indeed, girls were only destined to leave behind their original families when they married. Both in cities and in rural areas, parents invest more in the schooling of boys than of girls. Today the rate of illiterate women is 88 percent. This illiteracy is the direct reason why women are relegated to the background.”

-The Courier, Sept-Oct 2009



Tarbane Ewalwal

We often forget the realities faced by the poor in underdeveloped countries. Tarbane Ewalwal, a Tuareg, is a single mother who has lived a life of borderline survival. She welcomed RAIN's presence in her community and has been active in our programs as a weaver of straw crafts, an AIDS trainer and, most recently, a mentor. She is learning to write in her native language, Tifinagh, as well as to read and write in French.

In October of 2008, Tarbane said to Bess Palmisciano: "It is through RAIN that I have learned about AIDS and how to write. It is with RAIN that I first traveled to Niamey (the capital of Niger), and met Wodaabe women. I am so lucky, so grateful."

Educated women understand health risks and are less likely to marry or become pregnant at too early an age; they are more likely to seek health care during and after pregnancy. Such knowledge is a matter of life or death.

**Mothers in Niger face a 1 in 7 lifetime chance of dying during pregnancy or childbirth.
-UNICEF**

TEACHING ABOUT HEALTH

The most effective way to instill behaviors of safe sex is to discuss, in an age-appropriate manner, sexuality and the risk of sexually-transmitted diseases to schoolchildren – they not only adopt safe practices, they share information with family members. Therefore, RAIN's AIDS prevention and other health education programs are taught in the schools. RAIN trainers use entertaining and culturally relevant skits, as well as games, to communicate life saving information. We have expanded our AIDS education program to include other health concerns. Specialists meet with RAIN mentors, teachers and parent associations to discuss health, hygiene, the prevention of sexually transmitted diseases, the role of gender in society, the danger of too early marriage and pregnancies, and more.



RAIN mentors at the Akokan School, Arlit.

RAIN mentors are ideal trainers and counselors.

The position of a respected elder woman as community sage is a traditional one; mentors are adopting long accepted roles in their society.



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Photos: RAIN Annual Event 2008

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*(Left to right)
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Left to Right: Mamane Bala, Literacy Teacher; Rabi Egalangal, Mentor Coordinator; Mohamoud Mouta, Program Assistant



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all of our friends and
supporters -- Thank You!**

Rain for the Sahel and Sahara, Inc.
Statement of Profit & Loss
Fiscal Year Ending September 2009

Ordinary Income/Expense Income

Contributions Income	106,552.00
Grants	115,615.00
Earned Income	13,656.00
Total Revenue	235,823.00

Expense

Salaries	46,836.00
Program Expense	75,495.00
Amortization	2,824.00
Payroll Taxes	555.00
Field Management	34,643.00
Dues and Membership	1,055.00
Insurance	2,003.00
Events, Printing and Reproduction	20,295.00
Office Expense	16,862.00
Professional Services	5,350.00
Postage and Shipping	246.00
Repair and Maintenance	9,964.00
Rent - US & Niger Offices	8,522.00
Subcontract Labor	13,972.00
Telephone/Internet	2,160.00
Travel	16,172.00
Depreciation	7,702.00
Total Expense	267,899.00
Net Ordinary Income	-32,076.00

Other Income

In Kind Donation – Income	15,718.00
<u>Net Income</u>	-16,358.00

RAIN FOR THE SAHEL AND SAHARA, INC.

10/1/09 -**BUDGET FY 2010 9/30/10**

Income	
Donations	
Restricted	5,000
Unrestricted	132,000
Total Donations	137,000
Grants	
Restricted	82,011
Unrestricted	88,000
Total Grants	170,011
Niger & US Crafts Sold	8,000
Animal Feed Sold	4,500
Community Enterprise Income	2,400
Total Income	321,911
Cost of Crafts for Sale	-4,000
Cost of Animal Feed for Sale	-5,000
Proceeds from sale of asset: toyota ambulance	10,000
Total Income	322,911
Expenses	
Niger Program Expenses	
Education	62,215
Agriculture, Animal Husbandry & Water Security	77,919
Community Enterprises	9,123
General Program Support	119,456
Total Niger Program Expenses	268,713
US Administrative Expenses	47,249
Fundraising	49,700
Total Expenses	365,662
Capital Expenditure: Motorcycle for Arlit staff local transport	1,075
Reserve Fund	30,000
Reserve Fund for FX risk 24	35,000
Total Expenses plus Reserve	431,737
Total Income	322,911
Gain/Loss	-108,826
2009 Carry forward to apply	108,826
Ratio: Program/Administration/Fundraising 73/13/14	

GROWING THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA

RAIN is a well-known and respected NGO in Niger. In 2009, we focused on increasing our profile at home in the U.S. through our grassroots fundraising efforts and community involvement. We initiated a greater presence in the online community, connecting with a wider world of socially conscious individuals and like-minded organizations.



Go to www.rain4sahara.org to link to the **RAIN Facebook Page**, or follow **"rain4sahara"** on **Twitter** for news and notice of events and craft sales.



We are blogging from the field in Niger with our **Nomadic Notes**.
Subscribe at: <http://rain4sahara.wordpress.com>.

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