

**A letter from Bess Palmisciano, Executive Director
1 October 2009**

Dear Friends,

As I write to you from the RAIN office in Agadez, I think about all that has been happening here in 2009. Niger has in some ways benefited from sharply rising uranium prices, one of its major resources. But people did not see improvement in their lives, and political protests turned into an ongoing insurrection in the northern areas where traditional nomadic pasturelands are being sold to foreign mining companies.

The nomadic people of Niger's north suffered greatly during the insurrection. In addition to civilian fatalities, thousands of animals were killed by the Niger military. These animals are the foundation of nomadic livelihoods – without them many families have no source of food, milk or cash. During the past two years RAIN has helped many who left the mountains to live in temporary city shelters, offering school food programs, scholarships, emergency food aid and vocational education.

And nature has not been kind. Just three weeks ago, not one hundred meters from where I sit in Agadez, a flood destroyed over 3,500 homes, killing hundreds of people. Yes, here in our desert city. Violent storms during this year's brief rainy season caused a nearby dam to give way. A river almost six feet deep roared through town. Adobe houses came apart, fell and turned to lumps of mud, destroying all household contents. Many people are living in tent camps; as yet they've heard no plans for help with restoring their homes.



An Agadez neighborhood turned to rubble, a tent camp for the homeless, girls in camp playing with the photographer. [RAIN photos].

***Every morning in Africa, a gazelle wakes up. It knows it must run faster than the fastest lion or it will be killed.
Every morning a lion wakes up. It knows it must outrun the slowest gazelle or it will starve to death.
It doesn't matter whether you are a lion or gazelle. When the sun comes up, you'd better start running.
-African proverb.***

Here at RAIN, we're wearing our running shoes. We're assessing damage to school gardens in the zone of unrest and will help parents to get them going again. In Agadez we are thinking of helping to rebuild herds of goats and sheep the traditional way, with a system called *Temoko*: I lend you two animals, you breed them, you raise a small herd, you return my animals, you give two to your neighbor, and so it goes.

In an undeveloped land with few jobs, traditional skills can be a key to development – hone them, modernize them, to earn more while preserving cultures. RAIN looks forward to 2010. As we pursue new work with *Temoko* and teaching people better animal husbandry skills, we will also install new gardens and introduce mentors to girls in Tilabery and Tanout. Please turn the page to learn how RAIN programs work in tandem to accomplish long-term food and water security, education, and livelihoods for all.

RAIN'S MISSION IS TO WORK 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.

Access to water, gardening, education and improved livelihoods may sound like worthwhile, but unrelated goals. Yet, incorporated into traditional lives and cultures, RAIN programs create an integrated pathway to development, sustainability and cultural harmony.



SCHOOL MARKET GARDENS ARE SELF-SUSTAINING, PROVIDE FOOD FOR CHILDREN, AND TEACH KIDS HOW TO FARM.



EACH WELL NEAR A SCHOOL OR IN A SCHOOL MARKET GARDEN PROVIDES CLEAN WATER FOR HUNDREDS.
AMAN IMAN: WATER IS LIFE.



WOMEN ARTISANS, WITH RAIN'S SUPPORT, CREATE AND SELL BEAUTIFUL CRAFT ITEMS, GIVING 50% OF ALL PROFITS TO SUPPORT THEIR CHILDREN'S SCHOOLS. THEY ALSO TEACH THESE VALUABLE SKILLS TO THEIR GIRLS.



THE LITERACY LOOP: ILLITERATE WOMEN MEET WITH SCHOOLGIRLS WEEKLY AND COUNSEL THEM TO STAY IN SCHOOL, TEACHING THEM ABOUT FEMININE HEALTH AND HYGIENE, ROLES FOR WOMEN IN SOCIETY, AND TRADITIONAL SKILLS FROM LEATHER CRAFTS TO COOKING.

RAIN OFFERS THE MENTORS CLASSES IN LITERACY. THEIR GIRLS HELP THEM TO LEARN FRENCH, THE NATIONAL LANGUAGE OF NIGER.



As 2009 draws to a close, we eagerly look forward to a new year. RAIN, entering its eighth year in Niger, has truly become an organization of, and for, the people. Our mentoring program is especially beloved. When RAIN's program director Ibrahim Boubacar visited a RAIN mentoring school recently he was touched by the girls, mentors, parents and community members who approached him to say that this program has improved their lives as no other has. It is their enthusiasm and gratitude that moves us to grow and expand. Please look for our 2010 Annual Appeal, coming soon. Whether a loyal supporter or new to RAIN, join us in 2010 as another caravan of gardens, literacy and livelihoods sets off into the vast Sahara and Sahel.

Warm regards to all, Bess