

TRIP REPORT—NIGER



EDUCATE TOMORROW

INTERNATIONAL
OUTREACH—NIGER

In January, two of the co-founders of EDUCATE TOMORROW, Virginia Emmons & Melissa McCarthy, traveled to Niger with four volunteers. The group had three objectives:

- Complete an audit of the primary school and health clinic in Kabey Fo to ensure that the dollars contributed had been properly expended.
- Obtain local authority to utilize a former Peace Corps hostel near Kirtachi as a dormitory for the second phase of the International Outreach program.
- Assess the current condition of the hostel and estimate costs to transform the facility into living space for the 15-20 children from Kabey Fo expected to attend secondary school this fall.

All three objectives were met with great success. An extensive audit was performed on the primary school and clinic. Contributions are being allocated wisely. Some supplies are needed, but overall the school is being effectively managed, and the children are thriving. However the health clinic is very low on all supplies.

The meeting with Mayor Amadou Ali Djibo, the senior elected official of the Kirtachi region, was especially encouraging. With the support of the Peace Corps Director, Ambassador Jim Bullington, the Mayor agreed to grant the former Peace Corps hostel to EDUCATE TOMORROW for use as a dormitory. The group also met with the school director & the facilities manager to assess the facilities and student requirements for the dormitory. These findings will be finalized in the weeks ahead to identify fundraising priorities.

A WORLD OF POSSIBILITY...

Gary & Jamie Langston accompanied two of the co-founders of Educate Tomorrow, Virginia Emmons & Melissa McCarthy, along with two of their friends, Amanda Koziar and Maria Bianchi, to Niger in January 2006. Following are Jamie's reflections upon their return.

Gary & I recently returned from Niger, West Africa. Some of you were curious by our choice of adventure. A few were even anxious that some horrible tragedy would befall us on our journey. But there were no tragedies – not in our travels or in the people we met. The shocking CNN-type images of starvation in Somalia were not apparent – at least not this year. Life is tenuous at best in these parts of the world. A poor crop

Inside this issue:

Trip Report—Niger	1
A world of Possibility through Education	1-3
The Mayor's vision	3-4

**Her chances
for a better
TOMORROW
begin with
YOU!**



A WORLD OF POSSIBILITY... *(from page 1)*

these parts of the world. A poor crop next year may change the landscape of life entirely; but this year, the children, although lean, were not starving, and their curiosity and energy were abundant. The villagers are warm and welcoming. They are an honest people – strong and even courageous in the face of such poverty. And yet they face the challenges of each day with neither anger nor despair, but routine resolve and even happiness.



I spent some time one morning with a young woman who was pounding millet for the daily meal. She welcomed me to join her repeatedly pounding and sifting, sifting and pounding, until the millet was the finest flour. She laughed openly as this curious American woman clumsily aimed a large wooden pole into the almost cone-shaped stone urn. I became winded after just a few minutes, and we laughed together. I pointed at my biceps to show her how much strength she must have to do this each day, and she took my hand into hers and marveled at its smoothness. I was embarrassed. The young woman was perhaps 20 – her hands almost deformed by calluses.



Our “Kadidja,” Virginia Emmons, with Kabey Fo villagers

We traveled to Niger with two of the co-founders of EDUCATE TOMORROW, a small non-profit based in Miami, FL. Nationally, the organization supports kids who are aging out of the foster care system by matching them with mentors, who in turn help the kids enroll in college and training programs, find housing and jobs, as well as apply for social assistance that may be available to them. However, internationally, they have adopted the small village of Kabey Fo, Niger, where Virginia Emmons, spent three years as a Peace Corps volunteer. Virginia, or “Kadidja” as she is known to the villagers, is fluent in several local languages, as well as French, and has become somewhat of legend in the community.

Kabey Fo is a small, Muslim village of about 200. It is located on a flat, dry plain of orange sand, dotted only occasionally by a tree and scrub brush. Families live in circular huts, approximately 12-15’ in diameter, made of clay bricks and topped with thatched roofs. These are the modern huts that villagers were taught to build by the Peace Corps, although a number of the original style of straw huts remain.

Several years ago, Virginia and her sisters established a primary school in Kabey Fo. The first class will be graduating this year. Each student must pass a rigorous state exam to attend secondary school (grades 7-10), but because the nearest school is almost 26km away, attendance by those that graduate is unlikely. Life in Kabey Fo is completely subsistence. Only a few of the men and none of the women of the village are literate. Dreams of sending their children to secondary school is simply cost prohibitive.



Kabey Fo Primary School

EDUCATE TOMORROW

1111 Brickell Avenue, Suite 1700
Miami, Florida 33131

Phone: 305-789-8900
Fax: 305-789-8953
E-mail: info@educatetomorrow.org



A WORLD OF POSSIBILITY... (from page 2)

Everyone must help to tend the crops and complete daily tasks or the whole family suffers. So unless the children can attend without burdening their families, an education is just not possible. That's why EDUCATE TOMORROW is establishing a dormitory about 2km from the nearest secondary school, which will provide room and board, as well as tutoring to the students from Kabey Fo. The dormitory will be established in an area once used as a Peace Corps hostel, a place where young volunteers could catch of few days of respite. It is a beautiful place on the banks of the Niger River.



The Banks of the Niger River

Our travels were filled with sights and sounds and hopes and dreams of a better tomorrow in Niger. We completed an audit of the primary school to ensure that the dollars contributed had been properly expended. We inventoried the tiny health clinic and midwives kits to identify needs – everything from band aids to latex gloves and iodine and even to a donkey cart they hope to acquire to use as an ambulance. Additionally, we took a hard look at Tounga Lellea and what it will take to transform this former hostel into living space for 15-20 children – new latrines, maintenance on huts, sleeping mats, bicycles, books, gardening tools, etc. We'll be finalizing our findings in the weeks to come, so we can identify fund-raising priorities.



Children playing by the school flag pole

Niger is a different world – and not just by distance traveled. You have to consider how life may have been during biblical times to grasp their reality - - pounding millet into flour each morning, carrying water from wells by hand or by donkey, no sanitation, no kitchens or laundries, no electronics save for a battery operated radio or two (and oddly cell phone towers, which are now springing up along the still numbered paved roads). And yet the people are warm, friendly, industrious and happy. Despite the overwhelming poverty and primitive existence, do not feel sorry for these wonderful people; be as I am, unbelievably hopeful for their future and the world of possibility that will be made available to them through education.

THE MAYOR'S VISION

As the Peace Corps began plans to close out its development activities in the region, Ambassador Jim Bullington, Country Director of the Peace Corps, was approached by Virginia Emmons, former Peace Corps volunteer and current Executive Director of Educate Tomorrow. She requested his support to use the former hostel in Tounga Lellea as a dormitory. The dormitory would enable the children of Kabey Fo an opportunity to attend secondary school. Although the facility was built by the Peace Corps, local and regional authority for land use could only be obtained with the consent of the Kirtachi Canton Chief, Amirou Issoufou Mouni Dioffo and the Mayor of Kirtachi, Amandou Ali Djibo.

Mayor Ali Djibo is the senior elected official of a large region along the Niger River, stretching from Gay in the north to Tondeye in the south. The Mayor is an



Mayor Ali djibo



EDUCATE TOMORROW

1111 Brickell Avenue, Suite 1700
Miami, Florida 33131

Phone: 305-789-8900
Fax: 305-789-8953

E-mail: info@educatetomorrow.org

Give **TODAY**
to **EDUCATE TOMORROW!**



We envision a world in which access to EDUCATION is equitable for ALL people.

EDUCATE TOMORROW, CORP. is an international not for profit certified 501 (c) 3. We believe that the education is critical to a healthy society. All over the world, poverty denies children, as well as adults, the promises of a better tomorrow. Forgotten by society and social welfare programs, children born into poverty are trapped in a cruel and often violent cycle that frequently continues for generations. Lacking the inspiration, confidence, knowledge, and means to change, entire families are lost to the cycle of hopelessness.

EDUCATE TOMORROW believes that the best way to end the cycle of poverty is through education. Our mission is to make EDUCATION an attainable goal for the most disadvantaged in our world, so that ALL may be afforded the possibilities that can be achieved through learning. We strive to reach out to these individuals and provide them inspiration, guidance, and support and lead them on the path of life-long learning.

THE MAYOR'S VISION (from page 3)

educated man with great compassion and hope for his people. With the full support of Ambassador Bullington, two of the co-founders of Educate Tomorrow, Virginia Emmons and Melissa McCarthy met with the Mayor and Canton Chief in January to discuss the plan.

During the meeting, the Mayor shared his vision for the region. Highlighting the map shown at the right, the Mayor hoped that one day the dormitory could enable all of the children from Gay to Tondeye an opportunity to attend secondary school. He officially granted land use to Educate Tomorrow and offered his ardent support to make the dormitory successful.

Ms. Emmons was careful to explain that Educate Tomorrow was in the very early stages of "building a nest," beginning with the children of Kabey Fo. They understood, but it was clear that the local town officials and the Mayor knew that the success of the dormitory and the support of the people in the region would be key to realizing his vision to bring education to all of Kirtachi.

