

Living in Niger

village life

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This page is a hard one to write because, like towns in the United States, every one is different. I can write about my experiences in my village but they could be totally different from another volunteer's experiences.

FACT BOX:

The main ethnic groups are the Hausa, the Kanuri, the Songhai or Zarma, the Fulani , and the Taureg . The majority of the population is rural and lives in the southern regions. There is a significant migration of seasonal labor to Ghana, Nigeria, and Chad. This migration is referred to there as "exode". About 80% of the population is Muslim; most of the rest practice animism, or traditional religious beliefs. There is a small Christian minority in the cities and larger towns. The country's official language is French, and several indigenous languages as well as Arabic are spoken.



My particular village was filled with 425 of the friendliest, most brutally honest people one could ever come across. It is refreshing though that, unlike in the states, they will tell you exactly how well or how poorly you are performing whether it be speaking their language, farming, or just walking too slowly. In my first few months living in the village it was not uncommon for me to be told that I spoke like an child, or that I didn't know what I was doing, when trying something new. Believe it or not, this kind of feedback is very helpful and speeds learning. While they are providing you with constructive criticism they are also offering to help you with, or give you just about anything. It is hard to accept food and water from a village that you know does not have enough, but rejecting it would be considered rude.