

Former FAO and Other UN Staff Association

Associazione dei Pensionati della FAO e di altre Organizzazioni delle Nazioni Unite



Newsbrief 95
March 2015

BMIP/MMBP Health Insurance arrangements in the Rome-based agencies facing transition problems

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As FFOA members are surely aware by now, as of 1 January 2015, After Service Health Insurance coverage under BMIP and MMBP being provided by the Rome based agencies is administered by Allianz Worldwide Care (AWC), replacing Vanbreda International (VBI). Remember, however, that claims for reimbursement of services received in 2013 and 2014 will continue to be processed and paid by VBI.

The transition from VBI to AWC started only in November 2014 and there have been a number of constraints to be overcome. Participants with email addresses all received the new documentation from AWC in December, with few exceptions. Hard copies and plastic membership cards were dispatched to all participants (including those who had already received documentation via email) in late December and January. Therefore, all participants should now have received their membership cards and benefit guides. If not, you should send your full name and that of any dependants, plus index number to RBA.Helpline@allianzworldwidecare.com, or contact FAO Social Security.

FAO, at the behest of the FFOA and other staff bodies, organised a briefing session with AWC on 5 February 2015. The meeting was attended by over 200 persons, the majority being retired staff, reflecting the serious concern that retirees have with ensuring a smooth transition in the management and processing of claims. Representatives of the staff associations also participated. The briefing session was webcast to permit global participation.

FFOA raised some important issues for clarification by AWC, which were then complemented by additional points from participants in attendance. Key issues requiring solutions/ improvements are highlighted below.

The list of hospitals, clinics and medical centres with direct billing or other preferential arrangements in Rome was felt to be too short. AWC agreed to expand the list. As in the past, FFOA members are urged to be proactive in recommending additions.

The list of medical Doctors with direct billing arrangements was felt to be too short and does not indicate the medical specialization. AWC

A Word from the President on Behalf of Your Executive Committee

Unless you have retired to the moon, you must be aware of our major efforts regarding the transition from VBI to AWC for medical claims processing. I wish to commend again the hard work of Giorgio Eberle, Ed Seidler and Marco Breschi in leading our efforts to speed up the process and support a smoother transition.

You will have received a series of FFOA news flashes to help keep you abreast of major developments as they occurred (with FAO covering the costs of mailing to those members without email, for which we are grateful). And you will have had the opportunity to participate in briefing sessions at the three large UN Organizations in Rome (or to follow online via webcasting). As this Bulletin goes to press, we have had three further meetings with FAO (which has still not signed the final contract, although it is fully operational), and with Allianz representatives to impress upon them on YOUR behalf that these are OUR vital health plans that they administer. I can confirm that Allianz is working hard to follow each complaint/concern received, as it is in their own interest (as well as ours) to get the transition problems eliminated as quickly as possible. FFOA has requested that the JAC/MC resume regular meetings to carefully monitor the implementation by the new claims provider. This was agreed to by the Chairman.

With effect as of your April pension deposits and statements, the majority of participants (unless you are already capped at the max of 4 per cent) should see a reduction in your medical insurance cost of 1-2 per cent.

For those of our members residing in the USA, during February you should be receiving your special health cards, including a pharmacy card for direct billing.

This issue of Newsbrief is accompanied by important documents for our upcoming General Assembly on 27 May, and also for Executive Committee elections in November. Read the documents carefully and mark the dates on your calendar.

I conclude by informing you that as of 18 February, Giorgio Eberle has stepped down as FFOA General Secretary, although he will continue to be active in the Association. Thank you, Giorgio, for the expertise, guidance and leadership that you have provided, and that we hope you will continue to offer. The responsibilities have been taken up by Georgia Shaver, whom many of you will remember from her years in WFP; thank you, Georgia, for volunteering.

Alan Prien
President

Newsbrief 95 March 2015

Newsbrief, the FFOA official quarterly newsletter, is produced in English and Italian and is distributed free to all members, electronically to those who have internet access, and in print to those who do not. Newsbrief (current and back issues) is also available on the FFOA website: www.fao.org/FFOA. Suggestions or contributions from members are welcome.

Editors: S. Dembner, M.F. Purnell
Designer: O. Bolbol

The cost of printing Newsbrief, as well as other FFOA documents is borne by the World Food Programme, for which the Association is grateful.

Pension Matters

(Responsible: M. Breschi, A. Prien, G. Eberle, A. Fusco Femiano, M. F. Purnell)

The state of the UN Joint Staff Pension Fund.

Consistent with trends in recent years, the Fund remains structurally strong and financially sound while conducting its operations in an efficient and cost-effective manner. This includes managing its large and varied global investments in a prudent and effective manner leading to steady overall improvements in the value of the Fund's portfolio. Such positive performance continued in the last quarter of 2014 as well as in the first weeks of 2015. As previously reported, there is an expectation for a continued positive financial outlook for the current year with an annual overall positive trend including physiological short-term ups and downs reflecting market fluctuations. The latest information we have is that the preliminary value of the Fund's assets as at 31 December 2014 was US\$ 52,772 million up from the level of US\$ 50,739 million at the end of 2013. In January 2015, the level of the assets remained at a healthy level of US\$ 52,426 million. As usual, FFOA will remain vigilant and will continue to keep members informed on financial developments as they become known.

The Fund performance indicator for the 12-month period ended on 31 December 2014 was relatively stable at the level of 3.1, compared to the benchmark indicator of 3.6. The Fund remains committed to maintain a high level of performance in future years. In this context, the Fund is continuously refining its measuring, monitoring, assessment and valuation techniques. In this regard, an issue of significant importance for its positive impact on the Fund continues to be the increase to 65 of the mandatory separation age (MAS) for UN staff who entered on duty before 1 January 2014 (the MAS for those who entered on duty on or after that date was already increased to 65). We provide an overview of the complex process that eventually will lead to a full adoption of the new MAS within the UN at large on page 8 of this Newsbrief.

New publication on legal guardianship and estate

In response to an increasing number of queries regarding the policy and procedures applicable to retirees and adult beneficiaries who are less autonomous or can no longer manage their pension affairs, the UNJSPF has issued a new publication on legal guardianship and estate. The 16-page booklet focuses on issues related to retirees and adult beneficiaries who are unable to manage their affairs due to ill health or infirmity due to advanced age; beneficiaries of child benefits who are under the age of 21 or disabled; payments to the estate of deceased participants; and related UNJSPF regulations and administrative rules. Printed copies of the booklet may be obtained on request from the Fund or downloaded from the publications section of the UNJSPF website.

Cost of living increase.

FFOA liaises on an ongoing basis with the FAO Social Security office to ensure that increases in the cost of living indexes for Euro-based beneficiaries residing in Italy are properly and timely reflected by the UNJSPF in their payments of benefits. Based on the published level of the cost of living index in Italy, there will be no increases in benefits this year as the index increase was less than 2 per cent compared to the past two years (any increase will be applied when the threshold of 2 per cent is exceeded on a cumulative base, i.e., by including unapplied increases of less than 2 per cent accrued from previous years).

With regard to benefits defined under the US Dollar track, we have no indication of increases applied by the UNJSPF at the time we go to press. We will inform members on a timely basis as soon as information becomes available.

Certificates of Entitlement

The annual Certificates of Entitlements were released to retirees at the end of last year. We would like to remind members that it is extremely important to ensure that signed certificates are returned to the Pension Fund in time to avoid suspension of benefit payments.

Confirmation of status can be obtained by accessing the Pension Fund website with the pension number and password (see Navigation Tips on the Pension page of the FFOA web site www.ffoa-web.org). The Fund has sent a second notification to beneficiaries for whom they have no certificate on file as of February 2015. If a signed certificate is not received by April 2015, payment of benefits may be suspended. For any problem, we suggest you contact the Fund directly.

Medical Insurance

(Responsible: E. Seidler, G. Eberle, A. Prien, M. Breschi)

(continued from page 1)

confirmed that the list would be expanded. Here again, FFOA members are urged to be proactive. If you have a good doctor who charges reasonable rates, urge her/him to sign up for direct billing, and recommend him to your colleagues and friends.

The complete list of benefits offered by AWC does not seem to be exactly the same as that in force under VBI. A detailed check is required and is underway by Social Security as terms and conditions were to remain unchanged.

Reimbursement of travel costs for treatment abroad where it is significantly cheaper is no longer considered. This is regretted and should be rectified. FFOA will continue to push for this through the JAC/ MC.

There was a feeling that Helpline Staff require better briefing to be able to adequately respond to participants, especially in this time of transition.

Claim forms initially appear very complex, and seem to require many breakdowns and details. AWC confirmed that provision of only aggregate information in the appropriate boxes is acceptable.

In the case where BMIP/MMBP is used as secondary insurance, AWC appears to require information on total or selected costs that are generally not easily available, particularly from a national health service. AWC was urged to adopt more reasonable procedures.

It emerged that the historical records that VBI are transmitting to AWC are reimbursement records and not full medical records. Thus, the full medical condition and history of participants may not be immediately clear to AWC. This means that in some cases participants and/ or doctors may need to provide additional information/ clarification. FFOA stressed at the meeting that AWC needs flexibility and understanding when dealing with participants and their claims in terms of fair interpretation of coverage and reimbursements. Delays and requests for exaggerated detail in background information/ justification as a dissuasive tactic are unacceptable.

Clarification on practical issues

In addition to submission of claims by normal post or email, participants may also submit claims directly via smartphone (learn how on page 5). Use of the site my.allianzworldwidecare.com is recommended for downloading forms (rather than from allianzworldwidecare.com). A link to the AWC site has been inserted in the Medical Coverage page of the FFOA website www.ffoa-web.org.

Original bills and receipts must be kept for at least two years (plan requirements) or longer as required by local legislation (particularly if used for abating income taxes). Similarly photocopies are acceptable.

Reimbursements of Medical Doctor bills will be made only if they conform to local fiscal legislation.

Family members may submit claims and receive reimbursements provided they are authorized to do so by the principal participant.

When BMIP/MMBP is used as the second insurer, reimbursement of balances will be at 100 per cent.

AWC will provide participants residing in the USA with pharmacy cards allowing for direct billing from preferred suppliers. On request, travellers to the USA for at least two weeks will be issued a temporary card.

AWC has two Claims Assistants on FAO premises in Rome, five mornings per week. If they do not answer the phone because already engaged, calling the AWC helpline

is recommended. In addition, an AWC Medical Advisor (doctor) will be available, by appointment, at FAO on Mondays and Tuesdays.

Whilst there are “teething” problems whenever there are changes, it is important that these are minimised and services provided are equal to or better than previously. FFOA will be calling for regular monitoring of plan performance and will endeavour to ensure that the plans meet the expectations of participants in terms of administration, performance, simplified procedures and establishment of appropriate reasonable and customary reimbursements for treatment and hospitalization..

In this regard, a meeting of FAO’s Joint Advisory Committee on Medical Coverage (JAC/MC) took place on 23 February. At the meeting, FFOA considered of paramount importance application of the same rules and interpretation concerning the benefits package as those under VBI unless specifically agreed to by the JAC/MC. Unilateral changes by AWC were not acceptable in any case.

FFOA also stressed that a rapid response to requests from participants is imperative. This is particularly the case when quick decisions, often over the phone, are required on hospital admissions, payment guarantees, etc. Estimate Forms and other administrative matters can be handled once the crisis is over.

Your Executive Committee will continue to keep you informed about developments through this Newsbrief.

Medical insurance claims by smartphone

AWC offers participants a free smartphone app, MyHealth (for both Android and i-Phone), via which claims may be submitted. The process is simple and efficient.

After downloading and installing the app, to log on for the first time, you need to enter your policy and pin numbers (in the welcome materials you have received). You will be prompted to choose a secret code number (a pin) for the app, and on subsequent use, only that pin will be required to log on.

Unfortunately, new users also need to enter basic personal information into the

system on first use (it would have been better if the app could have obtained this information automatically from the Allianz database). But at least it’s only once.

After logging on, select “My claims”, then “Submit a claim”, and then “Claim details”. You will be prompted to provide basic information and then to take a photo of your invoice and other relevant materials with your smartphone. Then click Submit and the claim is done! No need to make or scan copies (of course, you need to retain your original receipts). And if for some reason, your Internet connection from the smartphone doesn’t work for a moment when you submit your claim, nothing is lost. The information remains on the app until you submit (or cancel) a claim.

It is also possible to monitor the status of claims via the app – both those that are in process and those that have been closed.

News from the UN Organizations

WFP

The First Regular Session of the Executive Board was held on 9 -10 February 2015. The Zero Hunger Challenge was a constant theme with WFP maintaining that it is possible to have a strong vision of a Zero Hunger tomorrow. But obstacles persist and for WFP the year of 2014 was a year of turmoil, bringing challenges and crises that at times pushed the organization to its limits. 2015 will be no different; WFP is currently responding to 5 concurrent Level 3 emergencies and 6 on-going Level 2 emergencies. WFP’s global funding outlook for 2015 is US\$7.45 billion and a funding shortfall of US\$3 billion is anticipated. WFP, along with the other Rome-based agencies will use the Expo Milano 2015 (opening in May 2015) as an opportunity to make a worldwide case to end hunger. Finally, football player Zlatan Ibrahimovic (Paris-Saint-Germain football club) is fronting a campaign called “805 million names”. Fifty names have been temporarily tattooed onto his skin, symbolically representative of the 80 million hungry people

who WFP currently assists globally. Each time he plays a game his worldwide supporters will also be cheering and supporting the real champions - people who are suffering from hunger today.

IFAD

The annual Governing Council was held on 16-17 February in IFAD HQ. Featured speakers were the President of Ghana, the King of Tonga, and the Italian Minister of Economy and Finance. The theme this year was “Rural Transformation-Key to Sustainable Development”. Key documents are available on the main IFAD website.

FAO

FAO is coordinating the UN system’s participation at EXPO 2015, which will open 1 May in Milan, Italy. At EXPO a UN itinerary will offer visitors an opportunity to learn more about the issues of food security and nutrition, sustainability, poverty reduction, development and cooperation and the UN’s work to build a world free from hunger. With its theme “Feeding the Planet, Energy for Life”, EXPO offers a chance to mobilize public opinion around the pressing need to make the eradication of hunger and malnutrition central pillars of the global development agenda, according to FAO Director-General José Graziano da Silva.

Behind the public EXPO is a government consultative process that will terminate in a Milan Charter containing statements of principle and proposals for action on making sustainable agriculture and food systems an engine for human development.

According to the FAO DG, “The Charter offers an opportunity for the world to engage in a global discussion on the future global development agenda, and in particular the key role of sustainable food systems.”

News from the Staff Associations

The primary concern of the Staff Associations in FAO, IFAD and WFP, is the newly introduced relationship with AWC.

It is evident that there is concern and uncertainty among serving staff with regard to the new medical insurance arrangements. The Staff Associations plan to diligently monitor developments, especially via the JAC/MC meetings, and also through their respective Organizations’ Administrative/Management Bodies.

In early February, Staff Association representatives participated in the 68th FICSA Council held at FAO. IFAD-ECSA is presently engaged in preparations for their forthcoming Italy-based staff associations meeting (date to be announced). The UGSS programme for 2015 also includes activities related to the new policy on Performance Management System (linked to renewal of contracts of PSA and consultants), outsourcing of administrative functions at WFP, changes in contracts related to increases within grade (WIGSI) and conversion to continuing status. Additionally, UGSS is seeking an agreement with FAO to represent GS staff in the field, plus changes to Manual 316 on Short term staff.

AP-in-FAO is addressing staff concerns related to the new FAO Geographic Mobility Programme promulgated on 19 February, 2015. There are grave concerns that the new programme may be detrimental to both staff and the Organization. FFOA congratulates Mr Juan Coy on his election as General Secretary in the January by-elections. We look forward to fruitful future collaboration in our areas of common interest.

The WFP Professional Staff Association (PSA)

In December 2014 the PSA participated in the WFP 2014 Promotion Panel and published its feedback with results of the PSA Diversity & Inclusion Survey, a PSA initiative aimed at gathering staff opinion on WFP’s development as a diverse and inclusive organization. PSA is hopeful that with a new Diversity Policy, WFP has an opportunity to take this issue forward while the PSA will continue to support and contribute to these management efforts. It is believed that this will include advocacy and

working with HR to develop a basic course to help all staff be more conscious of the benefits of our diverse working environment and our individual responsibilities.

The PSA is also currently surveying all National Officers to gauge their interest in being represented as part of the PSA, now that WFP has issued all full time national staff with WFP contracts in July of 2014.

February 2015 Carnevale in Ronciglione and Viareggio
 Art walks in Viterbo; painting and frescoes across the centuries
 Tuscania – the heart of Etruscan civilization
 The first monthly Coffee morning took place Wednesday 11 February (with the schedule for the year to be announced soon by email)

Social support and Recreational Activities

(Responsible: J. Smidt, G. Monciotti, I. Novelli, A. Van Arkadie, A. Fusco Femiano)

Previous activities:

Since our last Newsbrief 94, the following activities were enjoyed by some of our members:

January 2015: Monte Amiata – A Sunday in the snow
 Lago di Bolsena – The living creche at Civita di Bagnoregio
 Reggia di Caserta and the historic silk making of San Leucio
 Naples – Monastery and cloister of S. Chiara and the Archeological Museum

Upcoming activities

April A Spring lunch at Ristorante Babette – date to be announced.

In addition to organizing social activities, FFOA also responds to individual requests from members for assistance, guidance or referral on a broad range of issues associated with retirement and ageing in general (all services are provided by members on a volunteer basis). A member of the FFOA Executive Committee (a Duty Officer) is available every morning at the FFOA office to assist members with various issues. In this period, for example, FFOA assisted a member in finding a post in a nursing home, as a viable alternative to long-term hospital stay.



At the FFOA Christmas Party, December 2014

News from the Executive Committee

UN General Assembly increases mandatory separation age to 65 for serving staff but implementation date still uncertain.

In accord with the recommendations of the Pension Board, the ICSC and the Fifth Committee, on 29 December 2014 the UNGA decided, without a vote, to recommend to all Organizations (of the Common System) to increase the mandatory age of separation to 65 for staff recruited before 1 January 2014, taking into account the acquired rights of staff.

This is good news on the surface, but the date of implementation is still uncertain and looks to be delayed at least until 2017. The UNGA tasked the Fifth Committee with identification of a proposed date for implementation no later than its seventy-first session, which begins only in September 2016. Then the Fifth Committee recommendation will have to pass through the UNGA again, no earlier than end-December 2016, which certainly would not permit implementation before mid- to late-2017 or even later.

Of significance in the overall debate, the recommendation from the Fifth Committee was based on deliberations by the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC). According to official UN press information, the ICSC's analysis of costs, succession planning, performance management and gender/geographical balance, found there would be no negative consequences by changing the retirement age to coordinate with the policy for new staff. In addition there would be actuarial benefits to our Pension Fund. One Organization, the Universal Postal Union in Geneva, has already increased the MAS to 65 for serving staff.

FFOA annual General Assembly

The 45th Session of the General Assembly will be held this year at FAO on 27 May. The meeting starts in the Green Room at 9:30 with presentations by the Executive Heads of the three Rome-based agencies. Other important

presentations include those by staff associations, and by representatives of the Pension Fund and Social Security, with the introduction of the new claims processor Allianz Worldwide Care.

After a subscription buffet lunch (don't forget to book beforehand), in the afternoon Mr Ali Mekouar, a former FAO Director (and FFOA member), will make a presentation on the main issues raised at the Second International Conference on Nutrition, which took place at FAO in late 2014.

All members are cordially invited. Please don't forget to bring your FFOA membership card and your pensioner's building pass for easy entrance.

The General Assembly will also be available live over the Internet, so you can follow the discussion from your computer, wherever you may be. Instructions how to access the link will be provided by email shortly before the meeting.

The documents for the General Assembly are transmitted with this Newsbrief. Please bring them with you, as well as the Provisional Report dispatched with Newsbrief 93 of September 2014.

FFOA sub-committees - call for participation

At the May Annual Assembly, your Executive Committee will present to you the 2015 Programme of Work. That Programme of Work depends largely on the input and support of 11 sub-committees:

- Pensions
- Medical Insurance
- Institutional Matters
- Internal Matters
- External Relations
- Financial Matters
- Publications
- Social, Support & Recreational Activities
- Technology Support
- Programme Development and Follow-up
- Policy and Governance
- Membership Matters
- Communications and Training

Won't you lend a hand in one of these key areas? The amount of time required is exactly what you are prepared to offer! And you can be

in Rome or anywhere else around the globe and still make a valuable contribution. Help FFOA keep abreast of important developments. Read and analyse key information. Help us improve our communication channels. Use your current professional and/or social skills, or try your hand at something new. Your participation is key to a stronger and more effective FFOA.

Executive Committee elections November 2015

The three-year term of the present Executive Committee will end in December and a new one must be elected in November. All members who are eligible are encouraged to consider standing for election to the New Committee. Information and a nomination form are distributed with this issue of Newsbrief.

Following the successful introduction of an e-voting system for the elections in 2012, in which almost half of all members voted electronically, this system will be used again in 2015.

FAO parking available for disabled FFOA members

We are pleased to inform you that agreement has been reached with FAO to provide two parking spaces for disabled retirees who need to visit FAO. The parking spaces are behind the atrium next to the nursery garden fence (building B side) and are available between 9:30 and 15:00 hours. Retirees who need this parking arrangement should contact FAO Security at least one day before the parking space is required.

News from the Electronic World

(Responsible: Pino Pace)

Robots and elderly people

Most elderly people wish to remain in their homes as long as possible as this gives a richer social life and allows them to maintain their habits. This is also positive from an economic perspective as the cost of care at home is almost always much less than the cost of residential care. There are many innovative attempts to ensure



A Swedish GiraffPlus tester

environments that will allow elderly people to remain safe and happy at home. Newsbrief will bring information on these experiments to readers on a continuing basis. This time, we look at the GiraffPlus project, which takes a technological approach.

GiraffPlus is an EU-supported project that aims to insert a network of distributed sensors in the home, which then monitor activities and physiological data. The information collected from the sensors is transmitted to a central monitoring station, where anomalous results trigger first investigation and then, if necessary, action. For example, if the stove were to be on for an unusually long period of time, the system would trigger. Or if lights were turned on or off in an unusual manner. And a sensor installed into the participant's cell phone would react to a rapid motion with a decrease in altitude (potentially a fall).

But the focal point of the GiraffPlus system is a mobile robot, containing sophisticated

medial monitoring equipment to be used by the participant, and even a two-way video communication system to allow the participant to dialogue directly with the monitoring station. The Giraff (the name for the robot) even has a sensor that can “smell” smoke in case of a fire.

The system is currently being tested in several countries in Europe, including Italy, Spain and Sweden. A video of the system in operation in the home of a 94 year-old, very independent woman is available via this YouTube link <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pqnjC1UeCeQ>.

The use of technology to help people manage health conditions and stay independent for longer is a welcome approach. However, it is always important to ensure technology is only used where it delivers real benefits and to recognise that it is no substitute for the human touch.

The introduction of robotic devices in a lonely person's life might improve it. But that shouldn't disoblige society from finding new ways to give them human contact. The idea that we can say, “Hey, let's give them a robot and we don't have to worry any longer,” will only produce a scrapheap of robots.

To Your Good Health

(FFOA publishes health suggestions for pensioners but does not guarantee their accuracy or efficacy.)

More men face lonely old age, says a study commissioned by the BBC

A study conducted by the International Longevity Centre and Independent Age (a charitable organization), indicated that men are more likely than women to face loneliness and isolation in old age.

The report: The Emergency Crisis for Older Men, says women are still more likely to outlive their husbands but that the number of single older men is on the increase. The analysis of recent data from the English Longitudinal Study on Ageing suggests 1.5 million older men will be living alone by 2030 – up from 911,000 today.

Older men often also have less contact with family and friends than women of a similar age,

meaning they are often more socially isolated once their spouse dies, says the study. “When their partner died, often a man's social life shrinks” said independent Age chief executive Janet Morrison. Men are also less likely to ask for help or support and may be less able to seek new social contacts.

One excellent way to meet new people is through volunteering. As confirmed by Andrew Scharlach, Eugene and Rose Kleiner Professor of Aging, School of Social Welfare, University of California, Berkeley, “The whole volunteering aspect is so important. As you grow older you become less relevant. Helping other people is a way to stay engaged and to meet new friends.”

Article extracted from BBC News “Education and Family” and arranged by Sabatino Salvi.

Ageing in place through virtual villages

Most elderly people, when asked, would prefer to continue to live in their own homes, rather than move to an assisted living environment. Yet as they age, isolation is an ever-incumbent threat, and everyday tasks such as shopping and bill paying become increasingly difficult. And there comes a point where assisted living may appear to be the only option.

But a new concept is spreading rapidly in the United States that facilitates access by elderly people to needed services and social interaction without having to move from their homes – virtual villages.

Villages are intentional communities, made up of people with a common commitment – to take care of and look out for one another. They are membership-driven grass-roots organizations that, through primarily volunteers supported by paid staff, provide concierge-like service referrals for members. They coordinate personalized access to affordable services including transportation, health and wellness programmes, home repairs, social and educational activities, and other day-to-day needs enabling individuals to remain connected to their community throughout the aging process. More than 200 villages have been established in the United States in the past decade.

Each village is different depending on the people involved, but they share some common traits:

They offer a list of preferred service providers for “residents”. That makes it easy for residents to hire vendors, knowing the community has vetted them. Help with household chores, and assistance for personal care are in high demand.

They run transportation networks. Rides are provided by either volunteers, by senior services programmes from local governments, or via highly discounted commercial solutions. Access to reliable transportation helps residents travel to the doctor, hairdresser or grocery store as needed.

They organize and promote social events. Events are tailored to the tastes of the community. And members are actively encouraged to engage as they can in the provision of required services to others in the community, thus further stimulating social interaction.

The cost of virtual village membership

Yearly membership dues average about US\$450 nationally, and most villages offer subsidies for people who cannot afford membership costs. Even at full price, the comparison with the costs of assisted living is inviting indeed.

The main use of membership dues is maintenance of an infrastructure and staff (usually a combination of paid and volunteer) with the required organizational, administrative, communication and fund-raising skills.

“Economically, virtual villages are a great deal,” said Frank McAleer, director of retirement solutions at Raymond James, a financial services company. “You can retain equity in your home, your biggest investment.”

News from the membership

The lighter side

The name of the restaurant

Two senior couples are walking along, wives in

front, husbands in back. Herb says to Sam: “Gee, we went to a new restaurant last night and had the best meal ever. Good prices too.”

Sam says, “Well, we like to eat out too. What was the name of the restaurant?”

Herb says: “You’ll going to have to help me out here a little. What’s the name of that pretty flower, smells sweet, grows on a thorny bush?”

Sam says, “How about rose?”

“Yes, yes, that’s it!” cries Herb, then calls ahead to his wife.

“Rose. Hey, Rose. What was the name of the restaurant we ate at last night?”

New Members

A hearty welcome to all our new members.

Abib, Ms Dolly
 Arias Jimenez, Mr Enrique de Jesus
 Assinder, Ms Jacqueline
 Belgasmi, Ms Samia
 Burnet, Ms Ann
 Caravani, Mr Maurizio
 Caro, Mr Axel
 Catalano Badicu, Ms Aurica
 Dejene, Mr Alemneh
 Di Biase, Ms Dominique
 Garavani, Mr Maurizio
 Licitra, Ms Maria Lenina
 Makar, Mr Midhat
 Mousa Lo Cicero, Ms Habiba
 Ortiz Ribero, Ms Maria Teresa
 Passerini, Ms Paola
 Pontecorvo, Ms Isabella
 Salem, Ms Madeleine
 Santos, Ms Maria Lourdes
 Silver- Lorenzano, Ms Susan
 Smith Raffaele, Ms Hilary
 Spanò, Mr Vincenzo
 Tempelman, Ms Diana E.
 Troiano, Ms Norma
 Valentini, Ms Teresa
 Van Milink, Mr Willem

All retirees ought to join the Association to support its work representing the pensioners, and for their own interest, and should encourage their ex-colleagues to join!

IN MEMORIAM

Perrin de Brichambaut, Mr Guy
15 June 2014
Brescia, Ms Giselda
13 July 2014
Catalano, Mr Antonino
15 October 2014
Harcharick, Mr David
3 December 2014

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De Balogh, Mr Peter
1 January 2015
Azzolini, Mr Carlo
25 January 2015
Wood, Ms Rhona Margaret
3 February 2015

On behalf of all the members of FFOA, we express heartfelt sympathy to the families and friends of the above-mentioned members.

David A. Harcharik 3 December, 2014

David A. Harcharik, a US national, joined the FAO Forestry Department in 1971 as a P-2, but already with significant international experience, including service as a Peace Corps Volunteer, and an assignment as Visiting Professor in the Department of Forest Sciences at Agrarian University in Lima, Peru.

In late 1977, he left FAO to continue his studies in the USA, obtaining a PhD in forest genetics at Raleigh N.C. He then worked for the US Forest Service (International Forestry), ultimately rising to become Head of that unit. In 1995, he re-joined FAO as ADG of the Forestry Department.

On his return to FAO, Dave became one of the most popular and appreciated ADGs. He was hard-working, knowledgeable, and got on extremely well with both superiors and staff in FAO, as well as with colleagues in the increasingly competitive international community, who all appreciated his honesty and genuine wish to cooperate in getting things done.

In 2003, Dave was named FAO Deputy Director-General, a post he held until his retirement in 2007, when he returned to the United States.

Outside of work, Dave fully enjoyed the pleasures of life in Italy, especially his country home in Tuscany. He was also an avid outdoorsman, often using his home leave to embark on fishing excursions in the wilds of northern Canada. Dave was an FFOA member and also chaired a session of the FFOA General Assembly.