

# Former FAO and Other UN Staff Association

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



**Newsbrief 110**  
**April 2020**

## **A Word from the President on Behalf of Your Executive Committee**

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This is the first Newsbrief of 2020 and I take this opportunity to wish all our members a healthy, happy and prosperous 2020. As of Tuesday 10 March, the COVID-19 virus has seen the whole of Italy under lockdown with restrictions on movement and gatherings. All Rome-based Agencies have instituted emergency plans and only essential staff can enter Hqs with others teleworking. FFOA members have been informed of arrangements by a number of Newsflashes.

The end of 2019 saw your Committee heavily involved in the preparation of the transition of the medical insurance plans from Allianz to Cigna and a number of Newsflashes. Coffee mornings and Townhall meetings informed members of the new arrangements. Whilst Cigna will serve all the Rome-based Agencies for the next three years, the coverage and premiums will differ between the Agencies as there will now be three separate contracts. Premiums for BMIP and MMBP insurance cover were announced and communicated to the membership and a Coffee morning was held for FFOA members in February in which Cigna was able to take questions on coverage and processes and inform members on their various concerns. FFOA will be seeking to improve Cigna services in 2020; for those that have no computers or smart phones, the FFOA office will keep a stock of hard copy claim forms to provide to members.

FFOA is closely monitoring the performance of Cigna in its first months of operation and has raised member questions and problems with Social Security and Cigna to resolve problems. Membership card issues have arisen in all three Agencies and Newsflashes have been sent to members on what to do and who to contact. It is very important that members provide contact email addresses to FFOA so that we are able to inform members speedily on issues of major concern. If members themselves do not have an email address, then an alternative address should be provided (such as a friend or relative) who can receive the information and then relay it to the member. A key role of FFOA is communication and information to members on issues of primary concern to them (insurance and pension issues) and we can only do this speedily and effectively by email; reliance on the Agencies providing such information to retirees is being over optimistic.

This year will be the 50th Anniversary of the founding of FFOA. We planned to celebrate this at our Annual Assembly in May at IFAD but due to the COVID-19 crises this has been postponed. You will be informed of a new date which may be in late October.

**Edward Seidler**  
**President**

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## **Medical Insurance**

(E. Seidler )

The Rome-based Agencies (FAO, WFP, IFAD and ICCROM) will all be serviced by Cigna for their BMIP/MMBP Plans under separate contracts signed between each Agency and Cigna. Premiums will vary slightly between WFP and the other Agencies and coverage will be enhanced by WFP for dental, psychoanalysis, physiotherapy and preventive health screening. FAO, at the behest of FFOA, has reverted to charging a fixed premium for BMIP coverage as opposed to setting premiums as a percentage of full pensions; this brings FAO into alignment with WFP and IFAD and in conformity with UN procedures for the apportionment of premiums based on a 50-50 split. The FAO practice was considered not transparent and not in conformity with UN practices, as well as being too hard to implement in practice.

A number of Newsflashes have been sent to members informing on issues related to the transition of medical coverage from Allianz to Cigna and on who to contact at Agency and Cigna level to address problems such as incorrect names and questions on coverage. FFOA has taken up a number of issues with the Agencies and Cigna to seek clarification on coverage and procedures. A revised Benefits Guide is in the process of being written to better explain benefits and procedures and this should be available shortly. A number of overseas members have raised queries with FFOA regarding Cigna benefits and processes and these will be followed up; FFOA welcomes members emails re problems that they are

experiencing so that we can address these on behalf of all retirees. One issue that has arisen is the request by Cigna for confirmation tests or medical evaluations for medicines that have been prescribed by doctors and used by members for years and which were reimbursed by Allianz with no problem. Allianz does not necessarily share confidential medical information with Cigna so Cigna requests a doctor's confirmation and test results as to why the medicines are required to treat various ailments. This is a bother and an added expense, but is required as Cigna is the new insurer.

The FFOA office has copies of claim forms and benefit guides to give to members that require these. FFOA has secured agreement from FAO and Cigna that all retirees, irrespective of Agency, can visit the Cigna representative in FAO (available every morning) if they have problems or issues to raise. Retirees from WFP and IFAD do not have to visit their Agencies to meet the Cigna representative if FAO is a more convenient location. Likewise, FAO will continue to have a mailbox to receive hard copy claims from all retirees for Cigna (and for the time being Allianz) which will be sent every Monday morning to Cigna or Allianz. All Newsflashes can be accessed by members on the FFOA website: [www.ffoa-web.org](http://www.ffoa-web.org).

For our USA members, we are informed by Cigna that their pharmacy network is Cigna Healthcare PPO (which has agreements with the major pharmacies such as Walgreens, CVS, etc.) and network members should accept the Cigna card for the supply of medicines with prescriptions to cardholders under direct billing (i.e. 20% co-payment ). Please let us know if this functions well.

The Group Life and Accident Insurance (GLADI) for FAO will continue to be handled by Allianz and FFOA has raised the issue of delayed receipt of invoices for payment by retirees with FAO; invoices should have been received by retirees by end February and we are informed that coverage is in place as of 1 January 2020. WFP staff and retirees will have their GLADI coverage handled by Cigna as of 2020 and not Allianz.

## Pension Matters

(A. Prien, A. Fusco Femiano)

The main news on our pensions is found elsewhere in this bulletin, written by our former General Secretary, Marco Breschi, who has been representing us all at the Pension Board (PB), and now recently in the General Assembly debate on the PB report.

In addition to what he says, the increase in medical premiums for 2020 and thereafter will only be implemented with retroactivity by the Pension Fund Secretariat in early 2020. FFOA continued to monitor key pension-related issues in Italy, Geneva and New York through actively liaising and interacting with FAFICS, as well as with Management Representatives of the Rome-based Agencies, the FAO/WFP Social Security office, representatives of Staff Associations, key managers of the Pension Fund in New York and Geneva, and

with the members of the FAO/WFP Staff Pension Committee (SPC) and the IFAD SPC.

The cost of living changes were monitored according to the relevant indices published by the Italian ISTAT and the UN statistical office and it seems unlikely that an increase will occur for beneficiaries in Italy on the Euro track in 2020. The Pension Fund Secretariat has informed us that for those on the dollar track there will be an increase of 4.2% with effect from 01 April 2020.

We are now hoping to have the AGM in October at IFAD, when we hope to have with us Rosemary McClean, the new Chief Executive of Pension Administration, who has just taken up her new job.

## FFOA - Fifty Years of History

(P. Pace)



### YOUR VOLUNTARY CONTRIBUTIONS ARE REQUIRED FOR THE FOLLOWING FUNDS:

**Emergency Fund.** We wish to inform members that all loans granted in 2019 to members in financial difficulty have been paid back in full. A generous donation to the FFOA Emergency Fund was also made in 2019 by a former ICCROM staff member. In order to continue to assist our members, we wish to encourage voluntary contributions to the Emergency Fund so as to be able to consider all requests for loans received from members in financial difficulty. Requests for loans from the Emergency Fund should be addressed to the Chairperson, Joan Smidt: (joan\_smidt@libero.it).

**The Membership Defence Fund** was created to support legal costs, should FFOA find itself in need to appeal any legal decision that might affect members. The Fund balance is still low and needs to be increased. We therefore encourage our members to donate towards this Fund. The Chairperson of the Fund is: Gianni Monciotti (gmonciotti@alice.it).

This year we are going to hold the 50th GA, starting from the first one that was held in November 1971, soon after FFOA was established. In order to celebrate this anniversary, we felt that something should be done to pay tribute to the work of our colleagues, in particular those who devoted their time and energy to make this Association work in support of the interests of its members over such a long time.

The brochure "FFOA - Fifty Years of History" was thus assembled by pulling together, in as much as possible a concise approach, material from our archives, from the work accomplished by our Advisory Committees and from the memory of some of our colleagues.

The output of this joint effort, which has been embellished by the valuable design by one of our colleagues, is attached either in electronic or hard copy version. Hard copies will also be made available at the Annual General Assembly meeting, where a special afternoon session is planned to celebrate this important anniversary. This is one more good reason to attend our annual meeting, provisionally scheduled for late October, and to stay with us also in the afternoon.

## News from the UN Organizations

### IFAD

(A. Prien)

We are sorry to inform members that the second president of IFAD, **Mr Idriss Jazairi** as well as one of our earliest staffers, **Ms Malak El Kattan** have both passed away. Idriss was 88 and after leaving the presidency had continued extensive work with the Algerian embassy and various organizations in Geneva. Malak was with us at our last coffee morning, where she asked some pertinent questions of our Cigna representatives.

### WFP

(G. Shaver)

Ms Gina Casar, former WFP Chief Finance Officer and Director of Finance and Budget (2004-2006) has returned to WFP as senior advisor to the Executive Director on workplace culture to lead development of a comprehensive action plan and oversee its implementation. She presented to the February 2020 session of the Executive Board a document entitled “Concrete steps towards implementation of the recommendations of the joint Board/management working group on harassment, sexual harassment, abuse of power and discrimination”. This document includes a comprehensive action plan that features six core areas of action, identified after extensive internal consultation and review of the 2018 global staff survey and external review of WFP’s workplace culture and ethical climate. These areas cover: reaffirming values, leadership, employee engagement, policy and system revisions, discipline and communications.

A new WFP People Policy and strategy will be drafted for EB approval in February 2021. It will address, for example, issues of workforce diversity and inclusion and consider ways to limit the prolonged or repeated use of short-term personnel by looking at creating

a new contractual modality to meet short-to-medium term needs while providing competitive employment conditions for employees currently on short-term contracts.

Former WFP DED Susana Malcorra has been appointed Dean of IE School of Global and Public Affairs at IE University, Madrid Spain.

WFP now has a live hunger map, a near real time food security monitoring system. Food security can be monitored in more than 90 countries and predictions issued for places where data is limited.

WFP has issued two graphic comic books entitled Living Level-3: Iraq and Living Level-3: South Sudan that spread awareness of the real-life crisis and the people trying to solve it, as well as what life is like for the people suffering from war and famine. They were written by WFP’s Head of Television Communications, Jonathan Dumont and Joshua Dysart, with art by Roberto Ponticelli and Pat Masioni and are available in Feltrinelli bookstore in Italy and on GoodReads.com and Amazon.com.

### Mohamed Zejjari: In Memoriam

Mohamed Zejjari passed away peacefully on January 15, 2020, at his home in Rabat, Morocco, after a short illness. He was 81. Mohamed is survived by his spouse, Waheeda, and his two sons, Mounir and Hakeem. Mohamed studied law and economics at University Mohamed V, Casablanca, Morocco, and University of Toulouse, France. He joined the UN system in 1969, as FAO Administrative Officer in Guinea. In 1972, he joined WFP as Head of the WFP office in Niger. He then held several senior positions in HQ, as Head of Emergency Service, Chief of Staff, Director of Personnel and Administrative Services, Regional Director for Africa and lastly as Assistant Executive Director and Director of Operations. He also served as UN Coordinator and UNDP Representative in Iraq.

Mohamed was very much appreciated for his strong leadership, integrity, loyalty and kindness, as reflected in hundreds of messages of condolences from all across WFP community.

## FAFICS

(M. Breschi)

The Federation of Associations of Former International Civil Servants (FAFICS) continues its activities in support of UN retirees, including active participation in the work of the United Nations Pension Board and advocacy initiatives involving on-going contacts with the financial committees of the UN General Assembly, (UNGA) such as the Advisory Committee on Budgetary and Accounting Questions (ACABQ) and the Fifth Committee.

Work in this regard includes participation by FAFICS representatives in the various committees and working groups of the Pension Board. The **Succession Planning Committee**, appointed by the Pension Board to select suitable candidates for high-level positions in the Pension Fund, was successful last year in identifying and proposing to the Board Ms Rosemarie McClean of Canada as the new Chief Executive of Pension Administration (CEPA). Ms McClean started her new mandate on 2 January 2020 soon after she had been hit by a car as she was walking on the sidewalk in Toronto and seriously injured. She managed to take office as planned and presently works from remote as she recovers.

The same Succession Planning Committee is currently engaged in the selection of the **Deputy CEPA** and of the new figure established by the UNGA, the **Secretary** of the Pension Board, who will support the work of the Pension Board independently from the CEPA and the Head of the Office of Investments of the Pension Fund.

Another crucial area of work for FAFICS continues to be the **Governance Working Group**, appointed by the Pension Board to address all matters of governance by reviewing *inter alia* the Board's size and composition, with focus on the equitable and fair representation of all its constituencies (Member Nations, Executive Heads and Participants), as well as the modalities of their participation and finally the role of the representatives of retirees (FAFICS). The key issue here is whether there should be either four or six representatives.

The General Assembly at the end of last year could not reach consensus on the recommendations made by the Pension Board and decided to defer decisions on most governance matters to an external professional entity required to make recommendations to the upcoming session of the Pension Board in July this year.

The 2019 Council requested the President to write to the UN Secretary-General advocating the continued participation of FAFICS in any working group on After Service Health Insurance (ASHI). A reply received from the Secretary-General's office confirms the full participation of FAFICS in any future General Assembly initiatives regarding developments in medical coverage for retirees.

FAFICS through its representatives will continue to be vigilant following developments in the above areas, with the aim of preserving the integrity of its role in the Pension Board and the overall goal of protecting the interests of UN retirees and beneficiaries globally.

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## News from the Staff Associations

(A. Van Arkadie)

The **UGSS Executive Secretariat** in February shared the news from the ILO Tribunal that the case against FAO on employment limits for TAP staff of 55 months had been successful (retroactive implementation from March 2015), based on lack of consultation between FAO management and staff. This decision, UGSS claimed, "...had a devastating impact on a number of GS-TAP colleagues who, from one day to the next, found themselves without employment".

The **AP-in-FAO** noted that the UGSS judgement was also important to Professionals since it directly affects the duration and extension of contracts of short-term professionals. It further reiterated "the right of Staff Representative Bodies to be duly consulted on matters and decisions affecting working



conditions, rights and entitlements of all staff”. Earlier in January, the AP-in-FAO held its Annual General Assembly which was attended by FFOA President Edward Seidler.

Meanwhile, the IFAD Staff Association (ISA) expressed its fullest support for the preparations of FFOA’s 50th Anniversary GA-2020 to be held in late October at the IFAD-HQ in Rome. ISA will also undertake – as customary among Host Organizations – the preparation of the Joint Statement in consultation with RBA Staff Associations, to be presented to the GA.

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## News from the Executive Committee

### 50th FFOA General Assembly

The 50th Session of the General Assembly has had to be postponed and will take place this year at IFAD Headquarters in late October; the date will be communicated as soon as possible. We are also planning to organize a lunch for those of you who wish to participate, as well as an afternoon follow-up session similar to the one we had last year on issues of interest, which will include a question and answer period.

The Executive Committee has started preparations for the 50th General Assembly. In order to celebrate the 50th Anniversary of FFOA a brochure is being designed and possibly a video developed, to be presented to members at a special afternoon session of the GA. The Executive Committee continues to actively engage with representatives of Cigna to facilitate the transition to the new medical insurer, in addition to keeping open the lines of communication with members on problems, action to take to obtain membership cards, who to contact, etc. Finally, 2020 will be the year of the enhanced FFOA website thanks to FAO CIO having provided new computers and promised technical support.

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## News from the FFOA Advisory Committees Membership

(M. de Gaay Fortman, A. Bertini, R. Fenix, G. Monciotti, P. Pace, G. Shaver, A. Wolf)

As we reported in our previous Newsbrief, the chance to identify potential members is not easily available due to legislation on privacy. One of our best opportunities is the Retirement Seminar organized by FAO twice a year with a total participation of about 160 future retirees. At the Seminar, four or five members of the Executive Committee from the three Rome-based Agencies make a presentation on the FFOA. We make an effort to have the younger members of our EXCOM doing the presentations, which are supported by slides. At the beginning of the 30’ Power Point Presentation we elaborate on our “bread and butter” business, i.e. to defend the members’ interests in Pension Fund and health insurance issues, highlighting how we exercise our influence, such as in the FAO-WFP Joint Staff Pension Committee and the IFAD Staff Pension Committee and through FAFICS at Pension Board level. Regarding health matters we are represented on the Joint Advisory Committee on Medical Coverage (JAC/MC) at FAO and the newly established committee at WFP. Our direct relationship with the health insurance providers, Allianz and Cigna is important information for future members.

We also explain how FFOA is structured as a non-profit association with a statute and the Annual General Assembly as its principal organ, its daily business being taken care of by an Executive Committee of 11 members. Details as to our total membership of 2300 members, representing 100 nationalities and the difference in cost of annual and life membership are included in the presentation. The most important part of the presentation is the advice we offer regarding retirement, such as:

- consultation with friends as to the choice of the place of residence;

- receiving your pension in the currency of the place where one is going to reside, thus linking the benefits to the local cost of living;
- suggestions regarding lump sums. We advise against it, unless one needs to buy a house or - sadly to say - one knows that he/she is not going to live much longer;
- we advise that prospective retirees remain in the BMIP/MMBP plans, as medical costs of retirees are for more than 50 % subsidized by the former employer;
- we advise non-Italians who want to stay in Italy, to take up residence and to register at the Roma Anagrafe before they retire;
- finally, we make suggestions as to what kind of activities to undertake once retired, which naturally includes an endless list of possibilities.

At the end of our presentation we receive a number of questions on taxation, FFOA type associations in other countries, medical insurance arrangements, employment opportunities and also queries related to our own experiences as retirees, i.e. how do we enjoy it! Finally we inform participants about our social activities, such as the Coffee mornings and the excursions in which they can participate. At the last retirement seminar four participants immediately filled out the FFOA application form, and approximately 20% joined the Pre-retirement Service Programme, under which all services provided by FFOA can be obtained free of charge 18 months prior to retirement. In this manner future members become familiar with FFOA, while they are preparing for retirement. The Retirement Seminar undoubtedly is our most important platform to promote our Association.

## New Members

(The Secretariat)

A hearty welcome to our Members who have recently joined the FFOA:

Alercia, Ms Laura Susana  
 Barka, Ms Yasmina  
 Bashir, Mr Ahmad  
 Bolli, Mr Franco  
 Cantillon, Ms Nora Annette  
 Ciarnella, Mr Vincenzo  
 Crotta, Ms Eleonora Ervina  
 D'Angelo, Ms Carolina  
 De Carli, Ms Giuliana  
 De Cesare, Ms Gianna  
 Deutsch, Mr Werner  
 Diethelm, Ms Yvonne  
 Fabio, Mr Salvatore  
 Galway, Ms Tora  
 Germani Rossi, Ms Federica  
 Guillocheau Archer, Ms Janine  
 Gutierrez, Ms Maria Ines  
 Hassanpour Seydani, Mr Mahmoud  
 Hurford, Ms Caroline Rosemary  
 Jaber Pla, Ms Juanita  
 Jatta, Mr Sana  
 Katsaros, Mr Ioannis  
 Lasa Baran Diaran, Ms Maria José  
 Lautze, Ms Sue  
 Levins, Mr John  
 Lipper, Ms Leslie  
 Lubroth, Mr Juan  
 Lucarini, Mr Gian Piero  
 Lucchini Staltari, Ms Vanda  
 Mann, Ms Wendy  
 Marra Ughetto, Ms Elda  
 Mastrocicco, Ms Laura  
 Mastromarino, Ms Renata  
 Mcilear, Ms Margaret  
 Nilsson, Ms Carina  
 Nour, Mr Tahir  
 Nourallah, Mr Mounif  
 Pahwa, Mr Sanjay  
 Pasquale, Mr Luigi  
 Pratt, Ms Barbara  
 Rubio, Mr Ladislao  
 Ryan, Ms Deborah  
 Samii, Ms Roxanna

Sciarra, Mr Antonio  
 Soury Lavergne, Ms Beatrice  
 Tavares De Pinho, Mr Antonio  
 Tietze, Mr Uwe  
 Travade, Ms Marie Pascale

**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

(The Secretariat)

**On behalf of all the members of the FFOA, we express heartfelt sympathy to the families and friends of all those members who have left us.**

Mather, Mr Thomas  
 01 January 2017  
 Bocobo, Ms Dulce Laurel  
 10 November 2017  
 Gebauer, Ms Karin Maria  
 24 August 2018  
 Galeano, Mr Umberto  
 14 October 2018  
 Agrawal, Mr Babu Lal  
 27 December 2018  
 Jones, Mr Thomas Alun  
 31 January 2019  
 Solomon, Ms Elizabeth  
 04 February 2019  
 Mattiello, Mr Remo  
 06 March 2019  
 Belluomini Billiet, Ms Odile  
 14 April 2019  
 Zanotto, Mr Egidio  
 26 June 2019  
 Gatti, Ms Elena  
 08 July 2019  
 Rieusset, Mr Gabriel  
 13 July 2019  
 De La Fuente De Friston, Ms Simonetta  
 16 July 2019  
 Monti-Velche, Ms Nicole  
 18 July 2019

Salem, Ms Madeleine  
 14 August 2019  
 Scarlata, Ms Giuseppina  
 20 August 2019  
 Romano, Mr Angel Antonio  
 21 August 2019  
 Leutenegger, Ms Hildegard  
 27 August 2019  
 Slater-Di Bitondo, Ms Ann Mary  
 9 October 2019  
 Clonaru, Mr Alexander  
 31 October 2019  
 Chambron, Mr Jacques  
 04 November 2019  
 Van Asten, Mr Theo  
 15 November 2019  
 Lindsay, Ms Margaret  
 29 November 2019  
 Pinto, Mr Paolo  
 03 December 2019  
 Boeree, Mr Robert Machiel  
 04 December 2019  
 Perez De Vega, Mr Javier  
 12 December 2019  
 Renaud, Mr Jean  
 18 December 2019  
 Packard, Mr Philip  
 24 December 2019  
 Pasquale, Ms Lucie  
 28 December 2019  
 Dempsey, Ms Mary  
 01 January 2020  
 Neri Di Camillo, Ms Adriana  
 08 January 2020  
 Richards, Ms Paulina Lucia  
 09 January 2020  
 Youll, Ms Patricia  
 09 January 2020  
 Marraffa, Mr Giorgio  
 14 January 2020  
 Mittendorf, Mr Hans Joachim  
 14 January 2020  
 Zejjari, Mr Mohamed  
 15 January 2020  
 Meynardi, Ms Angela  
 16 January 2020  
 Bluestone-Borsari, Ms Ann Rose  
 31 January 2020



Fabry, Mr Henri  
09 February 2020  
Carpentieri Polacchi, Ms Wanda  
16 February 2020  
Donner, Dr Wolf  
26 February 2020  
Maestro Renedo, Ms Liliana  
26 February 2020  
El Kattan, Ms Malek  
27 February 2020  
Fredrickson, Ms Caroline  
27 February 2020  
Schinchi, Mr Pietro  
15 March 2020  
Edwards, Ms Yvonne  
21 March 2020  
Juge, Mr Chales  
03 April 2020  
Messineo-Di Lernia, Ms Doris  
06 April 2020  
Klohn, Mr Wulf  
06 April 2020

## Social Support and Recreational Activities

(J. Smidt, B. Pisani, A. Van Arkadie, M. De Gaay Fortman, M. Saleheen, S. Salvi)

### Previous activities

December	Lecce
February	Viterbo, Giornata nella piscina delle Terme dei Papi (postponed)
	Visita archeologica e naturalistica nella Tenuta Presidenziale di Castel Porziano
	Uscite giornaliere in barca a vela dal Porto di Ostia fino alle Secche di Tor Paterno (to be continued during the summer)
	Carnevale a Venezia
	Carnevale a Frascati

### Upcoming Activities

The Social Support and Recreational Activities Committee has presently placed all its activities on hold, in view of the restrictions on travel and

social gatherings in relation to the coronavirus outbreak. Members will be advised by email of the new calendar of events and travels as soon as this will be possible.

## Monthly Coffee Mornings

(A. Van Arkadie, J. Smidt)

FFOA's February Coffee morning was attended by over 200 participants and 7 members of the FFOA-EXCOM Team and was held on Wednesday 5 February in the FAO-Austria Room. Following a brief introduction by Alex Van Arkadie on the scope and purpose of the encounter, the meeting was led by FFOA President, Edward Seidler. Cigna Staff Representatives Ms. Katja Habets and Ms. Valeria Carra attended as special invitees to answer participants' questions on the change over from Allianz to Cigna as the medical insurer of all the RBAs. Senior Social Security staff from FAO, WFP and IFAD were also invited to the event and answered some queries. In response to FFOA's request, Cigna agreed to provide all information material in hard copy to FFOA in order for the Association to be able to provide it to its members who could not access the Cigna App or use a computer.

## Your Good Health

### The Best Hobbies and Activities to try out in Retirement

(S. Salvi)

Later life and retirement can be one of the most enjoyable periods of our lives; we are older and wiser, more aware of who we are, but most importantly we now have the time to go out and do whatever it is we have always wanted to do. More time for personal activities is often cited in polls of over 70 year olds as one of the biggest benefits of growing old, and the UK Office for National Statistics found that those aged 65+ spent an average of seven hours and ten minutes a day on leisure activities; the most out of all age groups.

We now know that loneliness can be as harmful for our health as smoking 15 cigarettes a day, and that it is a key problem for older people who live alone.

If you are interested in reaping the benefits of starting a hobby during retirement, here are some of the most popular hobbies and interests that people pick up in later life:

- Join a dance class
- Attend gym classes
- Volunteer at a homeless shelter
- Attend conventions
- Go to wine-testing night
- Join a drama group
- Take part in chess tournaments
- Go to festivals and concerts
- Learn a new language
- Attend a karaoke night
- Join a band/choir
- Attend an art class

(Extracted from "Age Co magazine" and rearranged)

### **STAY fit with Giampiero Bartolucci**

Since we are approaching Spring and Summer some of our members may wish to take advantage of the Stay Fit Stretching Class for FFOA pensioners offered by Giampiero at the FAO Gym every Friday from 10.30 to 11.30. For further information please call the FAO Staff Coop 06/57055753 or Giampiero directly at 339 779 3250.

This activity will resume upon the end of legal restrictions concerning the coronavirus epidemic.

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## **News from the Membership**

On the occasion of International Women's Day on 08 March, the following is dedicated to all female as well as male members of FFOA.

(M. Saleheen)

### **\*WOMAN\***

(unknown author)

When God created woman, he was working late on the 6th day...

An Angel came by and asked." Why spend so much time on her?"

The Lord answered. "Have you seen all the specifications I have to meet to shape her?"

- She must function in all kinds of situations.
- She must be able to embrace several kids at the same time.
- Have a hug that can heal anything from a bruised knee to a broken heart.
- She must do all this with only two hands.
- She cures herself when sick and can work 18 hours a day.

The Angel was impressed "Just two hands... impossible!

And this is the standard model?"

The Angel came closer and touched the woman.

"But you have made her so soft, Lord".

"She is soft", said the Lord,

"But I have made her strong. You can't imagine what she can endure and overcome"

"Can she think?" The Angel asked...

The Lord answered. "Not only can she think, she can reason and negotiate".

The Angel touched her cheeks...

"Lord, it seems this creation is leaking! You have put too many burdens on her".

"She is not leaking...it is a tear". The Lord corrected the Angel...

"What's it for?" Asked the Angel...

The Lord said. "Tears are her way of expressing her grief, her doubts, her love, her loneliness, her suffering and her pride."...

This made a big impression on the Angel,

"Lord, you are a genius. You thought of everything.

A woman is indeed marvellous"

Lord said. "Indeed she is.

- She has strength that amazes a man.
- She can handle trouble and carry heavy burdens.
- She holds happiness, love and opinions.
- She smiles when she feels like screaming.
- She sings when she feels like crying,

cries when happy and laughs when afraid.

- She fights for what she believes in.
- Her love is unconditional.
- Her heart is broken when a next-of-kin or a friend dies but she finds strength to get on with life"

The Angel asked: "So she is a perfect being? "

The Lord replied: "No. She has just one drawback.

"She often forgets what she is worth".

\*Being a woman is priceless\*

### COVID-19: A personal reflection

(M. Saleheen)

The Coronavirus global pandemic has now spread its wings across continents. It does not discriminate between caste, color, creed, sex, ethnicity or beliefs. Everyone is a potential victim. It is a soundless, invisible enemy. Humanity is challenged to adopt its best behavior and code of conduct.

Rome has suddenly become like a place where people have retreated away from. At the center where I live, the streets used to be full of people all day, the flow of public transport was continuous, bars and restaurants bustling with customers and shops frequented by clients - not anymore. It's very quiet, almost without sounds and the voices of the crowd are not audible for now. Mobility is well contained. Queues outside food shops and pharmacies are consistent but controlled. Supplies are maintained.

The COVID-19 has dawned upon mankind like "Apocalypse Now". It has brought a feeling of a prelude to Armageddon for many. It's akin to the biblical revelation "... for they are spirits of demons, performing signs, which go out to the kings of the whole world, to gather them together for the war of the great day of God, the Almighty". "But the beast will be seized", as per the revelation.

I commend the measures taken by the Government of Italy for the welfare of its people. International and national organizations,

businesses are following suite and have adopted their respective regulations in compliance with the government directives. Strong bonds of caring have surfaced.

This is the time to mend habits and lifestyles. It's a good opportunity to detoxify and renew a healthy life. In another way it impacts as a *de facto* recognition of the "Climate Emergency Declaration" of 2019.

However, the system here is challenged to cope with the growing number of cases and the harsh views circulating that hospitals have to prioritize the younger who have more chances to live longer, vis-a-vis the older and vulnerable cases, is causing increased stress and panic among many.

Notwithstanding the above, the real sense of apocalypse is actually felt by the hungry, the starving and those in peril and war... while we suffer in our warm abodes with food, water and Netflix amidst a temporary quarantine.



A view from my balconcino of the street always full



Nevertheless, let us all pray and collaborate in overcoming COVID-19 and think of how we can help those who have far less than us. We must not forget that we are interdependent on each other.

**Please share your personal experience or advice on retirement.** Everyone would love it. You may write in English or Italian, addressed to FFOA, attention: Newsbrief Coordinator, Gianna Paganelli.

### Travel experiences

(Mr. Dominique Alhéritière, FAO retiree, Administration Division)

I took early retirement in 2009, after spending 34 years in the United Nations System; my love for the Eternal City brought me to FAO in 1978. As I had to work for a living, I dedicated myself to my job, but as soon as I recovered my freedom I resumed my favourite hobbies, amongst which writing about my travel experiences. Writing during all of my professional life was

dedicated mainly to books and articles on water and environmental law. My latest books have been published by nombre7Editions in Nîmes (France) and are available on the main on-line site, as well as at the FAO book store (see the two cover pictures below).

- La route du Rhum, Regards d'un Bobo sur les Géants des Mers, le Rhum agricole et les Antilles. Éditeur: Nombre7 Editions
- Orients. Éditeur: Nombre7 Editions



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