

Former FAO and Other UN Staff Association

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



Newsbrief 111
July 2020

A Word from the President on Behalf of Your Executive Committee

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE

- A Word from the President
- Medical Insurance
- Pension Matters
- News from the UN Organizations
- News from the Staff Associations
- News from the Executive Committee
- News from the FFOA Advisory Committees
- New Members
- In Memoriam
- Social Support and Recreational Activities
- Your Good Health
- News from the Membership

This has been a difficult time for all our members in Italy and around the globe. FFOA has sought to maintain its services and contacts with members during this period of lockdown and during the gradual lifting of restrictions and has increased its virtual and email contacts to keep members informed on matters that directly impact them. A large number of News Flashes have been issued to advise them of changes and how to access services. The FFOA email and phone lines were up and running to receive requests from members. We are in constant contact with the Rome-based Agencies (RBAs) to receive updates on developments and to inform our members of changes and seek RBAs support to resolve various issues.

All RBAs have been closed for three months with most staff 'smart working' from home and only skeleton staff allowed into Hqs. The RBAs are taking a careful and prudent approach to reopening and it now looks as though restricted access may only be relaxed at the beginning of August but with restrictions on numbers and access under a 'new normal' regime.

FFOA has gained agreement from FAO to allow access for retirees to deposit Cigna claims and UNJSPF Certificates of Entitlement in special boxes located at the FAO entrance pavilion every Tuesday and Thursday from 7:30 to 10 am. Access to other services (Banks, Insurance company, UNFCU, Post Office) is not permitted as yet. We will inform members if there are any changes.

FFOA held a successful webinar with Cigna to discuss medical insurance issues on 12th June and had over 100 active followers; a copy of the Zoom proceedings was sent to all members in case they were unable to view the webinar live. As a result of the webinar, FFOA is taking up a number of issues with RBAs managements to address issues and problems raised during the webinar. You can read more on the above and other developments in this Newsbrief.

Even during this difficult period, new members are joining realising the value of being kept updated and having their problems addressed; if you have friends who are not members then please encourage them to join FFOA. If you are receiving this Newsbrief in hard copy, please provide us with an email address on which you can be reached (a relative etc.) so you can receive fast updates.

Whilst many countries have managed to contain Covid-19, others are still being afflicted and our thoughts and best wishes go to our members in these countries. Please stay safe and well and be assured that your Association is with you at all times.

Edward Seidler
President

Medical Insurance

(E. Seidler)

Cigna has now been our medical insurer for 6 months and FFOA has been closely monitoring its progress in servicing members. After the initial problem over the receipt of new insurance cards, some with incorrect names, we believe this problem has now been overcome. Cigna is the insurer/claims processor for the three RBAs (Rome-based Agencies) under three individual contracts. FFOA and some 100 members had a successful webinar with Cigna on 12 June and a number of questions were addressed. FFOA has sought clarification on two main issues highlighted in the webinar: a) Pre-authorization levels for treatment and tests and b) Problems or disputes on the medications prescribed by doctors for their patients which are then questioned by Cigna in processing the claims submitted. FFOA has requested RBAs managements to raise these issues with Cigna to get better clarity on these issues.

The delay in members receiving the full "Cigna Benefits Overview Guide" by email or in hard copy has also been raised as is the need to get the list of medications, treatments that are not covered under the RBAs policies with Cigna. FFOA has requested Cigna to provide its office with hard copies of the Benefits Guide for those who do not have email to receive the Guide.

Pension Matters

(A. Prien, A. Fusco Femiano)

Our Pension Board (PB) was originally scheduled to meet in July this year at the WMO (World

Meteorological Organization) but that Organization cancelled its invitation because of the pandemic. It will now meet virtually for 3 hours per day between 24-16 July.

This is the year when the PB receives and reviews the biennial actuarial evaluation. We can already share with you the great news that the Fund has an actuarial surplus of 0.5%. That means there is more than enough money in the kitty to ensure that all of us will be paid our pensions, with cost of living adjustments, until we leave this earth.

Related to the PB, our representatives in FAFICS normally would be meeting now, but because of bad connectivity problems among its 63 retiree Associations, the Bureau has decided to defer its meeting until the fall.

In the meantime, the President of FAFICS, Marco Breschi, the former General Secretary of FFOA has been heavily involved in the selection/ interviews for the posts of the Deputy Chief Executive Officer and the new Secretary of the PB.

Entitlement Letters Are Now Available on MSS for New Retirees

(UNJSPF, 4 June 2020)

The Entitlement letter is the first letter that is issued to a new retiree once his/her pension is implemented. It contains important information regarding their contribution and benefit amounts. Many retirees require it to determine their national taxes payable, or as proof of benefit/income.

The Fund is pleased to announce that retirees can now view their Entitlement letter in Member Self Service (MSS), (<https://www.unjspf.org/member-self-service>) provided their initial benefit was processed by the Fund after 1 March 2020. These letters are usually printed and mailed out, but due to the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions, handling of physical mail has been curtailed. Going forward, the Fund will no longer be printing Entitlement letters available in MSS unless specifically requested by the retiree.

We strongly encourage all participants, retirees and beneficiaries to sign up for Member Self Service.

Certificates of Entitlement (CEs)

Certificates of Entitlement (CEs) have been mailed to Pensioners at the end of June 2020. Many members have already received theirs. You have a few months to receive and return the CEs to the Pension Fund before pensions are suspended. CEs can be placed in the special drop box at FAO on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 7:30 to 10 am.

News from the UN Organizations

WFP

(G. Shaver)

WFP employees - no matter the global challenges due to COVID-19 such as closed borders, grounded flights, employees in lockdown – continue to work delivering food and cash assistance to families and communities in need.

WFP announced that an estimated 265 million people could go hungry globally (double 2019) as a result of the pandemic due to food supply shortages caused by job loss, income cuts, food supply chain disruptions; food losses due to strict lockdowns, restricted exports of key food commodities, and trade barriers.

Excelling in logistics, WFP initiated a UN air bridge using the WFP Air Service and Air Hub in Addis Ababa to ship personal protective equipment, diagnostic testing and other medical supplies such as ventilators to 134 countries, as well as transporting humanitarian workers and development staff while airports remain closed. WFP is also opening 5 regional intensive care field hospitals jointly designed with WHO that can treat UN and international NGO staff members sick with COVID-19. These field hospitals include pharmacies, operating rooms and ICU (Intensive Care Unit) capacity and will be located in Ghana, Ethiopia, Costa Rica, a location in the Middle East and another in Asia.

As of early June, 59 WFP staff had fallen ill due to COVID-19, more than half having fully recovered, including the Executive Director. We

mourn the loss of 4 colleagues who passed away due to this virus (updated 26 June).

Check out [WFP.org](https://www.wfp.org) for the latest information on COVID-19 including a regularly up-date map on World Travel Restrictions.

FAFICS

(M. Breschi)

The FAFICS delegation continues to provide its contribution to the work of the Pension Board. Some of the most significant topics include the work of the Governance Working Group where one of the key subjects under review is the size and composition of the member delegations, including FAFICS, which currently has four full members and two alternates. The current debate focuses on whether the alternate members should always participate in the Board session together with the four members, or only to replace an absent member. Governance Matters are also the subject of an independent review presently carried out by a firm of specialized consultants. Extensive advice and information was provided and specific requests were made by FAFICS.

Another area of significant work in which FAFICS participated in a very effective and productive manner was the selection of two key positions i.e. the Deputy Chief Executive Pension Administration, DCEPA and the new Secretary to the Pension Board. Two representatives from FAFICS joined forces with representatives from Member Nations, Executive Heads and Participants in conducting the work of the Succession Planning Committee. The challenge was to select suitable candidates to be presented to the Pension Board in July for the two positions in the limited time available.

The Budget Working Group has recently started its work to review the Pension Fund budget proposals for 2021. As in past years, two qualified FAFICS representatives are actively engaged in reviewing and preparing proposals for consideration by the Board.

FAFICS also participates in other Committees such as the Asset and Liabilities Committee which reviews the financial situation of the Fund.

In view of the major pandemic around the world the FAFICS Bureau, in close consultation with all the 63 Country associations, decided in May to maintain the session of the Council in its usual in-person format and to avoid virtual meetings to which many less privileged and less equipped associations will not be able to participate. As FAFICS has a long-standing tradition of fairness, solidarity and inclusion, the Bureau felt a virtual Council should be avoided.

News from the Staff Associations

(A. Van Arkadie)

In spite of the ongoing office closures at all Rome-based Agencies, FFOA continues to liaise with the staff associations in the respective Agencies and continues to take up measures of mutual interest.

Results from elections held in May 2020 to the **UGSS in FAO** and **WFP Executive Committee** were received. Accordingly, Ms Murray (FAO) remains the General-Secretary and Ms Moller of FAO and Ms Alessandrini of WFP are Deputy General-Secretaries.

Also, following elections of the **AP-in-FAO** held on 27 May, the following have been elected (among others) to the Executive Secretariat: President, Mr Jakob Skoet; Vice President, Mr Michael Riggs; General-Secretary, Ms Florence Tartanac and Deputy General-Secretary, Mr Uwe Barg. We wish them all continued success.

News from the Executive Committee

(G. Shaver)

FFOA is not closed! COVID-19 pandemic may have physically shuttered the office, but we continue to work for our members. Special thanks go out to our office assistants who have ensured continuous communications and support from home during these challenging days.

The Executive Committee continues to meet virtually, organizing its monthly meetings via Zoom. We have issued regular News Flashes to keep you up-dated and informed about the Rome-based Agencies' restricted premise access since 9 March, the Italian government lockdown measures (self-declarations and other Government information on the pandemic), which pharmacies have direct billing and home delivery, general medical insurance issues, service providers' contacts (bank, insurance and post offices) as well as contact information for the lawyers and tax advisers. We are happy with the positive messages received from you about these efforts.

The Executive Committee also organized a working group on Virtual Meetings to explore and implement technology-based solutions to keep in touch. This group prepared and issued guidance on how to join and participate in Zoom meetings. In addition to organizing orientation sessions for the Executive Committee on how to use Zoom, orientation sessions were also organized for FFOA members at large, enabling over 100 members to participate in our first Zoom thematic meeting on medical insurance, with representatives from Cigna and FAO, WFP and IFAD Social Security present, and moderated by President Ed Seidler. More virtual thematic meetings will be organized to replace the traditional Coffee Mornings.

Given the emphasis on technology to stay in touch and keep information flowing, members of the Executive Committee took the opportunity of the Italian lockdown to call many members who have no email addresses in order to ask for an electronic contact to be used from now on to share information as well to provide the latest news.

Our email address and FFOA telephone numbers are always available to members to access for inquiries on all subjects.

FFOA has joined a bi-monthly phone call between WFP senior management and the staff associations during which news is shared regarding COVID-19 and its impact on WFP colleagues, the WFP HQ gradual phased opening, changes to HR rules, etc.

Though FFOA cannot access the premises of the Rome-based Agencies, FAO has agreed

to move the boxes for Cigna claims and the Pension Fund Certificates of Entitlement to the building pass pavilion in front of Building A and to let retirees enter FAO from **7:30 to 10 am on Tuesday and Thursday**. The mail to Cigna will be sent every Wednesday.

We would like to remind all members that the new date for the FFOA General Assembly at IFAD is **28 October 2020**.

Summer Closure of the FFOA Office

The FFOA office and services will be closed from Saturday, 1 August through Monday 31 August. It will reopen on Tuesday, 1 September. Emails will be periodically monitored.

Working Group (WG) on FFOA Virtual Meetings

FFOA's New "Modus-Operandi" Following the Coronavirus Crisis

(P. Pace, E. Seidler, M. de Gaay Fortman, M. Sino, A. Bertini, M. Palmisano)

Since its initial surfacing early in March this year, FFOA has been very attentive to the implications of the Covid-19 crisis. Several initiatives have been launched to continue assisting our membership despite the heavy limitations imposed by the lockdown status.

The EXCOM decided to launch a **News Flash program** to inform our members on different decisions adopted by the Rome-based Agencies (RBAs) to manage the crisis and to mitigate the social impact on more fragile people, such as our membership community. The **News Flash program** established a bridge between the RBAs intranet and the FFOA end users who are not authorized to access the RBAs corporate intranet environment. The information published by the RBAs on the management of the crisis was thus distributed to all our members via email News Flashes, in addition to being uploaded on our website (www.ffoa-web.org).

In its April session the EXCOM also decided to endorse the establishment of an **FFOA Working Group (WG) on Virtual Meetings**. The

purpose of this decision was to explore ways and means to allow FFOA to continue deploying its support activities through the use of a software platform suitable for handling working meetings as well as larger audience assemblies in a virtual environment.

After reviewing various alternatives the WG identified Zoom as the tele-conferencing software that could be used for the purpose, also in consideration of the fact that the same solution had successfully been adopted by the RBAs and that, if needed, any required technical support could easily be obtained from the relevant help desk units.

The WG developed a Quick Start Guide (in ENG and ITA) to facilitate access to and use of the Zoom environment by our users. Practice sessions were delivered during the last week in May, attended by more than 100 users, and the first FFOA Thematic Zoom Meeting on the experience accrued with the Cigna contract during its first six months of operation was successfully held on 12 June.

The Zoom platform is also being considered as a viable solution in support of the planned session of our General Assembly in October, should the Coronavirus situation not have improved by then to guarantee a safe environment to hold a traditional session of the Assembly, as we all hope.

Day-to-day support, including access to the Duty Officers service continues to be operational by calling our front-office (06 5705 6012) which will refer the call to appropriate experts or provide an immediate reply to the questions posed.

News from the FFOA Advisory Committees

Membership

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

In view of the limitations which were imposed on us lately, the Membership Advisory Committee had to adjust its 2019-'21 Workplan. Elsewhere in this Newbrief you will find

the report of the Working Group on Virtual Meetings in which three members of our Committee participated.

The Committee was also involved in an activity related to our older members without an email address as there was concern about the wellbeing of those members whom we could not contact via email and the lockdown offered a good opportunity to verify whether these members were still living at the address under which they were registered. Volunteers, mostly from the Executive Committee, each contacted 20 members over 75. In total in Italy there are 256 members without an email address, of whom 42 did not provide a telephone number. The exercise to contact these 214 remaining members took place in April and May. Most of our fellow members appreciated our efforts to contact them as many had little or no contact with the outside world. We also received comments like: “Per favore può chiamarmi in un altro momento perché ho qualcosa sul fuoco!” In a few instances we were also faced with a situation in which the member who was contacted had passed away; this gave us the opportunity to express our sympathy to the partner and to offer assistance, also informing him/her about the possibility for the partner of a life member to join the association by simply filling out an application form and sending it to FFOA@fao.org. The majority of those who could be contacted were very happy to hear from their Association and we received very favourable comments on this initiative. Eventually 56 members of those contacted were able to give an email address, either personal or belonging to a relative/neighbour; 39 members responded that they could not give an email address; and we were not able to contact approximately 100 members of this group by phone. Members do not always update their address when moving and the Pension Fund does not share information about members due to privacy rules, which is why at times we have difficulty in contacting some members.

We will continue to try to touch base with those members whom we were unable to find to date, including older members without email and who reside outside Italy. One of the lessons learned from this exercise is that so many of our

older members do not advise us about a change of address or phone number. We would therefore kindly request all of you to advise FFOA of any change of address, particularly if receiving the Newsbrief by post as this involves a lot of work by volunteers and includes a cost. Also, if we can reach you, we will be able to inform you in a timely manner of all the issues of relevance to you.

New Members

(The Secretariat)

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

Antomarchi, Ms Catherine
 Bizzotto, Ms Cinzia
 Chiarabini, Mr Alessandro
 Everts, Mr James
 Iaquina, Ms Maria Teresa
 Koné, Mr Pape Djiby
 Medica, Ms Silvana
 Neroni, Mr Mario
 Olivares Montecinos, Ms Iris
 Owen, Ms Daniela Anna Louisa
 Padro Jiménez, Ms Norma Edith
 Rottger, Ms Alexandra
 Sokolowicz, Ms Estela
 Yu, Ms Florence Shao Rong

All retirees ought to join the Association to support its work representing 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.

Montanaro, Ms Silvana
 29 March 2018
 Somers, Ms Maureen
 [...] July 2018

Dempsey, Ms Mary
11 January 2020
Bandres, Ms Maria Antonia
07 February 2020
Colucci, Ms Rosa
16 March 2020
Abad, Mr Carlos
22 March 2020
O’Riordan, Ms Margaret
31 March 2020
Pronk, Mr Frits
04 April 2020
Walton, Mr Declan
05 April 2020
Chambers, Ms Cait
06 April 2020
Arias Jiménez, Mr Enrique
16 April 2020
Ball, Mr Jim
20 April 2020
Tewari, Mr Prayag Dutt
21 April 2020
Ayazi, Dr Abdul
05 May 2020
Piccione, Mr Ezio
06 June 2020
Fitzpatrick, Mr John
10 June 2020
Anastasio, Mr Tommaso
25 June 2020
Winnubst, Mr Piet
05 July 2020

July Giardino dei Tarocchi and Capalbio
Isola Bisentina and Lago di Bolsena
3 days on sailing boat to Ponza,
Palmarola and Ventotene
3 days trip to Ponza, Palmarola
and Zannone

Upcoming Activities

August 3 days trip to Ponza, Palmarola
and Zannone
4-6 August; 25-27 August
September 3 days trip to Ponza, Palmarola
and Zannone
1-3 September; 8-10 September

Regarding the bus trips we were assured by the Agency that the social distancing between participants required by law was respected.

Further outings may be announced for the summer and we invite our members to consult the emails sent by FFOA.

During the lockdown members of the Executive Committee received several calls from members in difficult situations, mainly elderly single ladies with no relatives in Rome. We tried to assist them with the various problems that unfortunately occur to people who are alone and are proud to say that many of their problems are being resolved. We will continue to monitor these situations.

As we all know nobody is getting younger. It is therefore IMPORTANT that our members try to plan for a future with less good health while they are still in good health. FFOA is trying its best to assist our members as much as we can with domestic, legal, pension and medical problems.

Should you wish to plan ahead and proceed with the above suggestion do not hesitate to call FFOA. The members of the Executive Committee are here to advise and help you to proceed in the right way.

Social Support and Recreational Activities

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

Following the lockdown, the above Committee announced the following activities for the summer:

Previous Activities

June Ninfa and Sermoneta
Pompei
Scarzuola
1-day boat trip, departure from
Ostia, the shoals of Tor Paterno

Monthly Coffee Mornings

(A. Van Arkadie, J. Smidt)

Following my summary report last April in the FFOA Newsbrief 110 - which soon coincided (sadly) with the Covid-19 closure of FAO and our Rome-based Agencies – retirees around Rome lost the happy occasion to meet, share, and discuss together issues of common interest aimed toward the welfare of FFOA retirees.

Whilst we lost the occasion to socialize among ex-colleagues and benefit from informative discourses by Special Invitees, as a remedial measure and thanks to the **FFOA IT-Expert-Team** (led by Messrs Pace, Bertini and Palmisano), swift action was taken to reach-out to members via Zoom sessions.

I am also glad to report that following successful coordination with our Cigna representatives who negotiated with: a) farmasantasabina@libero.it; b) martinofarmacia@libero.it; and c) farmaciaizzo@virgilio.it, the three popular pharmacies agreed to provide special Direct Billing Facilities “cum” Delivery Services to FFOA retirees at competitive prices and attractive discounts. Please note that when using these facilities, you must submit your Cigna Membership Card and Doctor’s Prescription, inclusive of orders by Telephone and/or in Electronic Format.

Your Good Health

Living with the Coronavirus COVID-19

(S. Salvi)

As the COVID-19 is spreading across Europe and worldwide, national authorities and EU institutions do their utmost to address the pandemic. Their key objective is to ensure that across the European Union, hospitals and health care professionals will maintain their capacity to provide intensive care to all who need urgent medical attention.

Solidarity as the Best Response

While EU countries seek to coordinate their efforts and pool resources and knowledge to address the pandemic, many EU countries have taken containment measures to slow down the spread of the virus and prevent hospitals from being overwhelmed with too many very severe cases. Yet, public authorities’ efforts will only pay off if each of us takes action and acts responsibly.

No One is Invincible

We are all at risk of getting infected by the virus. But older persons, persons with disabilities, or persons with pre-existing medical conditions might suffer much more severe consequences. Respecting the containment measures are an act of solidarity with those at risk of most serious outcomes and with the health and care professionals that are on the frontline.

“This is time when we need to help each other within our families, neighbourhoods and communities. We need to rebuild solidarity and social fabric that are so important when a crisis of such magnitude strikes. To fight the virus, greater solidarity and respect for each other are needed from all of us!”

(Anne-Sophie Parent, AGE ex Secretary-General)

Font: <https://www.age-platform.eu>

News from the Membership

Théo Van Asten

(Marius de Gaay Fortman)

Un anticonformiste dans une Église missionnaire. Mémoires de Théo Van Asten

Théo Van Asten finished writing his “memoirs” just before his death in November 2019. Van Asten worked for WFP from 1975 to 1993; before joining WFP, he was a missionary (White Father) in Africa, also serving as the Superior General

of the White Fathers, whom he represented at the Synods of Bishops at the Vatican in 1971 and 1974. He was an advocate for the ordination of women as priests and for priests to be allowed to marry. In WFP he worked in the Evaluation Service.

The title of his book is "Un Anticonformiste dans une Église missionnaire"; the English title: "A Maverick in a Missionary Church". The book is available in French and English and is currently being translated into Dutch.

Should you wish to order the book please contact:

Mrs Antoinette Van Asten
21, Avenue d'Assignan
34360 Saint Chinian, France
or by email avavanasten@aol.com
tel. +33448172514 or cell. +33 673746239

The price is € 17 + € 1.42 (mailing cost for Europe)

Share Your Covid-19 Lockdown Episodes



Living a Self-Imposed Quarantine Due to COVID – 19 Pandemic

(Izzat Feidi)

Living during quarantine, lockdown and abiding by official guidelines for staying safe is possible although remaining inside for long may invite stress and possibly affect immunities. Solutions were found to maintain necessary supplies. Complications faced are those which were never

considered problems while upholding the rule "Prevention better than cure".

Confined at home with my wife after 20 years of retirement was with uncertainty, fear, isolation and constant worrying due to feeling deprived from seeing children and grandchildren living abroad. Running errands to pay bills, maintain regular doctors' visits and laboratory tests, hesitate when the doorbell rings thinking the invisible enemy waiting to attack.

Worries persisted if having to call specialists to fix electrical failure, gas leak, broken pipes, and other tasks. What if a medical emergency requires a hospital visit? Also, renewal of expired documents like passports, car and driving licenses, credit cards or visiting banks. Would it be safe to touch own face, surfaces, door knobs, books, telephones, remote control or coffee machine?

Conversely, amidst such worries, also hopefulness was abound that from crisis opportunities arise and lessons learned for when "life becomes great again". Sanitation in cities much improved, better climate, cleaner air and water bodies. Trusting lessons learned would bring fairer, more humane, just, and safer globalization. Combating pandemics and natural disasters require joint efforts. World peace, happiness and prosperity of future generations depend much on the collaborations of all.

Lockdown Peru and Portugal

(George Everett)

From Los Angeles I went to the rainforest of Panama. Then the plan was to wait in Peru before moving to join a botanical group in Chile. However, on March 16 in the mountains, the state of emergency was declared and I was locked down in nearby Arequipa. I was confined to a hotel with a German couple (sunned themselves), two German girls on 'gap' travel (organized daily stretching for several of us), a French couple (searched for decent bread, enjoyed their drone to look into nearby patios), and other nationalities, whilst food ran low and we ended up with pasta.

The Portuguese authorities gave me a 'safe conduct' letter for a minibus organised by the

Hungarian Embassy to collect a group of lady rambblers from Budapest led by a guide based in Bogota. We took 17 hours to drive to Lima to join the plane repatriating 60 residents of Portugal, along with nearly 200 from Norway, Serbia, Hungary etc. On April 1st I arrived in Lisbon Airport where there was hardly room to land because planes were parked everywhere. I am gardening, and painting my son's property. The nearby coastal walks are fabulous. When possible, I will return to California, and perhaps await surprises in another lockdown?

[Quarantine]

(Dominique Alh  rit  re)

(translated by the NB team from the French text provided by the author)

Quarantine? What an attractive word, so attractive that it was acquired from popular Latin by almost all languages, not always Indo-European for that matter since in Hindi it is another word, "sangarodh", but in Malayalam, the language of Malabars, we say "kv  ran  n". The Tatars use the term "  ran  n", the Javanese (quarantine), the Kurds (qarantine), the Malays (kuarantin), the Filipinos (kuwarantina), etc. No wonder Esperanto took the word "kvaranteno".

Yes, but how about the strange family of Ural-Altaic languages that are Turkish and Hungarian for example? Well, even in Turkish it is "karantina", in Hungarian "karant  n" and in Finnish, from the same family it is "karanteeni"! In Tajik "karantin"! And the Basques who do nothing like everyone else? They also say "koarentena". Okay, but in Yiddish? "kvarentin"! I will get you! Here in Gujarati? Well, no luck: "kvorentina"! And in Somali? "karantiil"!

Really, incredible success for a quarantine which was in fact a "sixty"!

By the way, in classical Latin it is "tempus valetudini spectandae praestitum". "Quarantine" is vulgar!

You see what the Coronavirus can do, and much more.

[...]

(Gina Phillips Valeri)

The time didn't drag as much as I thought it would. We didn't go out during March and April at all, except to throw the rubbish away which became an occasion, as our son brought his "elderly parents" shopping a couple of times a week. During the first two weeks of lockdown all our neighbours stood at their front doors at 6 p.m. with a glass of wine and sang Italian songs like Volare in patriotic solidarity against COVID-19. I spread the message about it to friends, as well as contacts made in the lost battle against Brexit, in the UK because Northern Italy was suffering so badly, asking them to stay in and stay safe before the Government eventually did on 23 March. I made new friends on Facebook and kept in contact with ex FAO colleagues, friends and relatives.

My husband cooked delicious Italian food so I was rather spoiled. We watched TV more than usual, Sky News and films on Netflix in the living room for me and RAI in the bedroom for my husband, who watched documentaries as there we no sport! I read a book but spent most of my time in the afternoons on our terrace in the fresh air, first of all tidying up the flower pots and weeding, then planting seeds and plants ordered online. I missed seeing my granddaughters and my other son who lives in the Centre. Thanks to technology, we were able to have video calls but it was such joy on 4 May when we were able to see them again at last. They came up for lunch on our terrace, all sitting at one end of the table two meters away from my husband and I at the other end. On 5 May we drove into Rome to see our other son. We picked up a take away at the Malaysian restaurant on the Aventino which looked surreal without any cars parked between the blue lines.

I took photos of empty Piazza Venezia and the steps of the Campidoglio with nobody on them, sensing that we are living through the plague in history. I also took photos of us in our masks which could be conserved for future generations, like we look at photos of our

grandfathers in uniform in WWI. Life is almost back to normal now as I go to the supermarket, carefully keeping two meters apart from everyone else, arrange to meet friends and look forward to going up to Tuscany again on 3 June to tackle the backlog of work in our garden up in Argentario. There is a lot to look forward to but our lives are not going to be the same again until a vaccine is found. I feel sorry for colleagues who have children abroad because travelling by air and obeying quarantine rules is going to be problematic.

[...]

(Viviane di Majo)

I think that my text may not be too different from others that stayed in quarantine at home.



I focused on my house cleaning becoming rather 'maniac'...and of course a great cook so I put on weight! I just loved going for food shopping every three days especially with this good weather...waiting queuing out in the sun was a delight for me even if we had our mask on. Thank God we had gloves cause my nails were getting awful with this half gel on. All well now that we could take better care of our look.

Laughter Is the Best Medicine

(M. Saleheen)



The Covid-19 lockdown period in Italy has been both challenging and enjoyable. Relationships

and understandings at house-hold levels have largely improved, though doubts prevailed in communication. The short episodes below provide glimpses of conversations.

Episode 1. Telephone Conversation

Husband: "Hello dear, how are you today? Am very happy to announce that my culinary skills have greatly developed during the past two months. When we reunite, I will proudly cook meals for you for at least 2-3 months. Thought this will make you happy."

Wife: "Wow, how nice! I look forward to that. But how about cleaning and washing dear?"

Husband: (After a pause) "oh yes...Well... we can discuss that and find a mutually convenient arrangement."

Wife: "No need to give me a diplomatic response. You better sort that out before I return."

Husband: "Don't worry, we can eat out 3 days a week as restaurants and bars have now opened. Sorry, going to the loo. Will call you back. Bye for now!"





Episode 2: Bedtime Conversation

Husband: "Darling, do you feel sad when you see me running after young girls."

Wife: "No, not at all! Even dogs chase cars they can't drive!"



The relationship between husband-wife is basically psychological. One is psycho and the other is logical. But please don't ever want to know who is psycho and who is logical!

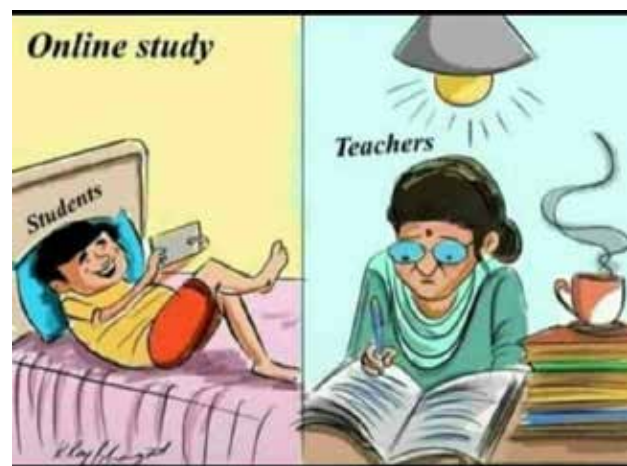
Episode 3. On-line Study

Teacher: "Jimmy, how many tenses are there?"

Student: (After pondering) "For now there are four tenses, Miss."

Teacher: "What? I taught there are only 3 tenses- past, present and then future. Where did you find another one?"

Student: "Miss, those who say there are only three tenses that's nonsense. The fourth one is social distance tense."



Feeling Old Age

(various authors)

Two elderly gentlemen from a retirement center were sitting on a bench under a tree when one turns to the other and says:

'Slim, I'm 83 years old now and I'm just full of aches and pains. I know you're about my age. How do you feel?'

Slim says, 'I feel just like a newborn baby.'

'Really!? Like a newborn baby!?'

'Yep. No hair, no teeth, and I think I just wet my pants.'

Font: More Houlmans and Horse Sense by Vernon Schmid

A senior citizen said to his eighty-year old buddy:

'So, I hear you're getting married?'
 'Yep!'
 'Do I know her?'
 'Nope!'
 'This woman, is she good looking?'
 'Not really.'
 'Is she a good cook?'
 'Naw, she can't cook too well.'
 'Does she have lots of money?'
 'Nope! Poor as a church mouse.'
 'Well, then, is she good in bed?'
 'I don't know.'
 'Why in the world do you want to marry her then?'
 'Because she can still drive!'

Font: *The Joke Book for People Who Think Getting Old Is a Joke*, by The Unknown Comic

Let's Get a Beer

Three old guys
 are out walking.
 First one says, 'Windy, isn't it?'
 Second one says, 'No, it's Thursday!'
 Third one says, 'So am I. Let's go get a beer...'

Font: *Reminisces of Happy Times* by Robert Wiley

Let's Hear It

A man was telling his neighbour, 'I just bought a new hearing aid.
 It cost me four thousand dollars, but it's state of the art. It's perfect.'
 'Really,' answered the neighbour. 'What kind is it?'
 'Twelve thirty...'

Font: *Reminisces of Happy Times* by Robert Wiley

Hot Momma

Morris, an 82-year-old man, went to the doctor to get a physical.
 A few days later, the doctor saw Morris walking down the street with a gorgeous young woman on his arm.
 A couple of days later, the doctor spoke to

Morris and said, 'You're really doing great, aren't you?'
 Morris replied, 'Just doing what you said, Doc:
 'Get a hot mamma and be cheerful.'
 The doctor said, 'I didn't say that... I said, 'You've got a heart murmur; be careful.'

Font: *Reminisces of Happy Times* by Robert Wiley

A little Old Man Shuffled Slowly...

A little old man shuffled slowly into an ice cream parlour and pulled himself slowly, painfully, up onto a stool.
 After catching his breath, he ordered a banana split.
 The waitress asked kindly, 'Crushed nuts?'
 'No,' he replied, 'Arthritis.'

Font: *jokesoftheday.net*

Armando Bettozzi's Poems

In the days of the pandemic... (from February-March 2020, to ...)

C'è Il Virus Che Passa...

C'è il virus che passa. Chiudete, serrate!
 Ma non v'accostate...Ché... per chi s'ammassa già ha pronta la cassa...Se è quel che cercate...! ...
 C'è il virus che passa...Non dategli appiglio!
 Seguite il consiglio...Lui passa e ripassa per fare man bassa, con truce cipiglio.
 C'è il virus che passa...Sarà anche 'galera', così, mane e sera...Ma lui non s'abbassa, va, succhia e s'ingrassa...Restiamo, in preghiera.

Armando Bettozzi – 7 aprile 2020

I Giorni Del Silenzio

Trabocca ogni tua strada ed ogni piazza
 ed ogni viale e vicolo, di vuoto,
 sia sconosciuto o a tutto il mondo noto,
 in ogni ora. E sol timore impazza.
 La storia, che qui è scritta ad ogni passo,
 che il mondo col suo fascino trasporta

adesso tace - anch'essa sola e assorta.
 Ed in sospetto attende, ogni suo sasso.
 Di tanto, tutto il mondo sta privando
 il morbo che si spande in ogni dove
 come nemico che una guerra muove.
 E a impari arma ... s'oppone pregando.
 Più duro è trapassar senza un abbraccio,
 senza una mano che intrattien la mano.
 Divenuto – par - inuman l'umano...
 Ma serve ad evitar mortale allaccio.
 I giorni del silenzio e dei pensieri
 si van spegnendo lenti fra i ricordi
 tra ammassi di frastuoni e di bagordi.
 Forse mai più - sarà - com'era ieri.
 Di giorno il sole e di notte la luna
 ti guardano con attenzione nuova
 e in tanto mal comune è quel che giova.
 Buon riposo, Italia ... Buona fortuna.

Armando Bettozzi – 13 aprile 2020

L'Affettoamicoamormometro

Non proprio tutto quel ch'è male nuoce.
 Il male, male è sempre!... Non discuto.
 Ma occorre un ragionare un pó più acuto
 di quello tetro che ... sol mette in croce...
 Quest'ammorbante, virulento, atroce
 "corona" che contagia con lo sputo
 di cui non sa nemmeno chi è un saputo,
 ha aggiunto in dizionario questa voce:
 "affettoamicoamormometro". Creato
 dall'unico governo del Paese
 da fantasia e favola guidato.
 Giammai parola è stata sì precisa,
 e chiara ed esauriente, e sì palese
 nell'esaltar l'ilarità e le risa.
 Fingiam che sia così, poiché altrimenti
 dovrebbero scoppiar tra le conte-se
 non si sa ben...quali altri patimenti.

Armando Bettozzi – 30 aprile 2020



from internet

È stata aperta una sottoscrizione popolare per la
 difesa in tribunale di Mr. Virus...
 L'appello unanime è: comprensione, perdono e
 generosità!
 Ma poverino...!

L'Autodifesa Di Virus

Va - Virus - a esternar la sua protesta:
 "A tutti date l'opportunità
 di dire, fare e andare in libertà,
 e confinate me...Che storia è questa?!".
 "Mi odiate tutti...Mi volete male...
 Il mondo intero è tutto indaffarato
 a che nessuno più sia contagiato...
 Cercate il siero che per me è letale...
 "E la pietas ... che tanto vi sta a cuore?...
 Che a tutti v'avvicina...anche a chi uccide...
 E che perdona, e il castigar deride,
 e di me dite: <Questo...Quando! Muore!>
 "Con me soltanto fate i bravi...i forti...
 E l'abborrito – ormai – 'dente-per-dente'
 avete riesumato immantinente
 e sempre di più stiamo ai ferri-corti..."
 "Dov'è!... Lo psicologico sostegno...
 che ha da capire e deve far capire
 chi compulsivamente ha da colpire,
 prima di dir se a viver non sia degno!"
 "Io vengo da un regime comunista...
 Ben lo sapete il modo e la maniera...
 Almen trattiamo gli anni di galera,
 non la mia morte qual vostra conquista!"
 "M'appello a voi 'no-vax'...Almeno voi
 che tutto altro concetto avete in testa.
 Vi dico: prima o poi mi fan la festa!
 Contro quei duri, uniamoci, almen, noi!"

Armando Bettozzi – 23 maggio 2020

Rinascita.....Nella Speranza Che Presto Venga Questo Giorno...

Poema a Canto Unico

La Divina Fede

Stavo arrancando...in cerca di salire
sempre più in su con mani e piedi fermi
come colui che tenta di sfuggire
all'inseguir d'immondi topi e vermi
o all'acqua che salendo va e l'incalza...
Cos'io a un demone che vuole avermi,
fin su ad un picco aguzzo che s'innalza
che pare trapassare il cielo inquieto
pel mio gridar che fin lassù rimbalza.
Finché, improvviso, un segno di divieto
diceva "Qui finisce la tua ascesa.
Va', tornatene indietro e resta quieto!"
Il passo mossi inverso, per la scesa...
Ma a guardar giù cresceva la paura
con quella in più di perdere la presa.
E mentre più scendevo, più era dura
tornar sui passi dritti alla salvezza
dopo scampata orrida sventura.
Tremavo come foglia pur avvezza
ai tempestar di soffi novembrini
quando i cipressi affogano d'ebbrezza
e rami antichi spezza a olmi e pini.
Pregavo mentre giù scendevo avvinto
a una speranza senza più confini,
da ingenua fede mosso, e a pianto vinto
come chi a un raggio cerca d'aggrapparsi
prima che al buio a un pozzo giù sia spinto.
La vita in me sentii rigenerarsi
e a terra, in piedi, alfin mi ritrovai
leggero...ché i timori eran scomparsi.
Caddi in ginocchio e, grato ringraziai.

Armando Bettozzi – 2 marzo 2020

La Vita ...In Quattro... Motti

LA VITA È UNA PRECISA SOTTRAZIONE
SEPPUR SIA NEL CONTEMPO ANCHE
ADDIZIONE
E A TUTTI TANTO DÀ E A TUTTI TOGLIE
MISCHIANDO UN PO' DI GIOIA A TANTE
DOGLIE
TENERLA CARA E STRETTA È
OPERAZIONE
DA SOLVERE CON UMILE ATTENZIONE
CERCANDO L'EQUILIBRIO E LA MISURA
TRA QUEL CH' È FREDDO E QUELLO
CH' È CALURA

Armando Bettozzi – 18 aprile 2020

Ritornaran Le Margherite Ai Prati

E quando il sole riaprirà le porte
di questa estemporanea prigionia
poiché seccato avrà la malattia
cos'altro avrà per noi serbato in sorte
la lacrimosa valle della vita?
Che si fa a volte cinica e morbosa
e l'aria oscura, e rende tenebrosa
anche la luce che alla vita invita!
Sarà il contagio invero terminato
e torneran le margherite ai prati,
da farci alzare gli occhi al cielo grati
pe' averci un'altra volta perdonato?
Dirà – il sapere – è cosa ormai finita...
O ci trarran da tanta pandemia
soltanto Padre Nostro e Ave Maria,
e ... senza Arca ... rifiorirà la vita?

Armando Bettozzi – 22 marzo 2020

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.



About FFOA

Since 1971, FFOA has worked to advance the interests of pensioners from United Nations Agencies based in Italy, regardless of where they spend their retirement. FFOA is based at FAO Headquarters in Rome and has a growing global membership numbering more than 2,300 pensioners from FAO, IFAD, WFP, ICCROM, etc. from all staff categories.

Representation

FFOA officially represents retiree interests in formal relations with management of FAO, IFAD and WFP. We have a place at the table in all retiree-relevant discussions. FFOA is also active in the Federation of Associations of Former International Civil Servants (FAFICS), which joins 63 associations like ours to represent pensioners at the UN System level.

Support

FFOA works to improve retirement benefits – particularly pensions and medical insurance – and to protect the interests of the membership as a whole. We also respond to individual requests from members for assistance, guidance or referral on issues associated with retirement and ageing in general (all services are provided by members on a voluntary basis). Members are informed of developments in areas of concern by our Newsbrief, by our website and direct contact by post (including e-mail).

Camaraderie

FFOA promotes contact and social and intellectual exchange among its members, through a web-based discussion forum, and a wide range of cultural and social activities. Colleagues and friends in the Rome area gather

at FAO on the first Wednesday of each month for “Coffee Morning” – drop in if you’re in the neighbourhood!

Helping those in need

Being a pensioner can be difficult and lonely. Volunteers from FFOA are available to support members in distress over the phone, or to organize home visits. FFOA also offers small no-interest loans (maximum 1,500 Euro) to meet short-term emergency requirements.

Service

Even after a career of service, UN pensioners remain interested in and committed to development issues, and continue to support the objectives of their former employer. FFOA attends key meetings and events at Rome headquarters, shares updates with members on key activities and achievements in the UN System, and provides direct support as well.

Keep up with FFOA and retiree colleagues
Stay informed on the latest developments on important issues for retirees via the FFOA website: www.ffoa-web.org. Register on the website to ensure you always receive the latest information, and stay in touch with distant friends and former colleagues.

Join FFOA!

Adding your voice helps make the Association stronger and more impactful. Annual FFOA membership is 25 Euro; a life membership is 375 Euro. There is one-time registration fee of 10 Euro. Follow the link to download a membership application: www.ffoa-web.org/eligibility-for-membership, write to ffoa@fao.org, or phone the FFOA desk at (+39) 06-5705 5623 / 5705 6016.

Newsbrief 111

July 2020

Newsbrief, the FFOA official edition, is produced in English and Italian three times a year and is distributed 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.ffoa-web.org. Suggestions or contributions from members are welcome. The cost of printing Newsbrief, as well as other FFOA documents is borne by the WFP. Costs associated with documentation for the General Assembly are borne by IFAD. FFOA is grateful for these contributions.

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