

WFP ALUMNI NETWORK NEWSLETTER



Alumni Network



June 2019

Welcome Message

By Steering Committee President,
Suresh Sharma

I am delighted to introduce this fifth newsletter of the WFP Alumni Network published on the eve of the 2019 Annual session of the WFP Executive Board. The newsletter has become a regular feature, in the hands of our able editor and AN Secretary Gretchen Bloom, with assistance from our very competent Liaison Officer, Arianna Cepparotti.

WFP Alumni Network members participated as observers at the first Session of the WFP Executive Board in February 2019. A brief report by the AN team observing the meeting is shared in this newsletter. The focus of the AN team these past months has been on the completion of the third Oral History publication on the theme of "Cross-Border Operations" and on the election of the new Steering Committee. There

are brief reports on both items elsewhere in this newsletter. AN Chapters in Italy, Nepal and the USA were involved in various activities, which are reported in other parts of this newsletter, and the Swiss Chapter has been revitalized with a new Chapter Coordinator.

The Biennial General Meeting of the AN on June 17-18 June will confirm a new Steering Committee, review and approve the Strategic Plan, and review and advise on the Work Plan for the new Steering Committee.

WFP Headquarters is in Rome, and hence it is important to have AN leadership in Rome to have a regular interaction with WFP. At the same time, WFP's work is outside Rome, and most staff and most Alumni work and live outside Rome. Therefore, it is very important that the AN be active outside Rome – for advocating and fundraising for WFP in economically well-off countries and for advocating and volunteering for WFP in programme

countries. To that end, I would like to urge Alumni in other countries to organize as a group to remain connected and carry forward the AN mission in their countries of residence. I am not a candidate for the next Steering Committee; therefore, I will be completing my term and stepping down as President of the AN after serving two terms when a new President is selected at the General Meeting. I will, nevertheless, continue to read future newsletters to learn about WFP and the AN, and will participate in the Nepal Chapter activities of the AN in the days to come. For, as I have said many times before, we leave WFP, but WFP never leaves our hearts!

Timeline of Upcoming Events

Alumni Network General Meeting
Rome, 17-18 June 2019, WFP HQs
Forum Room
Save the date!

World Food Day Concert
19 October 2019 at 18:30
Organized by the Italian Chapter at the
Sala Accademia of the Conservatorio
Save the date!

Election of the New AN Steering Committee Members (2019-2021)

Janice Burberry was appointed Polling Officer for the 2019 election to the Steering Committee. Following the procedures of the previous election, a ballot was sent to subscribed members. There are eleven candidates. The election of the eight candidates for the new SC is currently in process. The results of those receiving the highest votes will be announced at the General Meeting in June. The Polling Officer will present a separate report on the election and the results for confirmation and approval at the GM.

Summary of the Executive Board Meeting -WFP AN SC, February 2019

By Donna Ducharme

The first-regular session of the Executive Board was held between February 25-27, 2019. The Executive Director opened the session with remarks about the strategic direction of WFP. His Excellency Daniel Kablan Duncan, Vice-President of the Côte d'Ivoire, delivered a statement with a particular focus on the Centre of Excellence Against Hunger in Africa.

On Operations, the EB considered Country Strategic Plans, reviewed budgets, and approved projects and revisions to Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Dominican Republic, DRC, DPRK, Ethiopia, Liberia, Libya, Malawi, Nicaragua, Niger and Nigeria.

With respect to Resource, Budgetary and Financial matters, an update on the

management plan with a proposed organizational change was withdrawn. As such, the WFP organizational chart remains unchanged.

On Policy issues, the EB postponed its consideration of a revised Charter of the Office of Inspector General until the Annual session.

The EB took note of the annual report of the Ombudsman's Office which included an analysis of the cost of conflict.

An evaluation report was presented on Ethiopia. In addition, a formative evaluation paper was presented which takes a "theory of delivery" approach to assess how well WFP is prepared to deliver on its resilience-related commitments, including an examination

of the following areas: concept, strategy, guidance, systems, programmes, partners, people and information. Evaluation findings, conclusions and recommendations will inform the systemic, organizational change required to enhance the resilience of target populations.

At the request of the Bureau, the co-chairs of the joint Board/Management Working Group on harassment, sexual harassment, abuse of power and discrimination provided an oral update on the work of the group.

How To Become Member of the WFP AN

Membership: Former WFP employees can subscribe to become members of the WFP Alumni Network. Membership has two categories:

- ❖ lifetime with a payment of **USD 250 / 250 Euro** or annual with a payment of **USD 25/25 Euro**.

For new members, here are tips on [how you can pay your dues easily](#):

- ❖ The WFP Alumni Network has an account with the **UNFCU (UN Federal Credit Union)** in New York for collection of membership fees. You can transfer from your bank to the **UNFCU for the WFP Alumni Network** (Account Number: **1030827740001**). The Routing Number (ABA code) is **226 078 609**. the bank address 24-01 44thRd., Long Island City, 11101-4605, NY, USA.
- ❖ You can also transfer funds to the UNFCU's US dollar (\$\$) account in the **Banca Popolare di Sondrio in Rome**.

Account Holder:	United Nations Federal Credit Union (beneficiary)
Account Number:	074-0497500-EDC-EUR
BIC/SWIFT Code:	POS0IT2110C
IBAN (if needed):	IT84J0569603222EDCEU0497500
Causale:	WFP Alumni Network 1030827740001 (Account Number)

- ❖ You can send dues to wfpalumni@wfp.org (using either your credit/debit card or linking to your bank account, using PayPal account).

DON'T FORGET TO PAY YOUR DUES IF YOU ARE REGULAR MEMBER!

Chapter News

Italy Chapter

Bronek Szynalski for Francesco Strippoli, Coordinator

In the period from January to May 2019, some members of the Rome Chapter attended the February session of the WFP Executive Board, noting with satisfaction the continuing strong support of the donor community for the work of WFP, which is having enormous problems coping with the extraordinary increase in emergency needs.

In addition, the Italian Chapter organised a well-attended lunch on March 6 at the Taverna Cestia. Over 20 Alumni attended, including new members to the group, and there was a nice atmosphere of good humour, festivity and conviviality. Lively discussions varied between WFP current activities, nostalgic stories of working together, and updates of family and friends.

The one issue to which particular attention was paid in the Italian Chapter is the projected concert for World Food Day in October. After the third such concert organized last October, where costs overran the proceeds, one member of the Rome group contacted Ms. Marylene Mouquet, a professor of music and president of a musical association in Frascati. She agreed to organise a concert at a cost which was estimated to be acceptable. After discussion of the venue, Ms. Mouquet advised that the Director of the Conservatorio di Santa Cecilia was prepared to have us use the Sala Accademia of the Conservatorio, on condition that it be sponsored by the UN World Food Programme as part of its World Food Day celebrations. The concert will be free of charge, and entry will be based on voluntary donations as a benefit concert.

The concert hall is magnificent and has seen such performers as Renata Fleming, Kiri Te Kanawa, Joan Sutherland, and many other famous persons. The date agreed is October 19 at 18:30 and the programme will include music by Pergolesi and

Mozart, with the rest of the selections still to be defined. All in the AN and all others interested in WFP's activities and in music will be encouraged to attend. WFP's Deputy Executive Director has confirmed his presence, but hopefully members of the WFP Executive Board will also join, as well as other officials and staff of WFP, FAO, IFAD and the general public.

Please note the date in your calendars!

Nepal Chapter

Suresh Sharma for Heera Shrestha, Coordinator

Simpani Gaurigaun Drinking Water Project - April 2019



Background--Following the devastating earthquake that hit Nepal in April 2015, Bhai Raja Panday, a Rotarian of the Rotary Club of Mid-Town Kathmandu (RCMK), shared with me a project proposal (on 18 July 1916) to rehabilitate the drinking and domestic water supply system in Simpani Gaurigaun village of Dhading district. Based on my previous conversation with Hannah Laufer, a WFP Alumna and President of the Palms for Life Fund (PFLF), based in New York, I immediately (on 20 July 2016) shared the proposal with her to explore the possibility of raising funds through PFLF. Hannah was supportive and agreed to launch fund raising from the PFLF platform. After several iterations of revisions to the project document, mainly by Bhai Raja Panday and the RCMK, the project was launched on 28 November 2016.

Project--The project entailed constructing a water collection tank, installing a water pump to lift the water up to a distribution tank, constructing a distribution tank, and installing piping and taps to 32

households in the village, and a primary school in the village. The initial estimate was about \$32,000. After modification to the project to meet the specification of the Rotary Club, and other useful suggestions, the total outlay amounted to about \$46,000.



Field visit--A joint Rotary Club of Kathmandu and WFP Alumni Network team visited the project site several times over the two years of the project. The third, and final visit took place on 30th March 2019, when the project was completed and handed over to the local community. An event was organized at Gaurigaun, when the local community thanked the Rotary Club and the WFP Alumni Network for their assistance. The consumer group also gave a letter of Appreciation to the WFP Alumni Network. Some pictures of the field visits are here.



Collaboration with WFP Country Office Staff – May 2019

-- At the request of the WFP Nepal CO Staff Welfare Group, a presentation was made by the WFP Alumni Network to the WFP Nepal CO on 16 May 2019 to about 35 national staff. Also present on the occasion were Dr. Suresh Raj Sharma, President, Steering Committee, WFP Alumni Network, WFP AN (Nepal Chapter) Coordinator, Mr.

Heera Kajee Shrestha and Nepal Chapter members namely, Ms. Pushpa Acharya, Narayan Rajbanshi and Bijaya Amatya.



photos of the good old days of smiling Zhen-zhen with us.

USA Chapter Angela Van Rynbach, Coordinator & Gretchen Bloom, Secretary



Dr. Suresh R. Sharma delivered a brief presentation of WFP Alumni Network, its historical background, purpose, mission (AN/WFP MoU), structure & organization and activities. The presentation was followed by a brief introduction of Alumni members and interesting interactions with WFP national staff members present. The staff members expressed their happiness to know about the WFP AN and said they would like to invite WFP AN Nepal Chapter members to the CO staff informal gatherings in the future and interact more in detail. The programme was concluded with refreshments.

China Chapter Activity Report 2017-19 Mei Yue, China Chapter Coordinator from Oct. 2017

The China Chapter of the WFP Alumni Network has a total of 16 members. Although many of us who had worked for WFP/China live in different parts of China and overseas, it is relatively easy to keep in touch in the digital age. Although Facebook is banned in China, and those that don't download a VPN are unable to access WFP People, the Chapter has set up a similar group on WeChat. This is very active with fresh posts almost every day. Naturally, posts and comments are in Chinese.

In March 2019, in response to the WFP China Office initiative to compile a photo album for the family in memory of Zhen-zhen Huang who died on duty travel on the Ethiopian flight ET 302, Chapter members retrieved and contributed

The USA Chapter currently has 29 members, including two former Executive Directors (Catherine Bertini and Josette Sheeran), and one former Deputy Executive director (Jean-Jacques Graise). At our recent meeting on June 6 in New York, at the WFP Office, 14 members (one on conference call) discussed items on the agenda.

The New York Office hosted our meeting and gave a very informative presentation on UN Reform. (See BOX on p. 7) We discussed the upcoming General Meeting in Rome on June 17-18, updated some lapsed memberships, discussed nominations for the USA Chapter Coordinating Committee, and listened to news from the FFOA meeting about health insurance and the UNJSPF.

We also learned about the WFP AN Biennial Report and the third Oral History Publication on Cross -Border Operations, prepared for the GM, and discussed how to use the AN brochure and newsletter for increasing memberships, including in termination packets distributed by HR to retiring staff.

We brainstormed a bit about the future of the USA Chapter, wondering how to bring in members from other parts of the USA beyond the East Coast. Perhaps a third annual meeting will be on Zoom. As of now, we can plan to participate in a meeting in Washington DC in the fall in connection with WFP-USA when it hosts Leon Panetta at a Sandy Berger Lecture and a World Affairs Conference in St. Petersburg FL in February.

Agenda

- ✚ Introduction- Angela Van Rynbach, USA Chapter Coordinator
- ✚ Briefing – Karla Hershey, Senior Advisor on UN Reform, WFP NY Office Officer-in-Charge, & Daniel Barnhardt, External Partnerships Officer
- ✚ WFP-AN Publications-Oral History Project OHP#3 on Cross-Border Operations, Biennial Report & Newsletter -Gretchen Bloom
- ✚ AN General Meeting—Peggy Nelson
 - Discussion of achievements and challenges
- ✚ Election of Coordinating Committee of USA Chapter—Debbie Saily
- ✚ Update on UN FFOA (Former FAO and Other Agencies) Meeting in Rome/Health Insurance and UNJSPF (Pension Fund) – Joe Scalise
- ✚ Future Events and Activities – Angela Van Rynbach
 - Florida rendezvous in St. Petersburg for Conference on World Affairs—Trudy Bower, Allan Jury
 - Possible Chapter Meeting in Washington in conjunction with Sandy Berger Memorial Lecture (WFP-USA) – Debbie Saily

The meeting was followed by lunch at Ristorante DeGrazia during which members shared updates on their lives after WFP.

- ✚ Update on Palms for Life-Hannah Laufer
- ✚ Update on members' activities.

Once the meeting adjourned, we shared stories over an Italian lunch about our lives after WFP, which ranged from supporting food banks to teaching, advocacy, environmental activism, writing, traveling and community participation, among many other activities. Life after WFP seems to be very active with Alumni still committed to helping people.

Feature Story –Those who helped make WFP what it is today: Focus on Theo Van Asten– contributed by Bronek Szynalski



We surely all know that George McGovern was at the origin of the concept of setting up a food assistance organization and remember that Addeke Boerma was WFP's first Executive Director. Most of us also know that James Ingram took the initiative to separate an aid programme (WFP) from a technical organization (FAO) which in some way stifled its development. And we surely recall other Executive Directors and senior officials who made history running and managing the difficult task of addressing hunger among the disinherited of this world.

On the left: Theo & Antoinette Van Asten

However, we need to acknowledge that there were, and still are, innumerable people who took the ideas and decisions out of the offices and implemented a humanitarian mission which has saved and continues to save millions of lives and improve the living conditions of millions more.

I had the privilege to know and work with one such person whose background would not have suggested a role in such tasks as assessing the validity, relevance, efficiency and success of food as an instrument of development. Theo Van Asten was one of those: ordained as Catholic priest, he rose to become the head of the White Fathers, a missionary order in Africa, and then joined WFP as an Evaluation Officer after disagreement with the Church. He recounted, after a hard day's work, on several field trips we took together, his experiences dealing with a variety of types of people, including condemned criminals, in his earlier role as a missionary in Africa. He was addressing not only the physical but also the spiritual needs of some who wanted to understand what would happen when they died, be that naturally or at the hand of the executioner. Theo's job was to reassure, to calm, to make it easier to accept fate. It was in this spirit, noting how a colonial power such as Portugal in Mozambique, where he was stationed, was supported by the Church, he formally protested with the Vatican, and after several attempts to get a hearing, threatened to withdraw the White Fathers from Mozambique. Frustrated by a lack of understanding, he resigned and joined WFP to pursue a humanitarian mission where he had few constraints.

He led many missions, and I recall one in Chad, where we were chatting under a tent in some desert location, listening to stories he told us of happy and less happy experiences with the inhabitants of countries where he had worked. He was a great evaluation staffer, sharp eyed, judicious and articulate in his reports. It was a privilege to have been his colleague and friend.

Theo, a Dutch citizen, at the age of 97, lives in France, near Bésiers, with his wife Antoinette. He remains faithful to the Catholic Church, despite his past difficulties, and married religiously, once he got permission from Pope Benedict XVI in 2008.

[WFP Alumni Network Biennial Report 2017-19](#)

The Biennial Report is being prepared for the June 2019 General Meeting. It reports on the period for which the current Steering Committee has been responsible, that is, from July 2017 to June 2019. The Biennial Report is available on the WFP AN website: please go to the AN Website, Home page, Latest Communication and click on "[Alumni Network Biennial Report 2017-19](https://alumnimembers.wfp.org/documents/13767872/20387908/WFP+AN+Biennial+Report+2017-19/bc1f71ce-2c8b-4da9-bbb2-a3c4e529ec59)" <https://alumnimembers.wfp.org/documents/13767872/20387908/WFP+AN+Biennial+Report+2017-19/bc1f71ce-2c8b-4da9-bbb2-a3c4e529ec59>

Update on Third Oral History Project Publication on Cross-Border Operations

Following the June 2018 meeting of the Alumni Network and based on the opinion of the members from a survey conducted last year, the AN Steering Committee decided to embark on a third oral history publication. The theme is experiences of Alumni in **Cross-Border Operations**.

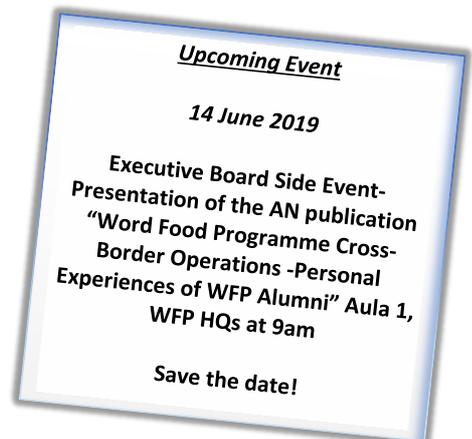
Cross-border operations simply means implementing operations from across a border to benefit the people in another country. This simple definition, however, conceals a lot of complexity that requires unique skills on the part of WFP staff. Generally, in such a situation, the government of the country where beneficiaries live is not readily cooperating with WFP or the population is fleeing from the conflict area to a neighboring country for security. A few examples include assisting Cambodian

refugees from Thailand; beneficiaries in South Sudan from Kenya (Lokichokio); in Somalia from Kenya; in Afghanistan from Pakistan; in Iraq from Turkey, Jordan, and Syria; in Syria from Jordan; or in rebel-controlled areas from government-controlled areas (e.g., in Sri Lanka).



WFP Cross-Border Operations
Personal Experiences of WFP Alumni

See [WFP AN Website](https://wfpalumni.wfp.org) to download the digital copy of the second AN publication at <https://wfpalumni.wfp.org> or write to wfpalumni@wfp.org for the hard copy.



Life After WFP

By Suresh Sharma

On the first day of my retirement, 1 April 2013, I was actually in Amman attending a meeting of the Advisory Committee on Internal Oversight of United Nations Relief and Work Agency (<https://www.unrwa.org>). I had started serving in that position the year before while still working at WFP. I continued that for another three years to the end of 2015, serving as its chairman for the last 18 months. I am based in Kathmandu and travelled two or three times a year to Amman to attend the meetings.

Also, immediately after my retirement, I was appointed to the Audit Committee of World Meteorological Organization (<https://public.wmo.int/en>). I served in that capacity for six years until the end of February 2019. I travelled to Geneva twice a year to attend the meetings. More recently, in July 2018, I was appointed to the Independent Oversight and Audit Committee of UNHCR for a period of three years. I was elected to serve as the Vice Chair for the period 2018-19 by the Committee.

In February 2013, the WFP Executive Director announced a WFP Alumni programme. Some other colleagues were already discussing the idea of forming an Alumni Association. All Alumni were invited to the 50th anniversary in November 2013 of the start of WFP operations in 1963. A group for drafting the statutes for the Alumni Association was created at that time. I became a member of this group. The group concluded the task, and the statutes were approved at a General Meeting of Alumni in June 2015. I was a candidate, and was selected to serve, on the Steering Committee just before this General Meeting. The eight-member Steering Committee selected me to be the President of the Alumni Network. The Steering Committee completed its two-year term in 2017, and I was re-elected. The Committee again selected me to be the President. I will have served four years as the Alumni Network President by the next General Meeting in June 2019. The work of the Alumni Network is reflected in Annual Reports, periodic newsletters, and Oral History Publications.

My main reason to be interested in the Alumni Network Steering Committee was to be in the know to do something in Nepal. Therefore, I continue to participate in the activities of the Nepal Chapter of the Alumni Network. In addition to periodic meetings of the members, the Nepal Chapter, in collaboration with the Palm for Life Fund run by an Alumna Hannah Laufer, raised funds to support, jointly with a Rotary Club in Kathmandu, the rehabilitation of a water system in a village, which was damaged by the Nepal earthquake of 2015. The project was finally completed and handed over to the local community on 30 March 2019. A brief report of the project is available on the AN website.

Upon my return to Nepal in 2013 I got together with other returnees from the UN and other multilateral organizations and established an organization called FIPMO - Forum of Former International Professionals of Multilateral Organizations (<https://fipmo-nepal.org>). I was the founding Secretary General in 2014 and have served as its Chairman since August 2017.

Life After WFP (continued)

By Suresh Sharma

The objective of FIPMO is to provide a forum for members to collectively use their experience and expertise for the benefit of Nepal and its people. The group provides pro-bono advisory service to the government, United Nations agencies, and non-profit organizations in Nepal.

In addition to these professional and UN-related activities, I serve on the Advisory Board of my first primary school – Pragati Shiksha Sadan. In late 2018, I was elected to serve on the Board of an academic institution, Southwestern Centre for Research and PhD Studies in Nepal (<http://phdcentre.edu.np>).

From time to time, I give seminars for Continuing Professional Development of Fellow Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCAs) in Nepal. Certainly, my multi-tasking has increased, but still I cannot complain about not having enough time.

Suresh Raj Sharma, Lalitpur, Nepal - surasharma@gmail.com

UN Development System Reform

As a part of a wider UN reform, WFP is actively engaged in the development system's reform, which is mandated through UN General Assembly Resolutions 71/243 and 72/279. Enhanced coordination is a major part of these reform efforts. A strengthened UN Resident Coordinator system was launched in January 2019 and a subsequent provisional management and accountability framework was then issued in April 2019. Within the new Resident Coordinator (RC) system, the RC function has been unpegged from UNDP and placed within the UN Secretariat, with a straight line of reporting to the Secretary General (SG) and Deputy-SG. WFP's Country Representatives now have a dual reporting line – 1) to WFP Regional Directors and 2) to the RC for accountability on WFP's activities in the Cooperation Framework. The Cooperation Framework (former UNDAF) is now the most important UN planning document in the country, and all UN Country Programme Documents must derive from it. Beyond these elements, a Funding Compact has been negotiated with Member States and seeks to improve quality and quantity of donor funding in return for greater UN transparency and accountability. A review of the UN's regional architecture is currently underway seeking to enhance UN synergies at regional level. WFP senior leadership and all WFP regional bureaux have been involved in the regional review. At a global level, WFP co-chairs the Business Innovation Group with UNHCR and continues to work with sister agencies and the Rome-based agencies on the various reform components. For more information, visit the UN reform website [UN Reform Website: https://reform.un.org/](https://reform.un.org/)



[Invitation to AN Members to Contribute to Newsletter](#)

This is YOUR Newsletter! Please send in your contributions. You could tell us about your 'Life after WFP.' You could send in an article that you have written. You could advertise an event coming up in your community. Please send your contributions to Gretchen Bloom, Secretary, c/o Arianna Cepparotti (arianna.cepparotti@wfp.org)