

WFP AT 60



World Food Programme

SAVING
LIVES
CHANGING
LIVES

**WFP Alumni
Network**



This booklet was commissioned by the Alumni Network Coordination Committee 2022-2023 to mark WFP's 60th anniversary.

The Alumni Network dedicates this Booklet to all those of the World Food Programme who have lost their lives while serving the hungry poor across six decades.

Photos and articles contributed on a voluntary basis by former WFP staff.

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WFP ALUMNI NETWORK <https://www.wfp.org/alumni-network>

The Alumni Network (AN) of the World Food Programme (WFP), was set up in 2013. It brings together former staff, whether they be retirees or employees who held contracts of any type or duration: Professional, Junior Professional Officer, General Service, National Officer, Consultant, UN Volunteer, Intern; spouse/partner or surviving spouse/partner; and continuing, indefinite appointment, fixed-term, or short term, Special Service Appointment, or Service Contract.

The ANCC is grateful to Caroline Hurford, Editor, and Alessandro Mannocchi, Graphic Designer, for their talent and dedication in gathering colleagues' contributions in this creation. Special thanks to Rein Skullerud, WFP Senior Photographer, for his valuable support and some images, and to Janice Burberry, Editor AN Newsletter, for her assistance.

STEERING WFP

With the award of the Nobel Peace Prize to WFP in 2020, the Committee turned the eyes of the world towards the millions of people who suffer from or face the threat of hunger.

“The credibility of an institution is not based on its declarations, but on the work accomplished by its members.”

Pope Francis, at WFP HQ in June 2016



Catherine Bertini
(1992-2002) strengthened the organization by enabling managers, entrusting a greater authority and boosting morale with designation, WFP Representative.



James Morris
(2002-2007) used the organization’s autonomy to institute inter-agency collaboration and public-private partnership.



Josette Sheeran
(2007-2012) further modernized WFP, adopting modern tools and empowering farmers to play a significant role in the fight against hunger.



Ertharin Cousin
(2012-2017) advanced the theme of working towards longer-term solutions to the problem of hunger.



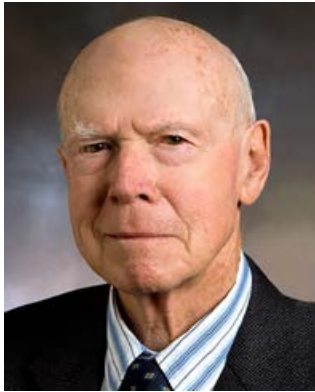
David Beasley
(2017-2023) became a compelling voice to educate the world about the plight of hungry people amid competing causes.



Cindy McCain
“I am deeply honoured to lead WFP and thrilled to be a part of the team.”

[See interviews with each of the five former EDs](#)

WFP FIRST DECADES



JAMES INGRAM (1928–2023) TRANSFORMING WFP

From Dennis Blight's obituary <https://www.crawfordfund.org/news/vale-james-charles-ingram/>

After a “stellar” diplomatic career, James Ingram was appointed in 1982 as WFP Executive Director, with the personal rank of UN Under-Secretary General. He is the only Australian to have led a UN organization at that level. His book, [Bread and Stones](#), provides a handbook and inspiration for those who, like him, seek to make the UN system live up to its great ideals.

Unlike many of his contemporaries, Ingram tackled all of his appointments with determined reforming zeal. As he himself admitted, he was not an easy man to work for, especially early in the mornings. But as those who did so agree, he was a first-class thinker, and once you got to know him, an excellent friend and wise advisor.

Read extract from Memorial tribute by former Australian Foreign Minister, Gareth Evans: <https://devpolicy.org/jim-ingram-a-great-australian-internationalist-20230815/>

						
Mr A.H. Boerma May 1962 - December 1967	Mr Sushil K. Dev (a.i.) January 1968 - August 1968	Mr Francisco Aquino July 1968 - May 1976	Mr Thomas C.M. Robinson May 1976 - September 1977	Mr G.N. Vogel October 1977 - April 1981	Mr B. de Azevedo Brito (a.i.) May 1981 - February 1982	Mr Juan F. Yriart (a.i.) February 1982 - April 1982

See also WFP <https://www.wfp.org/previous-executive-directors>



Click on this LINK to watch a short video celebrating WFP's 60th Anniversary. Reflect on six decades of fighting hunger – and see how you helped keep WFP on track!



<https://content.jwplatform.com/videos/FE6DwpFA-wOVdt6af.mp4>



Catherine Bertini on an early field trip

Catherine Bertini's career highlight: 10 YEARS HEADING THE WFP "FAMILY"

When Catherine Bertini was recommended by her boss to succeed James Ingram at WFP, the US Secretary of State James Baker still had to agree. As Assistant Secretary at the US Department of Agriculture, she was responsible for food assistance programmes, school lunches and similar projects. Her experience was relevant, but the appointment was far from being a "done deal". She still had to run a campaign.

The US government helped to create WFP and had consistently provided about one third of the funding (now it's responsible for much more). There had never been an American nor a woman at the top. "The American view was that it was their turn," she said.

The figures and the need have risen exponentially: "The last year I was at WFP (2001-2002) the budget was **US\$1.9 billion**. Twenty years later, in 2022, the US government contributed **US\$7.2 billion** out of a total

US\$14 billion raised!"

Asked about so-called "difficult" countries for WFP, Bertini said Afghanistan was among the most challenging. "We had very, very brave local female staff - they're the ones who convinced the Taleban to allow the women's bakeries to function. The argument was since

women are not allowed to leave home without a male relative... the widows would just shrivel up and die at home. We told the Taleban that if they let us run the bakeries, we could save lives." They were reluctant to concede the point, but eventually gave way. WFP had bakeries in the seven major cities.



President Scalfaro of Italy at the formal opening of HQ on 22 May 1998



Welcoming UN SG Boutros Boutros Ghali, at former HQ, 1993



UN SG Boutros Boutros Ghali addresses staff at former HQ, 1993

Another challenging country was DPRK, where WFP started operations in 1995. “They wanted our assistance in ‘94, but they asked us too late for FAO to assess the harvest. The following year they asked us on time and we were able to start an 8.3 million dollar programme using our emergency pot (thanks to Sweden). Then we were surprised the US donated - and the small operation quickly expanded.”

Asked what proportion of time Bertini spent in Headquarters compared with overseas travel, she estimated that during her first 5-year term, it was perhaps 50 percent in Rome vs “on the road”. On the arrival of UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, this was split a third way, as he required her to attend coordination meetings with other agencies in New York. He also appointed her as his Special

Envoy on the Horn of Africa drought in March 2000; she duly travelled to the region and coordinated the response.

Bertini cherished her meetings with WFP staff both in HQ and in the field. She managed to spend at least one third of her time in the global south. There was always a “pull” for her to stay in the capital when she was in the field, meeting government officials (essentially diplomatic niceties) when her main desire was to see WFP projects, meet local staff, speak with beneficiaries and get a sense of how things were progressing.

“When I was spending 3 to 5 days in a country, my plan was to spend the first day in the capital, then the remaining time in the field, but because the government officials knew I was *there*, they’d often want me to return on Day 4, but I would

say ‘no!’ They could get upset if I didn’t make myself available.”

While travelling in the field, Bertini tried to make a point of wearing a *skirt* – with a few exceptions, such as in North Korea, where it was cold, so she wore trousers. “I felt it was a tiny bow to women to wear some kind of dress – even if some of the women I met only owned one piece of cloth which they wrapped around their body. I felt more comfortable in a skirt. There was once a *Financial Times* leader article featuring my work/travel, which described me as looking more like a girl scout than a UN Exec. Director - I’ll take it!”

Was her second term (1997-2002) a chance to complete what she had started during the first? Yes, it had been very important; she estimated the optimum tenure for an ED as 7-8 years: “It’s not a question of coming in and just making your mark... you don’t want to stay around and get stale. What I’m most proud of are the creative ideas (from all levels of the organization): the *comms* changes, for instance: all the ideas, the initiatives that folks brought at all levels.”

Bertini gives full credit to Jim Ingram for the break with FAO; “He worked 10 years on it (see his book: *Bread and Stones*).” Describing a world in turmoil after the collapse of the Soviet Union (1991) and beset by crises, she said WFP needed the break with FAO in order to rise to the challenges and streamline new efficient operations: “Jim made the change – I ran with it.”

Not everyone was happy: some people didn’t want change. They had signed up for development careers when WFP was tackling emergencies. So options were offered to people who might have expected postings in Mexico City, Brasilia and Gaborone, where they could take their children. Emergencies were occurring in places such as post-genocide Rwanda, or Pyongyang, North Korea. “We didn’t point to people and say ‘go’; we offered buy-outs to all. And we lost some folk that we would rather not have left, but that was the

most equitable way to do it.”

Asked if her legacy from the second term put WFP onto an emergency footing with a little development around the edges, Bertini gave a resounding “No.”

“WFP started as mostly development. In the ‘80s the shift started to change. By the time I came in, we were desperately holding onto development programmes...No one wanted us to lose them...We kept looking for ways to keep the development portfolio, but it just dwindled – that was my biggest disappointment...that we couldn’t find our reasons to keep development, but we had to do emergencies.” Clearly the emergencies demand speedy response, but development is essential to avoid or mitigate those emergencies; the two cannot be separated. Bertini’s response: “Exactly! Donors still don’t understand that ...”

On the subject of contact with EDs who succeeded her, Bertini said she was mostly in touch with Ertharin Cousin, as they move in the same professional circles. She has seen David Beasley once, since



UN SG Kofi Annan entering the auditorium to address staff, 2000

he stepped down. She has met Josette Sheeran occasionally, at conferences... but hasn’t run into Jim Morris. “I called on Cindy McCain. Whenever there’s a new ED, I make a point of briefing them, saying: I’m not going to meddle in your affairs. I’ll tell you a lot of background now, but I won’t interfere. If you want more information, feel free to ask.”

Bertini said she had sent a note to thank Cindy McCain for travelling to Australia for Jim

Ingram’s memorial service (9 August 2023) “to give due credit to the man who created the options for us to shape WFP as it is today.”

On *WFP Alumni*, Bertini said: “The wonderful thing about WFP is that we’re family – **this is family** - and family treasure; it’s very, very special.” Asked whether her WFP service was a career highlight, this Executive Director replied: “Oh yes, no question! THE career highlight.”



The ED’s senior women (P5 and above), 2002

Jesse Mabutás

RISING TO THE TOP AFTER RECEIVING FREE SCHOOL MEALS



At the ACDF 25th anniversary with Thomas Yanga

"IN

May 2001,
I became the
first woman

Assistant Executive Director of WFP. This for someone who was a beneficiary of school feeding projects while at grade school in the Philippines. You might say I really managed to turn things around!"

In the 1980s and '90s, Jessie Mabutás worked her way up through the Philippines' state audit system. She then turned to the UN, where she became a trailblazer in enhancing audit,

investigation, oversight, financial management, administrative services, and governance. She helped establish the first audit committees with external and independent members in WFP, UNDP, UNOPS, UNIFEM, and UNJSPF; as well as introducing enterprise risk management in UNDP, UNOPS and IFAD and led the global implementation of the first ERP (WINGS) in WFP still considered as the most successful implementation in the UN system to date.

After 10 years' service with WFP, Jessie left in 2003 to work for the United Nations Secretariat

as Chief of Staff of the USG for the Department of Management, UNDP as Director of the Office of Audit and Performance Review, and at IFAD as Assistant President for Finance and Administration. And after a brief return at the UN she then took early retirement in 2013. She has since been involved with several UN organizations and even came back as a staff member acting as Interim Director for audit and investigations at UN Women, and more recently at the UNFPA. She also served as member of the Accreditation Panel of the UN Adaptation Fund for six years.

"I helped UN Women establish their internal audit function, which they took over from UNDP. When I left (after eight months) they showed their gratitude through this video, because they knew I wouldn't accept gifts!"

Jessie is currently a member of several bodies, including the African Capacity Building Foundation, and the Section on African Public Administration of the American Society for Public Administration. While maintaining a keen interest in all things connected with oversight and financial administration, Jessie still makes time for friends and family.



Kenya: Meeting local women managing the adaptation fund project



Rina at her desk in OED

Rina Manzo

AT THE HEART OF IT ALL

“I HAVE TO BE HONEST: I HAVE NO PROBLEMS WITH ANYONE... AND I HAVE BEEN VERY FORTUNATE,”

says Rina Manzo, recalling her three decades working closely with five former Executive Directors at WFP. While some might say Rina “knows where all the bodies are buried,” she looks back on her career with much pleasure, gratitude and pride.

Rina Manzo was 27 when she arrived in Rome from Montreal, Canada with her husband Giampaolo. They met in Rome on Rina’s first trip to Italy. Being bilingual with fluent French, Rina applied for, and immediately gained, a G4 post as Bilingual Stenographer at FAO in 1986. “My training in business administration in Montreal plus having worked for Teleglobe Canada was a big advantage in my work, which I did with passion – I really enjoyed it.”

After a brief spell at IFAD, Rina returned in 1988 to FAO’s policy department, where WFP’s separation from FAO was initiated

by WFP’s ED James Ingram - and later completed by his successor, ED Catherine Bertini.

With the birth of her son in July 1989, Rina took maternity leave. On returning to work, she was invited to join OED as personal assistant to WFP Chief of Staff Tun Myat. “I was scared by the workload and the overtime – my baby was only one-year old! However, Mr Tun Myat reassured me, saying all he required was that I work from 8.30 am until 5 pm – one of my best bosses ever!”

When Catherine Bertini became ED in 1992, Rina joined

her front office. Judith Lewis became Director, Tun Myat returned to Logistics. Though again “scared” by potential work pressures, Rina helped the new ED settle in and handled everything, including scheduling and correspondence, when email was in its infancy. “It was very challenging, but it was ‘love at first sight’ with Ms Bertini! We got on very well and still do,” Rina says.

“I didn’t bring work home, but I was always on call (no WhatsApp in those days). I got calls from everywhere – including the



The OED team, under Catherine Bertini



The OED team, under James Ingram



The OED team under Jim Morris

Secretary General's office. They had my number and knew that I would somehow get in touch with my boss, if it was urgent."

As for crises, Rina often assisted as these unfolded. For instance, she was the one who received the call from UN SOS Radio the day the WFP-chartered plane crashed in Kosovo in November 1999, killing all 24 people on board. "It was a nightmare: relatives started to arrive, we set up a Task Force, it was a big deal – and very sad."

"Whenever there was an emergency, a Country Director would call me, asking to speak to the ED. Of course it depended on the situation; it was a case of 'routing' people in the right

direction. I felt really involved, knowing what was going on. And I knew so many phone numbers by heart! It's completely different now." Gatekeeping was, of course, an essential part of the job. There were two sides to it: providing access to people who really needed it, while at the same time protecting the ED from more trivial concerns that could be dealt with at a different level.

After working with someone as dynamic as Catherine Bertini for 10 years, Rina found it a big switch to the next ED, Jim Morris. He brought in Mike Stayton to be Chief of Staff, having worked with him in Indianapolis. Jim Morris was the first ED who

motivated Rina to deepen her knowledge in Protocol. She took her first Protocol course in 2004 while managing Morris' schedule in Rome, as well as organizing official lunches, receptions and other high-level events hosted by the ED.

With the arrival of Morris' successor, Rina continued to wear two hats: handling both ED Josette Sheeran's schedule in Rome together with events she hosted.

Was this a new direction? Rina was already meeting ambassadors, who previously presented their credentials to FAO followed by a "courtesy call" to WFP and IFAD. When WFP became independent, the newly-appointed ambassadors also presented their credentials to WFP.

Mixing with "the great and the good" was all in a day's work for Rina. Asked if she could single out a particular VIP, Rina responded without hesitation: "Former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan is someone I will always remember and keep in my heart. I met him on several occasions, often in Rome. The first time was when WFP hosted the ICC meeting in Rome. Then, during Jim Morris' tenure, when he came for the funeral of Pope John Paul II."

Due to the attendance of many Heads of State, and elaborate security arrangements along the highway from Fiumicino airport, WFP headquarters was closed for the day. But ED Jim Morris wanted Rina at HQ (she needed special permission to cross a police cordon).

"While I was watching the funeral on the office TV, the ED, attending it, called to say he would accompany Kofi and Mrs Annan to HQ, on their way to the airport. I reminded him that I was alone, but he asked me to 'get some sandwiches!' As luck would have it, the former head of the WFP cafeteria was there, and personally organized some nice hors d'oeuvres and fruit – we did it together, at the last minute! Everything went amazingly well: with Jim and Jackie Morris, we hosted Kofi Annan and his wife, who were both charming and



With Josette Sheeran, making a presentation to US First Lady Laura Bush



Meeting Pope John Paul II with Catherine Bertini



With Ertharin Cousin, meeting Pope Francis, on his visit to HQ

appreciative with me.”

“Josette Sheeran was the next ED with whom I really ‘clicked’; she involved me in everything and gave me the opportunity to accompany her on many official trips including the UN General Assembly.” Although it was hectic and stressful for Rina, she said being at UNGA was a fascinating experience. While ED Sheeran’s schedule was “a real nightmare”, it gave her the opportunity to meet many Heads of State and other high-level personalities including the Clintons. WFP created an office on the 36th floor of the Millennium building, and while the ED had her special assistant, Rina set up all the meetings. After UNGA, Rina had time to relax: “I took the opportunity to visit my Mom in Montreal.”

“Another ‘big deal’ under Josette, was the visit by US First Lady Laura Bush to HQ.” Security was tight with military personnel all over HQ. Handling meetings with high-level personalities became part of Rina’s job, hence protocol – and etiquette – were taken to a whole new level, especially when meeting royalty (with Josette). “We were hosted by Prince Andrew at Buckingham Palace; he subsequently visited HQ. Then we made a visit to the Belgian Prince and Princess.... Another high-level person I met was Senator George McGovern; he visited WFP under Ms Bertini’s mandate and then a second time under Ms Sheeran.”

On this latter visit, Rina took the lead in organizing an official luncheon in the presence of the entire Executive Board Membership, held in the Auditorium on an exceptional basis. “A memorable event indeed!”

Any funny stories? “Of the many things that happened with Josette, there was the occasion when she had her private audience with Pope Benedict. I advised her not to wear white or red (His Holiness dresses in white and has red shoes...I suggested she choose a dark suit). We agreed to meet at the Vatican, together with her senior staff.”

“Imagine my shock when she got out of the car in a red jacket that she often wore. I almost had a heart attack; I knew this would make me look bad! On meeting His Holiness, she immediately apologised to him, saying that my advice had slipped her mind so I should not be blamed... her words seemed to break the ice!”

“On another mission, at a hotel in Oslo, we were in our rooms, preparing for the day ahead, when I noticed an announcement on the TV screen, telling guests to leave because of a fire. When I opened my door there was a lot of smoke and people rushing down the corridor. I couldn’t see Josette so I went to her room and knocked – she was taking it easy in her bathroom - oblivious of the panic outside. Afterwards she told everyone I had saved her – it became the joke of the year!”

After the first year of ED Ertharin Cousin’s mandate, Rina left OED, describing it as “a most emotional moment” - after more than 21 years as Personal Assistant to the Executive Director. Ertharin gave Rina the opportunity to take intensive training courses to deepen her knowledge in Ceremonial Protocol at the Protocol School of Washington

and she was promoted from G7 to P3, becoming the first Protocol Officer at WFP. This move became the climax of Rina’s amazing career. In 2016, under Ertharin Cousin, and in her capacity as Protocol Officer, Rina had the honour and privilege of organizing the historic visit to WFP of Pope Francis. “This incredible event will remain in my heart forever,” says Rina.

Rina’s last Protocol event under ED Cousin was on the eve of her departure, in April 2017: Prince Charles was visiting Rome, staying at the UK Ambassador’s residence. The next day, on 5 April, David Beasley arrived to take over the ED reins with a visit to the future King: “It was just HRH, the ED, UK Perm. Rep. Jim Harvey ...and me. His Majesty was nice and kind – he shook my hand!”

Meeting VIPs was part of Rina’s job which she clearly enjoyed – without bragging. Though she does acknowledge the heavy-lifting involved: “I really did a LOT!”

In retrospect, Rina says: “It was a wonderful career, I was fortunate; all the bosses I had were different but each has been, and still is today, so special to me. I am fond of each and every one of them.”

Rina worked with her last ED, David Beasley for three years and continued handling all Protocol matters for him until May 2020.

“I left in 2020 – at the height of COVID. It was horrible because I couldn’t say a proper goodbye to all my friends.” Many of those friends are still in touch, including former EDs, who left heartfelt messages on her retirement.

ALUMNI FIELD MEMORIES



Bhim Udas (second from right, front), and representatives from UNICEF, OCHA and UNHCR with the first WFP truck, loaded with food items for IDPs in Ingushetia, Northern Caucasus.

BHIM UDAS: CAREER HIGHS FROM 1981–2010

Initially, I served as a UN Volunteer in WFP emergency operations in Peshawar, Pakistan. Later, my postings were to Peshawar and Baluchistan; Rome HQ; Armenia; Geneva; Jordan; Moscow (Russian Federation); Myanmar and Lesotho.

One gratifying occasion was when I changed the food procurement and distribution system for Chechen IDPs in Russia. This followed the rehabilitation of the port of St. Petersburg, which helped to speed up the food supply chain - and the Russian Federation became a donor to WFP.

When assigned to Moscow as Senior Emergency Coordinator, overseeing the Northern Caucasus Operations for Chechen IDPs in early 2000, I found the Russian government was supplying food commodities from its stock and distributing to Chechen IDPs; WFP was reimbursing the government with cash, as per their report.

On a field trip to visit the IDPs living in Ingushetia and Vladikavkaz, I heard that they were not receiving

their full quantity of food rations on time. Although I reminded EMERCOM (Ministry of Emergencies and Natural Disasters) there was little improvement. Eventually, I informed the authorities that WFP would not purchase food commodities from the government, and our implementing partner (the Danish Refugee Council) would distribute the rations. Subsequently, the beneficiaries received their food assistance regularly; they were satisfied.

One day before my departure, 1st September 2003, from Moscow, a Deputy Minister of EMERCOM visited the WFP Office *unannounced* to give me a medal and certificate, in recognition of my humanitarian service in the Russian Federation. Our Regional Director, who happened to be visiting Moscow, was present!

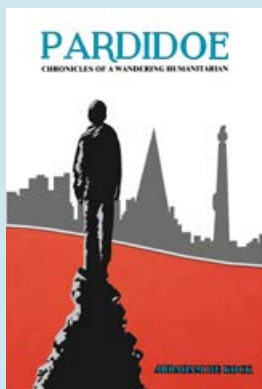
When posted to Amman, Jordan in May 1998, I facilitated (at short notice) a regional meeting, during which ED Catherine Bertini met the Jordanian Minister for Agriculture. The latter awarded WFP a medal for FFW and emergency drought food assistance.

Another career highlight was the signing of a Basic Agreement between Myanmar and WFP (it had not been done for many years); this switched WFP food procurement and transport for Rohingya IDPs from the government to commercial sector - all in addition to starting two new operations in Myanmar's most difficult mountainous region.

I went to Yangon in November 2003 as the first Country Director and Representative. Previously the operation was handled by a Project Officer.

Food supplies were purchased and transported by the government (under the military) and distributed by UNHCR. Many IDPs complained about irregular food supplies, mainly due to the fault of government agency.

I drew the attention of civilian as well as military authorities to this situation, but no solution was satisfactory. Eventually I informed my counterpart, then DG Col Than Swe (currently Foreign Minister) that WFP had decided to procure food supplies commercially, on a competitive basis. He could not say "NO"!



ABRAHAM DE KOCK

Abraham de Kock, Deputy CD in Pyongyang (right) with local WFP staff and officials from N. Hamgyong, visiting Chongjin Sub-office.

A WFP staff member from 1985-2007, Abraham worked in several countries and has published "Pardidoe" (Gopher, 2022).



A NARROW ESCAPE – JUST “ANOTHER DAY” IN THE FIELD

This is a story that many “field” colleagues could probably tell. It happened to me in the early 1990s, when I was WFP regional emergency coordinator based in Nampula, Northern Mozambique, where there were frequent attacks by armed opposition groups. I was invited by the regional Governor to visit a site where the population had suffered continuous violence and displacement.

I arrived on time at the Governor’s office (about 1400 kms from Maputo) along with members of the local government. After an hour, we were told that arrangements were being made for the trip, and that we should wait a little longer. After another hour or so, the Governor’s assistant came to say there were some “technical issues” which the staff were trying to sort out. After a further long wait, the Governor himself came in, sat down and looking very concerned, told us the armed opposition had prepared an ambush along the road we were supposed to be taking.

“There has been heavy fighting since early morning,” he told us, “with a number of our people taken prisoner”. He added: “We understand that their main target was me and our colleague Krystyna, from WFP, to punish her for the assistance which she and her organization has been providing to the displaced people in areas controlled by the government.”

I was shocked, but also felt grateful for the Governor’s support. Somehow, a good spirit had taken care of me this time but, throughout my long career with WFP, I have faced many similar stressful situations. That’s why I have always maintained huge respect for field colleagues in difficult countries who put their health and lives at risk - to assist people in need.

By Krystyna Bednarska, who retired from WFP in 2018, as WFP Director Brussels. She is currently living in Portugal, volunteering for WFP mentorship initiatives, and dedicating her time “to family and friends, our animals, gardening and a couple of charities”.



Cabo Delgado, Mozambique, 2018: One of my favourite activities – engaging with the local community. Conflict was on the rise amid mounting food insecurity and malnutrition. WFP’s contribution to this particular community was palpable. We strove to assist them in ways that strengthened the community health services’ capacity to tackle nutrition in the long run.

KARIN MANENTE: GOOD MEMORIES

I’m excited to start a new phase of interaction with WFP. I joined as a JPO in Rome in 1994, and was told that only one year of assignment could be guaranteed. Fast forward and here I am: retiring after 29 years! What a ride it has been, with assignments in DPRK, Mozambique, Laos, New York and Rome, ending as Director for Public Partnerships and Resourcing. What an impact it has had on my family! My three children grew up in an international atmosphere in ways that have marked them for life, in a very positive way. My spouse joined me on this journey and demonstrated that life as an accompanying partner is viable and very fulfilling too. Now I live in Sölvesborg, southern Sweden, and am glad to reminisce with memories like these.



THREE FORMER COUNTRY DIRECTORS IN MOZAMBIQUE: LEFT TO RIGHT: LOLA CASTRO, GEORGIA SHAVER AND ANGELA VAN RYNBACH

"I WANT TO FEED THE WORLD!"

Gawaher Atif looks back on her career

MY FAMILY REMEMBERS ME ONCE SAYING WHEN I WAS VERY YOUNG: "I WANT TO FEED THE WORLD".

As an undergraduate at McGill University, I had an insatiable hunger to learn about UN organizations and poverty alleviation. While pursuing graduate studies at the American University in Cairo, I landed a dream job as programme officer at Oxfam Egypt, overseeing poverty alleviation projects. I became passionate about international development. After my MA thesis on *the voices of women in the new villages in the reclaimed lands in Egypt*, I won the ultimate prize: UNDP offered me a post funded by the Government of Canada as Junior Programme Officer in Muscat, Sultanate of Oman. My five years with UNDP in Oman and Morocco allowed me to work with government and partners to develop rural societies, women in development, privatization and more.

One day in Rabat, I saw TV reports about food heading to the most vulnerable in Somalia. It reminded me of my original aim: to feed the hungry. In January 1993, I joined WFP as Head of Sub-Office in Aden, Yemen.

My UN career of nearly three decades took me across the globe on missions to dozens of countries and postings in more than 10. While most of my time was





Gawaher Atif: flying the flag for the hungry.

served at WFP, I was on secondment with partner UN agencies, including UNICEF and the UN Secretariat, where I helped advance the UNSDGs.

After retiring from WFP, I remained in contact with my friends and UN colleagues across the globe, splitting my time between Montreal and Cairo. I serve as an elected member of the WFP Alumni Network Coordination Committee since January 2022 as Vice Chair. I also sit on various boards of associations, including McGill, where I feel I've come full circuit, while continuing to fly the flag for the hungry - as best I can!

Here is a 6-minute "podcast" recently recorded by Gawaher Atif, taken from an article in Pipeline magazine (1998) giving her impressions following a mission to Bahr el Ghazal, South Sudan, earlier that same year.



Mother Teresa during her visit to Sudan. WFP/B. Garden



AFRICA: TEAMWORK AND FRIENDSHIPS



Here with my wife, Julienne, and our fourth grandchild, Arielle Mpano. Life is good!

CALLIXTE KAYITARE: WFP 1995–2022

I was mainly a Programme Officer, (HOFO) starting in my home country: Rwanda, then I moved to Zimbabwe until 2004; from there, I worked in Darfur, Sudan until 2006. After this, I went to Chad for a year, and was then posted from 2007-09 in CAR, before returning to Chad for two years, then Mali 2014-17, ending up with five years in South Sudan - until I retired in November 2022.

What I enjoyed most at WFP was the spirit of teamwork, mutual respect between colleagues, and help.



"We set up this 18m radio mast by hand, because no crane was available and we had time to concentrate."

ABIY GIRMAKRISTOS, WFP JIGJIGA, ETHIOPIA, 2017



"I made everlasting friendships with some of the people in this photo and although we do not live in the same country we check on each other from time to time. This is especially true during the difficult time Sudan is going through. It proves that WFP Alumni are family, more than just colleagues!"

MAISOON ABU AGLA: FOND MEMORIES OF 2006 TRAINING IN KHARTOUM

What's special about the training is that many colleagues, both National and International, from all duty stations in Sudan (including South Sudan at the time) came together.

It was exciting for me, having returned as National Officer for the Darfur EMOP, working with Head of HR and Darfur Coordinator, after my posting with WFP Indonesia, where I was HR consultant in the Tsunami EMOP (2004-05).



Nesia Effendi and Maisoon Abu Agla enjoying 17 years of friendship.

TRUDY BOWER (WFP 1985–2012): HOME-GROWN OPPORTUNITIES

I spent nearly two decades in Africa (Mozambique, Burundi, Madagascar, Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana) with three assignments in HQ (East Africa Bureau, Resources Mobilization and Grants Management).

My most gratifying experience, as CD in Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana, was supporting governments in piloting innovative approaches to home-grown school feeding programmes. In Côte d'Ivoire, my counterpart, Odette Loan, was awarded the World Food Prize for Africa.

While in Ghana, I accompanied President John Kufuor, together with staff from the Ministry of Education, teachers and schoolchildren to the WFP Executive Board in 2008 to promote their new home-grown school feeding. Later, the President became WFP Ambassador for school feeding.

One of those schoolchildren, a girl named Ilham from Northern Ghana, now has a master's degree in Public Health and is studying for her PhD. Here's her story:

"As a girl who grew up in a family of twelve and seeing three of my female cousins married off at the age of eleven, I always wondered and feared that one day it would be my turn, but with the introduction of school feeding, my parents didn't have to worry about feeding me or my siblings. I had an opportunity to travel to Rome with WFP. This opened my mind to so many things that I could do. I got to interact with a lot of wonderful people and all I could think of was how I was going to do better in school and help my community. I learned to dream big! To some people, school feeding might be just like any other project, but to me, it saved, shaped and inspired my entire existence."



HQ welcomes students from Ghana



Trudy with Ilham: "dreaming big".

My biggest challenge came on arrival in Ghana, in 2003, when the new Minister of Finance told me that the best donor was one who knew when to leave. The government's new strategy was based on private sector, agricultural-driven growth - so food aid was no longer relevant.

Using what I had learned, I pitched the idea of developing Ghana as a procurement hub, marketing local basic cereals, pulses, oil and fortified foods, to both the new national home-grown school feeding programme, as well as to WFP regional operations. Starting at a baseline of zero local purchases, I brought in Peter Dykhuizen to identify suppliers and hired a food technologist, Anahit Sadoyan, to support them in meeting WFP specifications. When I returned in 2014, WFP had bought \$20 million-worth of Ghana's food and the country's national school feeding programme was continuing without WFP food assistance.

When the concept of WFP Humanitarian Response Depots was launched in Rome, logistician Rosemary Parnell and I lobbied for the African hub to be located in Ghana with its air, sea and road connections. The Minister of Foreign Affairs organized a breaking-ground ceremony and construction began. In 2014, the HRD became the operational base for the Ebola response in West Africa.

Through our timely hand-over of technical expertise, we helped the government achieve food and nutrition security and emergency preparedness and response... Thank goodness we didn't leave in 2003!

My life after WFP consists of staying close to my two girls, photography, travel, writing and reuniting with friends. Before retirement, John Crisci and I started writing a fictional crime thriller, "The Hunger Crime" based on true humanitarian events. The Foreword was written by Catherine Bertini. It was published in 2023 and became an Amazon bestseller. I am now working on my memoirs.



GEORGE BOSSA: UGANDA COUNTRY CHAPTER COORDINATOR



Keeping the doctor away: Joining WFP in 1994, during the Rwanda emergency, George was summoned to the situation room, and arrived panting heavily. Head of Logistics Arnt Breivik suggested he was in the wrong place. "I understood I was as good as fired if I couldn't carry myself during this emergency. So I hit the gym and never looked back."



Chickens for sale! George, an enthusiastic Rotarian, supports this year's campaign to "uplift" 85 boys at Naguru remand home. They have received skill-training and certificates for their first commercial enterprise.



"These animals are just a generation away from Man," George observes the Bwindi Mountain Gorillas, on a Rotary tour of the region.



Hannah with Dorothy, head of *Palms for Life Fund* Botswana

HANNAH LAUFER-ROTTMAN: STILL BUSY AFTER ALL THESE YEARS

"WFP gave me 29 years (1976-2005) of amazing memories. From the avant-garde project "Clubes de Madres" in Bolivia, where food aid was transformed into cash contributions, to the Ecuadorian experience that convinced me - and I'm still convinced - that WFP can and must do more, even with fewer resources.

I never stopped learning and growing.

"I am not retired; in recent weeks, *Palms for Life Fund*, which I founded in 2006 presented its 7th Annual Ceres Food Film Festival with an opening night at the New York University. For one week, all we did was watch on the Ceres virtual platform, movies about food, talk about food, learn about food. And... *Palms for Life* has become the largest organization in Southern Africa with a unique focus of lifting indigenous mainly San and Nama communities out of poverty. There is no end.

Today David and I live in Westchester, New York, very close to our children and grandchildren. And food is always on the table.

NELLY ATIENO OPIYO WFP (2013-2016, 2018-2020)



After leaving WFP where I worked in Kurdistan Region of Iraq, Afghanistan and Nigeria, I joined MINUSCA Justice and Corrections Section in 2021 as a Corrections Officer and made a lateral move to MINUSMA in 2022. Here I am receiving 25 years long-service certificate (in UN peace operations) from the Gao Governor, Mali on 6 November 2022.



My sister and I just completed a 12-day trek in Spain on the *Camino Primitivo* or the Old Saint James Way on 20 July 2023. We both like staying FIT!



LILIANE BIGAYIMPUNZ (WFP: 2007–2018) A PASSION FOR FARMING

"I was a Programme Policy Officer for school feeding, as well as managing health and nutrition activities and later gender and protection. I'm proud to have left a robust, well-funded feeding programme with lots of complementary activities. What I liked most was talking to beneficiaries. It's fascinating and helps us better understand their reality and needs.

When my contract ended, I tidied up, rested and reconnected with my extended family whom I hadn't seen much – due to a heavy work schedule. In 2019, I started working part-time with the Global Child Nutrition Foundation on a school feeding survey; this keeps me abreast of developments. When I'm not collecting data, I volunteer for one activity or another.

One passion I've developed since my retirement is farming; this allows me to travel to different provinces and make new contacts in my country, Burundi. But most of all, I enjoy being close to my family, my grandchildren and my friends."



AMOS MWESIGWE (WFP: 2000–2020)

After 20 years at WFP Uganda as a national officer, I took early retirement in 2020 for a ministry opportunity in Ugandan media. As MD Church of Uganda Family TV, I lead a team of professionals bringing to every home the best in family-friendly programmes with a Christian focus. The Station runs programmes on education, health, finance, leadership/governance and parenting. We broadcast across the country on DSTV and in the Greater Kampala region on GoTV, StarTimes and Free to Air. I recently enrolled as a mentor on the WFP Professional Development Mentoring Programme.



William Vigil, subsequently Dominican Republic CD, preparing for another hurricane (2018)

WILLIAM VIGIL (WFP 1998–2019) HOW A PIZZERIA INSPIRED THE SAVING OF LIVES

In 2008, WFP's RB in Kampala faced yet another massive drought affecting Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, and Uganda; millions of people were in danger of starvation. I, along with Al Kehler, Volli Carucci, Scott Roncchini, Regis Chapman and Mark Gordon, among others, was responsible for ensuring that we, the CO's, could respond.

We had to combine various factors so food could arrive *in time to save lives*. Despite the Advance Financing

Mechanism, we feared food would only arrive around 3-6 months after funds were made available. Too late...

Intense and sometimes heated discussions took place within the RB and with HQ: we advocated that WFP should take a financial risk to save people, knowing that donors would eventually respond.

I made an analogy with a pizzeria owner, who expects a certain number of customers every day, so takes the risk of purchasing wholesale sufficient flour, tomatoes, cheese etc. to satisfy that number. Why couldn't WFP do the same?

We knew there would be 10-20 million hungry people in the Horn of Africa and that we would receive some US\$900 million a year for that region. So why not follow the Italian pizzeria example and purchase food in advance with WFP's financial reserves, knowing that donors would respond?

It was not easy to make the change - but we began moving maize from South Africa to Mombasa and Somalia, gaining time. And with this new effort, using WFP funds and purchasing commodities in advance, when donor funds were confirmed, food arrived for beneficiaries in a matter of days or weeks instead of the average of three to six months. It was an enormous success in terms of saving lives and donors enthusiastically supported it. The Forward Purchase Facility (FPF) was born.

Sometimes simple ideas solve major obstacles. It was the most satisfying effort I was involved in during my 20 years+ with WFP!

ASIA: FROM NURTURE TO NATURE



LOURDES IBARRA: "RE-TIRED BUT REARING TO CARRY ON!"

My life after WFP has been hectic: personally and professionally. I have been able to join my grandkids' school activities: good for family bonding and quality time together. The same goes for social commitments with friends for special occasions, e.g. weddings etc.

I've had speaking engagements, including the International Toastmasters' District Conference at which I presented a summary of my international experience in different countries in emergency, civil war, unpredictable security situation and refugee operations. The audience were carried away by my story. I got a standing and emotional ovation and received plaque of appreciation!

The Covid-19 pandemic in 2020 brought panic, confusion, loss of hope and faith as well as lost lives. Besides hosting Nutri-Talk on the local radio station, I opted to write, and take care of my mental health while confined at home; I co-authored two books for Moms, *Nanay Knows Best* and *The First Woman Who Loved Me*, as well as contributing daily to a devotional book - RUACH. I also spent more time writing my Memoir: *Being Unstoppable*.

When Typhoon Odette hit, damaging several regions and provinces, I wore my WFP hat and Rotary Club Shirt and joined the Rotary Club Bacolod South medical mission with my husband. We provided assistance to the most severely affected; I raised funds to buy food, water, blankets, etc.

Then, WFP Philippines called me back to lead the Typhoon Odette response in Caraga Region in January 2022, we established the Sub-Office until it closed in October 2022.

I am currently on a short-term consultancy with WFP Philippines on Home Grown School Feeding in Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao.

This is my "Life After WFP"; and my payback is a new set of tires (or wheels) RE- TIRED but rearing for more adventures to help!



OFELIA BORNAY: STEPPING INTO GRANDMA'S CLOGS!

I took early retirement in February 2006, after many years with WFP. I had mixed feelings: should I just "wind down" or use this great opportunity, to do things that I've dreamed of? I chose activities, interests and networks that gave my life a new, meaningful purpose. It's family first: I became a grandma; my two French-Filipino grandkids kept me on my toes: such precious and fulfilling moments!

I have also been travelling, with family and friends; including Lourdes Ibarra. Besides a cruise in South and Central America, we went to Northern Taiwan and Yilan, and visited a small village where the Baimi people carry on the local tradition of clog making.



ER RAJENDRA KUMAR LAL

Er Rajendra Kumar Lal (middle of the front row) is currently Head of Logistics for *Premiere Urgence Internationale* in Myanmar, training PUI colleagues based in Yangon. Despite the tough security situation, Rajendra draws on his experience as a Nepalese National Staff member with WFP Nepal (December 2001 to July 2014). After fulfilling several roles over 13 years in the WFP Country Office, he took voluntary separation when funds dwindled. He turned to academia, before switching back to become a logistics professional (thanks to WFP experience), leading World Vision's Nepal logistics earthquake response. This was followed by international logistics positions in Iraq, Somalia, Pakistan, Bangladesh and finally in Myanmar. Rajendra is a member of the WFP AN Coordination Committee.



HEERA KAJEE SHRESTHA

At home, in Nepal, I am growing organic vegetables and an organic orchard in 7 ha of land, with 15 varieties of fruits (kiwis, Japanese persimmons, avocados and cumquats) which we sell, and 11 varieties of organic fruits for our own consumption, sharing with our friends, colleagues, neighbours and staff.

I have written my autobiography (Sansaraa: The Bizarre World in which I lived) during 35 years with WFP: 20 years in Nepal, 15 years as a Programme Officer, Head of Sub-Office and Head of Area Office in North Korea, Sudan, Afghanistan, South Sudan and Ethiopia.

My wife, Roma Shrestha, made a music video about her own personal life during the 12 years when she lived alone in Nepal, while I was assigned to non-family duty stations.



**SRI LANKA:
ALUMNI CHAPTER ACTIVITIES**

Membership drive: A highly successful and concerted effort in November 2020, led by Chapter Coordinator Ajith Abeygunawardena and Assistant Coordinator Sharvini Ganesan Theeban, ensured a vibrant group of 153 members, to date!

Food pack distribution: More than 100 vulnerable families in Colombo received support during COVID, thanks to a project carried out by members' funding and contributions in collaboration with religious centres in Colombo.

Alumni members' visit Sri Lanka: 10 Alumni members and spouses met officials from the Presidential Secretariat, implementing partners and Government agents from five provinces on the island. Thanks to CD Abdur Rahim Siddiqui, his team and Chapter Chairman Mahinda Katugaha for supporting this successful tour.

Short-term assignments: Many Alumni members with the necessary skills have been offered short-term assignments according to Country Office needs. Close collaboration between the Chapter and CO management has boosted capacity.

WFP 60th Anniversary celebrations and Biennial meeting: A delegation of 18 members and some spouses will attend events in Rome in November 2023, led by Chapter Chairman Mahinda Katugaha and Team Leader Ms. Visakha Tillekeratne.

The WFP SL Alumni Chapter have more projects in the pipeline!



KEIKO IZUSHIN (WFP 1995–2020)

After 25 years with WFP, spending two periods in Rome HQ, but not always in "comfortable" duty stations (Indonesia, Afghanistan and Kyrgyz Republic), I decided that I would treat myself, and others, who may have endured stressful situations. So I became a hypnotherapist – certified RTT (rapid transformative therapy). Here is my master, world-renowned Hypnotherapist, Marisa Peer.

After the Aceh Tsunami operation (2004-2005), we were all exhausted and suffering from burn-out. That is when I went to Ubud, to de-tox and to find myself, my passion!

I set up the *Harum Sari Retreat* in Bali, Indonesia. You can read my story [here in this magazine](#).



Adelina with her husband Tor, and son Lars, in Pakistan - on duty travel for Kampuchea cross border operation. "This was just before we got stuck in Beijing during the Tiananmen Square protest in June 1989. Our intention was a 'holiday' stopover, before home leave in the Philippines."

**ADELINA MYRVANG WFP: 1984–2005
NUMBER CRUNCHING**

My life changed dramatically when I was seconded from IFAD to WFP as a temporary accountant for the Kampuchean Border Operation. I later became WFP Finance Officer, and retired as Manager of the Disbursements and Payroll Branch in 2005.

On my first day at WFP, I found a few pages of written notes and procedures on the analysis of accounts, and a *two-foot high stack* of accounting documents for review and analysis, correctness and compliance with the Financial Regulations and WFP Rules... then I was called to the Assistant ED, Salahuddin Ahmed, together with Giuseppe Buonaiuti. My main task concerned

documents from Country Office operations linked to the Kampuchean Border Operation. Working long hours and weekends, I came to understand not only the daily administrative pattern of expenditures, but also WFP's food purchasing system: millions of dollars were involved in the operation.

One aspect of WFP's accounting system then was the input of data into a hard copy format provided by FAO. When a hard copy of accounts was returned from FAO, we had to go over all the data to ensure they were correct. This put pressure on us to produce the statistics required by WFP Management... Some years later, WFP installed its homegrown WFP Information System (WIS), including commitments of major transport transactions... and later still, came the WFP Integrated Network Global system: WINGs!



Life after WFP? Adelina (left) attended a creative writing course in Manila this summer. The tutor, Barbara Gonzalez Ventura (centre) is a columnist on the *Philippine Star* and has written several books. In August, the budding authors toasted her birthday - and their own writing success.



According to ancient wisdom, a person should raise a son, build a house and plant a tree. I have raised a son; the house is under construction and just recently - I planted an oak tree

**NATALIA (NATASHA) GOLTSOVA:
ANCIENT WISDOM**

I am still getting used to my new life, having retired in June! My immediate plans are connected with family... then, who knows?

I have been with Security throughout my 19-years with WFP, both in HQ and the field. Latterly, I was 'Senior Security Officer/Security Analyst' in Rome. I'm really proud that I was the first WFP Security Analyst and was directly involved in developing this function from scratch. It's grown from just one staff member (me) at HQ to a network of Security Analysts at HQ, RBs and some Country Offices, bringing security analysis closer to operations.

Having travelled widely, I have many memories: being involved in ensuring WFP operations in armed conflict, terrorism/extremism, crime and other threats, especially in Eastern and Central Africa (when I was based in Nairobi/Kenya).



BELEN ZABALA: KEEPS COMING BACK!

I initially retired from WFP in 2013, but have been back in 2015, 2022 and 2023 - as Senior Staff Assistant/ Admin, in Manila. Apart from this, my "retirement" consists of travelling, gardening, cooking, baking, worshipping and all things worth my time and effort.

This August, I came to Rome, and it was a privilege to meet Mr Ramiro Lopez da Silva in HQ!



FARIBA SHEKAR-RIZ (WFP IRAN: 2008– 2020)

I came from UNDP to work at WFP Tehran, starting in 2008 as Admin/HR/Finance until 2010, when I became Finance Officer, adding security/OMT/Medical (CoVID) and focal point to my duties, until I took early retirement in November 2020.

Prior to this, I attended a WFP global gathering of Finance Officers in Rome in June 2015 - my first trip to Italy. It was held in one of the hotels but we managed to visit HQ. I received an **award for Innovation in Finance**. HQ colleagues prepared a report "**From sanctions to solutions**" which describes how we (in Iran) have managed to solve financial problems for the UN system.

Since leaving WFP, I have worked as Finance Officer for an International NGO in Tehran. Sequa Germany. I subsequently made a private visit to Rome in October 2022, when I was lucky to visit HQ - just to see my friends & colleagues.

In August this year, I celebrated the wedding of my daughter in Sweden.



QI HONGYOU (CHINA)

Qi Hongyou (on right) a national staff member retired from WFP Beijing Office, playing the Sheng, an instrument with many pipes. (Sent by Xie Hongyi, China Chapter Coordinator)

BANGLADESH CHAPTER: NEW PAGES



Asmat Ara (3rd from left) with CD Domenico Scalpelli and AN Bangladesh Chapter members

ASMAT ARA: FROM PROGRAMMING (1997 TO 2020) TO PEOPLE & PLANTS

During my journey with WFP Bangladesh, I have gathered many experiences and a great deal of knowledge as a Programme Assistant, providing humanitarian support to our people.

I took early retirement in 2020 and could have continued my services to WFP Bangladesh for a few more years. However, indoor plants have always attracted me and the prospect of tending them (green plants, cactus orchids and flowers) along with my rooftop garden, made the situation so welcoming.

On leaving WFP in 2020, I focused on the UN retirees' association (AFUNSOB), working as treasurer, from 2022 up to now. I enjoy my work and sharing photos from my home garden. I am also involved with the AN Bangladesh chapter as a coordinator. Very recently, I visited Sri Lanka to attend a Social Gathering programme.



UMME KULSUM WFP BANGLADESH

Life after WFP has been wonderful. More interesting and challenging! I had the opportunity to relocate to Sydney as my primary residence, where I am working as a child educator. Just as I helped families in poverty while at WFP Bangladesh, here I am helping families take care of their little ones, who need constant love, affection and support. Whilst I really miss working in WFP, I have seen a whole new world beyond, which I truly enjoy. My life has been a blessing and I am really grateful and appreciative for what I have.



RASHIDUL HASAN'S "INSTITUTE OF LEARNING" (2001-2020)

As a National Officer, I was involved in providing food assistance to vulnerable people at the right time and in the right quantity. I helped facilitate distributions and was pleased to see the smiling faces of those receiving WFP food. I faced many challenges which I had to overcome by the end of each day. We, at WFP, never thought of our personal lives: there was no time for eating, sleeping or resting! Our sole aim was to deliver food to the needy - as quickly as possible.

In 2020, I took early retirement due to my health issues. Ethically, I felt that if I couldn't dedicate 100 percent to the task, and to my country's poor and vulnerable people, I should not continue with WFP.

So I am spending time with my family (as I have deprived them for many years!) But I will never forget those days with WFP, where I learnt a lot about humanity, the livelihoods of the marginalized poor, human development, the needs assessment for people affected by disasters etc. Now I try to solve any obstacle or problem in my daily life based on my learning and experience at WFP. So I owe WFP - and am honoured to have worked with this Nobel laureate UN organization.



ANWARUL KABIR: PROUD TO HAVE WORKED FOR A NOBEL PEACE PRIZE WINNER (1990-2020)

I joined WFP in 1990 on SSA. Two years later, I got my Fixed Term Contract in WFP as Project Officer. For the next 10 years I worked in Dhaka in the Rural Development Programme. From 2001 to 2013, I was outposted as Head of Sub-office & Programme Coordinator, North Coordination. Then from 2014-2020, I was again posted in Dhaka CO where I spent most of the time as National Coordinator for the USAID-funded Nobo Jatrya Project.

I did some TDY assignments in Sri Lanka after the Tsunami, and in East Timor & South Sudan which gave me the opportunity to fight hunger internationally. I am especially proud that WFP received the 2020 Nobel Peace Prize during my tenure. I count myself as very fortunate to have been a member of the "WFP family" for 30 years.



**JAHANARA ARJU:
SENIOR STAFF
ASSISTANT TO
CD, BANGLADESH,
FROM 2002–2015**

Bangladesh is a disaster prone country: I recall many events in which I was directly involved; I learned a lot. I joined WFP's 2023-2024 Mentor Programme; I want to share my skills, knowledge and experiences to make a positive impact on global communities, especially across the organization.

An especially joyful moment was when WFP received the Nobel Prize in 2020. I am delighted that we, WFP Alumni, are gathering on 20 November for the 60th Anniversary Celebration in the Auditorium - in Dhaka.



**ARJU MAND
BANU: HR, WFP
BANGLADESH
2001–2010**

For family reasons, I resigned from WFP Bangladesh as Senior HR Assistant, but returned as HR Consultant in 2011-2012. Later, I worked in our family business, as well as voluntarily in a local charity: Shamsuddin Ahmed (Sham) Foundation in Kushtia Bangladesh.

Sham works with poor people in: education, treatment, infrastructure, forestry etc. We run scholarship programmes for students at primary, high school and university level. I also work remotely from Vancouver, Canada, where I'm employed as Chief of Operations for UnlearnMe Technologies Inc. since January 2023



**GKM NARULLAH:
GOOD MEMORIES,
NOW ENJOYING
FRIENDS & FAMILY
(RETIRED 2008)**

Starting as a G5 and retiring as NOC, I was a senior admin. and finance officer in Bangladesh CO, with periods spent in Kosovo and Indonesia. I took voluntary retirement in May 2008.

Retirement is just the other side of the coin; though initially painful, with time, it gets easier to cope with new challenges, finding new avenues: spiritual, social and entertaining activities.

I have ample opportunities to meet a variety of retired people: chatting, visiting, walking and sharing past experiences as well as enjoying priceless time with families, relatives and grandchildren.

Now I am 72: trying to live well despite some physical ailments, and recalling all those good memories that I gathered at WFP.

WFP was a wonderful place to work - alongside such diversity of colleagues, serving humanity and moving quickly to feed people in crises, saving lives.



**NUSHA CHOUDHURY
WFP: 2004–2014**

"WFP made me aware of various ways of reaching out to vulnerable and destitute people; I never knew that analysing food security and poverty could contribute towards protecting lives and livelihoods - and so help alleviate suffering," Nusha says. Regarding her current activity, Nusha is working as a consultant for humanitarian agencies including the UN - still in food security analysis. And her favourite past-time? Like most people, it's spending quality time with family and friends!



**MAH JABEEN MASOOD: FROM SCHOOL
FEEDING TO NURTURING PLANTS
(RETIRED: 2007)**

At home, I've always had plants, cactus orchids and flowers, to give a fresh look. After my early retirement, I started developing an eco-friendly rooftop. With more time, I have been growing veggies and nurturing colourful plants. On summer afternoons and evenings, I tend these plants and enjoy the beautiful fauna and flora. It's lovely on winter mornings to go up onto the rooftop and bask in a pleasant environment.

I put a lot of effort into obtaining fresh soil, organic manure and all types of plant food, fertilizers, seeds and seedlings from local markets. (You only need one set of gardening tools!)

One of my best experiences was growing Morinaga (drum stick) plant in big clay pots ...we have eaten both these and their leaves from the last few harvests. I also have Dragon fruit plants in pots, with a good yield this year.

Gardening has been a blessing after retirement and during the pandemic, and it's so encouraging when friends visit and enjoy my garden, take pictures and pick veggies.

Gardening nourishes the soul and nurturing the green soothes the eye. Life after retirement is good; if you plan well, take breaks and stay active with sport, gardening, or social charity work - it keeps you busy and healthy.

LATIN AMERICA: EDUCATION WITH A GENDER FOCUS



Rosio Godomar (centre) WFP Liberia: Empowering staff (2009)

ROSIO GODOMAR'S GIRL POWER!

While supervising the school feeding programme with WFP Liberia, I talked with teachers and community leaders. I noticed most teachers were men. Women in Liberia struggled to get an education, particularly in rural communities. I saw the tremendous challenges preventing girls from attending elementary and secondary school, as well as higher education. These included working to assist needy families, early pregnancy, lack of access to training programmes and limited financial resources for education.

In 2014, I started the "Educate Girls Network" initiative to support Liberian girls to get a higher education and to study at the William V.S Tubman University (TU) in Harper, Maryland Country, Liberia.

The Network aims to provide financial support to girls from remote areas of Grand Kru, River Gee and Maryland counties in southern Liberia. With funding, these young women can continue their education and study to become teachers or nurses. So far, the EGN network has provided a total of 13 scholarships to students; three students have already graduated as teachers and two as nurses. In the current academic year, 2022-23, EGN is providing seven scholarships in the Education and Health & Science Colleges.

I'm often asked how I stay optimistic about the future, when our world faces crisis after crisis. Sometimes hope feels hard to come by. My answer is simple: "If you educate a girl, you educate a family and develop a nation." The world faces many pressing problems, but we have a solution. If you share my belief in the power of girls and women, we can work together to support girls' education.

Rosio Godomar, a nutritionist from Peru, worked in various UN Agencies between 1991-2011 in humanitarian and emergency operations. Her career with WFP took her to Equatorial Guinea, Pakistan, Ethiopia, Sudan and Liberia.



WFP PERU TEAM OF RETIREES GET-TOGETHER

Here's a recent visit to new office premises in Miraflores/Lima. (L-R:) **Rosario Guevara**, Vice President of the Association of Former UN Employees in Peru; **Héctor Delgado** lives in Peru, and often visits his son in USA. When in Lima, he never misses a ceremony or meeting with former colleagues; **Carmen Perazzo** has started a business -making fancy leather purses for women; **Enza Alonzi** (from WFP Rome) attending a presentation for retirees; **Alberto Cerrón** travels regularly to Australia to see his daughters, both working as professionals and his little grandson.



TERESITA MOSQUERA DEL CASTILLO

Teresita, with a doctorate in Educational Psychology, started with WFP in 1999 in Nicaragua, followed by Peru, Cyprus, Iraq, Jordan, Egypt. She also worked in Malawi, did a mission in South Africa then Gambia - retiring in 2014.

"Working with WFP, in war and emergencies, I saw suffering - and this touched my heart. My passion is education because it changes people. Quality education, with a gender focus linked to school feeding and other programmes including de-worming, safe water, environmental care etc., can change a person's future.

I developed the first *Let's Learn to Think Programme* for children (boys and girls aged 5-8) in 2001, under UNESCO. I was invited to develop a workshop for educational psychologists in Quito, where it was replicated in their schools.

During the pandemic, I started a new *Let's Learn to Think Programme 1 and 2*, to develop concepts, vocabulary, skills, and strategies for students to acquire knowledge. This was because children, particularly in rural areas, had difficulty continuing their studies, due to a lack of internet/computers. Without human contact with teachers, they became isolated, which resulted in functional illiteracy; this programme helps children get back to basics.

NORTH AMERICA: HEALTHY PURSUITS



ERICH WEINGARTNER: LIGHTENING THE MOOD IN DPRK

From 1997-99, Erich was head of WFP's Food Aid Liaison Unit*, based in Pyongyang. With little access to leisure activities, he and some other expats from the tiny community of aid workers set up the RAC (Random Access Club) named "because we all wanted random access in the country, but obviously never got it". Various NGOs took it in turns to run the bar at weekends, and it became a popular entertainment spot – until it was closed down by the authorities in 2012. Read more here: <https://www.nknews.org/2013/04/remembering-north-koreas-random-access-club/>

Life after WFP

After leaving Pyongyang, I became involved with the Canadian Government's process of establishing diplomatic relations with DPRK. I chose to leave WFP and became advisor to a Canadian Government delegation to the DPRK in 2000. Foreign Affairs Canada and CIDA asked me to produce a weekly newsletter summarizing current events and analyses related to DPRK.

I retired in 2012, and continue to be invited to write articles and speak at conferences on humanitarian assistance, human rights and peace efforts on the Korean peninsula. Besides recently publishing a biography of my father, I am considering producing my autobiography.

I live beside a lake in northern Ontario with my wife (who was with me in Pyongyang) and our dog. This year our older daughter and her wife moved in to care for her elderly parents.



** FALU was a unique and successful WFP-NGO hybrid - created to solve a major trust problem when WFP first set up operations in DPRK in 1996. WFP donor governments were not yet convinced they could trust DPRK with large shipments of commodities. NGOs were then the major donors, but the DPRK government did not trust the sometimes unruly NGOs, and therefore refused them permission to set up resident operations. WFP convinced the authorities to approve a unit in its Pyongyang CO that would satisfy both the NGO's desire for a monitoring presence and DPRK's desire to have WFP act as guarantor of good behaviour. I was chosen by participating NGOs to set up the unit, under NGO guidance, but as a full employee of and under the authority of WFP. I did this job until the end of 1999; one of my assignments was to teach the North Korean authorities what NGOs are all about. I must have made a positive impression, because soon after FALU began, several European NGOs were allowed to set up resident offices, with the European Union acting as guarantor.*



JUDITH THIMKE WFP NOV 1993–DEC 2020

Duluth, Minnesota and Negril, Jamaica
February 2022

In my "life after WFP", purposefully embracing a whole-food plant-based lifestyle has aligned my nutrition, climate action and animal ethics values. It's made me passionate about preparing and sharing healthy food with others and provides me with a means to continue to educate and advocate for doing no harm.



JAN GONG

China – Programme Officer, 1980-88.
DPRK - Field Operations Officer, 1995-97
I was part of the WFP team that opened the office and operations in China and DPRK.

Life after WFP

Settled in Canada in 1988. Became a Real Estate Agent. Vice President, Southern Alberta Chinese Association. Board Member, Economic Development Lethbridge. Taiko drummer. Chinese traditional dancer. Grandma. World traveller. Winner of numerous real estate medals and in 2022 awarded the Queen Elizabeth II's Platinum Jubilee Medal (Alberta) in recognition of my contribution to the province.



YUKI GOTANDA WFP 2009–2018

I was both a WFP consultant and Fixed-term; I went back to school for one year, so worked about 8.5 years with WFP - in South Sudan, Sudan, Ethiopia, Chad, DRC, (also briefly Mauritania/Mali on TDY) and HQ.

On November 29, 2022, I gave a presentation for the Wellness Centre, Carleton University Students' Association, Ottawa, on "Ikigai and Fulfilling Career Goals".

Yuki is a Career Transition/Retirement Coach and Trauma-Informed Certified Coach (Yuki Gotanda Coaching & Consulting Inc. - <https://www.yukigotanda.net>).



KEEPING MY EYE ON THE BALL!

French Canadian **Pierre Serge Bolduc** (see front row, second from right) retired from WFP in 2003 but has NOT retired from sport! When contacted by the Alumni Editor, he was on his way to a game of softball "the same as baseball but with a bigger ball* ...it's called softball but the ball is very hard...softball allows me to play into my super senior years."

Bolduc has lived in Washington DC for the past 8 years (his wife works for the IMF). Formerly with the Canadian Foreign Service, he joined WFP in 1985 and had postings in Mozambique, Somalia, Rome HQ, Vietnam, China, Pakistan/Quetta, Myanmar and Pakistan/Peshawar. He focused on disaster assessment and project design.

"Softball was remarkable in Mozambique, Myanmar and China. In **Mozambique** I organized a league with expatriates and local Mozambicans. Some of them had never played, but turned out to be excellent - after just a few months. We also convinced some Cubans to join our league..

The league in **Myanmar** was very active because the US Embassy and US Marines had teams. Japan and Korea were also represented, as was a Burmese team, who played barefoot. We had a team of expatriates, "The International Brigade", which was very competitive.

In **China**, besides playing hockey with Chinese and expatriate teams, I organized a softball team with international journalists and local business people.

A team of young Chinese women in Beijing wanted to play. We were going to split them among us to make two teams, but they wanted to play *against us*. It turned out they were the Chinese National Olympic Softball team. We were *crushed!*

While Sport has been important to me, I enjoyed success at WFP. In Myanmar, I designed a project for Rohingya girls in North Rakhine State. (No girls were going to school at the time, just boys.) We offered all families with school age girls to be given 1 kg of rice per day if they allowed girls to attend classes. Suddenly thousands of girls started school; no project gave me more satisfaction!

** same rules, but for seniors the game is called slow pitch to allow the players a better chance to hit and be taken out via defensive actions.*



I felt safe in this WFP armoured vehicle; it brought me to and from the airport in Benghazi in June 2011.

ARMANDO R DIAZ WFP: 1999–2011

After six years in Gaza working for UNRWA, I joined WFP as Chief of Accounts in Rome in 1999, expecting slightly less stressful conditions. Little did I know how challenging and exciting it could be in HQ!

I transferred to the RB in Cairo as Regional Finance and Administrative Officer in 2006. I visited all country offices under the Bureau, conducting oversight reviews and providing administrative support in response to emergency needs. Being close to where humanitarian assistance actually occurs was the most satisfying (sometimes terrifying) time of my career. I retired in 2011, at 62, as was mandatory in WFP.

For me, it was most gratifying to see my staff, both national and international, move on in their careers and get promotions in their respective reassignments. One individual, a P3 in Internal Audit, was not “cut out to be an auditor” according to his supervisor, so he was going to be “terminated” at the end of his probation. I saw his potential and took him on. He did very well in Accounts and last time I heard, he was already a P5 on his way to becoming a D1!

Another gratifying moment was to see a couple of things I introduced in corporate accounting become a permanent fixture in WFP’s financial system.

As for the biggest challenge, I went on a support mission to Libya in 2011, after Khadafy was ousted from power. Our office in Benghazi needed cash to pay our staff, our vendors and our NGO partners, which they couldn’t get from any bank due to the prevailing chaos. So I secretly brought (in my backpack) \$250,000 in cash. Only our Security Officer and Regional Director knew I had such a large amount of cash when I boarded the UN chartered plane. From the airport, we went straight to the office vault and handed the cash over to the Finance Officer.

In Benghazi, I had a lot of meetings – with bank officials to arrange the transfer of funds to them electronically next time. I also met our NGO partners

to discuss financial aspects of their cooperative agreements with us to provide food aid and other humanitarian assistance to those who were displaced by the armed revolution and to be accountable to our donors on how we were spending their contributions.

But what was really challenging and scary was that Benghazi at that time was like the wild west. Everybody was carrying a gun in plain sight...

After a year of retirement, I accepted short-term consultancy contracts in Rome and Bangkok from 2013 to 2019. I enjoyed these stints – they kept me mentally fit and alert. However in 2020, the pandemic put me into full-time retirement.

Meanwhile, I joined a local Toastmasters’ Club in Las Vegas...then

in 2017, aged 67, I enrolled in an authentic Muay Thai class in Bangkok. One month of three sessions per week of 1-1/2 hours nearly killed me but it was a lot of fun.

<https://youtu.be/MxlCRbkN1kY>

I love running. I used to run 5 miles per week around the park near my house. When in Bangkok, I joined a 10k-run event and completed it together with some of my younger colleagues. But in 2019, after pain in my hips, I started biking instead (less strain on the hips and knees). I bought an electric mountain bike. It was not easy at first and I fell several times. But I kept on trying and now I’m having fun:<https://youtu.be/GgYLE4rGPI8>

I enjoy doing short films and special effects with my video camera and video editing software. <https://youtu.be/EJwh-zlXn9A> I also love looking at heavenly bodies with my Celestron 8-inch Schmidt-Cassegrain telescope and taking pictures. <https://youtu.be/KCMKCrDyRak>

A long-term project I’m currently undertaking with my kids is the gradual development of our off-grid 30-acre property in Helendale, CA. We called it Terra del Prodiere or land of the bowman because I love archery. We plan to construct access roads and later install a solar-powered tiny house there to serve as our weekend get-away and to enjoy the beauty of nature in the desert. <https://youtu.be/cqIntLNINfw>



2022: Las Vegas, Nevada, reminiscing on my adventures.



SAM GHOSE (WFP 1987–2009) PROUD OF SERVING IN TOUGH PLACES

I started as a volunteer field monitor in 1987 in Accra, Ghana and later became a consultant in Ghana, before moving to Baghdad, reporting on the Iraq Oil for Food Programme (1997-2001).

I spent two years as a Programme Officer in Pyongyang, prior to landing a family duty station in Jakarta, Indonesia in 2004.

When the Tsunami struck in December, it was all hands on deck for the huge emergency operation. Four years later, having assisted thousands of people, we closed the WFP office in Aceh.

For my last posting, I was a Programme Officer for Iraq, based in Amman, Jordan. I took early retirement, for family reasons, in 2009, returning to Toronto, Canada, where I'm enjoying our grandson and growing squash and Indian bitter lemons.



DOUG COUTTS (WELL-KNOWN TO MANY COLLEAGUES FOR HIS TGIF JOKES)

"These photos are not from the personal family side, more emphasizing that there is life in retirement in community service and engagement, inspired by our career with WFP."



Setting up a "floating classroom" and environmental science education centre with help from US Senator Bernie Sanders - Lake Memphremagog, Vermont/Quebec, August 2023



Therapy Dog programme, Auburn, Alabama with Síne, our Irish Wolfhound, April 2023

ANGELA VAN-RYNBACH (1981–88 & 1993–2009)

My initial contact with WFP was working with Tek Tomlinson in the WFP/UN Liaison office in NY from 1978-81, where I was a UN staff member assigned as a WFP/UN Liaison Officer. I worked for *Save the Children US* during the interim period.

At one point, I was secretary of four committees on Shelter Island ranging from two neighbourhood associations to Friends of Trees. I have since scaled back to one committee. I belong to book clubs in Puerto Rico, where I spend winters, and Shelter Island for the rest of the year. It's a good way to read and discuss books on a wider range of topics that one might not read on one's own. I also have fun practising my French at a conversation group hosted at the Shelter Island Public Library.



PEGGY NELSON: 30 YEARS OF FOND MEMORIES AT WFP

1982 For ED's Office, coordinating event in Netherlands to mark WFP's 20th anniversary; liaising with African Development Bank for emergency to development food aid seminar in Abidjan; preparing WFP *Pipeline & Newsbrief* in WFP's public information office; CFA Secretariat in Office of External Relations.

1994 WFP's Asia Bureau and Operations Department

2003 NY Office: raising WFP's profile in interagency and intergovernmental work

2010 WFP HQ: Executive Secretary of PSA; elected PSA President until retirement in 2013.

I have strong memories from **Africa**, including lively exchanges with children receiving school meals and using burlap bags with WFP's logo as doors and curtains in remote schools in Guinea-Bissau. Some of my fondest memories are from **Asia**, despite a close call with the plague, a short-lived hostage situation in India, and a near plane

accident in Bangladesh. There were also animated discussions with women in Indian villages and dialogue with all-male assemblies about food policies and women's health facilities. While discussing sustainable development policies as they related to WFP's presence in the country, Bhutan's Queen also explained the country's gross national happiness index.

In **New York**, I reinforced WFP's leadership in interagency efforts for UN reform, emphasizing operations be supported by processes, rather than simply strengthening those processes. The fruits of efforts to establish WFP's leadership in all UN-wide fora are still in place, including clear and logical decision papers leading to concrete actions.

While **PSA President**, discussions led to staff being invited for the first time to address WFP's Executive Board. We initiated collaboration with staff representatives of other UN agencies and with UK organizations to publish and disseminate materials to help staff better prepare for "life after WFP".

Following my retirement, I edited the **FFOA Newsbrief** (association of former UN staff in Rome); served on the Board of the American Women's Association of Rome as Chair of Sustaining Memberships (fund-raising and liaison with Italian schools and businesses); wrote articles about WFP's achievements; and was part of a team compiling and publishing an intercultural cookbook to raise funds for COVID health workers in Italy. I have pursued my interests and study of the relationship between food/nutrition and culture, and my Italian husband and I travel as much as possible to refresh friendships and discover new places.

JOSEPH SCALISE (WFP: 1983–2013) FROM FIELD TO CAPITOL

One of my first jobs at WFP was to set up the WFP sub-office in Abéché, Chad in 1983



Discussing the site with the Project Manager



Establishment of WFP Liaison Office, Washington DC, 1995

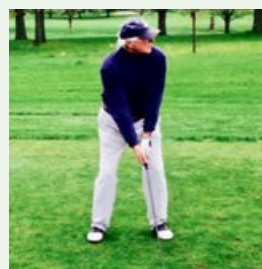


With President George W. Bush



Establishment of WFP Ethics Office (2008)

Life After WFP Retirement Activities:



1. Golf!



2. Fishing!



3. Food Pantry Feeding



4. USA Alumni Association

EUROPE: STAYING ACTIVE



MARTIN OHLSEN (WFP 1989–2014) DESCRIBES “MOMENTS OF GLORY”

As Logistics Coordinator in Former Yugoslavia, under Jean-Marie Boucher's directions and CIVMIL Coordinator Dale Skoric's preparation, we ran weekly convoys from Sarajevo to the Bosnian Enclave Gorazde, starting in October 1995. There were many difficulties and threats, such as stones flying against the trucks and diversion of an entire truck-load, but we were not discouraged. I used to bring coffee, chocolate and newspapers from the Sarajevo PX for the Serb check-points en route and learned how to swallow Slivovitzes starting at 7am with the troops at the check-points. Tough job!

I call such operations “Moments of glory” which would be nearly impossible today, if there were not WFP's line-breaking officers in Syria, Ukraine, Sudan, Gaza!

Life after WFP: One of the highlights of my lecturing and consulting activity was to coordinate contributions from six countries (China, Jordan, Bangladesh, Saudi Arabia, Lebanon and Germany) for a conference in Beijing in 2019. Funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, it was officially organized by the University of Science & Technology Beijing (USTB) and the University of Applied Science in Stuttgart/Germany.



Presidential hands on the initial construction, in 2012, of WFP's Logistics Hub PK20 in Djibouti was undertaken with the help of President Ismael Omar Guelleh.



I led the panel on the design of innovative sanitation systems. I am also often “on the road” as an OSCE/ODIR international election observer. In the last four years I have covered elections in Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan and Turkey. For the Presidential Elections in DR Congo in December this year, I have been nominated as EU Election Observer. (My last posting with WFP was CD Kinshasa).



MARINA RÄIS: MINDFULNESS, MUSCLES & MUSIC ARE KEY!

After leaving WFP and FAO (in 2005 and 2018 respectively), I returned to my university in London where I did my second M.Sc., this time in international public policy.

Nowadays, I read avidly - mostly subjects that help me understand the world better (e.g. philosophy, history, economics, politics, feminism).

I keep a monthly exercise log: it nudges me on, so I can spread the incredible amount we are meant to do: cardiovascular, muscle training, yoga for flexibility and balance exercises.

I've had a subscription to the Rome Opera for 16 years and enjoy it very much.

As a music lover, I joined an amateur choir, the *Coro italiano di musica antica*, where we sing mostly baroque music, especially Händel. My first concert, in 2011, was his "Messiah" - it was terrifying! This December, we have J. S. Bach's Christmas Oratorio. I enjoy the choir tremendously although I regret not being a bass - I am a soprano. I have a hunch that my neighbours don't just regret it, they despair.



Battambang, Cambodia

CHARLES VINCENT: GIVING FORWARD & LOOKING BACK

For me, "Life after WFP" is about *giving forward*, as well as honouring those who came before me, prompting me to contribute to make the world a better place.

Giving forward

1. Trying to be a better father (a full-time job!)
2. Creating and developing a now accredited international school in Battambang, Cambodia, and a scholarship programme for economically underprivileged children.
3. Providing leadership and management coaching to hundreds of UN and NGO staff (G-4 to D-2) to be and do their best to support communities and their organization.
4. Stepping in as CD a.i. in WFP Burundi for 4 months in 2017 after the untimely death of Jacques Roy.

Honouring those who came before me

1. Organizing an official ceremony to honour my great-uncle, who was executed by the Nazis on 31 March 1942, along with 1,000 other men between 1940 and 1944.
2. Searching and discovering my great-grandmother's journey to Auschwitz in June 1943.

Looking back

I started as a UNV with WFP in Karamoja, Uganda in 1983 (RIP Francesco), then Rome (Africa Task Force - hello Tun, Saleheen, Simon, Jones, Ramiro, et al.), Madagascar (where I found the place where my father was born 60 years before), India (RIP Taieb Essayem), Belgrade (RIP Djordje Vdovic); Rome with JJ Graisse; then Rep. in Haiti; Dep. Dir New York; Rep. in Afghanistan and then DRC (great colleagues - you know who you are! For AFG: a big thought for women and girls!), finishing as Director in Geneva in 2010.

A final thought: Since 'stopping work', I'm 'active': doing things I want to do!

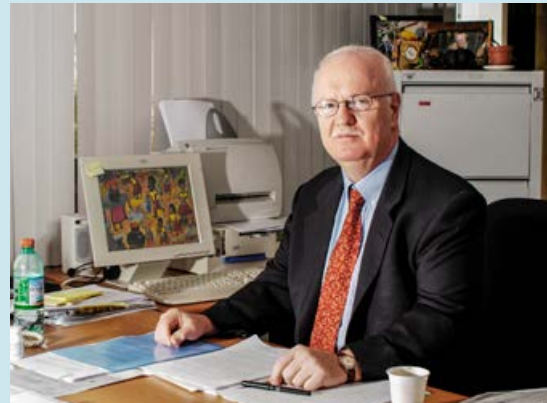


WERNER SCHLEIFFER: TRUST LEADS TO CONFIDENCE

Working in Afghanistan and Cambodia country offices, and during my postings in Geneva and Brussels, I particularly enjoyed the leeway in decision-making with which WFP/HQ entrusted me. That trust gave me confidence, optimism and energy in carrying out my tasks.

Probably my toughest assignment was to war-torn Cambodia, after four years of brutal rule, causing millions of civilian deaths. I will never forget a counterpart's remark: "You are the mother of Cambodia." I feel I contributed to the survival of millions of his compatriots.

Nowadays, I enjoy the combination of exercise with discovering one of the most beautiful, impressive landscapes I have ever seen - in central Switzerland: skiing during the winter and hiking across unspoiled mountain ranges in other seasons.



NEIL GALLAGHER: STILL ADVISING, WRITING ETC...

"Despite the usual health issues afflicting a man of 74 (they consume far too much time lately) I cannot complain about post-WFP life. I worked for Princess Haya and Sheikh Mohammed from 2007 until 2019 (until the UK's richest divorce) and played a big role in the continuation and expansion of the International Humanitarian City. It was on the chopping block when I arrived. Got involved in a number of humanitarian missions using HH's planes -- we had medicine, water purifiers and a portable office in Port-au-Prince less than 3 days after the Haitian earthquake. Wrote the usual editorials and articles mostly for HRH (*Le Figaro*, *The Times*, etc.) and generally worked to make Dubai a centre for aid activities. Have also had contracts with the Gates and Rockefeller Foundations, Chicago Council, and others writing papers on UN aid policies, fundraising, etc. WFP still has me under contract and I did a series of editorials for ED Beasley after the Nobel Prize award (*Le Monde*, *The Guardian*, etc.) plus a few pieces on climate change."



TORBEN JANHOLT CHIEF, OCEAN TRANSPORT 1995–98

"Cheers from Copenhagen; I'm now 77 with 7 grand children... still going strong!"



GEORGIA SHAVER (AT WFP FROM 1980–2011)

"This photo is taken at Mammoth Lakes, California, August 2023 - family travel to enjoy beautiful California and visit our daughter in LA."

"Since retiring, we have based ourselves in Rome. I was called back to WFP in September 2021 to act as Ethics Director for an initial four months which turned into almost two years. Though the job was challenging, it went well and my field experience in large humanitarian operations like Ethiopia and Mozambique was critical to grounding colleagues with a sense of reality. HQ itself has changed over the years, and as someone so appropriately summed it up for those of us considerably older - you feel like you are back in high school! Now off to hit some golf balls - my new frustrating hobby."



ERIKA JOERGENSEN: "LIFE IS GOOD..!"

...Taking morning dips in Baltic waters (also in winter). Erika retired from WFP in 2020 after 20 years serving in a wide variety of roles and locations, including as Country Director, Regional Director (and Deputy) and various director posts in Rome, Copenhagen and New York.

Erika is enjoying "an alarm clock-free environment," while keeping fit: yoga, biking, Pilates and walking a lot. COVID allowed her time to de-stress and reflect: "I spent the isolation time digging into old family letters, including 8 years of correspondence between my parents during WW2. That was a beautiful journey, which I have not yet completed, but so far has resulted in a manuscript which could turn into a 'family book'."

Together with Torben Due, Erika is a member of the Board of Engineers, "Global Development", and they have organized events including with WFP. What else? "Taking odd jobs as mentor for people working in the UN (not WFP). It's so nice to be able to listen to the issues people want to discuss and feel that my experience and network can be of use. And how nice it is to catch up with old friends again: do some small travel, have people for dinners and re-connect with friends and colleagues in WFP - plus enjoy Copenhagen!"



MICHELE MERCALDO, MASTER MARINER

After high school, I entered the Naval Academy in Italy. I didn't remain in Military Service, but joined, for one year, the Centro Studi Confindustria where I learned Statistics, but left to continue in the Merchant Navy, engaging in worldwide trade.

In July 1970, I was hired by an Italian shipbroking firm, which had, among other clients, WFP. At that time, WFP requested Charter shipments only: one shipment per month of only 2,000 tons of bagged cargoes, all in the Mediterranean or Southern Europe, to be delivered to North African countries.

Suddenly, in 1973, a request arrived for four shipments in one go. Three for the Mediterranean, plus 20,000 tons for oceanic shipment. My firm chartered only the three small cargoes. But later WFP called us again because the chartered vessel for the 20,000 tons would not make the appropriate loading dates. And my firm succeeded in organizing a substitute ship.

In 1990, my firm closed, for financial reasons. I joined another Italian ship Agency which was occasionally hired by WFP. Then this also closed shop just as I was hired as a consultant by WFP.

A P-3 post opened in Shipping and I finally became a WFP staff member for around 10 years, until 2001 when I retired. In 2003 I was recalled for the Iraq operation, as well in 2004, for the second Iraq Operation. Thereafter I was a regular consultant, until the end of 2019 when I was 81 years old.

Editor's note: Many in HQ recall MM fondly: smoking a cheroot by the fountain, listening to jazz, with a book in hand ("he is super cultural") and always with a twinkle in his eye. Another colleague recalled a rare day off during WFP's deployment to Larnaca, Cyprus (in 2002, for the Iraq war), when a group of friends visited Famagusta for a swim. Showing off his "butterfly" stroke, MM injured his back and returned to Larnaca lying on the back seat of the car; once recovered, he readily joked about his folly.



PETER CASIER: RELISHING RETIREMENT

"Now you are retired, how does it feel?" I am not the right person to ask. WFP was kind enough to let me work part-time since 1999, so I've been a "pre-retiree"- taking regular sabbaticals to go sailing or "do my own thing".

Since 1999, aged 39, I have gradually moved into retirement, working part-time. For most people, retirement is a clear date and "change of living/being".

Probably the main change, now that I am retired, is that I no longer have to think or worry about "a job" or "an income". I have my pension, so I can concentrate on the things I like doing.

Secondly, and I did not realise this before retiring as a manager, I always had a layer of concern and stress: a continuous feeling of responsibility about my job and the people in my team. So, again, retirement allows me to focus on what I really enjoy.

Retiring has been a psychological process, making me aware of how much time I have left to be really productive and active. This might sound negative, but for me, it's a rational calculation. On retiring, I wanted to do more sailing and adventure travelling, for which I must be at my physical "best". With time passing, I realized this was limited.

I was 63 when I retired and calculated that I had 10 more years of being able to do what I love: sailing.

I saw this as a positive - optimising "the time left". And, having now reached the peak of sailing experience, matching my physical capacities, I can share my skills with others, enabling them to learn and enjoy it.

So I feel liberated: in my own environment that allows me to sail the oceans, enjoy the starry nights, the salt on my skin, sit on the bow of a ship and appreciate the sunrise and sunset - in the middle of nowhere!

I love my retirement. I love the opportunities life has given me, also beyond retirement. And personally, I love to take it to the extreme and do stuff others hardly ever get the chance to experience.



**NOORTJE VAN KRIEKEN
(WFP: 2017–2022)**

“I worked for OIG as a P4 Internal Audit Specialist. I left when we relocated to Australia. That’s my son Victor, hiding his sister Hazel on the beach with me.

I now work at the University of Adelaide as Manager Audit and Compliance.

I loved that while working for WFP I always felt I was part of something big, something good, trying to do my part to make a difference in the world.”



Photo: Sept 2023 in Thessaloniki/Greece.

CHRISTA RÄDER

“I guess I am far too late. I was travelling.... if too late, ‘Never Mind - Tant pis - Dann eben nicht!’

I retired in December 2022.

My activities: arranging my new home, doing exercise, taking French classes and travelling, travelling, travelling - even in the rain.”



Suresh Sharma, President of the Alumni Association, with Donna Ducharme, Co-opted member of the Alumni Association Steering Committee, at an EB side event on 14 June 2019 on the Oral History Publication ‘Cross-border Operations’.

DONNA DUCHARME

Since 2001, Donna Ducharme has worked as a consultant with various UN agencies on various topics. “I am usually treated with reverence because of my WFP background,” she says. “Staff in other agencies admire the way WFP treats its staff, the WFP training and experience opportunities and the resources WFP invests to get the job done right. I value my WFP experience because it is an example of how to work well with the goal of achieving excellence. I apply this approach to my consulting work - especially underscoring how all areas of the organization contribute to delivering effectively for beneficiaries - in hopes that clients adopt similar values and practices.”



PETER LASSIG: "FROM CHINA WITH LOVE"

Others do crosswords or sudoku, but my Chinese studies went beyond brain gymnastics: eight years after retiring in 2000, I obtained my Bachelor of

Sinology (Bakk.phil.) from University of Vienna.

It all began in Paris 1967/8 while I was at the administrative school "ENA". During the student revolt Mao Ze Dong's "little red book" was everywhere. I got hold of it too, but wanted to read it in the original. So I started Chinese lessons.

At the start of my UN career with FAO, in 1971., the seat of the Republic of China (RoC) in the UN Security Council was taken by the People's Republic of China (PRC). The same changeover happened in FAO. I wanted to improve my Chinese for career purposes and asked for a PRC visa. Unfortunately, the Embassy told me that, since I had a West-German passport, I could not enter the communist paradise. I then obtained a visa from the Embassy of the RoC (Taiwan) at the Vatican and did four months of studies there in 1972, on leave without pay (LWOP) from FAO.

There was only one occasion when I could use my Chinese professionally with an official visitor from PRC. However, he was accompanied by a Russian KGB man who insisted on speaking English.

Since I was a Personnel Officer, no assignment to PRC was possible; the same applied during my employment with WHO, UNIDO and WFP. I therefore had to postpone developing my Chinese knowledge until after retirement. I enrolled at Vienna University in the Institute of Sinology in 2004 (after consultancies with WFP and UNDP) and visited PRC four times, once at its Western border with Kazakhstan in connection with a health programme of Vienna University for the Kazakh nomads in Yi Li.

With age, my active Chinese is going down the drain, and I limit myself to some reading and calligraphy.



JAMES CHEYNE WFP: 2007–2020

I first joined the IPSAS team, then entered Managed Services as Admin Officer. In 2017, I moved to Dubai to help COs carry out public auctions of unwanted or obsolete equipment jointly with UNHCR. We maximised revenues to bring much-needed cash to COs. Before retiring, I became Global Asset Manager for WFP in Rome.

As a mentor, I currently have 2 mentees and we have frequent sessions via Teams or Zoom. I am also part of the Men's Flock and we hold regular meetings to help male colleagues overcome difficulties by sharing their concerns. These have been truly rewarding: our flock say the sessions really help them.

I am also involved with the WFP gaming initiative.

Beyond WFP, I have joined the Capannelle Cricket Club in Rome.

We are grateful to those former colleagues who contributed a wide variety of wonderful photos and videos, and we invite everyone to click on the LINK to journey down memory lane ... or find out what life has to offer - after WFP!

The photo gallery and extra contents indicated in this publication are available at the link:
<https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fo/kdjagbcnl674om56chbkk/h?rlkey=vkkklmq41hpaez894yuz07ahc&dl=0>

**WFP ALUMNI NETWORK
WFP AT 60 WEB FOLDER**

WFP Alumni Network

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