AFICS PHILIPPINES

NEWSLETTER

Association of Former International Civil Servants - Philippines

JANUARY 2024



Alcestis A. Mangahas
AFICS-PHL President 2022-2023

The President's Message

I am truly grateful for the last two years as the AFICS Philippines' President. It has been a blessing to head our spirited organization and experience its management with a dedicated and passionate team of officers.

With our brand-new SEC registration certificate on hand, the AFICS Philippines' 2022-2023 Board of Trustees and Executive Committee set its first priorities to establish a firm organizational infrastructure - the 7-member Board of Trustees; the 15-member Executive Committee; and an Advisory Committee. Seven broad areas of work were given increased attention: Membership, Pensions and Benefits, Budget and Finance, Communications, Outreach, Development, and International Relations. To cap our institutional build-up, the AFICS proposed Rules of Procedure completed only a few weeks ago, that with a few tweaks, can serve as the "operations handbook" of our organization. It is an important legacy of the 2022-2023 officers, for which I am thankful to Ruth Batten, her Committee, and several AFICS-PHL contributors.

In setting out our term, several imperatives then stood out. (Our July 2022 President's Message has these down pat!). Today, I am happy to track and report progress on several current organizational priorities. As a professionally organized volunteer organization, we have seen in the last few years the potential and possibility of our organization.

1. Strengthening our Core:

The core involves the fundamental basis of AFICS-PHL, without which we lose our vitality as an organization. **The first fundamental is a strong and growing membership base.** The pandemic had certainly affected our recruitment and we are only slowly returning to face-to-face interactions, formerly our main mode of recruitment.

Still, we have slowly expanded our Membership. Over the two-year period (2022 and 2023), thirty-three new retirees joined the organization for a membership total of 193 members that that include 112 regular-lifetime, 60 regular-annual paying, and 15 associates-lifetime members. Currently, there are six (6) who, having reached the age of 85 years old and above, are not obliged to pay annual or lifetime membership fees. It is my hope that with the increase in membership categories proposed in the new Rules of Procedure, we can look forward an even larger expanded membership in the near future.

The second is financial sustainability. As we went "legal" in 2021, the organization incurred registration and (continuing) reporting requirements. In addition, there have been some necessary communication expenses to re-establish our profile as an organization. In our current Financial Report, we have rebounded back to a more robust financial profile, largely due to a more diversified financial portfolio, less dependent on only having membership fees.

Services to Members will always be a fundamental, especially as this relates to safeguarding our pension benefits and health claims. With much patience and persistence, our Pensions and Benefits Committee has prepared an updated Retirement Handbook. The 5th edition is professionally published and available for sale and has received a lot of positive feedback from many AFICS organizations all over the world. We have also relaunched the AFICS-PHL hybrid Pre-Retirement Seminar in May 2023, with attendees coming from several UN organizations. We continue to provide counsel and advice to members in their dealings with the UNJSPF. I am especially proud of our work with the UNJSPF in reaching out to members whose pension benefits are due for suspension. The work of our committee in providing advice and aid in dealing with our health providers, especially CIGNA, is also noteworthy.

This month, we have launched a second round of the AFICS-PHL Survey of UN Pensioners Resident in the Philippines. The first survey provided an overview of UN retirees' assessment of the sufficiency of their pensions, access to health services and vulnerability to environmental disasters, with special attention to those receiving less than US$833 a month, considered as "small pensions". The second looks at the same questions with additional probes on our members' needs for long-term care.

Communicating who we are an what we do has come a long way. The AFICS-PHL is now a standard, with AFICS-PHL newsletters available in both print and online versions twice a year. The copy you are holding is now the 4th in the series, a credit to the finesse and performance consistency of the Communications Committee. The AFICS-PHL private Facebook Group also is growing more popular with over 167 registered members. Plans are afoot for a "public" FB group or website that can serve as continuing updated source of AFICS-PHL information.

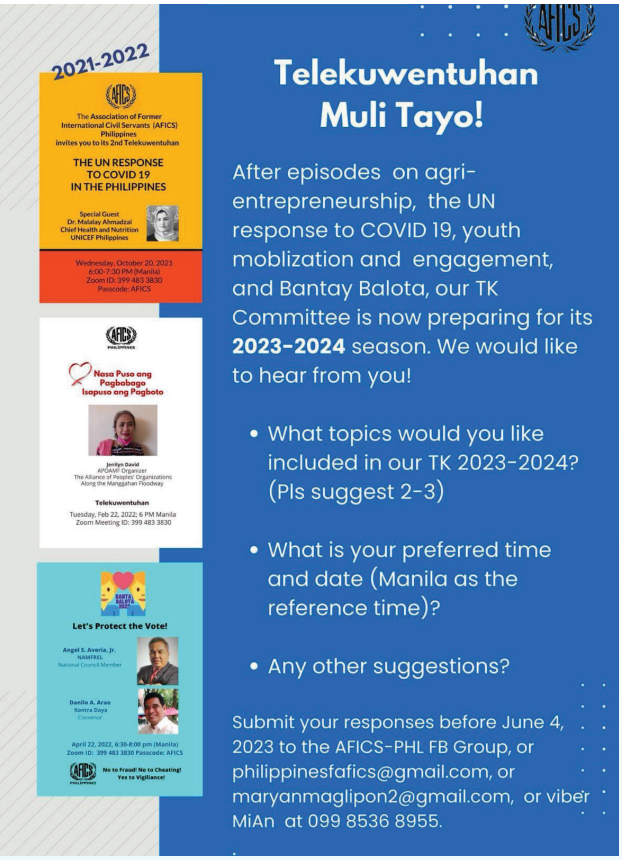
2. Seeking Social Relevance

The AFICS-PHL tradition of giving back to the home community goes back a long way, especially during the pandemic, with Food on Wheels for health workers and contributions to the feeding programs to the homeless through the Arnold Jannsen "Kalinga" program. The Outreach Committee continued this tradition in 2023 with a focus on the vulnerable elderly, with visits to two elders' peoples' homes (Bahay Kanlungan and Bo's Sanchez's Anawim) on Christmas 2022 and Happy Mother's Day 2023. While giving to those in need is satisfying on its own, what has also been outstanding are the creative ways the AFICS members contributed their expertise and experience to raise funds for these projects. Auctions and sales created many opportunities for strengthening bonds of friendship among members and creating additional avenues for personal growth and fulfillment!





Happy smiles from the elderly as they participated in the activities planned for them during the Outreach Committee's visit at Bahay Kanlungan and Bo's Sanchez's Anawim.



This poster was used to ask members what topics they would be interested in for the Telekwentuhan.

Using online media platforms, AFICS-PHL's Telekwentuhan (TK) have taken on different subjects to broaden our members' involvement in development. The TK has dealt with political issues relating to the youth vote and ballot protection during the 2022 contentious election year. Also, quite popular are features of our members' sharing of their life and work experiences such as the features on Maria Diaz and more recently, Mary Racelis.

Our Celebrations: The Joys of Being Together

Renewing ties and discovering new friendships is one clear blessing of being part of AFICS-PHL. Several face-to-face get togethers have strengthened these ties. In July 2022, AFICS-PHL traced its organizational roots by celebrating a triple anniversary: the first as an SEC-registered organization, the 10th from the first election of officers, and the 15th since its formal organization leading to FAFICS accreditation in 2009. The Christmas celebration of December 2022 was a riot of colors as AFICS-PHL members donned on celebratory hats of many different shapes and meanings.

Field Trips have also been a tradition with AFICS-PHL. "A Taste of Laguna," organized by Past President Ces Adorna and VP Delia Barcelona in February 2023, opened our eyes to the delightful treasurers of Laguna's Pakil, Sta. Cruz, and Pila towns. The November2023 visit to the Talumpok Lifestyle Center in Batangas City, hosted superbly by Zen and Robin Willison, introduced our members to the wonders of vegan cuisine and the spiritually-based lifestyle – necessary ingredients of a Blue Zone for healthy ageing.



Pakil Mayor Vincent Soriano (center, in dark blue shirt) joined the AFICS-PHL group during the lunch held at Ces Adorna's residence.



The AFICS-PHL group also visited the centuries-old Spanish Pakil parish church and the Shrine of Our lady of Turumba.

The culminating celebration was our 1st full celebration of the United Nations Day on October 29, 2023, graced by the presence of the UN RC Office, with a video from Gonzalvo Gonzales and Matijla Kavic. In addition, the UN Day celebration with the accompanying auction and bazaar sales, augmented AFICS-PHL financial resources and further strengthened our outreach projects.

AFICS-PHL Members: Don't forget to renew your UNJSPF Digital Certificate of Entitlement 2024!

3. Contributing to UN Retirees' solidarity through Partnerships

We can look back to 2022-2023 as the time when AFICS-PHL embarked on partnerships that strengthened our UN profile both at the national and international levels.

Our organizational relationship with the Philippine Office of the UN Resident Coordinator started with an online discussion with Resident Representative Gonzalvo Gonzales in 2022. It thrived with UNRC support of the AFICS-PHL Pre-Retirement Seminar in May 2023 and reached a high note with the UNRC contribution to the celebration of the UN's 78th Anniversary in October 2023. It is the hope that this relationship further deepens with strong relations with the UNRC and the individual UN agencies.

If AFICS-PHL had a sister-organization, it would be the Association of Former WHO Staff Members, Western Pacific Region (AFSM/WPR) headed by Dr. Linda Milan who sits in the AFICS Board as ex-officio officer. In July 2022, WHO-AFSM (Henry Cardenas) joined the AFICS delegation to the 52nd FAFICS Council Meeting in Vienna in 2022. In December of the same year, AFICS-PHL signed a Memorandum of Understanding to highlight both organizations' joint commitment and support for the UN Declaration on Healthy Ageing covering the decade of 2021-2030. This November 2023, Jana Ricasio and I attended and presented at the WHO-AFSM General Assembly. Acting Regional Director (A/RD) Zsuzsanna Jakab and the Chairperson of the WHO Staff Association, Dr Ada Moadsiri were special guests. WHO Director-General, Dr Tedros Ghebreyesus, addressed the GA with a specially recorded video message to UN/WHO retirees.

An important highlight of the 2022-2023 term is the higher profile of AFICS-PHL in the Federation of Former International Civil Servants (FAFICS), our global network of similarly minded associations, bound together by common purpose and mission. Prodded by Lydia Ontal, long-term stalwart of FAFICS and also AFICS-PHL VP for International Relations, AFICS-PHL fielded a full delegation to the FAFICS 52nd and 53rd General Council Meetings. Delia Barcelona, VP for Communication, was voted in as a FAFICS VP in 2022; she was then also elected as FAFICS Secretary in 2023. VP Marlene Arduo now sits as the FAFICS Alternate Representative to the UN Joint Staff Pension Funds' Committee on Pensions. Lois Villanueva of our Communications Department now also works closely with the FAFICS special Committee on Communications.



AFICS-PHL representatives,(left to right) Delia, Lydia and Thetis, having a group shot with FAFICS President Jerry Borton during the 2023 FAFICS Council Meeting.

Closing

Looking back, we indeed had a fully packed and exhilarating last two years. As President, I have had a special vantage view of the dynamics and tremendous potential of our organization. What a great ride and privilege! It would not have been possible without AFICS-PHL most valuable resource – its members and officers, with their unflagging commitment, know how, and determination.

Maraming salamat po!

Alcestis A. Mangahas
AFICS-PHL President 2022-2023





Celebrating UN's 78th Anniversary: AFICS-PHL's Fundraising Event

By Lois Villanueva

A memorable night indeed! AFICS-PHL celebrated the 78th year anniversary of the United Nations with a bang! It brought together an illustrious crowd to commemorate the anniversary in a dazzling fundraising event. This remarkable evening was graced by UN retirees, current UN officials, members of the diplomatic corps, and their families and friends. The event was made more memorable with a video message of congratulations by the Resident Coordinator, Gustavo Gonzales and a toast raised in honor of the UN's 78th anniversary by Matijla Kovac, head of RC office.

What made it a most fun-filled, vibrant celebration, pulsating with energy and high spirits was due to a team of fundraisers (kudos to the fundraising committee) who set up a recipe for a resounding success, e.g., good food, good music and nonstop dancing, an international bazaar and auction that offered early Christmas shopping and a most exciting colorful competition of the best international attire!



The chosen semi-five finalists gamely participated in the International Attire Contest. The contest raised a surprisingly substantial amount for AFICS-PHL.

To raise funds, a bazaar, auction, international attire competition was held to generate income for the AFICS Outreach programme which included homeless individuals, urban poor, abandoned elderly, health workers and frontliners, victims of typhoons and disadvantaged women.

The bazaar of pre-loved items included unique gift items, crafts, decors, housewares, and others, coming from other countries.

The evening's festivities continued with an engaging auction, featuring items from different countries. Around 14 exclusive, exotic as well as special selection of loved items or collectibles went up for auction.

One of the most exciting highlights of the evening was the international attire competition. Attendees arrived in their traditional or culturally inspired outfits, representing various countries.

The five finalists selected were costumes from China, Japan, Syria, Maguindanao and Philippines. The exciting part happened when the five semi-finalists walked from table-to-table enticing guests to vote for them by placing money into their boxes. The semi-finalist who garnered the highest amount won and that honor went to the Filipiniana attire worn by Brenda Vigo. Coincidentally, Brenda chaired the hard-working organizing committee of the AFICS-PHL UN anniversary event.

The event proved to be successful as evidenced by a good amount of funds raised to support next year's outreach activity which is to help improve the sorry conditions of women in detention.

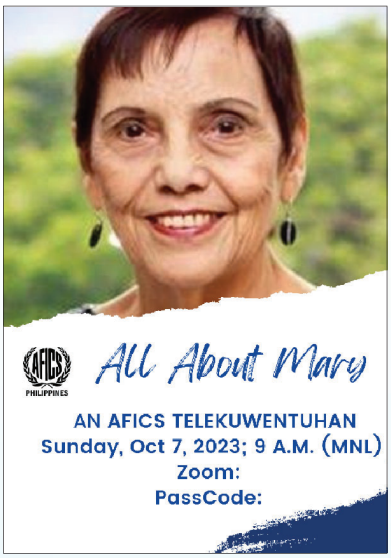
A two-part (back-to-back) Telekwentuhan Series

By Cecilio Adorna

If Netflix has the film documentary *Live to 100: Secrets of the Blue Zones,* AFICS Telekwentuhan (TK) could not be outwitted as it launched its own version back-to-back in 2023.

Part 1: All About Mary

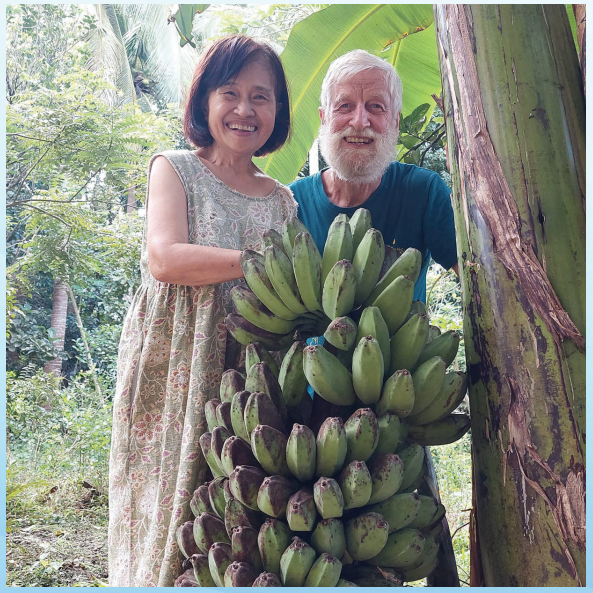
About the same time that the Netflix film was the talk among seniors, AFICS held a two-hour story telling online session on 7 October 2023 featuring Dr. Mary Racelis where she spoke about her life's formula of living to 91, healthy and fully engaged in multiple advocacies for public good as a defender of human, women and children's rights, especially of the urban poor, while nurturing a family and network of friends spread out in different parts of the world. Mary shared her formula to a wide range of participants coming from the academe, NGOs, UN colleagues, university students and government both from the Philippines and other countries.



All About Mary: This had the most number of online participants to any of AFICS-PHL's Telekwentuhan session.

Her professional and personal story spanned about 70 years teaching and research at the Ateneo de Manila University and the University of the Philippines, as senior adviser on women's rights for UNICEF worldwide and as Regional Director for the Eastern and Southern Africa Region of UNICEF. Mary led the Ford Foundation in the Philippines post-retirement from UNICEF. She was constantly working and inspiring colleagues in the NGO sectors championing the rights of the urban poor in the Philippines. A panel consisting of Mary's former deputy Regional Director in UNICEF ESARO, Jim Mayrides; Lilian Pimentel, a community organizer; Jimmy Tan, former UNICEF, a student from the Institute of Global Studies and Diplomacy, and Mary's own daughter, shared their views on Mary's inspiring presentation.

Mary maintains her intensity and passion of decades past in her multiple current engagements as a champion of human rights in the country and abroad. How? She said, all she did was eat a healthy diet, exercise regularly, and stay socially and intellectually active.



Layers of huge "saging sabah" from Talumpok Center, Zen and Rob Willison's wholistic farm.

Part 2: Talumpok Center

Zenaida Willison and husband Rob Willison have a seven-hectare farm in Batangas City. It is a beautiful farm mosaic that Zenaida inherited from her father, a centenarian of 104 years at the time of his death. The Willisons hosted fifteen AFICS Members on 12 November 2023 in their Talumpok Center for a day-long TK session on healthy lifestyle.

The Talumpok Center offers learning on a wholistic approach to life focusing on agriculture that is environmentally beneficial and sustainable. Their NEWSTART philosophy focuses on Nutrition, Exercise, Water, Sunlight, Temperance, Air, Rest and Trust in God. Talumpok Center promotes Christian lifestyle based on health and healing of the body, mind and spirit and care for God's creations. *Continued on page 8*

NEWS BITS

from the Executive Committee

By Mi Ann Maglipon, AFICS-PHL Secretary



The event was a resounding success with much-needed funds generated and participants enjoying themselves.

- **Celebrating UN's 78th Year.** One of the major activities of AFICS-PHIL in 2023 was the dinner-dance fundraising event held on October 29, to celebrate the UN's 78th year. The highly successful event raised funds for AFICS-PHL's activities including its outreach program planned for 2024. *(See full article on this in this newsletter.)*

- **AFICS-PHL's Survey:** The Association launched a survey to generate an updated profile of current AFICS Phil members and build a good database on the situation of all UN pensioners in relation to their main concerns such as pension, after service health insurance, and the risks of living in disaster-prone areas. The survey runs from December 2023 to March 2024. All Filipinos residing in the Philippines who are UN pensioners, whether AFICS members or not, are invited to participate in the survey. AFICS aims to have at least one hundred respondents to the survey.

- **Preparing for the Annual General Assembly and Elections.** With the completion of the 2 years tenure of the present Board of Trustees and Executive Committee Members and in preparation for the Annual General Assembly scheduled on January 17, 2024, the ExCom approved the creation of the Committee on Elections. The committee is headed by Medy Kapunan and is supported by Maria Diaz and Thelma Lampano. Procedures for nomination of officers have been prepared and circulated by the election committee. All regular and associate members of good standing are encouraged to join the General Assembly and to participate in the election.



- **Telekwentuhan Update:** AFICS-PHL managed to organize two back-to-back Telekwentuhans in 2023, under the leadership of past President, Cecilio Adorna. The first Telekwentuhan, on 7 October, focused on one of AFICS' most senior and active retirees, Mary Racelis. Mary is a strong advocate of human rights and child-youth participation. Her golden message: Do what you love to do. The other Telekwentuhan on the road took the group to Talumpok Lifestyle Center, Batangas on November 12. Fifteen members of AFICS Phil joined the trip to visit Zen and Robin Willison's farm and learned more about a healthy living approach to living. *(See pages 6 and 8).*

- **Rules of Procedures:** The committee headed by Ruth Batten, with members Thetis, Tony and Delia, has worked for months to prepare a draft that will be presented to the forthcoming General Assembly for its approval. The proposed Rules complements as well as supplements the Association's original By-Laws/Statutes.

FAFICS UPDATE

- **FAFICS' 53rd Council Meeting.** Thetis Mangahas, Delia Barcelona, and Lydia Ontal went to Vienna and Marlene Arduo was online for the FAFICS meeting which was held from July 17 to 20, 2023.

- One of the highlights of the 53rd Council Meeting was the adoption of the new Rules of Procedure which provide the parameters on FAFICS' management style – one which is characterized by clarity, transparency, accountability, collegiality and is committed to talent management and succession planning. The FAFICS RoP has also provided a lot of useful information to the AFICS-PHL's own draft Rules of Procedure.

- **Nomination to FAFICS Experts Pool.** As an answer to FAFICS's aim of broadening inclusive representation from member-associations, and call for more submissions to the Expertise Pool, AFICS Philippines submitted several names for the consideration in the FAFICS pool. The names submitted in this round included Carmelita "Lois" Villanueva (former UNESCO-UNFPA), Edgardo Valenzuela (former FAO), and Vicente Arandia (former UNICEF). Lois has already been picked up as member of the FAFICS Communication Committee. Earlier submissions included Marlene Arduo who has been designated as FAFICS Alternate Representative to the Pension Board; and Delia Barcelona, now FAFICS officer.

- **FAFICS Bureau Officer.** AFICS-PHL's is proud to have Delia Barcelona elected as Secretary to FAFICS (moving from her earlier election the year before as FAFICS Vice President). She is currently AFICS Phils Vice President for Communication.

A two-part (back-to-back) Telekwentuhan Series...*Continued from page 6*

The visitors enjoyed the plant-based lunch and snacks prepared by Zen. Sans any meat, every dish was delicious and prepared beautifully from produce of the farm. The group also enjoyed shopping for organic products from the farm. Turmeric, ginger, air-borne sweet potatoes were in the bags of the AFICS members when they left for home. It was a bonding time with AFICS members embracing environmental sustainability and healthy living.



The AFICS-PHL group happily pose with Zen and Rob.

The Netflix film documentary *Live to 100: Secrets of the Blue Zones* and the AFICS Telekwentuhan (TK) series in 2023 have several things in common. In both, one finds centenarians or aspiring centenarians living healthy and happily, who follow a healthy diet, who find time to exercise, have missions and purpose in life, and who are surrounded by friends with whom they are at peace.



AFICS partnership with WHO AFSM

By Thetis Mangahas and Dr. Linda Milan

AFICS President Alcestis (Thetis) Mangahas and VP Jana Ricasio joined the General Assembly of the Association of Former WHO Staff Members, Western Pacific Region (AFSM/WPR) held on 16 November 2023 at the WHO Western Pacific Regional Office in Manila. The General Assembly was a hybrid event that included former WPRO Staff abroad to join in the celebration.

Present at this occasion were the WHO Regional Administration's key officials led by WPRO Acting Regional Director (A/RD), WHO Deputy Director-General Dr Zsuzsanna Jakab, and the President of the WHO Staff Association Dr Ada Moadsiri.

It was a historic gathering, the first face-to-face Reunion for 5 years, to celebrate the official recognition of AFSM/WPR and institutionalization of the partnership between WHO and AFSM. A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed on 9 October 2023 between WHO/WPR Acting Regional Director Dr Zsuzsanna Jakab and AFSM/WPR President Dr Linda Milan, officially recognizes the ASFM, acknowledges the experience and wisdom of retirees, and aims to harness the retirees' potential to help WHO further its goals.

WHO Director-General, Dr Tedros Ghebreyesus, provided a specially recorded video message that was played to the Reunion. WHO generously provided the Conference room and lounge and many other facilities which made the Assembly truly a big success, a true partnership between WHO and the AFSM.



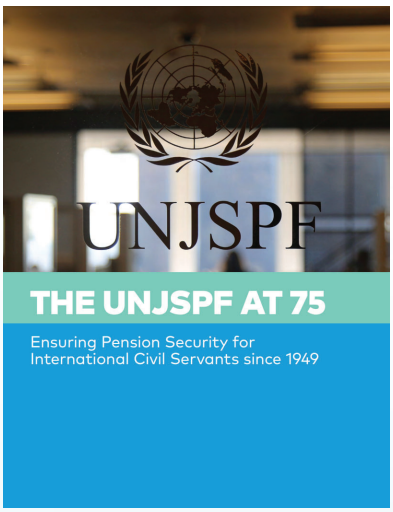
(Left to right) Jana Ricasio, AFICS-PHL Vice President-Outreach, Dr Ada Moadsiri, Chairperson, WHO/WPRO Staff Association, Dr. Linda Milan, President, WHO-AFSM, and Thetis Mangahas, AFICS-PHL President at the AFSM/WPR General Assembly.



Thetis Mangahas with WHO AFSM officers including Henry Cardenas and Romy Murillo, both active in AFICS-PHL events.

The UNJSPF@75
Ensuring Pension Security for International Civil Servants since 1949

By: Delia Barcelona



The Regulations of the UNJSPF were adopted by the United Nations General Assembly by resolution 248 (III) on 7 December 1948 but became effective only on 23 January 1949, and have been amended by the Assembly several times since then, following recommendations by and consultation with the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Board. Hence, 7 December 2023 marks 75 years since the approval of the UN General Assembly resolution establishing the Fund, and will be celebrated from this date throughout December 2024.

A very comprehensive 75th anniversary book has been published for this occasion and is now available on the UNJSPF's website. It provides a very interesting and well-documented history of the Fund as well as the many new developments in terms of services to beneficiaries.

The book also includes statements from the following:

"International civil servants devote their careers to building a better, more secure world for all. After serving the UN family, they deserve a measure of security in their own lives. The United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund has provided that financial security for 75 years."
-United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres

"The world has changed significantly in 75 years, but our purpose remains essentially the same. We provide pension security for an international civil service not covered by national systems."
- Rosemarie McClean Chief Executive of Pension Administration

"The Fund has in recent years consistently outperformed its investment benchmark; we achieve sustainable returns at 30 per cent less cost than our peers, thanks to in-house management."
-Representative of the Secretary-General for the investment of the UNJSPF assets

"The Fund is committed to ensuring the financial security for former staff of its member organizations and for their families."
-Jerry Barton, FAFICS President

Communication (and Newsletter) Committee

Chair and Editor-in-Chief: Delia R. Barcelona
Associate Editor-in-Chief: Mary Ann Q. Maglipon
Co-Chair and Managing Editor: Marylina C. Mabida
Creative Editor: Antonio I. Fernandez
News Editor: Carmelita L. Villanueva
Features Editor: Teresa H. Stuart



Highlights of 2023 United Nations General Assembly resolution on pension matters

(excerpt from the UNJSPF website, 9 January 2024)

The United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) resolution 78/253, which contains the guidance and decisions of the General Assembly on pension matters, has been published (section VII).

2024 Administrative Budget of the Fund approved

The UNGA approved the Fund's 2024 administrative budget following the report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ), with limited changes to the Pension Board's proposal. The 2024 administrative budget will provide the necessary resources to support the Fund's pension administration and investment, addressing a growing client base and an increasingly complex portfolio.

Other matters

The UNGA further recalled paragraph 158 of the report of the Pension Board, and requested the Board to examine any other circumstances where the guidelines to determine eligibility for spousal benefits could be extended in the context of changes in national law and marital status.

The UNGA also acknowledged that some members of the Pension Board were unable to attend the seventy-fifth session of the Board due to challenges beyond their control, and looked forward to the future efforts of hosting Governments and the Board's secretariat in facilitating the participation of the members of the Board at its sessions, as needed and appropriate.

Following the issuance of the General Assembly resolution, a new transfer agreement between the Fund and the European University Institute will be implemented. Additionally, Article 15(b) of the Fund's Regulations has been amended to codify the annual budget cycle of the Fund. Finally, the Special Tribunal for Lebanon, which ceased to exist on 31 December 2023, is no longer a member organization of the Fund.

Revised Regulations and Rules in English and French will be published soon on the Fund's website.



The 2024 Pension Fund administrative budget was discussed and then approved by the UN General Assembly.

Seven imperatives for overall wellness for smart and healthy ageing

By Tess Stuart Guida

We all aim to maintain total wellness to make our retirement years fulfilling. What does it take to achieve total wellness for healthy aging? Our research led us to seven interrelated imperatives of overall wellness for older adults based on studies by the U.S. National Institute on Aging (NIA). We summarize them in the chart below, with brief descriptions on what and how each component can impact on the other components.

Figure 1. Seven interrelated imperatives for overall wellness for a long, healthy, and happy life



1. Make smart food choices

Research has shown that as we age, smartly choosing what we eat can help protect us from some health problems and may help improve brain function. Choose a variety of nutrient-dense foods across and within all the 5 food groups based on preferences, cultural traditions, and budget: vegetables, fruits, grains, protein foods, dairy products, and oils.



And follow these 7 tips for healthy eating:

- Base your meals on higher fiber starchy carbohydrates
- Eat lots of fruit and vegetables
- Eat more fish, including oily fish
- Limit intake of saturated fat, sugar, and alcohol
- Eat less salt: no more than 6 g. a day
- Do not get thirsty; drink 6 – 8 glasses of water daily
- Do not skip breakfast



2. Exercise and physical activity

Physical activity is the cornerstone of healthy ageing. Research evidence (NIA/NIH) shows that people who exercise, or engage in other forms of physical activity (e.g., housework, gardening, walking the dog, dancing, taking the stairs, etc.) enjoy more years of active life without pain or disability. This is because as we age, muscle function often declines from loss of muscle mass, leading to lower energy levels to do everyday activities. Exercise can help maintain our muscle mass, as proven by a 2019 study (NIA) that found that moderate to vigorous physical activity is strongly associated with muscle function, regardless of age. Another NIA study of older adults showed that taking a walk for 4,000 up to 8,000 steps or more a day has been associated with lower risk of death from all health-related causes. In other words, maintaining muscle mass can help us live longer.



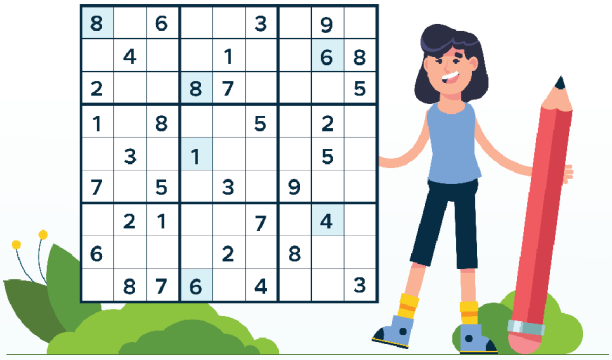
3. Keep positive relationships

In his 2018 book, "*Timeless: Nature's Formula for Health and Longevity*", Louis Cozolino writes: "Of all the experiences we need to survive and thrive, it is the experience of relating to others that is most meaningful and important…Our brains are social organs. That means that we are wired to connect with each other and to interact in groups…A life that maximizes social interaction and human-to-human contact is good for the brain at every stage, particularly for the aging brain." A 9-year study involving 7,000 people found that those with more social ties tended to live longer regardless of their socioeconomic status, smoking, drinking, exercise, or obesity.



4. Engage in fun social activities

Retirement affords us with more free time to participate in social activities and volunteer work in our community. Engage in activities that you enjoy depending on your interests and ability and that uplift your mood, mind, body and spirit. Reconnect with your high school or college buddies and with your group of retirees. For each group, agree on a bucket list of interesting things to do (e.g., hiking, biking, line dancing, Zumba, yoga, tai chi, cooking, and eating); volunteering (e.g., at a church, school, hospital, community, senior center, local arts or theatre group, and climate smart initiatives); organizing fund drives for people in need; joining hobby groups (e.g., painting, cross-stitching, knitting, gardening, and woodworking); touring places of common interest; checking out restaurants; joining clubs (sports, book, film, bowling, exercise, dance clubs), and others.



8		6			3		9	
	4			1			6	8
2			8	7				5
1		8			5		2	
	3		1				5	
7		5		3		9		
	2	1			7		4	
6				2		8		
	8	7	6		4			3

5. Take care of cognitive health

Cognitive health or brain health refers to the ability to clearly think, learn, and remember. However, cognition often changes as we age. Although some people develop Alzheimer's or other types of dementia, many older adults experience more modest changes in memory and thinking. Research shows that healthy eating; staying physically and socially active; learning new skills (e.g., taking up a new sport, learning to play a musical instrument, or learning new dance steps); and repeating a usual activity (e.g., reading books, writing, doing exercise routines, engaging in a favorite sport; solving crossword and soduko puzzles) may help maintain cognitive health.



6. Take care of mental, emotional, and spiritual health

Take care of your mental health by connecting and interacting with family and friends, trying to stay positive, and participating in activities you enjoy. Studies suggest that positive emotions of

warm, loving family and social relationships play an important role in longevity and low incidence of mental health conditions like anxiety, depression and reduce the risk for Alzheimer's and related dementias as you age. Spiritual health helps us find purpose in our lives making us focus on the positive. When we share similar beliefs, we maintain strong relationships. Staying involved in religion and spiritual matters are positively related to cognitive, emotional, and mental health.



7. Maintain a healthy lifestyle

A healthy lifestyle sums up the factors that lead to overall wellness and reminds us to:

- Get a good night's sleep in the dark for 7 to 9 hours. Following a regular sleep schedule can help us stay energetic and alert, and avoid depression and dementia. Research suggests that deep breathing exercises and mindfulness meditation for 20 minutes can improve sleep quality.
- Quit smoking. Even if you are 60 or older and have been smoking for decades, quitting will improve your health by lowering your risk of cancer, heart attack, stroke, and lung disease; improving your blood circulation, sense of smell and taste, and increase your ability to exercise.
- Avoid or limit alcohol consumption and be aware of medications or substances that can be misused and abused or be at risk for dependence, e.g., prescribed opioids for pain, or those for anxiety, depression, or trouble sleeping.
- Visit your doctor every six months for regular health check ups. Consult a health and nutrition professional before you adopt any change in your daily health routine.

Sources: U.S. National Institute on Aging/National Institutes of Health (NIA/NIH)

Note to AFICS-PHL Members: For future issues of our AFICS Philippines Newsletter, we invite you to share an action photo with a one-paragraph caption on how you are smartly practicing healthy ageing. We will include your contributions in this section on "Smart and Healthy Ageing".

Forthcoming: The 54th Council Session of FAFICS

The 54th Council of the Federation of Associations of Former International Civil Servants (FAFICS) is scheduled to be held at the United Nations Conference Centre, Bangkok (UNCC), in hybrid mode, on 22-25 July 2024.

Venue location:

The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP)
Rajdamnern Nok Avenue, Bangkok 10200, Thailand

Invitations to all 64 FAFICS Member Associations and information updates will be sent out beginning 1 April 2024. As the Council Session will be held in hybrid mode, Member Associations can send in-person participants as well as virtual participants, or only in-person or only virtual.



Continuing revenge travels

Lois travel to Mexico

Two of the reasons we visited Mexico- to see with our own eyes one of the seven wonders of the world declared in 2007– the ruins of Mayan Chichen Itza, particularly the Temple of Kukulkan which was built to reflect the Mayan astronomical year. Chichen Itza is a symbol of the lost Mayan civilization. We also explored the ancient city of Aztecs called Teotihuacan which consists of two pyramids, Pyramid of the Moon and the Pyramid of the Sun and running down the middle of the site is the Avenue of the Dead







Cowgirls for a few days

Delia Barcelona and Soc Reyes went on a short adventure to Tennessee in mid-October 2023. Visiting its most popular cities - Memphis and Nashville – the two experienced real southern culture, food, and music – home to such legends as the King of Rock n Roll, Elvis Presley, the Father of blues, B.B. King, and legends such as Johnny Cash, Patsy Cline, the queen of country music herself, Dolly Parton, and iconic Taylor Swift, among many others. Nestled around the Mississippi river, these two cities both have beautiful mountains, plantations, and most importantly, long histories of the civil rights movement, and the struggle against segregation. Overall, we enjoyed dawning our cowgirl looks, complete with plaid shirts and hats, for this brief period

Note to AFICS-PHL Members: We invite you to send to us photos of your travels here and elsewhere with your family or friends. Please accompany the photos with a one-paragraph description! We shall feature these in forthcoming issues of the AFICS Philippines Newsletter.

AFICS Philippines Executive Committee 2022-2023



President
Alcestis Mangahas, ILO
- Former Deputy Regional Director for Asia and the Pacific
- Technical expertise on migration, forced and child labor, and human trafficking



Executive Vice President
Regina Molera, UNICEF
- Former Asst Rep, Turkmenistan
- Early childhood care and devt, governance for children



Corporate Secretary
Mary Ann Q. Maglipon, UNICEF
- Former Chief, Communication, Timor Leste
- Loves writing and editing, mountain climbing



Treasurer
Antonio Fernandez, UNCRD
- Former Training Officer
- Climate-smart technologies (including organic farming); enjoys classical piano



Vice President, Budget and Finance
Danny Carlos, UN-ICTR
- Former Chief Budget Officer
- Audit and financial management



Vice President, Communication
Delia Rarela-Barcelona, UNFPA
- Former Chief of Staff, Executive Office, UNFPA HQ; Deputy Regional Director for Arab States
- Communication, Facilitation, Teambuilding, Organizing



Vice President, Development
Socorro Reyes, UN Women (formerly UNIFEM)
- Former Chief, Asia-Pacific and Arab States Section
- Women's rights advocate; Convenor, Free Leila Campaign



Vice President, International Relations
Lydia Ontal, UNHQ
- Former Staff, DPI and Assistant to the FAFICS President
- Now FAFICS Emerita; enjoys golf and piano



Vice President, Membership
Danilo Bautista, UNHCR
- Former Deputy Representative, Indonesia
- Decades of work with and for refugees; enjoys golf



Vice President, Outreach
Jana Ricasio, UN DESA
- Former Chief, Prog Devt Cluster, Capacity Devt Office
- Prog/Proj devt and management, evaluation, strategic planning, policy analysis



Vice President, Pension and Benefits
Ma. Magdalena Arduo, UNICEF
- Former Chief of Operations, China; Operations Officer, Philippines
- Dedicates time to helping fellow retirees on their pension and insurance benefits



Chair, Committee on Rules and Procedures
Ruth Batten, UNEP
- Former Chief, Administration and Communications, Ozone Secretariat
- Keen on adult literacy and charity work



Co-chair, Communication
Marylina Mabida, DPKO
- Former Field Services Officer, Communications and Logistics
- Photography



Co-chair, Pension and benefits
Ludivina Santos, UNDP
- Former Human Resource Associate, UNDP Manila
- Passionate about training, coordination, and being of service to others



Ex-Officio
Linda Milan, WHO (AFSM-Manila)
- Former Director for Reform, Office of the Regional Director, WHO Western Pacific Region
- Advocate of good governance in health and climate-smart hospitals; also passionate about homemaking

AFICS PHILIPPINES ADVISERS
Cecilio Adorna, President Emeritus 2016-2017 (UNICEF)
Maria Diaz, Former Executive Committee Secretary 2019-2021 (UNICEF)
Edmundo Ortega, President Emeritus 2018-2021 (UNEP/UNON)
Mary Racelis, (UNICEF)

We encourage all members or their family members to contribute articles to the AFICS Phils newsletter. Contact us at philippinesafics@gmail.com !