



AFUNO - NZ



ASSOCIATION OF FORMER UNITED NATIONS OFFICIALS | NEW ZEALAND

Newsletter 2020/2

July 2020

Message from the President

Dear AFUNO Friends

Hope you are all well and enjoying the freedom of post lockdown life which we are so lucky to be enjoying in New Zealand.

We are delighted to have two contributions from members in this newsletter; on life in Bosnia Herzegovina from Quentin Adams who worked with UN Peacekeeping missions, and an opinion piece that Rajiv Sondhi (IFAD and World Bank) wrote for Scoop. We look forward to receiving more contributions from members for future issues. The newsletter also contains brief summaries of FAFICS issues plus websites and blogs that you may find of interest, along with a brief update on the IRD case and a UN@75 survey on the future of the UN that you may be interested to participate in.

On a sad note AFUNO's only centenarian member, Una Dowding, passed away in early July. AFUNO's former President Rex Billington kindly spoke at Una's funeral and extracts of his tribute to Una are included below.

Many congratulations to our distinguished AFUNO member Helen Clark on her appointment by WHO DG Dr Tedros as co-chair to the Independent Panel of Pandemic Preparedness and Response with former Liberian President Ellen Sirleaf Johnson. We wish her every success with this challenging but vital undertaking.



Several AFUNO members enjoyed the well-attended Auckland launch of Tuma Hazou's (UNICEF) memoir ***Dances with Death***. A reviewer commented "*Written without rancour, Tuma Hazou's description of his experiences is an engaging, authentic and rare Palestinian account of recent Middle East events, and of nerve-racking personal trauma.*" Copies can be purchased online through:

www.womensbookshop.co.nz

*Tuma Hazou launching his book **Dances with Death** at the Women's Bookshop, Ponsonby, Auckland.*

I do hope some of you have had the opportunity to participate in the wonderful Matariki celebrations that have been organised around the country. As getting the extended family together for Christmas becomes more challenging with adult children spread across the world, my siblings and I enjoyed the opportunity to get together in Whanganui to celebrate Matariki.

Kia nai tat our Matariki - Happy Matariki everyone!

Gillian

Tribute to Una Dowding

With sorrow we mark the death of Una Dowding who, at 100 years of age, was our oldest colleague. For 22 years Una travelled with and supported her husband Ed in his work for the International Labour Organisation (ILO) in Cairo, Geneva and Suva. Her role as the wife of a senior official was not one of ease, glamour and luxury. She hosted countless cocktail and dinner parties and she attended an even greater number of diplomatic functions. She was noted for an excellent memory for names and one occasion in Cairo she hosted a dinner party in her husband's absence even though she had just left hospital with six stitches in her cut thumb. Una and her husband Ed were the originators and foundation members of our NZ AFUNO branch in 1993. She attended and helped host all NZ AFUNO luncheons in Auckland and her gentle and smiling presence was appreciated by new and longer-term members. Una and Ed were a complimentary dignified couple and the NZ AFUNO remembers and recognizes unreservedly Una's role in the work of exceptional colleagues and gifted diplomats. She was an inspiration and someone very special.

Fora We Have Found Useful

1. Age Concern New Zealand

Age Concern New Zealand is a charity dedicated to people over 65, their friends, and whanau. *"We promote dignity, wellbeing, equity, and respect and provide expert information and support services in response to older people's needs. We are active and vocal on relevant issues and work to ensure older people stay connected with their family, friends and community."*

[Local Age Concerns](#) throughout New Zealand are the first port of call for older people in their communities. Age Concerns offer expertise and knowledge of all available [services](#) for older people as well as social activities. Age Concern New Zealand provides national support to local Age Concerns. Age Concern New Zealand also informs the government and other national bodies on issues of concern for older people. If you, or anyone you know, needs our help, please contact us: <https://www.ageconcern.org.nz/> From the recent Age Concern newsletter:

BLOG: "Giving Back" A Role for Older People

The term generativity was coined by the psychoanalyst Erik Erikson in 1950 to denote "a concern for establishing and guiding the next generation." He first used the term while defining his theory of the stages of psycho-social development. Later additions to this theory included a concern for one's legacy or even an "inner desire for immortality". It all boils down to concern for the future, a need to nurture and guide younger people and contribute to the next generation.... [Read the full BLOG!](#) If you have a topic you think would be of interest or want to be a guest blogger for us please email [Sophie Parkes](#).

2. The Conversation

<https://theconversation.com/au>

A member has found The Conversation (Australia Edition) email subscription to be consistently good reading. The Conversation is an independent source of news, analysis, and expert opinion, and delivered directly to the public. The Australian Edition is written by academics and researchers from both Australia and New Zealand Universities. Authors work with professional journalists who help them share their knowledge. It is a not-for-profit organisation committed to ethical journalism, with a strict Editorial Charter and codes of conduct. Every author discloses their expertise, funding, and conflicts of interest.

3. Useful Websites

Mental Wellbeing: <https://www.depression.org.nz/>

The **Health Promotion Agency Te Hiringa Hauora** was established in 2012 by the New Zealand Public Health and Disability Act 2000. As a Crown Agent under the Crown Entities Act 2004, HPA is required to give effect to government policy when directed by the responsible Minister. This HPA website helps New Zealanders recognise and understand depression and anxiety. It is full of ideas and stories to help people with depression and anxiety get to a better place. Under the COVID-19 portal, there is a specific tab for [Older People and COVID-19](#).

Mentemia: <https://www.mentemia.com/about>

For Kiwi rugby icon and **Mentemia** co-founder Sir John Kirwan, 25 years ago was his low point. Depression. Anxiety. Endless worry. He hid it from his friends and team-mates. He came across as a healthy, high performer at the peak of his career. JK then made the decision to get help. He learnt his mental fitness was something he could work on, just like his physical fitness. At that moment he dedicated himself to becoming as mentally fit as he could possibly be - the All Blacks for mental health.

Fast forward to now and there is no dispute that JK has achieved that aim. He's at the top of his mental wellbeing game and on a mission to help others do the same. JK co-founded Mentemia in 2018. He has shared all that has worked in his journey and blended it with the latest best practice from our team of clinical advisors. Our world-class digital platform is the result.

Netsafe: <https://www.netsafe.org.nz>

In New Zealand **Netsafe** provides free and confidential advice and support related to online safety topics including bullying, grooming, illegal content, and scams. Netsafe also provides support to schools and kura under a contract with the Ministry of Education.

Seniorline: <http://www.seniorline.org.nz/>

All New Zealand District Health Boards contract **Seniorline** as an information service to assist older people to navigate the health system. Information includes how to get help to stay at home and support services for caregivers. Seniorline also advise on the process for entry to rest home, dementia or hospital care, funding and the services that should be provided.

Sorted NZ: <https://sorted.org.nz/>

As New Zealand's trusted personal finance site, **Sorted** has the tools and information you need to tackle debt, plan and budget, save and invest, dial up your KiwiSaver, plan for retirement, protect what's important, and manage a mortgage. No matter where you are at when it comes to money – just starting your first job or wrapping up a successful career – Sorted lets you fine-tune your finances and get ahead moneywise.

Sorted is a free service powered by CFFC (Commission for Financial Capability), the government-funded, independent agency dedicated to helping New Zealanders get ahead financially. You can learn more on the [CFFC website](#), or make contact directly through the website.

Student Volunteer Army: <https://shop.sva.org.nz/>

All over New Zealand, the **Student Volunteer Army** delivers groceries within 48 hours. This service is for those aged 65+; the medically vulnerable; anyone that requires support due to their personal circumstances, such as single parents; and essential services workers.

SuperSeniors: <http://www.superseniors.msd.govt.nz/>

The **SuperSeniors** website is run by the Office for Seniors within the Ministry of Social Development. It is a gateway to information on government services for anyone aged 65+. There are specific portals for, amongst others, Finance & Planning; Health & Wellbeing; Elder Abuse; and Age-friendly Communities.

4. The AFUNO Auckland Coffee Group



1st July - AFUNO Auckland members enjoyed the first monthly get together after lockdown at Westhaven Marina.

Contributions from Our Members

Life in Bosnia and Herzegovina

Quentin Adams originally hails from Southland. After many years with UN mission assignments, he is currently enjoying post-UN life in Mostar, Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), from where he wrote this article for our Newsletter.

After several assignments to peacekeeping missions and a weapon inspection commission, and then finally after an 11-year stretch assigned to the DPA Mission in Iraq, it seemed time to move on. So in August 2018, I finished up working in Baghdad, my wife ended her UN assignment in Kuwait and we moved to her home town of Mostar, BiH looking to take a long break from work before deciding what to do and where to go next. I served here in BiH with UNMIBH (DPKO's Police support Mission) for about three years beginning in 2000. Readers will probably agree that the UN experience in BiH played a large and very influential role in the growth and development of the UN Secretariat's peace keeping and humanitarian operations. The Agencies, Funds and Programs also had and some still have a presence of varying size here too. So, I have no doubt some of our members will have served time in BiH. I thought it might be of interest to share some insights into life in BiH as it is now in 2020, twenty-five years after the tragedy that engulfed the countries that fell out of the former Yugoslavia.

I took a liking to Bosnians and Herzegovinians and their country from my first days here. They are a strong 'down to earth' and really resilient people, who love to laugh. Much about them reminds me of some of my parents and grandparents' generation in rural Southland, where I grew up. Very conservative, little time for grandstanding or grandstanders, frugal, very practical and pragmatic, and a bit cynical. I worked in the logistics side of the UN, not the political or humanitarian. So it's an opinion not an educated judgement, when I say that I detest the local politics and the governing system that a certain world power left the Bosnians with in the haste to bring fighting to an end in 1995. And the fighting goes on, it is just the physical bit that stopped. Mostar is perhaps the most significant example. Our street has two 'official' names. Which one you use depends on which 'side' you feel, or others have decided for you, that you belong to. The city is divided and run as two separate entities, both who refuse to remerge and gain the obvious efficiencies and benefits that a merger would bring to citizens. The three hardline parties that took the country into war in 1992 still run the country. Even some of the names of the party leaders remain the same, just the next generation touting the same old divisive nonsense. The Dayton Agreement has unintentionally enabled these hardliners (*whom many here believe collaborate with each other behind the scenes for personal gain – I suspect there may be some truth in this*) to control all public revenue and therefore they can and do exert huge amounts of often dubious influence on the business and private communities they are supposed to represent. Attempts at political reform and improvement are most often resisted, despite the obvious desire of many citizens. The status quo seems to advantage the political leadership and they continue to use religion as a tool to divide the population, whom to the outsider are largely indistinguishable in almost all aspects of their culture and lifestyle.

Almost a third of the population has left over the last few years to work in Germany or similar countries, which is making an already serious aging population problem much worse. I think it is this factor that may in the end force reform. Younger families are (I think for the most part reluctantly) leaving because they have had enough of feeling financially and physically insecure and many are highly pessimistic as to the political future here. Given a choice, they won't come back until they judge that the country is functioning properly, as it could and should be. Many see entry to the EU as the enabler to that status.

That's the bad news. The good news is that despite the dysfunctional government and public service systems, many choose to ignore these aspects and are getting on with life and working with whom they need to so as to get around the nonsense their hundreds of politicians force and impose on them. Tourism (at least before the bug hit) is booming and has a great future. Sarajevo and Mostar throng with tourists from all over the world, including many backpackers and others from NZ! Adventure tourism is starting. There are many small successful businesses quietly working away, manufacturing and exporting a surprising range of different and sought-after consumer products. Furniture and kitchens made here are right up to the mark in fashion and are apparently in high demand in Western Europe and beyond. It is still complicated and expensive to start up and run a business here so many don't bother and instead they operate in the 'gray' economy. The official unemployment rate, which is pretty dreadful, is in practicality not as bad as it seems. My wife is working for a rapidly expanding software development company whose customers are mostly located in the US. They are good at IT here and there are lots of rapidly growing businesses in all parts of the IT services sector. The cost of living is low by comparison to what is now, I think by anyone's standards, a very expensive NZ. It seems to be around 40% or less of the costs of a comparable lifestyle in say, Dunedin. But the official average monthly net income is about 900BAM (NZD 800) I think were the gray economy included, it would be a lot higher than that, but none-the-less, many struggle and there is minimal Government support for those on or below the poverty line.

Most of the war damage has been repaired, what's left is being used as props by the local guides to 'wow' tourists with war stories. Most of the mines have been removed, especially around the towns and populated areas. Sarajevo now, covered in snow in mid-winter is a sight to behold. My daily walk down through Mostar's old city, through its many stalls and craft shops, highly patronized coffee café's and ice cream stalls, and where many of the curious locals have got to recognize and say 'kako ste sta ima' to the 'crazy' foreigner living among them, is a special experience every day. 'Crazy,' as they all long since concluded that no one in their right mind would come to live in Bosnia given a choice.

But it's not so crazy. I continue to like and respect the people and the country as much if not more than ever and I suspect they will keep on tolerating their poor leadership while making the most of what is open to them. I hope the world powers that be don't give up on BiH. Influential well-meaning world leaders need to keep twisting the arms of the politicians here, and hopefully forcing them to stop arguing about yesterday's old story and instead get on with their job, which should be about creating a future for their citizens, not running an enterprise for themselves.

All Hands on Deck!

Rajiv Sondhi is former staff of IFAD and the World Bank. He now lives in Auckland from where he wrote this opinion piece for Scoop. He kindly shared the article for including in our Newsletter:

Sunday, 14 June 2020, 10:14 am

Opinion: Rajiv Sondhi

Even as we relish the defeat of the Covid 19 contagion, a new contagion is upon us.

As has been headlined in recent days, the economic contagion is rearing its head. And we will need the same bold, innovative, and united moves from "the team of 5 million" to tame it quickly and effectively.

In recent days, local news headlines have not been encouraging. Large businesses seem to be competing with each other to announce layoffs. When the Prime Minister publicly expressed her anger, one opposition leader disingenuously suggested she "sticks to her knitting" and prompted some social media comments lamenting that we were moving to a 'Nanny state'.

The message that got us through the first pandemic seems to be getting lost, even as the joblessness crisis starts to bite. Some 37.500 layoffs in May and it seems tens of thousands more will be coming in the coming months. Experts have predicted that we now face the largest threat to paid employment since the Great Depression of 1930.

To some degree, this development is understandable. Businesses that have been heavily reliant on overseas visitors, for instance, clearly have taken a major hit and face a serious sink-or-swim challenge. Some will need to shut down or re-invent their business model. Smaller businesses will suffer the most.

But these are not normal times. A different counter-cyclical approach is needed in current extra-ordinary times when we see the risk of a prolonged downward spiral. Keep employees on your rolls as long as you can afford to, or at least in the short and medium term, so that aggregate demand in the economy does not shrink and consumer (aka your staff) spending confidence stays buoyant. That is exactly the counter cyclical approach government is adopting with its scaled-up spending. If businesses do so too, we will have all hands on the deck, which will help keep our ship afloat.

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News <https://www.scoop.co.nz/stories/print.html?path=HL2006/S00091/all-hands-on-deck.htm>

Update on Tax-Exemption of UN Pension Payments in New Zealand

In late May, the IRD released the Exposure Draft on the Monthly Retirement Payments from the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund. AFUNO-NZ members who have engaged with the Tax Relief Appeal have been kept up to date with progress. The IRD is accepting comments on the draft until 21st July. Our Honorary Legal Advisor, Anne Knowles, has continued to liaise with barrister Mike Lennard who has now drafted an expanded response with concluding recommendations. The AFUNO-NZ Executive has agreed that Mike Lennard will prepare a formal response to ensure that every opportunity has been taken for the consolidated views of AFUNO-NZ to be considered by the IRD. When the IRD formally issues its QWBA (Questions We Have Been Asked) document, AFUNO-NZ will decide on the strategy for going forward. A detailed update on both Mike Lennard's responses and the strategy for going forward will be communicated to friends of the Tax Relief Appeal.

UNJSPF Monthly News – and the 2020 CoE Exercise

The UNJSPF Monthly News (July 2020) has been emailed to beneficiaries. Evidently not all AFUNO-NZ members are receiving this automatically. All the Monthly News articles are available on the UNJSPF website at: <https://www.unjspf.org/category/news-announcements/>

Subscribe to the newsletter

While there, you will see a box at the top of the page . Click on this and you will be taken to a preformatted email which will be sent from your default email address.

Meanwhile, of the articles in the July Monthly News, AFUNO-NZ members are encouraged to be familiar with the 2020 Certificate of Entitlement exercise which has recently commenced. The process has been adjusted due to Covid-19 constraints on international mailing systems. The full article can be found at the following link: <https://www.unjspf.org/the-2020-certificate-of-entitlement-ce-exercise-has-started-information-for-retirees-and-beneficiaries/>

Updates from FAFICS

AFUNO-NZ is one of the 63 members of the Federation of Associations of Former International Civil Servants (FAFICS) and receive news of the Bureau and Council meetings. Two recent emails may be of interest to our AFUNO members. The first gave the results of a virtual meeting via Zoom of the Bureau on May 28. The report covered four main items. First, it provided details of the current budget and agreed it would be examined by the next Council meeting. Next it explained that the proposed changes to the Rules of Procedures could not be considered until a face-to-face meeting was held. Third, it was also agreed that a virtual meeting of the Council was not possible because of time zone differences, availability of connectivity, and power outages. It was agreed that the Council meeting would be postponed to the last quarter of this year. Finally, representatives of FAFICS for specialist committees were agreed. The President of the AFICS Governing Board in New York responded to this message on 1 July. He said that a virtual meeting of the Council should be held as an in-person meeting of the Council was unlikely until the second quarter of 2021. He noted that at least 20 members had asked for a virtual meeting of the Council this year. He also itemised important business for a virtual Council meeting to include Rules of Procedure, elections, and selection of a representative for the Pension Board's Audit Committee.

The second email of 18 June reported that the financial work of FAFICS was to be transferred from the Geneva office to New York and that the eight staff previously involved in the finance work were to become client service work. Copies of these reports are available if anyone would like to read their information in full.

Be the Change, Have a Say in the Future of the UN

Members may be interested to participate in this survey about the future of the UN.



Help shape our future by participating in a one-minute survey from the United Nations. To mark its 75th anniversary, the UN is capturing people's hopes and fears for the world, and crowdsourcing solutions to global challenges. The results of this UN75 survey will help shape the institution's plans and programs and ensure those plans better reflect the views and needs of the global public. Take the survey [here](#).

UNA NZ National Conference (Virtual)

Saturday 25th July, 10:00am - 4:30pm

The United Nations is marking its 75th anniversary at a time of great disruption for the world. The United Nations Association, New Zealand, National Conference provides a platform for promoting dialogue and thought-provoking discussion about the work of the United Nations. This year's annual conference will look back at 75 years of the United Nations, with an emphasis on the Security Council. The conference will open with the *Dame Laurie Salas Memorial Address* given by Dr Gill Greer.

Our guest speakers include:

Dr James Kember, NZIA Chair of Research and Publications Committee, former New Zealand Ambassador

Simon Draper, Executive Director, Asia New Zealand Foundation

Nicola Hill, Assessments Manager, Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet

Nicholas Walbridge, Private Secretary, Office of the Minister of Foreign Affairs

Kelly Mackie, former New Zealand Adviser to the United Nations

Dr Negar Partow, Senior Lecturer in Security Studies Massey University, Special Officer for the UN Security Council

Mark Howard, President UN Youth

Dr Graham Hassall, Adjunct Research Associate School of Government Victoria University and more to be announced!

UNA NZ Members: Free. Non-UNA NZ Members: \$12. Register [here](#)

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