



The Association of Former International
Civil Servants, (Kenya)

**Our UN Safari: Reflections on Past Service,
Current Activities and Future Dreams**



17th March 2023



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www.afcis-Kenya

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To all former and current Presidents, members of Executive and issue-based committees; thanks for your service and diverse contributions. Thank you to all who sent their retirement story and/ or participated in one of the working committees for the 15th anniversary celebration; and to DG UNON for her support and to the Print Shop staff for the design, layout and printing of the 15th Anniversary Bulletin.

Finally a big thank you goes to all members for making AFICS-Kenya a space for exchange and solidarity.

Foreword by AFICS-Kenya President



The Association of Former International Civil Servants in Kenya (AFICS-Kenya) is a chapter of the Federation of Former International Civil Servants (FAFICS) that is based in Geneva (Switzerland).

The year 2023 marks the 15th year since AFICS-Kenya was established as an NGO in 2008. As part of the celebrations, we have decided to publish this bulletin to commemorate our 15th anniversary and to summarize the changes we, as an Association, have experienced. This bulletin documents our history and our activities to date and outlines some of our plans as we move forward to a new era.

AFICS-Kenya has been involved in a number of activities to promote the Association within Kenyan society. These activities have involved the active and tireless support of many people, both members of AFICS-Kenya and also friends and partners from the Kenyan community at large. The members' stories are amazing and capture the many angles of working and life with the UN system.

I would like to express my sincerest gratitude to the Anniversary Planning Committee and its sub-committees, especially the Drafting and Editing sub-committee for making this commemorative bulletin possible. I also want to thank our sponsors and partners for their generous support. Above all, I wish AFICS-Kenya every success and look forward to it thriving in the next 15 plus years to come.

Hongera!

Amb. John.O. Kakonge, President, AFICS-Kenya

Message from Ms. Zainab Hawa Bangura, Director General, UNON



I am delighted to congratulate the Association of Former International Civil Servants - Kenya on your 15th Anniversary.

The UN has a special relationship with Kenya. It is home to UNON, the only Office away from Headquarters in Africa and the global south. UNEP and UN-HABITAT also have their global headquarters here.

In Gigiri, we now house over 60 UN agencies, funds and programmes, with more coming. Nairobi is also growing as a global service centre.

Your contributions over decades of service laid the path for this platform, from which our UN family continues to go from strength to strength, striving tirelessly to advance the objectives of the Charter.

You also continue to enrich us with your experiences through your ongoing engagement, as highly valued and respected senior members of our UN family. Your ongoing advocacy, to generate understanding and good will for the UN's work, is deeply appreciated.

I thank you for the outstanding service and support of AFICS Kenya for the UN in Kenya, as we continue to advance the UN's mission of serving humanity.

Congratulations from FAFICS Headquarters



On behalf of the FAFICS Bureau, I bring you greetings and congratulations on the fifteenth anniversary of AFICS-Kenya.

For the past fifteen years, your association has provided valuable services to UN system retirees in Kenya and continues to provide them today. Services such as providing a unique community, holding social events, and assisting with residency permissions provide your members with valuable contacts and support. In addition, the essential matters of pension benefits and health insurance matters - both in providing local information and in advocating for global issues - contribute to the well-being of your members in Kenya. I am particularly impressed with your consultancy services, making good use of the skills that your members have gained during their careers.

I thank you for your efforts to “spread the news”, encouraging the formation of AFICS associations in other African countries.

Best wishes for a joyous anniversary celebration and for continued growth and recognition. I hope that we can strengthen our ties so that both you and we can have a strong voice in our advocacy endeavors”.

Jerry Barton, FAFICS President

Greetings from AFICS Philippines



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28 October 2022

Amb. John O. Kakonge
President, AFICS-KENYA

Dear Amb. Kakonge,

On behalf of AFICS Philippines, I am pleased to greet our sister organization, AFICS Kenya, a Happy 15th Anniversary to be marked on the 3rd of March 2023. I am happy to also note that our immediate past president, Mr. Edmundo Ortega, had contributed to the formation of AFICS-Kenya. This can only further ensure that our two associations will be linked continuously in the coming years.

AFICS organizations in developing counties have significant meaningful challenges. While primarily, we stand to promote/defend our retirees' pensions and benefits and provide opportunities for social interaction and solidarity among our members, AFICS associations are also channels to continuously promote UN principles and values. It would be wonderful to exchange views and ideas on how we can further strengthen our associations to meet these diverse expectations.

I am attaching to this letter our July 2022 Anniversary edition of the Newsletter.

Congratulations on AFICS-Kenya's 15 years! May it even grow stronger in the years to come!

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ma. Alcestis A. Mangahas'.

Ma. Alcestis A. Mangahas
President

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CC: Mr. Jay Sundaresan, FAFICS Secretary, Mr. Edmundo Ortega, AFICS Philippines Immediate President

Greetings from AFICS Mauritius

15th anniversary of AFICS-KENYA
2008-2023
young but strong
15th anniversary celebration, 3rd March 2023

Remember that the first main warning to the world about impending climate problems was made by M.K.Tolba and UNEP staff in NAIROBI in 1986. The world was warned of incoming global warming, sea-level rise and climate change. Most if not all States took good note, but very little action was undertaken.

Today in 2023 the Planet is in dire state with, already, winters and summers becoming extreme, floods and droughts devastating, hurricanes and typhoons destructive and ice-shelves melting.

The UN family is at the forefront of the effort to save our planet. In 1992, its "Earth Summit" in Rio (largely planned from UNEP in Kenya) produced the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) as a first step in addressing the climate change problem. Today, it has near-universal membership. The 197 countries that have ratified the Convention are Parties to the Convention. The ultimate aim of the Convention is to prevent "dangerous" human interference with the climate system.

The UN family, including FAFICS, AFICS-Mauritius and AFICS-Kenya join the main actors to support all initiative to combat climate change: reforestation, shift to renewable energies, sustainable development and agriculture etc.

We are small associations but continue to live up to the UN ideals of peace in the world and saving the Planet.

With very best wishes to AFICS-Kenya from sister organisation AFICS-Mauritius !

Dr Michael Atchia
AFICS-Mauritius.



History of AFICS-Kenya

The history of AFICS-Kenya has its roots in the **Federation of Associations of Former International Civil Servants** (FAFICS) of the United Nations which was established in 1975 in Geneva. FAFICS provides a framework for promoting and defending the interests of former civil servants, most notably in pension and health insurance issues. It represents retirees and beneficiaries of the **United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund (UNJSPF)** and the after-service health insurance (ASHI). FAFICS currently has over 61 Member Associations cutting across all continents.

AFICS-Kenya is a member of this global family; however, membership did not just happen overnight. The journey to full registration and recognition by the Government and the UN, and the recruitment of members and staff, has been quite a ride. It took hard work and the patience of a vulture to get AFICS-Kenya on its feet! In February 2005, Ms. Teddy Giannopoulos was requested to represent UN staff at a meeting that FAFICS was planning to hold in Nairobi. Interests grew and with the support of a group of other staff including Mr. Donald Kaniaru, Mr. Edmundo Ortega, Mr. Joseph Mungai, Mr. Francis Nnebe, and Mr. Tomasz Sudra, AFICS-Kenya finally was registered as an NGO in June 2008 and provided space in the UN Complex.

In 2010, AFICS-Kenya became fully operational and took as its primary function the representation of members' interests and assurance that their welfare was foremost on its agenda. Under the first President, AFICS-Kenya gained recognition and began attracting retirees from within UN organisations in Kenya and also from those retirees who retired outside the country, albeit very slowly. While the association focussed primarily on the welfare of its members, it began exploring the possibility of reaching out through charity to fund community projects in Kenya.

Between 2011 and 2013, AFICS-Kenya records are unclear, but it would appear that at some point the association was de-registered by the **NGO Coordination Board**. The usual reasons for deregistration are non-compliance with the laws that require registered NGO organisations to make annual returns, including on matters such as: notification of change of office bearers, audited accounts, minutes of annual general meetings, etc. Amb. John. O. Kakonge took over as the fifth President of AFICS-Kenya in 2017, but found a de-registered association and in consultation with

the NGO Secretariat the outstanding things were resolved and the association was re-registered in May 2017. It was only after this that a relaunch was possible, which was done in July 2017.

With the relaunch, the name **UN Retirees** was also dropped and the association became known officially as AFICS-Kenya, in line with FAFICS principles. The change of name also raised the status and profile of AFICS-Kenya, which now enjoyed more prominence and acknowledgement. The relaunch alone attracted Ksh. 1.5 million from a wide range of organisations including banks, the UN system, and corporations.

Today, AFICS-Kenya is organised and works under three sub-committees, namely: Social Events; Benefits, and Outreach and Consultancy. The Social Events sub-committee, in collaboration with the AFICS Executive Committee, have been able to organize get-togethers in 2017, 2018, 2019 and 2022. The Outreach and Consultancy sub-committee has produced several policy briefs and proposals in a wide range of topics such as: **Vision 2030**, food security, Universal Health Care, Population and Census, Street Food and others.

Since its inception, the objectives of our Association have been to:

Assist members to access their pensions and after-service medical insurance;

1. Share useful and relevant information from the **Federation of Associations of Former International Civil Servants** (FAFICS) of the United Nations;
2. Advise and assist former international civil servants and those about to leave service;
3. Represent the interests of our members within the United Nations system and with the host government;
4. Organize periodic get-togethers for members to foster social and personal relationships, and
5. Support and promote the objectives and activities of the United Nations.

A look back in photographs



Photo session of AFICS-K members with former UNON Ms. Hanna Tetteh at the UN Complex-Nairobi



AFICS-K members at a get-together briefing session





AFICS-K members at a get-together session

Relaunch of AFICS-Kenya

The *Association of Former International Civil Servants*, AFICS, was founded in 1970 by a few recently retired former staff members of the UN Headquarters in New York. Following that, similar associations of UN retirees began to be formed in other countries that hosted the headquarters of UN agencies or in countries with significant numbers of retired UN staff. Many of these associations sought to be affiliated with the original AFICS and consequently, the *Federation of Associations of Former International Civil Servants*, FAFICS, was formed. Currently, there are over 60 associations affiliated with FAFICS with a total of about 30,000 members.

Although Kenya hosts the headquarters of two UN agencies and is the Africa regional hub for several UN agencies, it was not until 2008 that a sufficient number of retired UN staff living in Kenya came together and formed AFICS-Kenya and obtained affiliation with FAFICS. AFICS-Kenya became operational in 2013 as an NGO with an office and office assistant. However, because of lapses in submitting annual returns, it was deregistered as an NGO under the Kenya Law in 2015.

A new committee and president of AFICS-Kenya was elected on 16th February 2017, and under the leadership of the new president the committee immediately set about re- invigorating the Association. Plans included reinstating the Association as an NGO in Kenya (accomplished in 2017); strengthening the relationship with the UN in Kenya (including developing a closer relationship with the heads of the UN agencies headquartered in Kenya and with the UN Office in Nairobi, UNON); developing a mechanism whereby members of the Association could work together through AFICS-K to provide consultancy services drawing on their skills and UN experience, and seeking appropriate corporate sponsors to help support the Association's activities.

AFICS-Kenya was relaunched at a meeting held in the UN Complex, Gigiri, on 13th July 2017 attended by 104 members. The Director General of UNON gave an inspiring keynote address entitled *"The role of the UN in the 21st Century"*. Six organizations generously contributed funds to support the Association, and representatives of some of those organizations also spoke at the relaunch. The president outlined the Association's plans to establish a consultancy service and to organize regular workshops and seminars on various topics useful to the members.



Former UNON DG HE. Sahle-Worku Zewde during a photo session with AFICS-K members during relaunching event

The Pioneers in their own words

Anastasia Teddy Gianopulos, AFIC-Kenya Inaugural Secretary

In July 2005, the FAFICS Council was holding its annual Conference at the UN in Gigiri - the first to be held in Africa, and they were very keen to start an AFICS office in Nairobi. I had recently retired and was not at all ready to cut my ties with the United Nations – having served for nearly four decades. A letter came to the then President of the UN Staff Association, Michael Mwangi, from Andres Castellanos Del Corral, who was the President of the Council. There was a note for me attached saying “Mrs. G, is there any way you can meet Mr. Castellanos and maybe brief him on the situation of retirees in Kenya? Well, for a start I was one of them and was happy to meet Mr. Castellanos. After a brief meeting Costellanos was convinced that I could get the ball rolling. He warned me that as a start I might have to pay for retirees to become members of AFICS Kenya, which could gradually encourage them to join as members. It would cost around USD 1.20 per person. I agreed to take on the challenge!

It was not an easy task. I was only able to get the contact details of the more recent retirees with the help of the Human Resources Division. To get the older ones on board, I approached former staff members that I knew - in the supermarket, coffee shops ... and other popular meeting places - got their contact details and also asked them to kindly forward my request to others. This resulted in our getting our first 50 retirees registered within the first couple of months. By 2007, we had organized a Committee with Donald Kaniaru as Chairman and Edmundo Ortega as Vice Chairman. We were officially registered and recognized as fully paid up members of FAFICS. I offered my services as Secretary for a number of years, and continue to hold the post of Honorary Secretary up to the present day.

Judge Donald Kaniaru, Inaugural President

AFICS-Kenya was, by no means easy to actualize. We had to work on the idea, within the UN entities in Nairobi, in Africa and elsewhere, and at the same time press the Kenyan authorities to approve the registration. A number of staff from different UN bodies decided to take action. They consulted and decided to act, in their respective organizations, the head of the Nairobi office, and to approach the Government of Kenya on a legal status. Having just retired in February 2003, and set up a law firm, Kaniaru & Kaniaru Advocates, I was convinced and

started work immediately. Almost simultaneously former senior Diplomats of Kenya also started similar initiatives. The diplomats' group presented no problem; being mostly former Kenyan civil servants. The UN retirees, on the other hand, included a “foreigner” component, and concerns were raised but we finally convinced the government.

Within the UN, Nairobi, we needed to mobilize staff. We also needed office space in the Complex, and we sought the consideration of Ana Tibajuka, Director General, UNON and Executive Director, UN-Habitat. She was receptive and appointed Chris Mensah (legal officer) as the focal point on legal issues. Staff unions in Nairobi were also supportive. They constituted an interim Committee with Chair, Vice Chair with Secretary and Treasurer. Then we engaged the Federation of Associations of Former International Civil Servants (FAFICS) on requirements and way forward, and the UN Joint Staff Pension Fund whose issues would constitute a large part the concerns of retired staff.

Kaniaru & Kaniaru Advocates handled the legal issues and processes with the Government of Kenya. The applicable law for us was the NGO Act, 1990. Our application to the NGO Board, with a draft Constitution was rejected by the Board in July 2007. We appealed to the Minister, who took time but no decision. When a new Minister was appointed we put a five-page appeal with convincing reasons. FAFICS actively supported our effort. Persistence paid and AFICS-Kenya was registered.

In conclusion: I pay tribute to the group that persisted to establish our NGO I mention a few, still very active, that include: Anastasia Gianopulos (Teddy), Edmundo Ortega, Joseph Mungai, Francis Nnebe, Tomasz Sudra, as well as many others, some already departed. May God bless the current team of leaders for their sterling work. I wish AFICS-Kenya all success in its second decade and in serving members in the years to come.

Peter Simkin, Second president

It is ten years since I was the Chairman of AFICS Kenya. Since then, I have misplaced my files with the minutes of our meetings in the UN Recreation Centre and correspondence with the Government of Kenya, UNON and UNJSPF. Although the names of many of our most active supporters have faded from my memory, I remember that one of the prime movers of our association,

was (and probably still is) Teddy Gianopulos, who was then our secretary.

When AFICS was registered as an NGO with the Government of Kenya we discussed possible opportunities to fund community projects in Kenya, if we could obtain the status of an international NGO. Perhaps some of these ideas could now be revisited. I remember a meeting with the Director of UNON at in which we sought greater support and recognition by the UN system in Kenya. Following the meeting with UNON made a small office available for us. However, one of our requests for the reinstatement of ground passes for spouses of retirees, which the UNON Security management had inexplicably withdrawn, has remained unresolved. Access to UNFCU, KCB and UNSACCO is still a tiresome process for our spouses, in spite of their past support for the UN.

By far the most important issue we faced during my Chairmanship was the arbitrary decision by the UNJSPF to ban UN pensioners living in Kenya from the 'Two-Track' pension system w.e.f December 2012. This resulted in a very substantial reduction for the 20 or so pensioners who had previously (and irrevocably) opted to receive their pensions as calculated by the agreed rules of a TWO-Track US\$/local currency formula. UNJSPF argued that the

exchange rates between the Kenya Shilling and US dollar had fluctuated to such a degree that our pensions had become an 'aberration' and were no longer sustainable by the Fund. I attended the annual FAFICS meeting in Geneva to argue for the Federation's support, but was told that nothing could be done to reverse the pension fund's decision. At a later AFICS meeting with Alan Blythe of UNJSPF's Geneva office, he told us that the Kenyan issue had been discussed in both Geneva and New York and that the UNJSPF office in Geneva had been over-ruled by New York.

2020 -2022: It is thanks to the continued support of so many individual members of AFICS that the association has survived the COVID-19 pandemic. The meetings with the participation of UNJSPF, CIGNA, UNFCU and the Government of Kenya could not have taken place without such individual efforts. Even if many of our original issues remain unresolved, the need for mutual support which the association provides to its members is as important now as it was in 2012. Finally, I believe that there is still scope for AFICS to participate in NGO development activities. This could be by sponsoring, fund-raising, and donor contacts of the various projects already being supported by our individual members.



Judge D. Kaniaru, Amb. J.O. Kakonge and some members of AFICS-K attending the re-launch



Former UNON DG HE. Sahle-Worku Zewde with AFICS-K members during relaunching event



Relaunching meeting session, July 2017



Amb. J.O. Kakonge, President AFICS-Kenya and former UNON DG HE Sahle-Worku Zewde during relaunching, July 2017

Milestones

1. Office space

We were able to persuade the UNON DG to allocate a sizeable office for AFICS-K's operations.

2. Changing the office name of the Association

Prior to the Association's relaunch in July 2017, our office was referred to as "*UN Retirees*". To bring us in line with the *Federation of Associations of Former International Civil Servants* (FAFICS), that name was changed to *AFICS-Kenya*. This has raised the status and profile of our Association, and since then we have been received much more positively.

3. Re-registration

AFICS-Kenya was re-registered as a non-governmental organisation (NGO) with the assistance of the NGO Secretariat, and relaunched in July 2017.

4. Relaunching AFICS-Kenya

Insufficient funds were available for re-branding and relaunching, so sponsors were sought. Within six weeks, KSh.1.5 million was raised from various donors including: UNON (KSh.400,000); KCB (KSh.400,000); *Standard Chartered Bank* (KSh.250,000); UNFCU (KSh.200,000); *Monarch Insurance* (KSh.100,000), and *Mohamed Muigai Advocates* (KSh.100,000). The relaunch was well attended, with Guest of Honour, *Ms Sahle-Work Zewde*, former UNON Director-General, now President of Ethiopia, and 150 participants.

5. Establishment of AFICS-Kenya Consultancy Services

The knowledge and experience of our international civil servants is widely recognized and underpins the establishment of the *AFICS-Kenya Consultancy Services*, which was presented at the Association's relaunch in 2017. Despite initial challenges, members have been busy networking and have established close links with various Kenyan organisations and agencies.

6. Financial management

The Association's accounting system has been improved and is kept up-to-date. Accounts from 2017 to 2022 have

been audited. The Association now has the necessary checks and balances in place to ensure that its funds are utilized properly.

7. Recruitment of new members

According to the *UN Pension Fund*, there are more than 1,500 UN pensioners in Kenya. Our goal is to increase our membership to at least 500. Currently, our Association has 300 registered and fully paid-up members. We are striving to attract more members through various initiatives, including: establishing a website; circulating regular newsletter, and hosting various social events.

8. Website

AFICS-Kenya now has its own website to raise the profile of the Association and promote awareness of its services, including consultancy, to a wider audience. Feedback has been positive. Readers are encouraged to visit our website and see for themselves. Comments and suggestions on website content would be most welcome.

9. Newsletter

Several issues of a newsletter have been prepared and distributed to members. Readers are encouraged to comment on the contents and share items of interest with other members

10. Assistance to non-AFICS-Kenya members

AFICS-Kenya, in collaboration with the *Pension Office* and *Cigna*, assists retirees on both pension and medical issues, especially after-service health insurance (ASHI). From time to time, assistance is also provided to non-members to encourage them to join the Association.

11. Sub-Committees

Three sub-committees, for: social events; benefits, and outreach and consultancy, have been formed to complement the work of the Executive Committee. We plan to expand our sub-committees to cover other areas.

Keeping members updated

During the COVID-19 period, the Executive Committee of AFICS-K decided to issue monthly updates on the situation and other relevant topics. These included:

COVID-19

The monthly newsletters urged members to continue adhering to WHO and Ministry of Health instructions and protocols. The newsletters informed members of vaccination sites outside the UN compound at Gigiri and also provided regular updates on the pandemic trends and which areas in the country to avoid.

To help members get through the challenges of the COVID-19 lockdown, the President of AFICS-K ended each newsletter with an encouraging message from influential figures - both thinkers and people of action – some of which are reproduced here:

1. Alexander the Great stated: ***“There is nothing impossible to him who will try”***. While originally applied to dealing with the pandemic, this message applies equally to our current focus. With the support of all our members, let us all try to make our proposed anniversary a big success!
2. Albert Einstein reminded us that when experiencing a crisis, we are all in it together, whether we are rich or poor, young or elderly, and so on. He himself was no stranger to crisis, having fled Nazi Germany to seek refuge in the USA. Einstein reminded us that we must rely on each other by being of service. As our scientists, health care workers, and government were doing their best to mitigate the crisis, we called on each of our members to play their part individually and collectively to support the government directives. And many members became part of initiatives to help the disadvantaged or to organize vaccination drives.
3. Lucius Annaeus Seneca, the Roman stoic philosopher, noted that: ***“Hardship strengthens our character. We become wiser by adversity; prosperity destroys our appreciation of the right”***. In short, the COVID-19 crisis has reminded us to appreciate more the things we take for granted, like free movement, and socializing with friends and family.

4. In crisis, former President John F. Kennedy said: ***“Be aware of the danger - but recognize the opportunity”***. It is amazing that during the COVID-19 pandemic, individuals, local NGOs, charities, and some of our redundant manufacturing plants, seized the opportunity created by the pandemic to make face masks for donations and sale. Personal Protection Equipment were in short supply globally, so Kitui and Athi River factories made them to protect our public health workers, nurses, doctors and clinical staff. Moreover, one of our local university students together with faculty members developed a prototype ventilator; once approved by the government, it could be used for coronavirus patients in ICU. This is what President Kennedy meant when he said that a crisis can have both bad and positive sides.

Climate change

Currently, Kenya is experiencing severe drought, especially in the north due to climate change, which has caused a major part of the country to suffer from serious food shortages.. This has forced the government to import maize, our staple grain, from other countries. Climate change is real and everyone’s business. Members were reminded that they are part of the problem, but they are also part of the solution. Any small effort to mitigate the impact of climate change will go a long way.

Terrorism and the security situation

Kenya is continuously under a state of alert because of the increased presence of Al-Shabaab, the terrorist organization operating from Somalia. Moreover, Kenyan soldiers are in Somalia fighting the group. We continued reminding our members of the general need for security awareness and frequently urged them to exercise caution during the festivity seasons of Christmas, New Year, Easter, and Eid.

Combating counterfeits in the online market place

A lot of people have lost money due to counterfeits, especially via online marketplaces and e-commerce. These businesses are vibrant and have become difficult to combat. With the internet providing a wide reach to online

traders in counterfeit who generally are anonymous, we urged members to be careful and to avoid falling victims of counterfeit products and of being swindled.

Concrete mix errors that collapse buildings

Many of our members are building their retirement homes or are involved in the construction business. Over the last few years, several buildings have collapsed in Kenya owing to a section of professionals abrogating rules defining

building practices. A detailed examination revealed that the quality of construction materials plays a huge role in the durability of buildings. While attempting to save on costs, a common mistake made at some sites is the deliberate use of less or cheaper cement that does not meet prescribed standards. To prevent these devastating errors, members were encouraged to engage qualified construction professionals and to strictly follow regulatory frameworks and to verify adherence to building standards.



AFICS-K members at a get-together session

Giving back to society: AFICS-Kenya consultancy services

Nairobi is the fourth UN Headquarters. It hosts two global UN agencies: *United Nations Environment Programme* (UNEP) and UN-HABITAT and several regional and country offices of other UN agencies. The *Association of Former International Civil Servants of the United Nations in Kenya* (AFICS-K) is a registered non-governmental organization. As part of giving back to society, the Association decided to establish a consultancy service associated with the UN headquarters in Nairobi, that would draw on the expertise of its UN retiree members.

The primary objective of the consultancy service is to offer a range of integrated professional services in a variety of areas to support both the national and county governments in the country, as well as to work with other development partners in Kenya.

1. National Government

The AFICS-K consultancy team has been active at the national level advising a number of government ministries including Devolution, Labour, and Public Service. For example:

1. The team assisted the *Ministry of Devolution* to unlock EU funds to support 15 counties in value-added activities relating to food security, livestock, and other related areas. The AFICS-K team also helped the ministry to formulate a policy to regulate county benchmarking missions which had been mismanaged and abused. This, in turn, resulted in saving money and making such missions impact oriented.
2. 1. The team helped the *Ministry of Labour and Social Protection* to address the challenges it had with the *National Industrial Training Authority* (NITA). Following their review, the AFICS-K team made recommendations which helped the ministry to change the management of the institute. The AFICS-K consultancy further assisted the *Ministry of Labour and Social Protection* with proposals on how to address cash transfers for orphaned and vulnerable children, and provided advice on how to consolidate all vulnerable groups into a single registry.
3. Assisting the *Ministry of Environment and Forestry*, the AFICS-K team has just finalized a concept note on *Youth and Climate Change* to solicit funding from the

Green Climate Fund. The team will be working closely with the *National Environment Management Authority* (NEMA) and will target youth and students at public universities and TVET institutions who are actively involved in environment and climate change issues to deepen their understanding of these phenomena.

2. County Governments

Kenya has 47 counties but the AFICS-K consultancy has concentrated its activities on three of them, namely: Nandi, Garissa and Kakamega.

A. Nandi: Working with the *County Government of Nandi*, the team developed a proposal to build the capacity of the county in three areas: to establish a data or statistical services unit; to strengthen its human resource division, and to raise funds to fill the financial gaps in the county's five-year *Integrated Development Plan*.

B. Garissa: The team assisted the county in three areas:

1. By developing a proposal for raising funds to complete the building and establishment of the county abattoir which had stalled.
2. By carrying out a feasibility study for the value-addition of using perishable mango fruits with other staple products to diversify the agricultural value chain and thus increase revenue.
3. By undertaking a scoping study to determine the extent of environmental degradation during the period when the county area was used by Somalian refugees.

C. Kakamega: The team assisted the *County Government of Kakamega* to prepare a project document for solid waste management. The purpose of the document was to assist the county solicit funding from donors and development partners to implement the proposed project.

3. Collaboration with Other Partners

AFICS-K has also established formal partnerships with other organizations wishing to benefit from the knowledge and experience of its members. *Memoranda of Understanding* have been signed, or are about to be signed, with the following organizations:

1. *Frontier Counties Development Council* (FCDC) to collaborate in the provision of a range of technical expertise across 10 northern counties.
2. *Kenya Diaspora Alliance* (KDA) to offer specific services to national and county governments.
3. *Technical University of Kenya* (TUK) to organize seminars on diplomacy for senior management staff.



AFICS-K members at a get-together session

Policy briefs



Members of AFICS-K working in their professional capacity, and collaborating with associates in academia, contributed to a variety of policy briefs and documents commenting on *Vision 2030*, the *Big 4 Agenda* and other initiatives, and proposed recommendations to aid in their effective implementation.

Implementing Vision 2030: priorities, challenges and prospects

Vision 2030 is Kenya's long-term blueprint to transform the country into a modern, globally competitive, middle-income nation that offers a high quality of life for all citizens by the year 2030. Unfortunately, the V2030 targets were over ambitious and the outcomes have been disappointing. Implementation has been unstructured, uncoordinated and poorly resourced, mainly due to divisive politics and lack of leadership. There is therefore need to revisit the Vision and to come up with more realistic targets.

The team preparing the brief noted that political leadership is critical for the implementation of the V2030 and that it needs to be harmonized between the two levels of government for it to be more impactful in terms of poverty alleviation and general socioeconomic development. To achieve this, the *Big 4 Agenda* should be reformed through public campaigns and increasing resources and finance.

Other measures proposed included capacity building to link policy, planning and budgeting, to enhance inclusiveness, more diversity, and empowerment of disadvantaged segments of the population. Fighting corruption and entrenched ethnicity, and more robust

monitoring and evaluation to enhance decision making, should also be part of the V2030 efforts.

2. Achieving food security in Kenya

This brief was prepared to augment the President's Big 4 Agenda on food security and nutrition.

Kenya continues to experience food shortages and famine with the situation being dire in the northern and north-eastern parts of the country. The team concluded that attaining food security is a challenging task that requires the concerted efforts of all stakeholders and that previous food security policies, programmes, projects, and initiatives have had mixed results.



A man displays beans in a market © Photo: Kenyamarkets.org

The AFICS-K advisory team recommended that 'business-as-usual' initiatives should not be an option. Instead, they suggested that national and county governments' efforts in food security should be aligned and harmonized; that the government should increase investments in agriculture to at least 10 per cent of the national budget, as called for in the Maputo and Malabo Declaration; adopt appropriate measures and leverage technologies to improve productivity; improve access to innovative and affordable crop and livestock insurance products; release idle land for agricultural production; involve women and youth in food security initiatives, and strengthen extension and advisory services.

Finally, being sensitive to the challenges of climate change is critical for food security. Therefore, emphasis should be placed on climate-smart agriculture and more efficient and effective soil, water, and feed conservation technologies.



A nurse prepares to vaccinate a child © Photo: globalgiving.org

3. Achieving universal healthcare coverage

Health remains a fundamental human right of all people, as enshrined in the Kenya Constitution 2010. The attainment of universal healthcare coverage (UHC) in Kenya is a formidable challenge that requires concerted efforts by all stakeholders for it to be achieved.

This policy brief emphasized that more than 50 per cent of the country has no access to health care and lacks health insurance. In some parts of the country there are no health facilities whatsoever, and people have to walk for miles to access health services. Further, the brief noted that adequate attention has not been given to communicable diseases.

The government has been very ambitious in its aim to achieve UHC which is stipulated in Vision 2030 and is part of the Big 4 Agenda. The team concluded that to achieve UHC, the following recommendations be implemented: adoption of modern technology in health care; strengthening of partnerships within health care; engaging more community health workers to support local communities; restructuring the current National Health



Men roasting beef along the street © Photo: Fdimolloy

Insurance Fund to cover all urban and rural populations (including the informal sector); and comprehensively reviewing and reforming existing public healthcare policies, programmes, projects, and initiatives with a view to making them effective, efficient, and responsive to the aspirations of the Kenyan people.

4. Challenges, risks and prospects of the street food sector in Kenya

The policy brief was prepared in appreciation that street food is a growing service sector in many countries around the world, including Kenya. It is estimated that 2.5 billion people world-wide consume street food on a daily basis, mainly because it is relatively more affordable and accessible. It is an important source of nutrition and income for many low-income urban dwellers and is gradually becoming a major source of informal employment. Unfortunately, in Kenya, street food vendors are often harassed and penalized for providing an essential service to many low-income wage earners.



Youth coming together for a peace initiative © Photo: www.usip.org

This policy brief recommended that since street food is a critical service, the government should recognize the sector. In doing so, the sector could be properly regulated and supported with increased investment in requisite public infrastructure (for example: water, toilets, security) to promote the growth of the sector. Vendors should receive training, public hygiene, and food safety, and must be protected and not harassed. Waste management is critical to maintain food safety and minimize associated health risks, and consumer awareness is also required to enhance the economic and social contribution of the street food sector.

Additionally, the advisory team recommended that relevant public institutions, non-state actors, civil

society organizations and vendors should be involved in establishing efficient, effective and inclusive management systems for street food vending and for self-regulation at both the national and county levels.

5. Preventing youth and violent extremism

This policy brief was prompted by the fact that over the last few years, violent extremism on the African continent has claimed the lives of over 30,000 people, injured scores of others, and displaced millions of people. While violent extremism is not necessarily confined to any age, gender, group, or community, its public face has often been youthful as demonstrated by recruits into Boko Haram and Al-Shabaab.

To address this violent extremism effectively and sustainably, the team identified the need for a multi-disciplinary, multi-sectoral, and multi-pronged approach. This includes engaging in stronger public sector partnerships and involving non-state actors and other key stakeholders, and including the youth, at the national and county levels, to find solutions to exclusion, discrimination, inequities and social injustice. It also means supporting a wide array of interventions that include: action research; capacity-development; providing quality and inclusive education, and access to basic healthcare and other services for all in the most excluded and marginalized communities. Creating income-generating opportunities for young people is also vital. TVET institutions could play an important role in this intervention. Additionally, it was suggested that government should implement the recommendations of various studies that have been undertaken in recent years to find solutions to the menace. Finally, the brief pointed out that ongoing communication and engagement with the youth in all decision-making that potentially affects them is essential.



A lady in her small-scale tailoring/fashion shop © Photo courtesy – Kenyan wallstreet

6. Strengthening the contribution of the SME sector to the Big 4 Agenda

Small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) play a vital role in Kenya, contributing 28.5 per cent of the GDP and 83.6 per cent of all jobs in 2018. This policy brief explored the current status of SMEs in Kenya in terms of their contribution to the economy, the challenges they face, and what can be done to promote their contribution to national socioeconomic development. Importantly, the brief also explored how the sector could contribute to the achievement of the *Big 4 Agenda*, especially in the housing and manufacturing sectors.

The SMEs sector faces numerous challenges including inadequate access to finance, excessive regulation, limited market access, low technology absorption and inadequate knowledge and managerial skills.

The team recommended that the government should enhance the contribution of SMEs through leveraging technology in innovation, production and diversification; improving the quality of products; providing better operational infrastructure such as industrial parks and roads; providing common-use facilities such as workshops; improving access to finance; provide linkages with large domestic and international companies, and by ensuring less but more focused or incentivized regulations.



7. Lessons learned from organizing and implementing the Kenya population censuses

This policy brief was compiled as the country was preparing for the 2019 *National Population and Housing Census* to highlight some of the lessons from previous censuses and best practices. The team emphasized the challenges anticipated which included census data quality and analysis, dissemination of results, data use, and non-technical issues.

The team also pointed out the need for government to develop a number of key social economic indicators and to establish empirical benchmarks against which development in the coming decade could be measured and evidence-based national policies developed, especially in relation to *Vision 2030*.

The 2019 *National Population and Housing Census* was conducted for the first time with the participation of 47 county governments in the country. AFICS-K has many members with a wide range of expertise in population census and survey methodologies and who have worked in the population sector and were ready to assist the government to ensure the survey was properly executed, protected from political interference, and that enough resources were deployed.

8. Challenges in public procurement in Kenya

One of the biggest challenges in Kenya has been the theft, corruption, and mismanagement of public funds through the procurement process.

This policy brief identified some of the major challenges and proposed a way forward to enhance better procurement management in Kenya by both levels of government. The emphasis of the brief was to tighten procurement loopholes so as to ensure the process is guided by clear legal, policy and institutional frameworks and to establish rules of transparency and enforcement. There is need for political leadership to demonstrate long-term commitment to fight corruption so that the country's resources are put to the best possible use. The document also recommended that procurement officers should be freshly screened and transferred regularly every 3 years from MDAs (what are MDAs?). Technology needs to be leveraged effectively and efficiently, which is critical if best practices are to be delivered. Furthermore, the team identified the need to implement a strategic sourcing strategy and to only purchase from vetted suppliers to eliminate waste in procurement.



Procured goods in a warehouse © Photo: www.constructionweekonline.com

9. Security and related investigations

The team noted that security is a big concern in the country, especially since Kenya has experienced several attacks in the last decade. This briefing note provided an overview of key security concerns and related investigations and how to address them to promote good governance, transparency and accountability in the President's Four Pillar Agenda.

The brief noted that routine pre-employment screening of all government employees, at both the national and local level, should form part of sound personnel management procedures. Government employees should be made aware of security situations and their capacity developed to ensure that no public servant or professional remains in one position for so long that they acquire a level of control that may become a security risk. The team further suggested the vital importance of regular security audits; that government entities should ensure that regular backup copies of important information are made and



An investigator analyzing data © Photo: iwa-network.org

stored offsite; that personal passwords are changed frequently, and the need to develop a security programme capable of protecting strategic assets from theft, fraud, and corruption.

10. Linking disaster medicine to the Kenyan health care system

Disasters have become more frequent and devastating in African countries including Kenya.

The objective of this brief was to highlight and review the importance of disaster medicine in the overall healthcare system and to provide examples of medical disaster responses to draw some useful lessons for the country.

Disaster medicine is an inter-disciplinary specialty which provides healthcare to disaster survivors and provides leadership in medically-related disaster preparedness, planning, response and recovery. There are very few specialists in disaster medicine in Kenya.

The advisory team identified the need to improve the capacity of the country to deal with disasters. Weaknesses in preparedness, planning, and coordination result in delayed responses to disasters.

The brief recommended that government increases investment in the healthcare system to encourage trained and qualified medical doctors to specialize in disaster medicine, and that counsellors and psychologists should be involved with post-disaster medicine and wellness. It was proposed that medical disaster response teams be evenly distributed throughout the country and essential medical supplies be stockpiled and available in strategic areas countrywide.

Finally, the brief suggested that multi-sectoral and multi-disciplinary approaches, incorporating community engagement and participation in health disaster management programmes, are vital for improving responses to medical disasters.



A Nurse attends to COVID-19 patients in a ward © Photo: Xinhua

Members stories

Anastasia Teddy Gianopulos : UN Veteran and AFICS-K pioneer

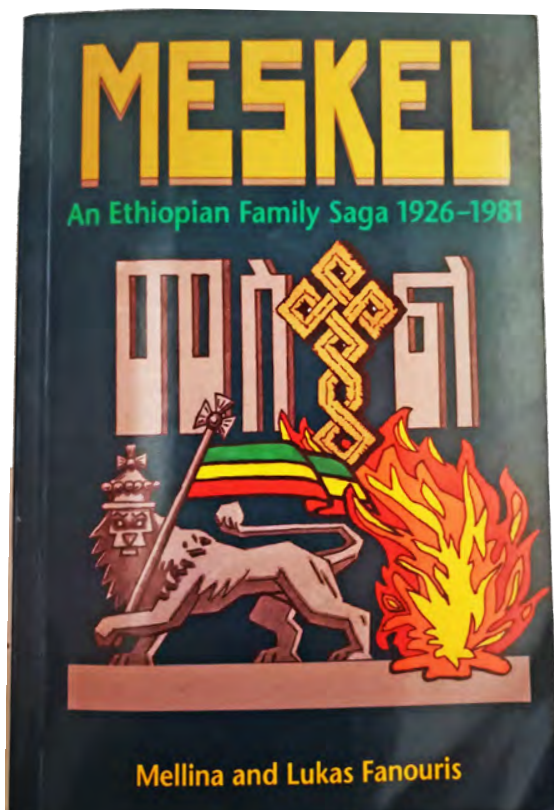
I began my UN career by accepting a short-term contract with the WHO Tuberculosis Centre in Nairobi. This materialized, at the graduation ceremony of my College where the Director of WHO politely asked me about my future plans. I didn't hesitate to let him know that I wanted to work for the UN, especially UNICEF, the agency that concentrated on the welfare of children. Pediatrics and caring for youngsters was a topic very close to my heart. He replied, "Well, I have a vacancy in my office for a young, enthusiastic college graduate. Let's see how you can manage six demanding doctors? Can you start on Monday?" That was the beginning of my UN Career! It was on to 15 years with the UNICEF Area Office in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, UNESCO, FAO and finally UNDP before I moved to UNEP in 1979. I retired while in UNON

I have lived in Kenya for 43 years. The decision to retire in Kenya was not only that we loved the country and people, but also the fact that the staff that had been working for us played a major role in our final decision. They were devastated that we were considering the possibility of returning to Greece and voiced their concern asking, "have you thought what will happen to us and our families if you leave?" We had over the years supported our staff through school fees for

their children as well as loans to buy land and build small houses. etc.

After retirement, I was not ready to break or relinquish my ties with the UN and was always on hand offering my service whenever I was called upon to help. On numerous occasions we offered our home to visiting ex-colleagues and friends who were attending UN Conferences in Gigiri. I loved the interaction and being brought up-to date with what was going on. It was this close contact that I maintained which led me to start developing and getting AFICS-Kenya off its feet. In the meantime, together with my husband, we wrote our first book 'Meskel' (under pen names) on our life in Ethiopia and the devastating revolution that destroyed a beautiful country. After the terrible 1998 bomb 1998 on the American Embassy in Nairobi, I completed my second book, "Phaedra," dedicated to the sister I had lost in the blast!

In the next few years I would like to be around for the younger generation in my family – visit as many as I can - scattered in all corners of the world. I also want to together a cookery book of all their favourite recipes, something they have been constantly asking for, share with them the art of growing and caring of flowers and be gratefully for all that life has offered us.



Naigzy Gebremedhin: Watch your height!



9-year-old Naigzy and Mother- 1943 Mr. Evteev gives my mother Ukrainian shawl- 1990

I am 88 years old. I was born in Addis Ababa in 1934, of Eritrean parents. My mother passed away a week short of her hundredth birthday. (see picture of barefoot me at age 9). Many of my UNEP colleagues may recall the wonderful party we enjoyed at my home in Lavington, Nairobi when we celebrated my mother's 90th birthday in 1990. I attach an endearing picture of Sveneld Evteev presenting my mother with a Ukrainian shawl on that occasion. You will recall Sveneld Evteev was UNEP's head of the Program under Dr. Mostafa Tolba. I understand Sveneld's mother was Ukrainian. Given what is currently happening in Ukraine, I find this picture most touching. May God bring peace to Ukraine, Ethiopia and elsewhere where turmoil persists.

In UNEP I served as the head of the "Environmental Technology Branch": a hybrid that included – *inter-alia*– the environmental aspects of Human settlements, Environmental Security. One interesting assignment I had was leading the program that utilized the "Russian Rubles" held by the Fund of UNEP. As the leader of that program, I had the opportunity to travel to the Soviet Union numerous times. I got to know cities like Moscow, Leningrad, Kiev, Tashkent and other cities intimately.

I retired from UNEP in 1994 after serving twenty years, eleven months and nineteen days. (20y,11m,19d). I remember contemplating on this odd combination of years, months and days of service. I thought I should be allowed to serve an additional eleven days so that I could "boast" I had served The UN 21 years: Like an old soldier being sent away with the proverbial 21 Gun Salute. I applied to have my contract extended by **just eleven days** (11days): an application promptly rejected by the

then Executive Director: Ms. Elizabeth Dowdeswell. Her special assistant wrote to me: "*The Executive Director has rejected your application for extension of your contract*"

In September 1994, I left Nairobi without funfair and headed to Eritrea, the new country that had gained its independence from Ethiopia three years earlier. I served as Executive Director for the National Agency for the Environment until 1997. I then served as Coordinator of the Cultural Assets Rehabilitation Program (CARP): an initiative designed to save the colonial architectural heritage of Asmara – Eritrea's capital city. I returned to Nairobi in 2005 having served Eritrea as a volunteer Director for eleven years. I was 71 years old.

I live in Nairobi and continue to enjoy my favorite hobbies: travelling and hiking. I have been to Mount Kenya's Point Lenana thirteen times since 1980: the last time in 2018 when I turned 84 years old. AFICS/Kenya officials and I made a serious effort to include retirees to join me for that climb. Sadly, not a single retiree showed up. I was up there alone! Incidentally, I have also been to the top of Mount Kilimanjaro four times in the last 63 years! The last time in 2014 when I turned 80!

I am in the process of registering an NGO that provides books and periodicals to Askaris. Over the years, I have noted that many of them just stand around: occasionally moving to open and close gates. What an opportunity there is to develop active minds. I am calling the NGO: **-ARC- Askari Reading Club**. You are all welcome to join me in this effort.

Let me end with a story: My climb to Point Lenana in 2018 was covered extensively by the Kenyan Media. One day I was walking in Sarit Center when a stranger approached: "*Are you the one who was up in the mountain recently?*" Somewhat coyly I said: "*Yes*". And the man continued: "*Eh! Eh! You are so short!*" Without hesitating I answered: "*Indeed, I am short. And it is because I watch my height: unlike most people who only watch their weight*" This is a phrase I learnt from my friend Donald Kaniaru. And the picture of both of us taken after planting a tree confirms unequivocally that we: "*watch our height*".

Members of AFICS/Kenya !!... let us keep moving...let us keep fit! And if you are not in the mood to watch your height, no need to worry. But watching your weight? That is another matter altogether.

Aldo G. Manos: Welcomed to Kenya by President Jomo Kenyatta, and still here

I joined the United Nations Secretariat in New York with the first batch of Italian recruits in 1962 on a P2 Step 1 Probationary contract. In the Division of Public Administration, I was responsible for the OPEX Program, and later was Desk Officer for Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam in BTAO, the Bureau for Technical Assistance Operations. In 1967 I was assigned to the Regional Commission for Asia and the Far East, now ESCAP, in Bangkok as chief of the Technical Assistance Coordination Unit, P-5, managing regional projects. In 1972 at the request of Maurice Strong I was seconded to the UN Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm as liaison officer with Western European and Others Group – WEOG, and was present at the creation of the UN response to the emerging environmental crisis.

I transferred to the newly established United Nations Environment Program and was one of a handful of officials sent to Nairobi in December 1973 to open the new Office, first in Electricity House, then on four floors of the Kenyatta Conference Centre, and later in the first group of buildings in a former coffee plantation at Gigiri.

At the 10 Years of Kenya's Independence Celebration I had been designated to represent UNEP. At the State House reception, I was introduced to H.E. Mzee Jomo Kenyatta who shook my hand and said: "Thank you for coming to Kenya." - my most unforgettable experience in this country.

I served in UNEP for the rest of my UN career, as chief Program Management Division, Deputy Director of the Environment Fund D-1, Acting Director for Europe in Geneva, and first Coordinator D-2 of the Mediterranean Action Plan. My proudest achievement was when the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention accepted to take over the financing of what was then the largest UNEP project, and pay UNEP Overhead costs.

At the age of 59 I took early retirement to pursue a career as Professor of Environmental Diplomacy at the University of Trieste, consultant to the Italian Government, the EU, various UN organizations and private companies. I returned to Kenya on a half time basis, and later as a resident, still on one-to-two years Permit renewals requiring fresh fingerprints every time.

I became interested in the story of the 60,000 Italian prisoners of war in Kenya from 1941 to 1947, did research



2019, Nairobi: with Elena presenting my book at the Italian Fair at Village Market

and published a book "Campo 360 Ndarugu" (2019) and a bilingual booklet "Early Italian contributions to the building of modern Kenya – roads, bridges, dams, irrigation canals, farm machinery, RAF engines overhaul, churches, a housing estate, private houses, decorative objects, the first symphonic orchestra and more" (2022). I have launched the website prigionieriinkenya.org which can be accessed in Italian and in English. On 19 January 2020 the Nation newspaper devoted three full pages to my work, under the endearing title "From Italy with love". My efforts earned me a knighthood from the Government of Italy in 2019.

My hope for the future is to find a person to carry on my work on prisoners, continue the practice of clay target shooting with the Limuru Gun Club, and enjoy life in a peaceful and prosperous Kenya with Elena, my wife of sixty years. Together, we have "served the world".



At Limuru Gun Club

Michael Mwangi, Kenya: A joyous retirement life

There is an African proverb that says, "The best preparation for tomorrow is to make sure today's work is superbly done." I fully had this in mind, body, and soul as I joined United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) in 1988. I knew that a time would come when I would retire. Indeed, that moment came in May 2011. I had served for 23 years at the Nairobi headquarters, under six different Executive Directors (EDs).

By the time I retired in May 2011, I had diligently served as a Geographical Information System (GIS) Analyst in the Division of Early Warning and Assessment (DEWA) served in this capacity simultaneously with performing other duties as the Acting Chief Administrative Support Unit (ASU), and the Acting Officer in Charge of the Global Resource Information Database (GRID). In 1992, I also had the privilege of being a member of the coordinating team for the publication of the UN Green Peace Newsletter for the UNEP 20th Anniversary.

Over the years, I actively participated in staff welfare and governance mechanisms covering UNEP, UN-Habitat, as well as UNON (the United Nations Office in Nairobi), serving in the following capacities: President, United Nations Staff Council/Union in Nairobi Duty Station for (4) years (Interacting directly with two EDs and a Director-General on staff issues);

A focal point member of the UN Harassment Survey Team, Nairobi Duty Station;

A member of the UN Staff Council Polling Office for six years; where the first electronic voting was managed; member of the Joint Monitoring Committee (JMC) for the UN Staff Personal Assessment System (PAS); focal point member of the Consultative Group on integrity (UNEP/UNON); and member of the panel for Local Appointments and Promotions Board.

I also served as Chairman of the Habitat Housing Co-operative Society Ltd, which included other UN staff members from other agencies.

What retirement means for me

Retirement is an opportunity to continue being active in the service of humanity. Retirement, therefore, is a time for my renewal; a moment for furthering the generation



Kienyenji chicken as part of the farm recycle

of life, rather than degeneration. It is fundamentally for this reason that I currently serve as the treasurer for the Habitat Housing Co-operative Society Ltd.

Outside of normal work, I continued to offer voluntary services to the following institutions as:

Trustee and founder (among) Cerebral Palsy Society of Kenya, (CPSK); Trustee for the Young Women Christian Association (YWCA) of Kenya; Executive Committee Member of the Africa Alliance of the YMCAs; Executive Committee Member of the World Alliance of the YMCAs (2014);

Member of the Governance Committee in the World Alliance of the YMCAs; Delegate at meetings of the YMCA World Council in Hong Kong, China, Tia Mai in Thailand, Geneva, and Estes Park Colorado; Board member of the National Executive Committee of the Kenya Young Men Christian Association (YMCA); Chairman of the National Nominations Committee of the Kenya YMCA. The YMCA/YWCA has a wide range of programs for youth empowerment.

Academic activities include: Chairman, Board of directors, YMCA College of Agriculture and Technology, Limuru; and member of the Africa Renaissance University (ARU) task force and think tank of the Africa Alliance. The university is not yet a reality but hopefully it will be. I am also a member of the Programme Innovation & Franchising Sub-Committee of the YMCA Africa Alliance.

Urban Farming

Besides my very demanding and joyous voluntary work in various capacities after my retirement, I also embarked on urban farming. As I worked for the UN, I deeply desired to do urban farming. Retirement has given me the privilege to practice it and I love it! I farm on a small section of my residential plot and have derived immense satisfaction from the returns. I keep *Kienyeji* (local) breed of chickens for meat and eggs for my family and neighbours. I grow mainly organic tomatoes and capsicum in a greenhouse, and African indigenous vegetables in an open field. My excess produce has a ready market through a platform for organic produce - the Innovation Organic Group of Farmers (I-NOGOF) - where farmers sell and buy. I am the Vice-Chair of I-NOGOF. Urban farming has been rewarding. I have received gifts as a result of my farming activities.

Passion for music: I continue to express my love for music as: A choir member and vice chairman, Nairobi Music Society (Classical); Chairman, Apostles of Jesus Associated Choirs (11), Nairobi; choir member, Holy Family Basilica Church, Nairobi;

Other affiliations: I profoundly believe that the best way of exploiting my giftedness and living meaningfully as a retiree is to have linkages with people or organizations that have the same passion as mine in similar areas of interest. Consequently, retirement has granted me the opportunity for the following affiliations:

- Kenya Young Men Christian Association (YMCA) - Life Member;
- Cerebral Palsy Society of Kenya - Life member;
- Kenya Alliance of Residents Association (KARA) – member;
- Parents and Friends of Disabled Children of Kenya;
- Friends of the Nairobi Arboretum;
- United Nations Recreation Center – member.

Other activities and hobbies include: Choral and Classical Singing; Environmental preservation activism; Neighborhood welfare mobilization; Gym; Cycling; Swimming; Mountaineering; Walking; Cooking and Merry making; Writing; and Praying.

It is evident that just as I had the privilege of wearing many hats during my days at the UN, I still have the opportunity for doing the same during my life in retirement. When I look back at my life as a UN employee, I clearly see that by being assigned various responsibilities, the UN was actually preparing me not only for productive employment life but also for joyous and fulfilling ventures in retirement. I am grateful indeed!

Indeed, "The best preparation for tomorrow is to make sure today's work is superbly done." Serving the UN in various capacities to the best of my ability adequately prepared me for the life in retirement that I currently enjoy. I am not just happy;

I am joyous.



Empowering the youth: graduation at YMCA Limuru College of Agriculture and Technology

Ambassador John O. Kakonge: My nomadic life within and outside the UN



I joined the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in 1981 and was posted to Lagos, Nigeria. Lagos was a good opening into a career with the United Nations. The weather was humid and torturous. Despite all the bad things I had been

told about Lagos and Nigeria before my arrival, I enjoyed the one year that I lived there and was disappointed when I was reassigned. Next stop was Sierra Leone. I stayed in Freetown for four years before I was posted to Lilongwe, Malawi. The Sierra Leoneans are very welcoming people, especially to foreigners, and they like entertaining. I enjoyed my tour there and was fortunate to leave before the civil war erupted. My two-year stay in Malawi was less pleasing: at that time, government counterparts were not supposed to socialize with foreigners. Contact with them ended in the office and if they were found visiting foreigners, they would be punished by the Banda regime. Happily, Malawi has since changed for the better.

In 1988, after Malawi, I was granted a sabbatical to go to Cambridge University to pursue further postgraduate studies. After completing my research assignment at Cambridge I was posted to UNDP Headquarters in New York, in the Regional Bureau for Africa, an assignment I greatly enjoyed. In 1992, I was promoted and posted as UNDP Resident Representative and UN Resident Coordinator to Maseru, Lesotho. After five years in Lesotho, I was reassigned to post-crisis Liberia, where I was stationed for three years. My assignment in Liberia was most memorable. When I arrived in 1998, the only way to get to Monrovia was by old propeller-driven Russian aeroplanes that were owned by a Spanish family. These aeroplanes were not recognized by IATA, and so were not insured – as a result, we literally mortgaged our lives - in the event of an accident, we were on our own. During my stay, we lost two colleagues, one to cerebral malaria and the other due to complications related to HIV/AIDS. Medical care was rudimentary at best. I became more spiritual, praying that I would not get sick, and took anti-malaria tablets religiously every week. Despite the challenges, I had considerable work satisfaction and even

felt quite reluctant to leave when my tour of duty came to an end.

My next posting was to the Gambia, where I stayed for four years. It was a very interesting country and I was extremely careful not to get in the bad books of President Yahya Jammeh. I avoided all unnecessary informal gatherings until my tour was over. After that, I was privileged to be granted another sabbatical, this time to Yale University for one academic year. After my sabbatical I was posted to Rwanda briefly and then was reassigned to UNDP Headquarters as the Associate Director for South-South Cooperation, until my retirement in 2010.

When I retired, I had further good fortune, being recruited as a special advisor to a South-South news organization based in New York. My primary responsibility was to organize short training sessions for African journalists and media houses to deepen their understanding about climate change issues. This was because the media houses rarely posted information concerning climate change on the front pages of their publications. One of the reasons given for this was that the subject is too complex and most of their journalists were arts graduates with limited scientific background.

I also sat on the panel responsible for identifying African leaders who were promoting good governance in their respective countries and nominating outstanding leaders for the South-South awards. In 2011, during my time on the panel, former President Ellen Sirleaf Johnson of Liberia and the Honourable Thomas Thabane, former Prime Minister of Lesotho, won South-South awards.

As a third part of my assignment, I assisted African countries in carrying out benchmarking missions to Asian regions, specifically Viet Nam, Singapore and Hong Kong.

In 2012, I was appointed by the late President Mwai Kibaki as Ambassador and Permanent Representative to the United Nations Office in Geneva and the World Trade Organization (WTO). It was an exciting assignment but very taxing. The traffic of government officials coming in and out of Geneva was very heavy. Weekly we received and dispatched between 10 and 20 senior government officials who were attending meetings at various UN agencies and WTO.

In addition, I was privileged to be the coordinator of the African Group of Ambassadors for World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) and WTO issues. My WTO portfolio was the most demanding and the negotiations could sometimes go on until 3 a.m. Working for the government as a political appointee can cause resentment among career civil servants and I struggled to establish my own network to help with my work as ambassador.

After returning home in 2017, I was elected President of the Association of Former International Civil Servants in Kenya, and in 2019 the President of the Republic of the

Gambia appointed me as their Honorary Consul in Kenya. Receiving these appointments has enabled me to stay active doing the things I enjoy best: attending to the needs of former UN colleagues and, through them, assisting the people of Kenya and Africa as a whole and, in my own small way, striving to make the world a better place for all.

Since retirement, I have also enjoyed writing articles for local newspapers and academic papers. In addition, I have published a book about life in the foreign service. In short, my life has been busy and fulfilling.



AFICS-K members at a get-together session

Wandia Seaforth, Kenyan: Valuing diversity

I retired in August 2013 from UN-Habitat after 18 years of continuous service. However, my UN-Habitat story started in 1981 when I worked on several short-term assignments in the Information Division. In those days UN-Habitat was based at the Kenyatta International Conference Centre (KICC). We had the upper floors, and from my office window I had a view of Mt. Kilimanjaro on a cloudless morning. KICC was also the headquarters of KANU (the then ruling political party) and we had serious human traffic jams in the building whenever there was a big KANU meeting. We also got a bird's eye view of exhibitions in the courtyard, including for the UN Conference on New and Renewable Sources of Energy (1981). Kenya's Permanent Representative to UN-Habitat then was the late Ambassador Pamela Mboya Her office was in the same building and we often encountered her in the lobby - a friendly lady with a great sense of humour.

In 1984 I moved to the UNICEF Regional Office for East and Southern Africa. Here I was responsible for the library and the Greetings Cards Operations. I got my first UN passport and did my first official missions – to Zambia, Zimbabwe, Lesotho, Mozambique and Swaziland. This was during the Mozambique war and the shops in Maputo were totally empty. I was amazed at how friendly and lively Mozambicans were despite the war and shortages. The trip to Swaziland was unofficial - overland with Maputo office staff, to shop for household supplies.

In 1986 I lost my UNICEF job and for the next six years I worked in an NGO that dealt with urban and housing issues. I met many housing-related professionals and activist during this time and got the chance to visit several countries in Africa as well as Canada, Mexico and the Philippines. I remember going to Malawi in the days when women in that country were not allowed to wear trousers, and I only wore trousers! Luckily a friend alerted me in time to do some emergency skirt buying. While in this NGO job, I met the woman who later invited me to join her Unit in UN-Habitat.

My job title in UN-Habitat was *Networking Professional* (I was the first and last holder of that title) in the Women in Human Settlements Programme, which later became the Gender Unit. The initial job consisted of mobilizing women's networks globally, for inputs to the Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing 1995) and the Habitat II Conference (Istanbul 1996). My last docket was Chief, Best

Practices Unit where I managed three international awards on sustainable human settlements. Information generated by the awards goes to a database for public use.

Since retiring, I have done several interesting assignments including writing the gender institutional memory of UN-Habitat, editing reports for development institutions, working as chief rapporteur for an IGAD conference on disaster risk management and assisting the Chinese City of Guangzhou with their Urban Innovations Award. I have made interesting work trips to China, Colombia, Ecuador, Malaysia and Indonesia.

In the last 30 thirty years, I have been privileged to learn about the world beyond Kenya, travel to numerous countries and make friends from many parts of the world. I have come to truly enjoy and value diversity.

Other than the intermittent work, what else have I been doing since 2013? I have read a lot, written quite a bit, exercised more, got involved in projects of family and friends, joined a choir, visited a friend in Uganda and taken a patient to a hospital in India. The India experience was



Exercise is good for body and mind

interesting in a sad way. I discovered that more than half of the international patients in the particular hospital were Kenyan. The Indian guy who served us meals knew to say *karibu mama, asante, chakula, chai, maji moto* ... (welcome madam, thank you, food, tea, hot water) ... just from interacting with so many Kenyans. I discovered that most of us went to India for one of two reasons: treatment unavailable in Kenya or cost prohibitive – that really made me sad.

COVID-19 has taught me the importance of a few Fs: Faith, Family, Friends; Fragility (of life), and just how privileged it is to have a spacious house, a garden; running water; and health insurance.

AFICS-Kenya has been an important space for solidarity, for reconnecting with Nairobi colleagues and getting to know Kenyans who worked for the UN outside Kenya. I



Books are good company: my COVID-19 lockdown reading

feel that we could make it even better by participating more and contributing to its operations.

Dan Odhiambo Odallo: Every day was a learning day

Partnership Development for AIDS response research in Bangladesh

I joined the UN in 1999 and have worked for UNAIDS and UNFPA. My first posting was in Johannesburg South Africa in the UNAIDS Regional Office, my first responsibility in a new UNAIDS was as a Community Mobilisation Officer. The job entailed the development of multi-sectoral *partnerships in* the response to HIV/AIDS across all the seventeen countries in East and Southern Africa with the realisation that the response to HIV/AIDS would be successful only under a multi-sectoral response. UNAIDS created a regional office to push this agenda and my work was to reach out and support the work of Governments, Civil Society and other stakeholders.

In 2006 I moved to the office in Dhaka, Bangladesh as UNAIDS Country Coordinator. My responsibility was to provide leadership and coordination of the expanded UN system HIV response, to scale up rights-based HIV services for all, focusing on underserved populations. My work also entailed advocating for equitable financing for the HIV response and broader health systems. The UNAIDS Country Office also promoted the effective use of strategic information to better understand and track the epidemic and its trends, and to measure progress and sustainable impact of the response. While in Bangladesh, I also served

the Nepal office. In 2010 I moved to a similar position in Asmara, Eritrea.

From 2013-2016, I worked as UNFPA Country Representative, still in Asmara. The main job was to lead the Country Office and ensure the integration of issues around sexual and reproductive health and rights in the national development agenda. Eritrea was a good case of accountability and delivery of essential services to women and youth. I was then re-assigned to Lilongwe, Malawi (2016-18), working a lot on support to adolescent girls'





Enjoying some Lake Victoria time in Uhanya Beach - Happy retirement!

programmes and policy advocacy and services for safe motherhood. I took early retirement in 2018.

My early retirement was driven by missing home. After 17 years away, I really wanted to come back home and be with my people. I missed the Kenyan way of doing things. After retirement I have gone back to my passion which is research and now supporting Child-centered research through the Kenya Pediatric Association under their research organization called KEPRECON (Kenya Pediatric Research Consortium). I have also begun my PhD program in Peace and Conflict Studies at Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology. I'm also a fish cage entrepreneur and chicken keeper.

In the next few years I would like to integrate research in health and conflict and do some teaching as well.

Mr. Vincent K. Lelei (MBS): Working on disaster management and response



I started my career with the government of Kenya in 1980, rising to being the first substantive Director and National Programme Coordinator for Disaster Management in the Cabinet, in 1995.

I left the government in 2000 on appointment to a senior Director position by the British charity OXFAM GB, Regional Director Horn, East and Central Africa. Thereafter I joined the UN in early 2003 for the next fifteen years, occupying management and leadership levels until December 2021. My UN career started in Zimbabwe, and then on into seven other countries. The last function I discharged was in Nigeria at the Post of Deputy Humanitarian Coordinator.

Before the UN DHC Nigeria function I worked in Somalia at the same level for two years. Before then I worked for the UN in the function of the Head of UNOCHA, for five countries: Ethiopia, Sri Lanka, South Sudan, Somalia and Nigeria. I started my UN career in Zimbabwe, working for UNDP, as the Head of Humanitarian Coordination in 2003, before being promoted and deployed to Ethiopia, where I worked for five years, three of which as Head of Office, and the first two as the Deputy Head of Office.

I am currently taking time off from active career engagements, only occasionally involving myself in mentoring and coaching functions on a pro bono basis for INGOs, while supporting family priorities.

Dr. Alexander Lichina Alusa, Kenyan: Two decades of working on Climate Change issues

I retired from the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) in February 2007 after close to eighteen years of service - initially appointed in 1989 October on a short-term contract, but later regularized to two-year consecutive renewable contracts.

I was originally appointed as a Program Officer in the Atmosphere Unit of the then Global Environment Monitoring Systems (GEMS). I was responsible for the World Climate Impacts and Response Strategies Programme. The programme addressed emerging challenges of Climate Variability and Change on Socio-economic Development of nations, especially developing nations.

In the course of my 18 years work in UNEP, I was involved in the negotiations for a Convention on Climate Change, later promulgated as United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), The Kyoto Protocol to the UNFCCC, and the United Nations Convention on Desertification (UNCD). Later I served as Deputy Director of UNEP Regional Office for Africa, (ROA) where my responsibilities were largely on matters climate change, and the nexus between Climate Change, Biodiversity, Desertification and Deforestation. In addition, I had administrative duties in the course of deputizing the Regional Director.



Among my non-professional activities I served as the Chairman of the United Nations SACCO for a year. It was a most rewarding experience as I interacted with all categories of staff in the UN family in Nairobi and in Field Missions.

Towards the end of my service, I served as Deputy Director of UNEP's Division of Environmental Conventions and specifically tasked to coordinate UNEP's input to the Annual Conferences of Parties (CoPs) of UNFCCC before my retirement in February 2007.

The first one year of retirement was initially a period of relaxation, playing tennis, and leisurely travelling across Kenya, from Nairobi to Western, and the Coast for further relaxation. But this was short lived as I got keenly involved in the 2007 presidential campaign for my favorite candidate. Consequently, after the post-election accord of 2008, I was invited to serve as an Advisor on Environment and Climate Change to the then Prime Minister of Kenya and establish a Climate Change Coordination Unit in his office.

For close to four years, I established a small team within that Unit whose objective was to raise awareness within Kenya on the ramifications of Climate Change on Social Economic Development of the Country. During this period, I served as a member of the Task Team that developed the Climate Change Bill later promulgated as an Act of Parliament. Additionally, I was a member of the Task Team that developed a National Environment Policy within the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources.

After 2013, I was briefly involved in vetting funding requests for project proposals by Civil Society related to energy in Eastern Africa submitted to the NGO established by the late Kofi Anan, the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA).

Presently, I have put consultancies on hold to create greater space for self-actualization, and time for family and old friends.

Enjoying every bit of it!

George Kiuri Mburathi: Passionate about food security in Africa

I started my career as a civil servant in the Government of the Republic of Kenya in 1968. I progressively held senior positions including District (now county) Agricultural Officer; Provincial (now Regional) Director of Agriculture; Senior Deputy Director of Agriculture rising up to the rank of the National Director of Agriculture in the Ministry of Agriculture. My entry into the international arena was as Kenya's first Agricultural Attaché for Europe, based in the Kenya High Commission in London, UK, 1973-1976. During the same period, I was Kenya's Representative to the International Coffee Organization, Wheat and Tea Councils, all in London.

Still working for my country, I was Kenya's Ambassador and Permanent Representative to the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) in Rome, Italy from 1979 to 1982, in addition to being accredited to other Rome based UN system Organizations including the World Food Program (WFP) and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD). From 1982 to 1986, I was appointed the first Chief Executive of the Permanent Presidential Commission for Soil Conservation and Afforestation in the Office of the President, Nairobi, Kenya. I am passionately committed to the conservation of Nature, both in Kenya and the world.

I joined FAO as a staff member in 1986 as the FAO Representative in Malawi. From Malawi I was progressively appointed to serve in various country ranks including in Zambia, Liberia Ethiopia, South Africa and Ghana. While in Ethiopia I was also accredited to the African Union (AU)

as well as the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA). During my tenure in Ghana I was also the Deputy Regional Representative of FAO for Africa.

On reaching the UN retirement age in 2007 I settled back in Kenya but continued to serve FAO as Representative *ad interim* in a number of countries and also as international consultant for the next three years. From 2010 to 2020 I worked for the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR) as an International Consultant and Advisor on ACIAR Programme Development and Implementation in African, at regional and country levels.

During this period, I have revisited nearly all the countries in our Continent of Africa.

Over the last five years I have, among other tasks, contributed to writing on various issues and particularly on the Agricultural Sector Development in Africa. Suffice it to mention the last task was as co-author and co-editor of the recently published book, "*Farming Systems and Food Security in Africa; Priorities for Science and Policy under global Change*". The book was published in 2020 by Earthscan, from Routledge UK and New York.

I have keen interest in rural development and have kept abreast of what has changed in my home area in the Mt. Kenya region and beyond. I am a frequent traveler to various parts of Kenya and the world. My hobbies include a daily walk early in the morning - 4-6 am - and reading, among others.



Enjoying some Lake Victoria time in Uhanya Beach - Happy retirement!

Irene Mwakesi: A retired Information Officer turned Caregiver – in her own words



My name is **Irene Wakio Makes (PhD)**. I worked with the United Nations from 1993 -2015, having started with UNICEF (ESARO) and moving to the United Nations Information Centre (UNIC) in 1995 to retirement in 2015. My position was a National Information Officer in both organizations.

earlier than me and was busy with consultancies started having memory lapses and I got very concerned. My well planned agenda changed to Caregiving agenda and I spent the whole of 2016 in India and home trying to understand what was happening to one very vibrant head of my house. That meant change of my priorities.

My retirement season started with change of family routines and from an Information officer I was now a student of two very difficult schools that of **care-giving** and a PhD student. I eventually graduated with my Doctorate in 2020 and I have Caregiving School is my second Doctorate programmer and I must pass.

I really enjoyed serving at the United Nations under the Secretariat especially on my role with the community which involved educational institutions in Kenya and Uganda, the media both electronic and the press, NGOs and all UN agencies. I always say UNIC is a small entity with a very large mandate.

I will only celebrate my new phase of life when I graduate in making sure my husband gets healed through prayer and the gracious strength and provision God has given me to take care of this special man in my life and I must pass.

In 2014 I enrolled at the Angary Maathai Institute, University of Nairobi for a PhD programmer in Environmental Governance and Management. I attended the classes in the evening and was done with the classed before I retired in 2015. As I left the UN my agenda was already set and it was a busy one because it was time now to collect data for my thesis. Little did I know what was a waiting me. My dear husband Mr. Fred Makes who had retired much

In conclusion, I dare say I performed very successfully at the UN and now I am on this second leg Aim a very able CAREGIVER which so far I am doing well by the grace of God and which will end successfully for God's glory. Indeed, Retirement is not Tiredness meaning I have retired but I am not tired.

Watch this space!



After talking to young people at Strathmore University

Grace Kabui Kagundu: From vaccination campaigns in Africa to hiking in Kenya

I worked for WHO for fifteen years as a Technical Officer, Advocacy, Communication and Social Mobilization for the Immunization Programme. Nine of the fifteen years were in the WHO Regional Office for Africa (AFRO), first based in Brazzaville, Congo and then in Harare, Zimbabwe - after the political situation in Congo necessitated the move. My job entailed providing technical support to AFRO countries as well as implementing a Regional Plan to Increase Immunization Coverage and Polio Eradication. After that I spent six years in WHO country Office for Nigeria, based in Abuja, providing technical support to the Nigeria National Primary Health Care Programme. My job covered a wide range of interventions including enhancing government planning and logistics as well as countering negative cultural beliefs and general misinformation around immunization.

I retired in 2013 and returned to Kenya.

Having worked away from home for fifteen years, retirement came with the joy of being home, re-uniting with family, seeing children and grand-children grow, catching up with friends ... home is home!

Activities since retirement include consultancy, volunteer activities, travelling, hiking/keep fit activities and reading.

Immediately on retirement and over the last several years, I have undertaken various consultancies with UNICEF, John Snow Incorporated (JSI), and WHO. These included providing Technical Support to countries, Training and Capacity Building, Monitoring and Evaluation and a couple of research projects. A synopsis is below:

UNICEF ESARO: based in Nairobi and supporting countries in Eastern and Southern Africa to develop plans for polio eradication, measles control and increasing routine immunization.

JSI: capacity building for Civil Society Organizations partnering with the Ministry of Health in routine immunization in South Sudan.

Was involved in monitoring of measles and polio campaigns to ensure quality and reaching of all children under five years.

Conducted a pilot project in Mingora County, Kenya, to guide development of a tool to improve Health Worker Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices (KAP)

Conducted a KAP study among health workers to guide introduction of a ten-dose vaccine vial – moving from previous twenty dose vial

Was a trainer in mid-level management courses for immunization programme managers

Was member of a team that conducted an evaluation of the immunization programme in Somaliland

Volunteer and Charity work:

I have been actively involved in charity work mainly through my church (Ridgeways Baptist Church - RBC) as a member (and later chairperson) of the Senior Citizens Ministry of RBC. We regularly carry out activities aimed at providing spiritual and material support to the elderly in the community: Some of the activities are described below:

We conduct visits to the elderly in the community to extend love and care through fellowship and financial support

We visit old people's homes. During the visits, we have fellowship with them. We also donate food and material items according to the needs - adult diapers, soap and detergent etc. Homes visited include Kikuyu Home for the Elderly, Nyumba ya Wazee, Cheshire Home, Mji wa Huruma.

Outreach in the slum areas in the communities around us: Especially during the COVID lock-down, we distributed food packages to the elderly and needy in Githogoro, Marurui, Ngomongo, all slum areas in Nairobi.

Medical outreach: Holding of free medical camps that provide several services including screening, health education and provision of drugs. In 2021, in one of the slums, in conjunction with the local health facility, we collected prescriptions for needy elderly and bought the drugs for them. We plan to make this an on-going

engagement since there is always a lack of drugs in local health facilities.

Reaching young girls with sanitary pads: with the COVID lockdown and closure of schools, many girls out of school were unable to access sanitary pads. We collected funds from church members and distributed sanitary pads for about 100 girls in Marurui slum.

The Senior Citizens Ministry receives funding from the church as per our budget. Additional funds and material donations are given by church members for specific activities/events.

Travel: I have done quite a bit of travel both locally and in Africa for work, leisure and to visit friends. Travelled to: Dubai, Liberia, South Sudan, Somaliland, Tanzania, Uganda, Ethiopia

Sports: I am enthusiastic about physical fitness and go on regular hiking expeditions especially to my favourite area, the Aberdare Mountain Range. I also participate in regular keep fit sessions.... gym, aerobics etc.

Reading: I belong to a book club that meets monthly to discuss a book of choice

Civic duty: I was an observer in the 2017 general elections in Kenya.

In the next few years I hope to enjoy more years with family and friends; Continue to be of service to the community; Climb Mt. Kenya!



Edith Kinuthia: Peacekeeping in East Timor to Conflict Resolution in Kenya

After 26 years of service to the United Nations, I took early retirement in 2018. My years in the UN spanned the World Food Programme, UNEP and UNON in Nairobi, as well as UN Peacekeeping Mission in Timor-Leste. Before that I worked with the Embassies of Spain and Mexico.

When I retired in 2018, I had just lost a loved one. I spent many months mourning. I was also reeling with uncertainty on what to do next. Towards the end of 2018 I picked up chicken rearing, which has been a family business for a long time. I started with 300 broiler chicks, after 6 weeks I sold to hotels and nyama choma (roast meat) joints. I have continued with this business to date.

In March 2019 I trained as a Mediator with Dispute & Conflict Resolution International, and I am now a Certified Mediator. What is mediation and why did I choose to train as a mediator? In the society today disputes are increasing daily. They include family conflicts over many issues such as succession matters involving land, property and other assets, commercial disputes and many others. The Government and the Judiciary have endorsed Mediation as an easier way to settle certain types of disputes.

As the mediator you are the neutral person. I've acquired the skills to bring people together, to make them talk about their issue and eventually come to a mutual agreement.

have been working with several local Chiefs in Kiambu county. We sit with the Chief and listen to disputes and help the concerned parties to agree by listening to one

another. I was invited in July 2019 to address a public baraza (meeting) at a village in Githunguri. I have also assisted in mediation cases with the Federation of Women Lawyers - FIDA (Kenya).

Apart from Mediation I joined a group where we crochet blankets, baby socks, throws, and bags and then distribute the items to children's homes. 2020 and 2021 were rather quiet because of the COVID lockdown. Hopefully I can now resume joining the local chief to assist solve some disputes. I am also involved in church matters including being a member of the choir. I have also established a boutique in my town where I sell ladies' and children's clothes and cosmetics. All these activities keep me very busy, spending a lot of time outside my house.

On the leisure front: In January 2019 I visited Mombasa and Ghana with lady's groups. As mentioned above my other hobby is to crochet, below I have photos of a few items that I have made. In my church we have a monthly News and Views Bulletin and I have written a few articles about crochet and tree planting.

In the coming years, I plan to continue giving to society in whatever way I can. Having worked as an Administrative Assistant with the UN and in Diplomatic Missions, I have vast experience in organizational structures, which could be of use to various establishments such as schools, businesses, churches etc. I also hope to be able to take time off to relax and to visit parts of Kenya that I have never visited.

Esther Njeri Njenga, Kenyan

I retired in 2016 after 27 years in the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN) at the UNEP Regional Office for Africa (ROA). My work included among others working with various Presidents in different countries in Africa who presided for a 2 Year period championing on all environmental work and programmes with Ministers in charge of environment in Africa. I worked with the minister of environment in Senegal, Egypt, Mali, Nigeria, South Africa, Ghana, Gambia, Algeria, and many others in their capacity as Presidents of the Secretariat. My work was to liaise with countries on all ongoing programmes in the area of administration and conferencing their many conferences held regularly and also on every two years' period when all the countries met to select programmes or other emerging concern on environment.

Since my retirement I have engaged in organic farming as a hobby and I have also been involved in various community Welfare groups where I help women to get together and start activities that help them to make a living, i.e. table banking and others according to their choice. I do counseling part time and also mentor young people in the area of career development, overview in life challenging situation etc. I have also been travelling occasionally and most of my free time I take small breaks as holidays to relax

In the next few years, I wish to grow these self-support groups and engage more on mentorship to the young people in my church and in the community. I also seek to enhance my Counselling Psychology being my major to assist more in the communities. The work am doing is not funded by government or any other institution.

Kabawa Nganga, Kenyan

After 26 years of service in UNEP and UNON, I retired in 2018. Activities on retirement: I have continued with construction of simple rental houses that I had started before retirement. I don't have daily schedules and only take up activities as they come.

I travel mostly to visit relatives but also for leisure within the country. I go on retreats pilgrimages and overnight trips. I do very little traveling outside the country.

I sometimes join in physical activities of a fun club not far from my home.

During the day I like solving crossword puzzles and in the evenings I like to watch TV.

In the next few years I hope to complete the ongoing constructions and enjoy a quiet retirement.



With my grandchildren on my 65th birthday

Cristina Boelcke-Croze: Director at UNEP and friend of Karura forest

I retired in 2008 after 25 years of service, all of them in Nairobi. I worked in UNEP where I held the position of Director the Division of Regional Cooperation by the time I retired. I arrived in Kenya in May 1979. So after more than 40 years, Kenya is home, and the natural place to retire.

Since retirement, and as one of the founding members of Friends of Karura Community Forest Association, I have been part of the transformation of Karura Forest. From a no-go zone of the 1990s, the forest is now the green space in Nairobi with almost 60,000 visitors a month. The forest is being restored to a natural ecosystem. From

25% of indigenous cover, the forest now has just over 50%. Numerous indigenous animals live and breed in Karura.

Presently we employ 100 staff and almost 100 casual workers a day to work in the forest and keep it a safe, clean and serene place for all Nairobians.

Future plans: Continue working to keep Karura Forest safe and as an example of one of the world's largest urban forests restored to its original state.

Charity work

From members' retirement stories, it is clear that many are involved in volunteer and charity work individually and / or as part of groups or institutions. Below we highlight the work of two colleagues, and applaud all others who are in small or big ways giving to individuals and communities.

Jessica Kazina and David Hastie charity activities

Jessica and David, both former staff of UNON, and members of the AFICS-K Executive Committee have over the years taken part in, and initiated many volunteer projects in aid of disadvantaged communities. At a personal level, they have sponsored the education of Kenyan children from primary school through university and in one case up to post-graduate level. They are also currently fostering two children whom they are sending to leading Kenyan schools.

David has been a Member of the Rotary Club since 2008, and has held the positions of Treasurer, and President. He has organised fundraising for charity work, as well as free Eye Camps – providing over 1000 free cataract operations. Other medical-related interventions include the procurement of US\$280,000 worth of equipment for

a maternal operating theatre for not-for profit hospital in Nairobi.

He has headed Rotary Foundation projects: to install rainwater harvesting at a school in Meru; East Pokot Sand Dams and borehole restoration, worth US\$90,000; East Pokot Sand Dams and borehole restoration worth US\$90,000; and Worked on water and sanitation project for Maasai community in Torosei.

David has also initiated and supported sporting activities for special groups including: Kenya National Paralympic athletes 2015-2016, providing refreshments at bi-weekly training; Paralympic Swimming: Support international swimming event at Kasarani, bringing in assistance from Rotary; "Road to Rio 500 Km" Paralympic hand cycling event - Nairobi to Mombasa and Talanta Nairobi, sponsoring boxing event at Sarakasi – a charitable trust that promotes performing arts for artists from the slum areas of Nairobi.

Alliance for African Assistance as Non-Executive Director 2018 to present, has participated in promoting peace through training among refugees and Kenyan youth and extended COVID-19 mitigation support to disadvantaged in Mathare and Huruma

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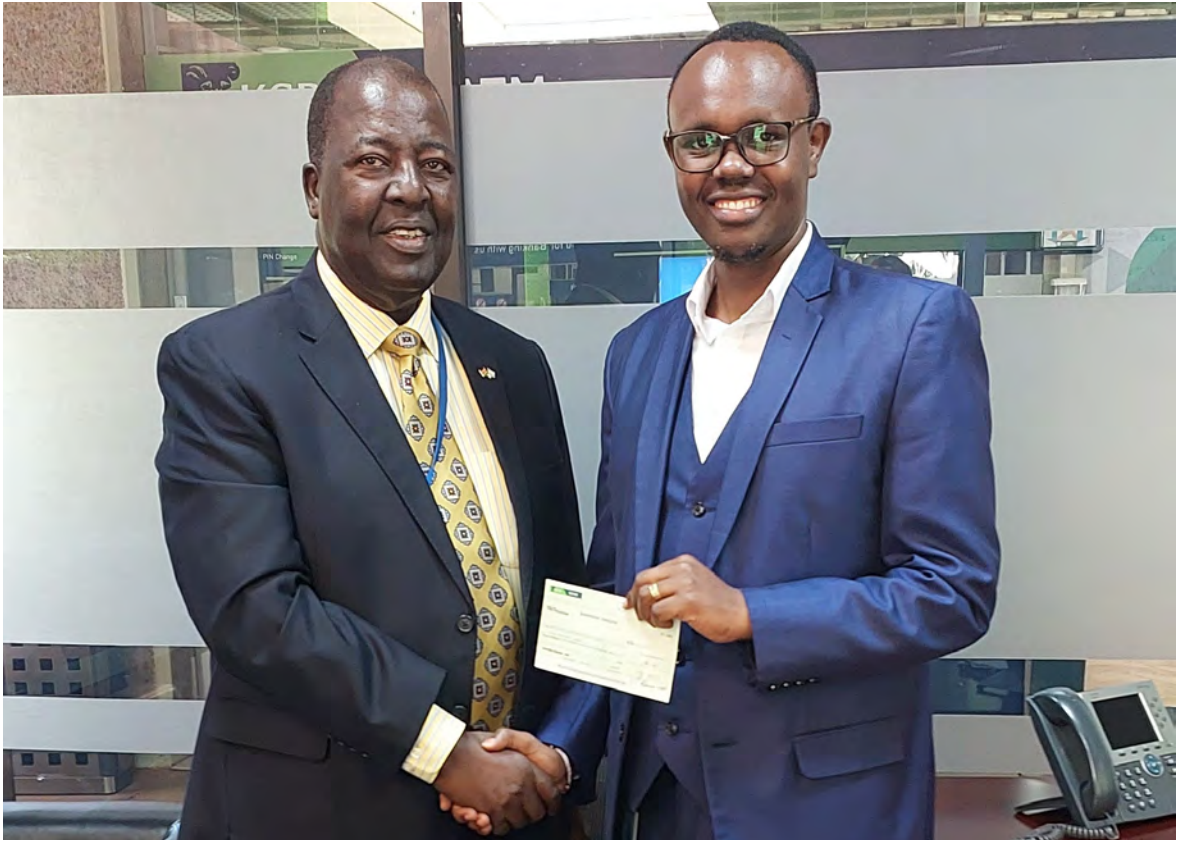
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