

# Staff Management Relations

## Staff-management relations in the times of COVID-19

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One of my favourite books is *Love in the Time of Cholera* by Gabriel García Márquez which depicts a magnificent and magic love story in the time of a terrible disease. There is little resemblance between the story told and our reality today, but I still think of it because, although magic realism at its best, it is a look into how we may tackle and survive hardship, and find beauty in the small things in the face of fear. Such reminders are direly needed these days where staff in Italy, New York and many other places, are at home in quarantine, without the possibility of leaving their homes but for grocery and pharmacy shopping, because of the COVID-19 outbreak.

Personally, at the time of writing (6 April) I have been at home for four weeks, with two more to look forward to – at a minimum. These are challenging times not only because we need to adapt to a new way of working, but because many have to attend to their children as well, or – on the contrary - feel tremendous solitude and loneliness.

Effective and solid Staff-Management relations during this period have been crucial and in FAO, and I am happy to report that we were positively surprised at the level of engagement from Management.

From the onset of the crisis, Management has called for weekly meetings to update the staff

representation bodies on the measures they were taken. The Chief Medical Officer, the Chief Security Officer, Communications Officers and others are also present on a needs basis, and the meetings provide an opportunity for us to share staff's views and concerns, and provide suggestions for how to improve the situation and the communication about the crisis. Suggestions we have made which were taken on board or looked into straight away concerned teleworking, intensifying cleaning, providing masks, special measures for the security guards, setting up of a hotline and special help to international staff who are alone in Rome. In addition to this, we also discuss the HR guidelines – adapted from the CEB guidelines – in our meetings, and tackle the changing challenges faced by staff.

Management continues to provide email updates at least once a day. We, as Staff associations, have an important role in voicing staff's concerns and in providing suggestions, but also in bridging between the organization and staff, helping us all come together.

We hope that the current crisis will enable us all to re-evaluate how we work and communicate, and that it will spur cohesive and respectful relations between us and Management also in the future.

