The Director General's Note

SANDRA TINOTENDA MUSEVENZO

REHEARSING THE FUTURE, REFLECTING ON THE PRESENT

Welcome to the latest issue of the Zimbabwe Association of Pension Funds (ZAPF) magazine. As we navigate an ever-evolving economic and social landscape, this edition is dedicated to exploring how we can actively shape our future—not just by saving, but by rehearsing it, and by making informed, critical decisions in the present.

The Retirement Rehearsal: Practice Makes Perfect

How many major life events do we approach without a rehearsal? A wedding, a presentation, a performance—all are practiced. Yet, for many, retirement, a life stage that could span decades, is treated as an abrupt event. This issue features a compelling series of articles focusing on mock retirement and the concept of rehearsing for retirement lifestyles.

Imagine living your intended retirement budget and daily routine for a full month while still employed. What unexpected challenges would surface? Could you truly sustain your envisaged retirement outcomes? Our contributors argue that by practicing and living these scenarios now, you can identify critical gaps in your planning—be they financial, social, or geographical—before they become permanent realities. The core question we pose is: Are you planning for retirement, or are you preparing to live it? It is time to move beyond spreadsheets and into real-life simulation.

Navigating the Digital Noise: The Cautionary Tale of Influence

In the age of instant information, financial and lifestyle advice floods our feeds. Social media influencers offer quick fixes and alluring promises about investment and retirement. But as the saying goes, "Advice is only as good as the advisor's accountability."

We delve into why people should treat advice from social media influencers with caution. While the platforms offer accessibility, they often lack the fiduciary responsibility, regulatory oversight and deep, context-specific knowledge that qualified financial advisors possess. Before adopting a sensational strategy presented online, ask yourself: Does this advice account for the unique, often complex realities of the Zimbabwean economy and regulatory environment? Our analysis highlights the crucial difference between entertainment and professional, personalized guidance, urging you to verify and validate every piece of financial counsel.

Strategic Synergy: The Power of Mergers

The Zimbabwean financial sector continues to seek resilience and efficiency. A key trend driving this is consolidation. This issue examines the tangible benefits of mergers within the Zimbabwean financial sector, particularly as they impact pension funds.

Mergers are not merely about combining two entities; they are about achieving strategic synergy. The advantages include greater economies of scale, leading to reduced operational costs. This can, in turn, result in improved member services and potentially higher investment returns for beneficiaries. Furthermore, a larger, more robust entity is often better equipped to manage systemic risk and invest in sophisticated technology and expertise. Is consolidation the necessary path to long-term stability and competitive member value in our market? We suggest this move is less about survival and more about securing a prosperous future.

The Emotional Ledger: Retirement is More Than Money

While finance forms the foundation of retirement planning, the emotional landscape is equally critical. Our articles on the emotional dimensions that influence retirement planning remind us that fear, hope, identity and a sense of purpose are powerful, often subconscious, drivers of our financial decisions.

Many people tether their identity to their professional role. Losing that can trigger a crisis of self. Fear of the unknown, or "what will I do all day?", can lead to procrastination in planning. We discuss strategies for confronting these deep-seated feelings, encouraging members to plan for their social and psychological capital alongside their financial capital. As one expert in the magazine notes, *“Retirement readiness is 50% money and 50% mindset.”*

Upholding Standards: The Value of Peer Review

In the governance of pension funds, transparency and accountability are non-negotiable. This issue spotlights the immense value of peer review in pension funds.

Peer review, the systematic assessment of fund operations, governance, investment strategies and compliance by objective, qualified peers from within the industry, serves as a vital safeguard.

It is a mechanism for identifying best practices, flagging potential operational blind spots and ensuring that funds are acting in the absolute best interest of their members. If the stability of our members' future rests on the decisions made today, shouldn't those decisions be subjected to the highest level of scrutiny by trusted industry colleagues? We advocate for peer review as an essential tool for continuous improvement and maintaining public trust.

The Future Equation: AI and Global IQ

The integration of *Artificial Intelligence* (AI) is rapidly transforming the financial world, bringing both opportunity and trepidation. Our feature explores the personal impact of AI—how it will change roles within the sector, and how it can be leveraged to enhance personalized advice and fund performance.

Crucially, we introduce the concept of the rise of Global IQ. In an interconnected world, financial success depends less on siloed, local knowledge and more on the capacity to rapidly process, synthesize and act upon information from international markets, regulatory changes and technological shifts. AI acts as a multiplier of this Global IQ, but human insight remains the conductor. *How can Zimbabwean pension professionals harness AI to leapfrog traditional barriers and compete on a global intelligence scale?*

Building a Durable Zimbabwe: Beyond the Immediate

On a broader national level, we consider the responsibility of institutional investors to drive sustainable, long-term growth. Our article on using durable building materials for large-scale buildings in Zimbabwe argues that pension fund investment in property development must prioritize resilience and longevity.

Investing in materials that withstand the test of time, weather, and economic volatility is not just an expense; it is a commitment to the country's *infrastructure legacy and a shield against future maintenance costs that erode returns. Should our investment mandate reflect an unwavering commitment to quality that transcends short-term cost savings?* This is an appeal for durable vision in our built environment.

Preparing the Next Generation: A Legacy of Resilience

Finally, we address a deeply human, yet often avoided, topic: preparing the next generation for the inevitable. Our guide on how to prepare children to deal with possible grief is a conversation about securing an emotional legacy.

Retirement planning is not just about financial transfer; it is about the emotional health of the family unit. Open, honest conversations about end-of-life planning, wills and the process of grief can inoculate children with resilience and clarity during difficult times.

Are we empowering our children with the tools to manage not only the inheritance of assets, but also the inheritance of emotional loss? We provide actionable advice on creating an environment of emotional preparedness, turning a moment of grief into a testament to a life well-planned and a family well-loved.

We hope this issue inspires you to engage with your future proactively, critically and emotionally. We invite you to join the conversation and let us know: What is the next rehearsal your retirement plan requires?

Enjoy the articles

Yours Sincerely

Sandra Tinotenda Musevenzo

Director General

ZAPF