

Remarks by Mr Evans Maswahu, Chairperson of the Benefits and Administration Committee, GIPF Board, on the occasion of launching the GIPF Biometric Enrolment and Verification System.

01 August 2022

- Fellow members of the Board of Trustees present
- Mr David Nuyoma, CEO and Principal Officer
- Mr Andrew Matjila, Chairperson of the GIPF Pensioners' Association - GIPAN
- GIPF Management and members of staff
- Colleagues from the Media Fraternity
- Ladies and gentlemen,

A very good morning and welcome to the launch of the Government Institutions Pension Fund's (GIPF) new Biometric enrolment and verification system. As you may all know, GIPF suspended the enrolment and verification process on the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Fund currently has close to 50,000 active annuitants ranging from children annuitants, spouses, retirees and members on disability who reside both in Namibia and outside the borders of Namibia and who receive monthly annuity payments from the GIPF. The new Biometric enrollment system which officially goes live today will run until 28 February 2023. This period is however subject to review and any change will be communicated to all stakeholders timeously. The verification process will only commence once the enrolment period has been concluded. Biometric enrolment will be done at all fully fledged GIPF offices nationwide. Kindly note that GIPF Satellite offices at Grootfontein, Opuwo and Nkurenkuru will not be enrolling during this initial phase. These offices will be served by our mobile teams and those schedules will be announced in due course. Be rest assured that additional equipment are being procured to cater to our members in the above mentioned towns and once received, our pensioners and annuitants will be informed via the media.

GIPF strives to be a leading pension Fund globally and therefore high on the GIPF's agenda and strategy is digital transformation, sustainability, and service excellence. It is against this background that the GIPF saw it fit to acquire a state-of-the-art solution for the benefit of its esteemed members. The new solutions requires that all qualifying annuitants are enrolled, and this involves capturing of their biometrics data which includes both fingerprint and facial capturing into an Automated Biometrics Identification System (ABIS). Previously the Fund was heavily reliant on fingerprint identification and the new system has an added security feature of facial scanning which has liveness detection. This is especially critical where we have members with disabilities in respect of their hands, or damage to fingers which may be difficult to scan.

The GIPF thus implores all qualifying annuitants to enrol. Kindly note that the term qualifying refers to all annuitants receiving an income from the GIPF, and not to be mistaken with those receiving any Government grants. Qualifying annuitants include all retired members be it those on early or normal retirement, spouses and children of deceased members of GIPF. It is important to note that this is limited to those in receipt of a monthly income from the GIPF. The GIPF will communicate extensively to our members via multiple media platforms in respect of the required documents the annuitants need to bring along. The Fund will require annuitants to periodically verify as proof of life so they may continue to receive their benefits. However, prior to verifying a member is required to be enrolled, and failure to enroll will result in benefits being discontinued as the Fund has no proof of life. I reiterate that the Fund places great emphasis on sustainability, and therefore needs to ensure benefits are only paid out to correct beneficiaries, thus annuitants are encouraged to enroll to make sure their benefits continue to be paid timeously.

The Covid-19 pandemic has been a great learning curve to the Fund. One such lesson has been the need to remain innovative and to exploit the use of technology to the fullest. The new solution has the following functionalities:

- Remote verification services via different platforms.
- Verification capabilities even when there is no connectivity.
- Enhanced security features which require facial capturing and liveness detection; thus, someone cannot cheat the system using a picture of someone else.

Ladies and Gentlemen, in conclusion, with any new change comes some challenges and teething problems. I thus humbly request that our members accord us their usual support during this transition and kindly be rest assured that benefits due to you will continue throughout this process. Cognizance is given to the fact that a lot of people still do not have access to internet services and for this reason the Fund will deploy mobile teams to remote areas to conduct such verifications during the verification period. The Fund will in the near future also introduce self-help kiosks like those found in various petrol stations where members can verify themselves.

Lastly, our members are urged to be vigilant of unscrupulous characters that may attempt to mislead or defraud them during this process through false information. The GIPF will continuously provide information to our members through the appropriate platforms. Data integrity remains one of the Fund's strategic focuses and as such this project serves as an opportunity to significantly improve the accuracy and integrity of our data by capturing and updating all the relevant information at enrolment.

I thank you.