

NEWS LETTER

July, 2024. Volume 13, Issue 40



KEY ISSUES

Celebrating our Top RTS Performing Stars for the Month of July

Rainy Days: The Importance of Micro Pension Plans for Informal Sector Workers

Annuity: Annuling Your Access to Additional Income and More

Deskercise: Simple Moves to Keep You Energized and Revitalized at Your Desk



*Say Hi to TIVA
on Whatsapp
or Telegram*

0907 008 8008

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EDITORIAL CREW

Hello Esteemed Readers,

As usual, we bring you fresh, engaging and enlightening contents for your reading pleasure. This edition illuminates the benefits of the Micro-Pension Scheme for informal workers, including business owners, professionals across various fields etc. The Micro-Pension Plan (MPP) with features like contingent withdrawals and flexible contributions, not only offers a safety net for rainy days but also empowers them to secure their future.

In the opinion corner, the thought-provoking piece titled “Chess or Politics” draws parallels between chess pieces and political figures, offering a witty and insightful look at how strategies in both realms can seem strikingly similar. From pawns to kings, each chess piece represents a unique role, much like the diverse players in Nigeria’s political scene. So, whether you’re a chess enthusiast or a political aficionado, this article will make you ponder: Are we all just pieces in a grand game of strategy?

What seems like an immediate gain might come with long-term sacrifices. The financial column delivers a wake-up call on the importance of weighing the pros and cons before opting for annuity. With real-life examples and expert insights, the piece explores the hidden costs of annuities compared to Programmed Withdrawals and benefits like periodic pay rises and potential family inheritance that annuities may forgo.

Feeling sluggish at your desk? Try Deskercise! In our health corner, we offer a few tips on how you can transform your workday with “deskercise”- a series of quick, effective exercises you can do right at your desk.

We also shine the spotlight on our staff members born in the month of July. Finally, our sports column takes us through the lessons from the Paris 2024 Olympics, delving into the reasons why many athletes choose to compete for other nations, emphasizing the importance of investing in sports infrastructure, financial incentives and improving sports administration.

We trust you will enjoy reading these articles as much as we enjoyed creating them. Your contributions and feedback are always valued, as we strive to continue delivering engaging, enlightening and informative contents.

Do visit our website www.trustfundpensions.com and follow us on all our social media platforms (Facebook, Instagram, Linked-In, TikTok, YouTube, Twitter (X) etc) @trustfundpltd.

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SPOTLIGHT ON OUR RTS STARS - JULY 2024



At Trustfund Pensions Limited, we recognise and honour the achievements of our team members, as our journey toward success is fuelled by their dedication and excellence. Hence, we are thrilled to shine a light on the remarkable individuals who made a significant impact in our Retirement Savings Account Transfer System (RTS) in the month of July.

Join us in celebrating our RTS highflyers: Henry, Bernard, Tahir, Siaka, Rawiyyah, Sampson, Richard, Winifred, Noela, and Enetimi. Their excellence and steadfast commitment have truly set them apart. We are immensely proud of their accomplishments and deeply appreciative of their unwavering dedication.

As we celebrate these highflyers, we also acknowledge the collective effort of our entire Trustfund Pensions team. It is through our collaboration and shared vision that we achieve such extraordinary success, helping in securing our clients' financial future. The performance of our RTS stars serve as an inspiration to us all as we continue to set new standards in the pension industry and deliver exceptional service to our clients.

INDUSTRY NEWS

RAINY DAYS: WHY INFORMAL SECTOR WORKERS NEED MICRO PENSION PLAN



The introduction of the Micro Pension Plan (MPP) in Nigeria has enhanced financial inclusion within the informal sector, playing a crucial role as a safeguard during retirement. Since its inception, the MPP has gained considerable traction, evidenced by increasing enrolments. In the first quarter of 2024 alone, 12,559 new contributors joined the MPP, bringing the total number of Micro Pension Contributors (MPCs) to 126,941. During this period, these new MPCs collectively contributed ₦111.42 million, bringing the cumulative total to ₦791.57 million as at 31 March 2024.

To mitigate the impact of hard times, the MPP allows for contingent withdrawals. From inception up to 31 March 2024, several MPCs had utilised contingent withdrawals amounting to ₦48.62 million. This feature enables informal sector workers to access their savings when faced with financial challenges, thereby providing a vital buffer during periods of economic instability.

Guided by the provisions of the PRA 2014, the National Pension Commission (PenCom) introduced the MPP with the specific objective of broadening pension coverage to include workers in the informal sector. The Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) Communique No. 150 of the Monetary Policy Committee Meeting in

February 2024 posits that the informal sector remains the largest employer in Nigeria, accounting for 92.3 percent of total employment. Under the MPP, private sector organisations with less than three employees and self-employed individuals can participate in the CPS.

Eligibility And Registration

Eligible participants under the MPP include self-employed individuals affiliated with trade, professional cooperatives, or business associations, those with business name registrations, partnerships, or enterprises, informal sector employees with or without formal written employment contracts, and other self-employed individuals. A Micro Pension Contributor (MPC) must be at least 18 years and reside in Nigeria.

Prospective MPP participants must register with a Pension Fund Administrator (PFA). This involves opening a Retirement Savings Account (RSA). Upon registration, the MPP participant receives a Personal Identification Number (PIN) from the PFA and is ready to start making pension contributions.

Contributions And Investments

Making pension contributions under the MPP is designed to be easy, allowing MPCs to contribute daily, weekly, or monthly based on their cash flows. They can also use a variety of payment channels, including cash deposits, electronic transfers, approved payment platforms, or financial services agents endorsed by the CBN.

The MPP was designed to consider the diverse income patterns within the informal sector, hence the flexibility in allowing participants to determine the frequency of making contributions. Accordingly, individuals determine their contributions and frequency based on their financial capacity and pension aspirations.

PFAs invest the MPP pension contributions in secure assets specified by the Investment

Regulation issued by PenCom, ensuring steady growth through investment yields over time.

Regulation issued by PenCom, ensuring steady growth through investment yields over time. This accumulation serves as a foundation for retirement benefits and pensions for the contributors.

Accessing Contributions

The MPP's flexibility extends to accessing pension contributions, with a 40-60 split between contingent withdrawal and pension allocation, respectively. The contingent portion permits contributors to withdraw funds for immediate financial needs, easing pressures before retirement. The retirement/fixed portion, constituting 60 percent, becomes accessible only upon "retirement", with eligibility set at 50 years or due to health reasons.

The Revised Regulation on the Administration of Retirement and Terminal Benefits ensures clarity in benefit payments to MPCs. Those unable to procure monthly pension/annuity up to one-third of the prevailing minimum wage receive en-bloc payments.

In case of the demise of an active or retired MPC, the RSA balance is disbursed to legal heirs, as stipulated by a Will, Letter of Administration, or court directive. The foregoing underscores the MPP's role in providing financial security to the families of deceased informal sector workers.

Conversion From MPP To Mandatory Contribution

The flexibility and dynamism of the MPP empowers MPCs to seamlessly transition into the Mandatory CPS if they secure formal sector

employment, as stipulated by Section 2(1) of the PRA 2014. Upon employment, MPCs can easily continue their contributions by providing their PINs and PFA details to the new employer, eliminating the need for opening a new RSA.

Before conversion, MPP contributors have the option to withdraw the total balance of the contingent portion of their RSA. Alternatively, they can choose to leave the contingent portion, which will be merged with the retirement benefits portion of the RSA upon conversion to the mandatory CPS.

It is essential to note that failure to request conversion within one month of receiving remittances from a new employer may result in automatic status change by the PFA, with notifications sent to the employer and monthly returns forwarded to the Commission.

Participation in the MPP is exclusive, with no provision for conversion from the Mandatory CPS to the MPP. Additionally, once an individual retires from a formal sector job, participation in the MPP is prohibited.

At Trustfund Pensions Limited, we deliver exceptional customer support to contributors in the informal sector through our Micro-Pension Scheme, offering tailored solutions to help them secure their financial future. Professionals across various fields—lawyers, doctors, entrepreneurs, pharmacists, engineers, entertainers, athletes, artistes and more—are already benefiting from the micro-pension scheme. Start contributing today to ensure you're prepared for life's unexpected challenges.

FINANCIAL SERIES

ANNUITY: ANNULING YOUR ACCESS TO ADDITIONAL INCOME AND MORE - BY OGECHI EWURU (FINANCE DEPARTMENT)

Life gives us options, but the onus behooves individuals to optimize these options as they open or materialize. Once any employee tends towards retirement whether in the office, at home, or pre-retirement forum. Like a bride, suitors begin to come especially life annuity companies to market them to move to annuity. Section 120 of the Pension Reforms Act 2014 defined annuity as “a right to receive periodic payments, usually fixed in size, for life or a term of years”. While it is legal but optional to choose between Programmed withdrawal administered by Pension Fund Managers or buying a life annuity package from any of the licensed life insurance companies, it is only proper to exhume the opportunity cost beyond the initial monthly pension increase offered as bait to exclude you from enormous benefits awaiting ahead.

So, before you annul your access to additional benefits, you need to note the following alternatives forgone:

Periodic Pay Rise: One major benefit **contributor** who switch to an annuity will **forgo** is the opportunity to access periodic increments in their monthly pension payments. From my experience, Life annuity companies will always offer a contributor a monthly pension a bit higher than what he is receiving currently as a sweetener to sway him. However, that amount once accepted will remain static for the rest of the **annuitant's** life span irrespective of the inflation level, reduction in purchasing power, or interest that must have accrued to the member's RSA balance. Therein lies the major disadvantage of locking up your earning potential at the expense of a bait presented as a pay rise.

Section 173 (3) of the Nigerian Constitution states that “Pensions shall be reviewed every five years or together with any Federal civil service salary reviews, whichever is earlier” for pensioners under the old pension scheme currently managed by PTAD. If the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria recognizes the need for periodic increases in monthly



pensions, why then should a citizen ensnare himself?

Programmed withdrawal is structured in such a way that you will be able to track the performance of your Retirement Savings Account balance making it possible for you to predict when you will qualify for monthly pension enhancement.

I once had an encounter with a retiree from the Federal University of Technology Owerri who walked into our Wethedral Road office at Owerri presenting an offer letter from a Life annuity assurance company demanding to utilize his outstanding pension balance to purchase an annuity premium that will offer him a lifetime fixed monthly pension of N85,000. As required by the National Pension Commission, the Pension Fund Administrator must explain the intricacies of the options inherent in both PWD and Annuity to Customers. We printed his RSA statement from inception and analyzed the content. We discovered that this retiree has been on programmed withdrawal in Trustfund for the past 13 years. At the commencement, he was on a monthly pension of N70,000 within the span of these twelve years his monthly pension has been enhanced three times based on his RSA balance growth to N73,000, N77,000, and was on a monthly pay of N80,000 as at the time he came with the request to migrate to Annuity because the Annuity company offered him a

monthly pension of N85,000. I asked him if, over a period of 13 years, your monthly Pension increased from N70,000 to N80,000 i.e. N10,000 increase does it sound rational to lock yourself for a N5,000 difference? He took the RSA statement and the analysis we did on a plain sheet and went home. Only to come back two days later to withdraw the request thanking us for the clarity.

Benefit beyond death: it is a natural thing for your family, spouse, or children to look up to you for inheritance. After all, the holy book makes it clear that a good father leaves inheritance to his children. In programmed withdrawal, the named beneficiary in the will of the deceased retiree will automatically receive the RSA balance of a demised customer. That privilege is only available in an annuity for the first ten years beyond which the annuity company takes your remaining cash after death. Legends are known for creating intergenerational wealth. Imagine if Alfred Nobel had chosen an annuity, the globally celebrated Nobel Peace Prize would have been a mirage. With the current rate of returns on investment hovering between 18 to 21 percent, patient contributors will not only get a good enhanced monthly pension but will leave substantial residual value at death for their family. This will prompt the children to write “with a gratitude to God for a life well spent” instead of writing “we regret to announce the passing away of “...I choose not to pass away but to pass on the baton of wealth.

Loss of Individual Ownership: One other disadvantage of migrating to an annuity is the complication of losing your ownership identity. Since insurance operates on the concept of “pooled funds” the ownership of your RSA fund metamorphoses from “my” fund to “our” fund. **While you can check your balance as a retiree in programmed withdrawal the same cannot be said of a life annuity.** If an opportunity comes for a retiree to travel and the embassy demands evidence of financial strength a retiree on Programmed withdrawal can easily print his statement of RSA from our website https://services.trustfundpensions.com/request_letter/ in addition to the cover letter by inputting Phone number, Surname and date of birth and pronto! Your embassy letter and Retirement Savings Account Statement will go to your registered e-mail with Trustfund Pensions Ltd. *But an annuity customer cannot*

enjoy that luxury because his money has lost that individual identity.

Post-retirement job remittance: Before you move to an annuity, picture a scenario where you get another job beyond retirement. What if you get hired by a security outfit based on your training as paramilitary personnel (Police, customs, Immigration Officer, etc.) by a university to teach or by a consulting firm willing to tap from your wealth of experience and knowledge? If you are on programmed withdrawal, your pension entitlement will be classified as voluntary contribution and with the new amendment to voluntary contribution guidelines you can access fifty percent of your accumulated voluntary contribution once every year. Moving to an annuity entails closing your pension account and the complication of reopening or reactivating it when previously unidentified benefits like NPF, NSITF, and Already Existing Scheme (AES), come can be cumbersome. We have a lot of retired NGO workers currently in the employment by other Non-Governmental Organizations who retained their Retirement Savings Account because of choosing programmed withdrawal and now get their monthly pension entitlement while *their pension remittance from their current employer is credited as VC unabated.* Why cease when continuity can create greater value?

Legal Complexities: confusion that arises from the manner annuity companies present their contract letters calls for a concerted effort for adequate interpretation since ignorance of the law is not an excuse. While the Pension Reforms Act 2014 empowers licensed life annuity companies to offer annuity as a product and defined annuity as “usually fixed in size, for life **or** a term of years” most of the annuity contracts read this contract is “for 10 years **and** for life” Until this clause is put to test in a court of competent jurisdiction, the real ambiguity cannot be fathomed. In my opinion, trading **or** for **and** means a lot and may have the potency of invalidating the entire contract. But till then, I will keep my fingers crossed and say let buyers beware. Furthermore, whereas the act in section 89(c) prohibits the use of pension funds as collateral specifically “ Pension Fund Administrator shall not apply pension fund assets under its management by way of loans and credits or as collateral for any loan taken by a holder of

retirement savings account or any person whatsoever”, we have instances where retirees are lured into an annuity to grant the retiree loan to complete a project and repayment linked to the retirees' monthly pension that will be administered as an annuity.

At a recent post-retirement event in Abuja, Hajia Hauwa Tukur from the Benefits Department of the National Pension Commission cleared the air again that both Programmed withdrawals from PFAs and Annuity by Insurance firms pay pension for life. Referring to provisions of the Act relating to Minimum Pension, Section 81 established the Statutory Reserve Fund. Likewise the Pension Protection Funds created under S.82 are all aimed at guaranteeing payment for life for Programmed withdrawal customers. Each time a confused contributor comes to make inquiries regarding this “lie” that

beyond. I will ask them how can a scheme that increases your monthly pay periodically not pay you till death. The ability to increase your money at intervals of 4 years or less is proof that your future payment is guaranteed.

At Trustfund Pension, we respect the contributors' right to choose. Nevertheless, as expected by PenCom, we have a fiduciary function to explain both in detail to enable you to make informed decisions, re-echoing that a journey of no return must be approached with caution. Trustfund Pensions having managed your funds during your working period, truly desires that you get the best from your sweat. An African proverb says, “What an elder sees sitting down, a child cannot see it even if he climbs an iroko tree”.



ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT MICRO PENSIONS

- ✓ Micro pensions are designed to cater to business owners and self-employed individuals: to provide them financial security in retirement.
- ✓ Micro pension schemes are structured to be affordable and accessible to those with low incomes. Contributions can be made in small amounts, and flexible payment options are provided to accommodate irregular earnings.
- ✓ Micro pension schemes allow participants to continue contributing even if they change jobs or move to different locations.
- ✓ Participation in micro pension schemes is voluntary and based on the contributor's financial capacity and retirement goals.
- ✓ Micro pension schemes typically offer a range of investment options suited to the risk preferences and financial goals of participants.

PHOTO GALLERY

TOP RTS PERFORMING STARS FOR THE MONTH OF JULY



Richard Oghiomho
Ebakhaye
Ikoyi branch



Bernard Amadi
Head Office



Sampson Charles
Sunday
Uyo branch



Henry G. Davou
Jos branch



Isa Tahir
Bauchi Branch



Noela Ikechukwu
Onele
Port-Harcourt branch



Enetimi Endurance
Ekiodiribo
Port-Harcourt branch



Adejoh Siaka
Head Office Branch



Winifred Nnenna
Ihekanandu
Port-Harcourt branch



Rawiyah Bashir
Kaduna Branch

PHOTO GALLERY

BDSC RETREAT FOR HALF YEAR, 2024



MD/CEO, UCHE IHECHERE AT THE RETREAT



FROM L TO R, HEAD HR & ADMIN, E.D. BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT AND MARKETING AND SOME MANAGEMENT STAFF



COMPANY SECRETARY/GENERAL COUNSEL AND THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR (OPERATIONS)



L TO R, REGIONAL MANAGER LAGOS, HNI MANAGER LAGOS, HEAD DIGITAL MARKETING AND HEAD B.D.M SOUTH



HEADS OF CONTRIBUTION & ENROLLMENT, FINANCE AND FUNDING



REGIONAL MANAGERS (NORTH) WITH THE HEAD OF AUDIT



L - HEAD OF BENEFIT AND ADMINISTRATION, R - HEAD OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY



HEAD BDM SOUTH WITH SOME MANAGEMENT STAFF

PHOTO GALLERY:

2024 BDSC RETREAT - HALF YEAR 2



MANAGEMENT STAFF AT THE RETREAT



THE COMPANY SECRETARY/GENERAL COUNSEL, MRS FUNMILAYO OLUWO WITH A SENIOR STAFF OF THE INVESTMENT DEPT.



AT THE RETREAT



L TO R, REGIONAL MANAGERS (SOUTH), AND HEAD COMPLIANCE



HEADS OF NSITF, CORPORATE STRATEGY & PLANNING, CSSD AND CORPRATE COMMUNICATIONS



MD/CEO, HEAD HR & ADMIN, MRS RACHEL OBI AND E.D. BDM, MRS ENO ADETAYO-OLUGBEMI



AT THE RETREAT

PHOTO GALLERY:

2024 BDSC RETREAT - HALF YEAR 2



AT THE RETREAT



THE EXCOS



AT THE RETREAT



HEAD, AUDIT & INTERNAL CONTROL AND REGIONAL MANAGER NORTH 1



HEAD BDM NORTH FLANKED BY L - HEADS OF FINANCE AND FUNDING & R - REGIONAL MANAGERS, NORTH



E.D. BDM, REGIONAL MANAGER LAGOS ANDHNI MANAGER LAGOS



HEAD BDM SOUTH, HEAD HR & ADMIN, AND REGIONAL MANAGER LAGOS,

PHOTO GALLERY:

2024 BDSC RETREAT - HALF YEAR 2



MANAGEMENT STAFF MEMBERS



MD/CEO AND E.D. OPERATIONS



THE MD/CEO, HEAD HR&ADMIN, HEAD BDM SOUTH AND SOME OTHER MANAGEMENT STAFF MEMBERS



HEADS OF DIGITAL MARKETING, CORPORATE COMMUNICATION AND COMPLIANCE



E.D. OPS, DR. TUNDE AKINSOLA, FLANKED BY REGIONAL MANAGERS OF ABUJA, ENUGU, HNI MANAGER LAGOS & REGIONAL MANAGER NORTH 1



THE E.D BDM FLANKED BY MANAGEMENT STAFF IN HER DIRECTORATE

July Birthday Celebrants



Uchenna Okorie Agwu
Internal Control & Audit
Head Office



Festus Olalekan Hamza
Benefits Administration
Head Office



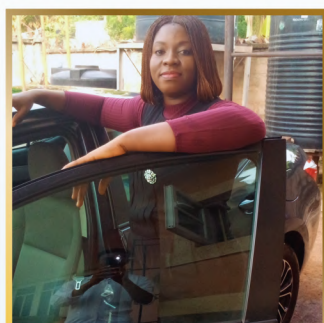
Mary Victoria Robert
Business Development & Marketing
Onipanu



Modesta Chinasa Okafor
Business Development & Marketing
Enugu



Victor Agahiu Okai
Business Development & Marketing
Lokoja



Kosiosochukwu Chinoyelum Ndubuisi
Business Development & Marketing
Enugu



Timothy Zaccheaus
Customer Support Service
Head Office



Innocent Chinonso Ezenma
Human Resources & Admin
Head Office



Adaobi Chikwe-Ihezue
Compliance
Head Office

Eno Adetayo-Olugbemi
E.D. Business Development
& Marketing
Head Office

Murtala Mohammed
Habibu
Admin
Head Office

Adeolu Oyetunde Ibitoye
Customer Support Service
Ilorin

Tayo Grace Olawale
Customer Support
Service
Ota

Halimah Yetunde Olawale
Customer Support Service
Onipanu

Anietie Gregory Okon
Admin
Warri

Chigozie Ferdinand
Iheagwam
Customer Support Service
Umuahia

Esther Afocha Oloke
Benefits Administration
Head Office

Esther Afocha Oloke
Benefits Administration
Head Office

Ogburo Ejemen Akhere
Business Development &
Marketing
Victoria Island

Uchenna Okorie Agwu
Internal Control & Audit
Head Office

Ijeoma Peace Mfon-Umoh
Compliance
Head Office

James Makanjuola Olatunde
Business Development &
Marketing
Ikorodu

Olatunbosun Seun Eke
Business Development &
Marketing
Victoria Island

Nazeer Abdulazeez
Business Development &
Marketing
Sokoto

Solomon Adah
Business Development &
Marketing
Head Office

Agada Ogbu
Business Development &
Marketing
Head Office

Osahon Omoayin
Obasogie
Business Development &
Marketing
Ikoyi

Mohammed Sambo Hamza
Investment
Head Office

Rachael Onyekachi
Omashor-Ojo
Business Development &
Marketing
Ota

Jonah Samuel Kienka
Admin
Uyo

Chinyere Victoria Eric
Business Development &
Marketing
Amuwo Odofin

Ifiok Bassey Umoh
Customer Support Service
Uyo

Ayobami Akanji
Internal Control & Audit
Head Office

INVESTMENT NEWS

FUND PERFORMANCE REPORT FOR JULY - INVESTMENT UNIT

Our Mission

To create future value for the economically active workforce and assure a quality standard of living upon retirement.

Our Vision

Our focus is to be:

- The leader in terms of market share
- ✓ Competitive in terms of returns on funds under management
- The market maker in terms of setting benchmarks on best practices for funds management and customer service.

Value & Principles

Our 4-point definition of self reflects our image, values, and represents “who we are as a Company”.

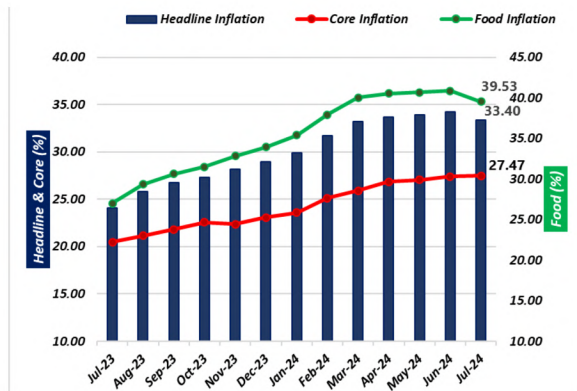
1. We are conservative.
2. We are dependable, promising good returns without taking unnecessary risks.
3. We are a commercially oriented profit making enterprise.
4. We have a passion for service: Exciting the customer is our business: We understand that without "satisfied customers", we cannot remain in business.

At Trustfund, our sacred trust is to protect against poverty at retirement.

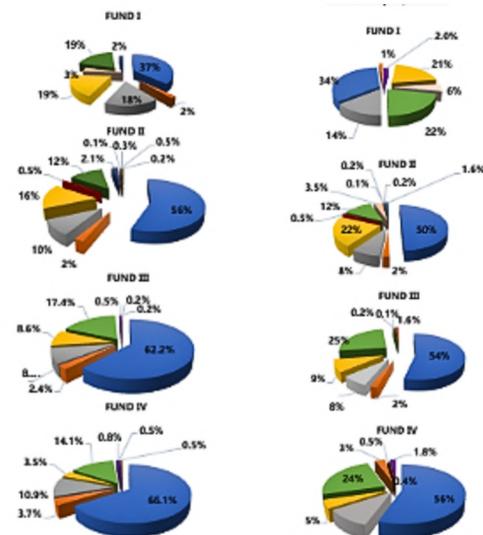
Investment Strategy

- Our focus will remain on defensive stocks with adequate free float and potential for attractive dividends to buffer our portfolio position
- We will invest in government bond instruments particularly those with high coupon/interest rates
- We will be on the look out for "A" rated corporate bonds with attractive coupons, as current yield levels proffer the opportunity for Private Issuers to return to the debt market
- We will continue to invest in money market at best rates for liquidity and flexibility
- Overall our main objective is to continuously maximize return on investment

HEADLINE INFLATION CREEPS TO 33.95%.

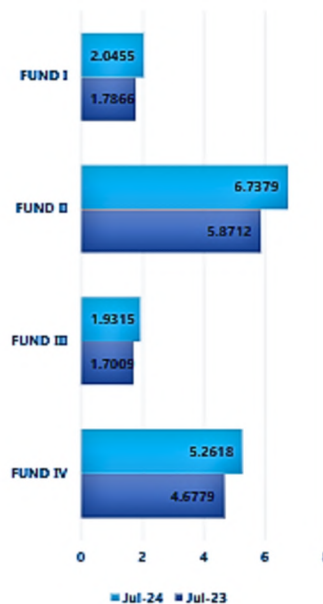


Headline Inflation accelerated further in May, albeit in moderation, due to the continued pressure on food and energy prices. Hence, the Index climbed 26bps to 33.95% from 33.69% printed in April 2024. Food and Core inflation closed at 40.66% and 27.04% respectively. We continue to anticipate a slowed pace of inflation in the near term due to ongoing accelerated tightening interventions by the CBN. Nonetheless, these expectations are barring any radical global/macro-economic shifts and apex bank interventions.



ASSET ALLOCATION AS OF JULY 31ST, 2023

ASSET ALLOCATION AS OF JULY 31ST, 2024



Price Movement Chart- July'23 Vs July'24

THINK PIECE

CHESS OR POLITICS - BY HILDA OKOYE (DIGITAL MARKETING UNIT)

Ever played the game of chess? Ever thought chess mirrors politics? If you have, I bet as a Nigerian you probably see some similarities between that and the game of politics played in our dear motherland. If you haven't ever played, then yikes... you're probably just being strung along.

But... not to worry, I'm about to give you some insights on the game.

On the chess board you'll find the playing pieces. I would tell you about each piece on the chess board, what I would not do is tell you each piece in relation to the Nigerian scene.

Let's begin...



We have the little guys in the front, the pawns. Those guys are dispensable or so people think. Those guys protect the bigger dawgs but "nobody rate them". "Everyone—or at least most people—would sacrifice themselves to protect someone they believe to be more 'precious.' Of 16 pieces used to start the game, 8 pawns. IMAGINE THAT!!! Yet, people do not 'rate them'. SMH!

Next, we have the guys at both ends behind, the rooks. Normal people (that's a lie) call them the castles, they look just like castles so you can see why I say the "normal ones".



These guys move in straight lines. They could get to the end in a straight line, as long as there is no obstruction in their way.



Next up, The KNIGHTS. These guys don't care who tries to stand in their way. They don't exactly see them, maybe because they choose to avoid issues, they don't go far. Now, they leave their obstacles and they know this. So, what do they do? They never move in a straight line. Only three steps in an L-shape. If left to survive these guys will get and achieve great heights.

The bishops come next. Why do they have such a religious name, *makes a suspicious face*. These guys are on a mission, "take out every enemy in sight". They, just like the rooks go in a straight line, the only difference is, these guys go diagonally. They think they are too "sleek". They can't get caught. They would get to their target without being spotted. How foolish! Do they succeed in their foolishness? Sadly, sometimes they do.



Now we're drawing to a close. In life they say the man should protect the woman at all costs, but on the chess board, the Queen shall go to any extent to see that no harm comes to her king. She moves in the direction of every other piece but the knight. You can't protect the top dawg by jumping obstacles, can you? Now you see why she can't "knight-move".

The king! This guy and his pride pull a string or two on my nerves, but this is not about me.



Every other piece on the board goes above and beyond to protect him, yet all this guy does is move only one step at a time in any direction. Such a coward! He does this usually as a means of defence or escape from death. Everyone gets sacrificed to save you, the least you could do is put in a little effort. That's all they ask... Really...Do not be so selfish!

As an opponent all you're after is the "top dawg". He must be taken down at all costs!

Our dear politicians and political parties have so mastered the game of chess, they play it over our heads. The pieces sound oddly familiar now, don't they? You won't tempt this writer to reveal the identity of each piece in the true sense of the game.

Just think, " did I just read an article about the game players in the game of politics or did I really just learn how to move my chess pieces?"

DESKERCISE: SIMPLE MOVES TO KEEP YOU ENERGIZED AND REVITALIZED AT YOUR DESK



Work, work, work... We all know how deadlines, meetings and schedules can dominate our day. In our busy timetable, staying active often gets sidelined. But what if you could fit in a workout without leaving your desk? Absolutely!

Introducing "**Deskercise**"—a series of simple, quick exercises designed to keep you energized, enhance your posture, boost your productivity and maintain your health all from the comfort of your workspace.

Here we Go

1. Chair Squats: Stand up, hover just above your chair as if you're about to sit, hold for a few seconds, and rise back up. This strengthens your legs and core.

2. Seated Leg Raises: While seated, straighten one leg and hold it parallel to the floor for a few seconds, then lower it slowly. Alternate legs to build strength in your thighs and improve circulation.

3. Shoulder Shrugs: Raise your shoulders toward your ears, hold for a moment, then release. This relieves tension in your neck and shoulders.

4. Desk Push-Ups: Place your hands on the edge of your desk, step back, and do push-ups at an incline. It's a quick way to work your arms and chest without needing a gym.

5. Wrist Stretches: Extend one arm in front of you, palm up, and gently pull back on your fingers with the opposite hand. This reduces strain from typing and helps prevent carpal tunnel syndrome (a common condition that affects the hand and wrist, caused by pressure on the median nerve as it travels through the carpal tunnel—a narrow passageway in the wrist)

These deskercises are perfect for breaking up long hours of sitting, helping you stay active, alert and healthy throughout your workday. Remember, every little bit of movement counts!



RETAINING NIGERIAN SPORTING TALENT: LESSONS FROM THE PARIS 2024 OLYMPICS - BY AKINKUNMI GEORGE (LEGAL/SECRETARIATE)



Nigerians have long been recognized for their outstanding abilities in various sports, with numerous athletes gaining global attention for their remarkable achievements. As the Paris Olympics 2024 draws to a close, it's evident that several athletes of Nigerian descent have competed for and won medals on behalf of other nations. While this underscores the vast talent inherent in Nigeria, it also raises concerns about the country's capacity to retain its sporting talents.

The phenomenon of Nigerian athletes representing other nations is not new. Over the years, athletes born in Nigeria or with Nigerian heritage have found opportunities abroad, leading to significant accomplishments on the world stage. For instance, athletes like Salwa Eid Naser, formerly known as Ebelechukwu Agbapuwu who was born in Nigeria, won silver for Bahrain in the women's 400m event at the 2024 Paris Olympics. Germany's Yemisi Ogunleye secured gold in the women's shot put, while Annette Echikunwoke, draped in an American flag, celebrated her silver in the women's hammer throw at Paris 2024. For many Nigerians watching from home, Echikunwoke's victory was bittersweet, as she could have competed in Nigeria's green and white, if not for an alleged administrative oversight by the Athletics Federation of Nigeria (AFN). It's important to note that these athletes often seek better training facilities, financial support, and a more structured pathway to success, which may be lacking in Nigeria.

This situation raises a critical question: **How can Nigeria encourage its citizens to represent their home country in international sports?**

First and foremost, Nigeria must significantly invest in its sports infrastructure. The country is endowed with

abundant human resources—young, vibrant, and talented individuals who, given the right opportunities, can excel in various sports. However, the lack of adequate facilities, training programs, and support systems has often driven athletes to seek opportunities elsewhere.

By developing world-class sports academies, upgrading existing facilities, and ensuring athletes have access to top tier coaching and training, Nigeria can create an environment where its talents can flourish.

In addition, financial incentives and proper athlete welfare are essential. Many athletes leave Nigeria in search of better financial rewards and stability. By offering competitive salaries, sponsorships, and endorsements, Nigeria can retain its top talents. *Both the government and the private sector must collaborate to create sustainable funding models that support athletes from grassroots to elite levels.*

Moreover, Nigeria must address issues related to sports administration. Transparent and efficient sports management is vital for building trust between athletes and governing bodies. Cases of mismanagement, corruption, and lack of support have discouraged many athletes from representing Nigeria. **Implementing reforms that prioritize the athletes' needs and ensure merit-based selections can go a long way in restoring confidence.**

Furthermore, Nigeria should celebrate and honor its sports heroes, both past and present. *By recognizing and rewarding those who have brought glory to the nation, Nigeria can inspire the younger generation to follow in their footsteps.* National recognition, awards, and even post-career opportunities can serve as strong motivations for athletes to remain loyal to their country.

In conclusion, while Nigeria's vast talent pool in sports is undeniable, the country must take proactive measures to retain its athletes. By investing in infrastructure, providing financial support, ensuring proper sports administration, and celebrating its sports heroes, Nigeria can create a nurturing environment where athletes feel valued and motivated to represent their homeland on the global stage. **The Paris Olympics 2024 may have seen Nigerians winning medals for other nations, but with the right strategies, future Olympics could witness these talents bringing glory to Nigeria.**

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