

# A STORY OF SUCCESS WITHIN ADVERSITY

(COVID-19 PANDEMIC)

## Who is ZEP-RE Academy?

ZEP-RE Academy is the training arm of ZEP-RE (PTA Reinsurance Company). It was established in 2016 to institutionalise the company's founding mandate of training insurance and reinsurance industry personnel in the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) region and beyond.

The Academy takes pride in its expertise in insurance and reinsurance training, grounded on the firm belief that continuous professional development is critical for growth and progress in the insurance sector. Its training targets insurance and reinsurance companies' employees, insurance and reinsurance brokers and agents, risk surveyors and loss adjusters, regulatory authorities, and other industry service providers in all insurance and reinsurance business disciplines.

The training curricula are designed for staff in direct underwriting, claims, risk management; and reinsurance underwriting, claims, and accounting. The training programs focus on different insurance classes, including Fire, Engineering, Life and Medical, Marine, Bonds and Casualty, and Motor. Moreover, the Academy customises specialised training programs on Insurance Risk Management

for senior insurance executives and boards of directors, in addition to programs for insurance regulators across the region. The latter include Catastrophe and Risk Accumulation, Exposure Management, and Financial Inclusion.

To create training solutions that are best suited to each of its markets' unique needs and challenges, ZEP-RE Academy partners and collaborates with insurance training colleges and institutes as well as insurance associations in various countries.

Prior to the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, the Academy conducted its training programs throughout the year via in-person seminars, workshops, and conferences, in addition to tailor-made training programs for particular clients' needs.

As a thought leader in insurance and reinsurance, ZEP-RE Academy produces training manuals that offer practical and proven methodologies in different aspects of the industry. Additionally, the Academy contributes well-researched articles to insurance and reinsurance publications in the COMESA region.



## ZEP-RE Academy's Experience in 2020: A Period of the Covid-19 Pandemic

As the year 2020 began, ZEP-RE Academy had set a calendar of training programs for the year, aiming to deliver within a "normal" environment. Between January and March 2020 (pre-Covid), the Academy conducted three workshops in different countries, attracting 100 participants.

However, before the end of the first quarter of the year, the Covid-19 pandemic hit the world. Consequently, various governments put in place measures to mitigate the spread of the virus. Among such measures was the cessation of movement between nations. Faced with such a reality, the Academy had to confront the fact that it was no longer feasible to hold in-person training.

In this unforeseen challenge, the Academy did not sit still but quickly re-strategised, leveraging technology to offer training through webinars. This quick response is evidenced in the first webinar held between April and May, attracting 296 participants. This was a huge leap from the average of 33 and 30 participants trained in-person in 2019 and between January and March 2020 (pre-covid), respectively.

The April 2020 webinar marked the beginning of a

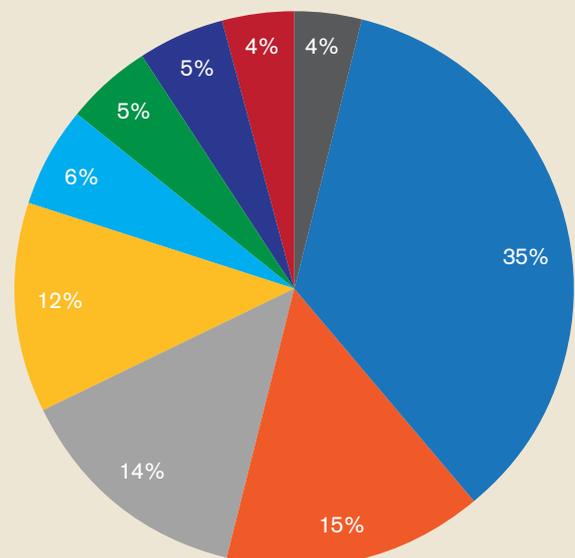
series of webinars on various insurance and reinsurance topics held in the year. Remarkably, the webinars attracted 2,351 participants from 37 countries (see the chart below), whereby the top nine countries in terms of number of participants were Kenya, Zambia, Tanzania, Uganda, Ethiopia, The DRC, Rwanda, Zimbabwe, and Nigeria.



### TOP COUNTRY PARTICIPATION IN ACADEMY WEBINARS



Noteworthy also is that the Academy customised 7 in-house and specialised training sessions for various clients. These attracted 161 participants.



# Achievements from Online Training



## Large numbers of participants

The shift to online training through webinars has made it possible for the Academy to accommodate large numbers of participants in one classroom. From April to December 2020, the Academy conducted 29 webinars, drawing 2,351 participants from 37 countries. This was a significant difference from the 2019 scenario whereby the Academy, through the in-person mode of delivery, conducted 22 training sessions, drawing 714 participants from 9 countries. On several occasions, the Academy found it necessary to hold webinars for more than two consecutive weeks to accommodate the large numbers of participants who had oversubscribed for the training sessions.



## Larger geographic scope

Through the webinar mode of training, the Academy has reached participants from a larger geographic scope, a feat that would not have been attainable with in-person training. Unlike online training, in-person training has its limitations due to costs related to the travel of participants and facilitators, compensation for expert trainers from around the world, and the hiring of training facilities. The webinars have enabled the Academy to deliver on its training mandate while reaching more participants in regions that would otherwise have been exempt from in-person training delivery.



## Cultural and professional diversity in the classrooms

The webinars have attracted participants from all over Africa and beyond, bringing in the benefit of professional and cultural diversity and adding vibrance to the classrooms. This variety provides enriching discussions as the participants share their experiences, challenges, and observations, thus benefitting each other.



## Access to a variety of international facilitators

Without the restriction of geographical borders, the Academy has been able to access a variety of professionals from across the globe as guest facilitators for the training sessions, especially for the speciality classes of business. Such collaborations with expert trainers would not have been possible with in-person training, considering the cost implications on both the Academy and the participants.



## More Achievements

Over and above the already highlighted successes in training, the Academy undertook other activities in 2020. These included actualising the Engineering (CAR/EAR) Rating Manual, completing the Academy Profile, publishing two research articles, and identifying regional and global partners for collaborative training engagements. The goal of the Engineering (CAR/EAR) Rating Manual is to simplify the underwriting of engineering insurance associated with construction projects. It guides on the CAR /EAR policy cover in terms of scope, general exclusions, period of cover, property insured, and third-party liability. It also guides on the rating for basic cover, extensions of basic cover, and any other extensions. The ZEP-RE Academy Profile highlights what the Academy is about: its history, training offered, and other roles, such as writing and publishing training manuals and research articles. The Academy produced two research articles. The first article: "Impact of Covid-19 on private medical insurers," focused on how the pandemic has impacted private medical insurers in East Africa and South Africa, as well as lessons for insurers regarding preparedness for pandemics. The second article: "Digitization in a time of Covid-19," highlighted clients' expectations before and during the pandemic, technology as an enabler in the implementation of the changes needed for service continuity during the pandemic, and how ZEP-RE has used technology for this purpose.

## Conclusion

ZEP-RE Academy's 2020 story is evidently one of success, as it demonstrates that the Academy has and continues to thrive during the Covid-19 pandemic, a period of adversity. All this has become a reality because the Academy chose to perceive the pandemic as an opportunity rather than a challenge, consequently promptly re-strategising by leveraging a tool that was already available: technology. This pivot saw the shift to online training delivery, and as a result, the Academy has been able to deliver on its mandate of training despite the prevailing pandemic.

The shift to online training has brought about achievements that would not have been attainable with in-person training, notably, huge numbers of participants from a larger geographic scope, cultural and professional diversity in the virtual classrooms, and availability of international expert trainers. Indisputably, through technology, the world has become a global village, and, for ZEP-RE Academy, this is manifest in the significant reach of trainees

from all over the African continent and beyond, enabled by technology.

With its firm belief that continuous professional development is critical for growth and progress in the insurance sector, ZEP-RE Academy will continue to deliver on its parent company's mandate of training insurance and reinsurance industry personnel.

Going by its noted success during a period of adversity, the Academy's only way is up.

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### Reference List

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