

Opening speech by the Honourable Minister of Development Planning
Tertiary Student Bursaries Means Testing Mechanism Development
Validation Workshop
'Manthabiseng Convention Center – Wednesday 29th October 2020

Programme Director,

Allow me to pay my respects to:

His Majesty King Letsie III ,

The Right Honourable, the Prime Minister,

President of Senate,

Speaker of the National Assembly,

The Chief Justice,

The Deputy Prime Minister,

Judges of the High Court,

My Colleagues, Honourable Ministers of His Majesty's Government,

Honourable members of both Houses of Parliament,

Excellencies Heads of Diplomatic Missions and International Organizations,

Senior Government Officials,

Our distinguished guest, the Consultant from the Republic of Zambia,

Distinguished Members of the Media, and

Ladies and gentlemen

We are gathered here today to validate the Tertiary Student Bursaries Means Testing report from the consultant. As just a brief background, you may recall that the current Regulations governing the National Manpower Development Secretariat and offering of scholarships and bursaries came into force as far back as 1978. A number of improvements in the manner in which teaching is approached have been made but the law has not as yet been amended.

You must be aware that the Means Testing achieves Basotho's aspirations, through the Vision 2020 as entailed in the National Strategic Development Plan (NSDP) I & II and National Human Resources Development Policy (NHRDP), that they shall have inclusive and equitable access to relevant and quality tertiary education for applied skills development.

It must be noted that due to this state of affairs, the Loan Bursary Fund (LBF) together with its governing National Manpower Development Council (NMDC) and its administering agency, the National Manpower Development Secretariat (NMDS), as government tertiary education student financing vehicle, was assessed on its capacity to provide and manage tertiary student bursaries to fulfill the aspirations and it was found challenging.

The Fund, given its one size fits all Merit Bursary Model criteria to determine eligibility into getting a bursary that rely solely on academic performance such that every Mosotho who has performed well despite their financial needs becomes eligible for a bursary coupled with the increasing demand for bursaries versus depleting government resources as the main source of financing, has perpetuated many Basotho whom without the bursary support could not access tertiary education, obtain skills and have opportunity to overcome poverty.

In the light of this background, the Fund reform has been instituted to transform the bursary eligibility determinant criteria to the Equity Bursary Model using the Means Testing that combines the academic performance with financial neediness to pay for tertiary education. This will ensure that Basotho who are in need of financial support to pursue tertiary education are afforded such support in accordance with each student's financial need and be able to support as many of them as possible when applying the limited one size fits all Merit Bursary Model. The Government has fostered the development and implementation of the Means Testing Mechanism in order to achieve these aspirations.

It must also be noted that government has recognized the challenges of outdated and ineffective governance, management and legal frameworks of the Fund that will further affect its capacity to implement the Means Testing as they have remained not reviewed ever since its establishment 42 years ago from 1978. This must also be transformed in order to enable the Fund capacity to implement the Means Testing.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

You must recall that as stakeholders you have contributed with data and your views when undertaking stakeholders consultations, data collection and interviews to inform the kind of Means Testing aspired by Basotho. As such, today we are gathered here to appreciate and validate the compiled and analyzed information with policy direction and actual instrument from our contributions. This has now crafted the Equity Bursary Model we have long been awaiting for to be able to use as a criterion to determine those Basotho students eligible, according to each's academic performance and financial neediness, for the Fund to award them bursaries to access tertiary education, obtain skills and use those skills to transform their lives and to boost our economy.

Ladies and gentlemen, having said this, I urge all of you to ensure that your discussions and inputs into this work will lead to production of a solid Means Testing tool to indeed provide for eligibility of bursaries for coverage of financially needy Basotho as many as possible.

With these few remarks, I now declare this workshop officially opened.

Thank you.

Khotso!! Pula!! Nala!!