



**REMARKS BY THE CHAIRPERSON,
HIGHER EDUCATION STUDENTS' FINANCING
BOARD**

**AT THE RELEASE OF THE APPROVED
SUCCESSFUL STUDENTS' LOAN BENEFICIARIES
FOR THE ACADEMIC YEAR 2023/2024**

5TH JUNE 2024

**Honorable Minister of State for Higher Education,
The Permanent Secretary Ministry of Education and
Sports,
The Executive Director, Higher Education Students'
Financing Board,
Board Members of HESFB,
Representatives of the Ministry of Education and Sports,
Staff of HESFB,
The Press,
Ladies and Gentlemen.**

I welcome you all to the Media Centre and thank you for accepting our invitation. Hon Minister, I would like to warmly welcome you and thank you for coming to officiate at the release of the 10th Cohort of the Students' Loan Beneficiaries for the AY2023/24.

In a very special way, and through you, I would like to extend my gratitude to the First Lady and Minister of Education and Sports for the guidance and support offered to the Board. I would like to thank you too for always availing yourself and for the continued guidance offered to the Board. Because of your immense support, the Board

has been able to make good progress in the last ten (10) years. We say thank you so much.

I would like to welcome all the Board Members and thank you for the tireless efforts in ensuring that the Student Loan Scheme is a success. We thank you for the commitment, guidance and keenness to the activities of the Board. In a special way, I welcome our senior colleagues at the Ministry of Education and Sports for the cordial working relationship that is exhibited at all times. Special thanks go to the Permanent Secretary for the enormous support given to the Board.

Hon Minister, I would like to recognize the staff present here and others in absentia for working tirelessly within a short period of time handling this year's loan application process. Thank you for your commitment and hard work. I would like to equally thank the Board Members for the self-sacrifice exhibited throughout their service.

I would like to welcome the Press and thank you for being our good allies and for always positively and objectively covering issues concerning the Student Loan Scheme. You have always done a remarkable job and we acknowledge and appreciate you for that.

Hon. Minister, I thank the Executive and the Parliament of Uganda for availing to the Board, a total of UShs. 13.958 billion that was utilized to cater for domestic arrears, all of which have been paid, and award of Loans to the new Cohort of Learners.

Loan Application for the AY2023/24

Hon Minister, in March 2024, the Board invited applicants to the 10th Cohort of the Students' Loan Scheme after missing to announce for the applications at the start of the academic year due to the budgetary constraints that were faced by the Government.

However, in March 2024, following the approval of a supplementary budget of UShs 13.958 billion for the Higher Education Students' Financing Board to pay part of the domestic arrears and support first year's students, the Minister of Education and Sports further guided that the call for Applications was possible.

This invitation came as an intervention to help the needy students who could have joined last year but missed out the opportunity, or who are already at the Higher Learning Institutions in first year but struggling to pursue their academics due to tuition constraint.

Hon Minister, because the target audience to this invitation as cited above were those students already admitted, the Board did run a country-wide awareness campaign through the key media platform and within specific institutions to ensure that all the key information is disseminated to all communities and institutions in the country to achieve an equitable distribution of the awards. This campaign was run in largely 3 Newspapers and 1 Television station to enhance the reach of the messages. This was also distributed in the eligible 23 Universities and 36 Other Tertiary Institutions. This was supplemented by broadcast on all the Board's extensive social media platforms and those of our stakeholders.

Hon Minister, the Board has been on a journey of improving and decentralizing the application modes, making them simpler and user friendly. In this window of applications, the Board continued to use the online application as the sole application mode. I would like to report that this was very successful because of a simpler system which allowed applicants to use their handsets to apply.

Hon Minister, the Students' Loan Scheme has gained popularity among the youth and is appreciated by many Ugandans for availing opportunities to the needy learners to attain higher levels of education and this explains the growing number of applicants in each subsequent year since inception.

During this Academic Year 2023/2024, the Board received and reviewed a total of 1,921 Loan Applications, of which 640 were rejected due to falling outside the eligibility criteria leaving a total of 1,281 as eligible applicants. Of the considered 1,281 eligible applications, 964 (75.25%) were Male Applicants while the Female Applicants were 317 (24.75%).

Working off a budget of UShs 5.2 billion, the Board was able to support 1,196 beneficiaries, which represents 93.4% of the eligible applicants numbering 1,281. This so far represents the highest number of successful applicants to funding ratio in the decade of the Board's operations.

It is important to note that, the 1,921 Loan Applications received in this Academic Year represents a significant drop in the number of applicants by 25.8% against a total of

2,417 Applications received in the Academic Year 2022/2023, having had a bumper 6,247 Applications in the Academic Year 2021/22.

While applications in the Academic Year 2022/23 were affected by the halting of learning due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the low numbers registered in this call for applications which targeted those already enrolled, signify the fact that most qualifying but financially constrained students do not apply for admissions into Higher Education Institutions when there is no hope of access to any financing opportunity.

Hon. Minister, substantial budget allocations and timely funding are important in providing opportunities to thousands of prospective Ugandan learners to transition from basic education to Higher Education and the Students' Loan Scheme has the capacity to overturn the statistics on enrollment to Higher Education in Uganda.

Distribution of Loan Beneficiaries for the AY2023/24

Hon Minister, with the available resource of UShs 5.2 billion, 1,196 students have been approved and will be supported with tuition fees, functional fees and Aids and Appliances for persons with disabilities.

Of the 1,196 selected beneficiaries, Hon. Minister, 879 (73.5%) are Male and 317 (26.5%) are Female, while 1,056 are Undergraduate Degrees and 140 Undergraduate Diploma applicants. Eleven (11) of these beneficiaries are Persons with Disabilities.

The table shows the Gender Distribution and parity among the Loan awards

Eligible Applicants by Course type	Eligible Applicants	Selected Applicants	Percentage
Males	964	879	91.2%
Females	317	317	100%
Total	1,281	1,196	93.4%

Affirmative Action

1. Girl Child

The Students' Loan Scheme runs an affirmative action to increase the number of girls benefitting from the Students' Loan Scheme including being offered an advantage of 7 points in the Means Test Assessment.

It is important to note that while all the eligible 317 female applicants were considered as part of our affirmative action agenda, this only constitutes 26.5% of the total Loan awards given the low number of applicants for the gender. This is testament to the fact that the girl child is heavily affected with issues of lack of financing for Higher Education in addition to the challenges of pursuit of Science subjects/discipline as the major prerequisite for loan application eligibility. Many do not get the chance to enroll and advance with education.

2. Persons with Disabilities

Hon. Minister, Persons with Disability are the only category of applicants that can undertake any programme of their choice under the Students' Loan Scheme, whether in Sciences or Humanities under affirmative action.

We are happy to report that all applicants that identified as Persons with Disability (11) were offered Student Loans and we will not only support their tuition and functional fees but also fund any aids and appliances they may need to complete their studies successfully.

3. Regional Balance

The Board strives to create regional balance in the award of beneficiaries, especially for the Greater Northern region, Karamoja region and the island districts of Buvuma and Kalangala. Given the fact that overall, 9 out of every 10 applicants were supported, every district in Uganda is highly represented with many of them having all applicants being supported in this Cohort. The only exception, Hon. Minister, were districts where we did not receive any applicants for Student Loans and these include; Buvuma, Kaabong, Kapelebyong, Kiryandongo and Lyantonde.

This time round, we have registered good performance in districts that normally post dismal performance such as Madi-Okollo (5); Nakapiripirit (3); Napak (5); Terego (11); Kalangala (3). All the eligible applicants were considered by the Board.

Beneficiaries across Higher Education Institutions

Hon Minister, the beneficiaries of the Students' Loan Scheme are distributed in 23 Universities and 36 Other Tertiary Institutions. It is also important to note that the biggest majority of the selected beneficiaries offer Health Science programmes followed by Engineering and Information Technology programmes, Science Education and other natural sciences taking the rest of the slots. Some of the beneficiaries are offering Tourism programmes on affirmative action.

Registration of the Loans on the Credit Reference Bureau

Hon Minister allow me report to you that, the Board has commenced on the process of registering the Student Loans on the Credit Reference Bureau (CRB). Hon Minister, this will enable the Board to establish a credit history with our beneficiaries, foster financial accountability amongst our beneficiaries since they will be required to acquire a certificate of compliance from the Board before they can acquire another loan from other lending institutions in the country. These efforts, Hon Minister, will bring about effective and efficient recovery of these funds we disburse to these learners.

Increasing need for Higher Education Financing

Hon. Minister, I wish to reiterate the remarks of the Executive Director that the fruits of Government's intervention in Uganda's Education Sector are bearing a huge harvest. The fruits of Universal Primary Education Policy and the successive, Universal Secondary Education and later the Universal Post 'O' Level Education and Training have borne a huge harvest of learners.

From less than 60,000 who qualified for Higher Education in the early 2000s, current statistics show that we now have about 150,000 youth who qualify for Higher Education every year. This is a bumper harvest. However, with the Government Scholarship Scheme only able to support 10,000 each year and only about 40,000 able to pay for themselves, the Higher Education Students' Loan Scheme is the most efficient way to support brilliant but financially constrained young people to access to Higher Education. Once educated, these will make up Uganda's Labor force and increase the tax payers' base. Moreover, the Students' Loan Scheme is a revolving fund where the funds from Loan repayments are now being re-invested to support

another cohort of applicants. In a few years, this will ensure sustainability.

We appeal to you Hon. Minister to caucus with your colleagues in Parliament and in the Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development to make generous and timely allocations and funding for the Students' Loan Scheme.

Hon Minister, today you are going to release the names of the successful Student Loan Beneficiaries for the AY 2023/24 and the Board is likely to advertise for the Academic year 2024/25, the current academic year towards the end of this month of June 2024. Those intending to apply should ensure that they are admitted in the Chartered Higher Learning Institutions.

Hon Minister, it is possible that this could be the last function my Board and I are joining you in the officiating of the release of successful loan applications for our young students because Parliament has already passed a law to mainstream the Board back into the Ministry of Education and Sports; and hence its demise. I would like to request you to pass my appreciation and that of my colleagues to

the First Lady and Minister of Education and Sports for the trust she put in us by appointing us to this very important Board. We shall work seamlessly with our successor unit that will be responsible for the Loan Scheme, as Government may see appropriate, to ensure that the scheme grows from strength to strength.

Hon Minister, once again I would like to thank you for coming to officiate at this function; I thank the Board and staff that has expeditiously concluded the exercise of awarding loans to the student beneficiaries.

Hon Minister, I now take this honor to invite you to make your remarks and officially release the names of the successful Student Loan Beneficiaries for the academic year 2023/2024.

Thank you for listening to me.

Eng. Dr. Charles Wana-Etyem, Ph.D.

CHAIRPERSON OF THE BOARD

For God and my Country

5th June, 2024