



Prof Russel Botman Rector & Vice-Chancellor of Stellenbosch University  
Programme Director  
Distinguished guests,  
Colleagues,  
Friends  
And most importantly our SMSF recipients

Good Afternoon

Former President Nelson Mandela once said, No single person can liberate a country. You can only liberate a country if you act as a collective.”

Today, we are here to celebrate this collective effort by the Department of Higher Education and Training, Institutions of Higher Learning like Stellenbosch University and the National Youth Development Agency but most of all we are here to celebrate our scholarship recipients.

Over 200 young people from disadvantaged backgrounds can today be counted among thousands who are enrolled in various institutions of higher learning across the country, thanks to the National Youth Development Agency’s (NYDA) inaugural Solomon Mahlangu Scholarship Fund. 14 of these students are currently enrolled here at Stellenbosch University.

As the National Youth Development Agency we the value of education and the potential it has to change lives, we have thus shifted our main focus away from Enterprise Finance and Skills Development towards Education and Skills Development. This shift in focus was influenced by numerous studies indicating that most young people in the country actually derive their income from salaries and remittances. In fact only 4.6% of young people between the ages of 15 and 24 derive their income from business related activities. Salaries remain the main source of income for young people which underscores the importance of employment as a source of livelihood for the youth of South Africa. This is not to say that we no longer support entrepreneurship or that we are negating the value of entrepreneurship towards creating jobs but how can one even venture into entrepreneurship without the appropriate education and training?

Initially when we conceptualised the Solomon Mahlangu Scholarship Fund we considered how best to create a legacy programme that future generations can look to and say, ‘that is what the NYDA stands for’

We wanted to create a cadre of prestigious individuals, prestigious not in terms of wealth or status but rather prestigious future professionals that can one day call themselves alumni of the Solomon Mahlangu Scholarship Fund. This prestige will grow as the Solomon Mahlangu Scholarship Fund grows and as each of you students seated here today move on to achieve even more great things this legacy will follow you and the National Youth Development Agency. So today I would like to wish each of our 14 scholarship recipients everything of the best in pursuing your academic qualifications, continue to make us proud and continue to set the example that education is fashionable.

As we look back on the past 20 Years of Freedom and Democracy let us remember that education is one of the sweetest fruits of our democracy. Freedom fighters like Solomon Mahlangu could only dream of such fruits.

Furthermore, to the Mahlangu family, who are not here today, as the NYDA we express our sincere gratitude to them for sharing their son's legacy so freely, for allowing the youth of South Africa the opportunity to own the Solomon Mahlangu Legacy.

The Department of Higher Education and Training must be commended for coming on board as a partner and matching our commitment of R10 million. It is only through partnerships that we can comprehensively tackle youth development. Youth development in essence is as diverse as the population that we serve. Young people face daily challenges like unemployment, health and wellbeing, peer pressure, drug and alcohol abuse, access to information and funding to mention but a few. As the NYDA we cannot tackle all these challenges alone. It is only through partnerships with local structures, civil society, government and the private sector that we can begin to make the necessary impact. With the NYDA's current budget we can only afford to commit the current R10 million in years to come which means that we can only maintain our current students as this scholarship is renewable based on their results. Currently, our funding for students at the Stellenbosch University amounts to R1, 470 530.00 and we if we are to grow this scholarship fund according to plan then next year we will need double this amount to uphold our 14 current students and 14 more recipients. We need stakeholders to come on board and commit to the Solomon Mahlangu Scholarship Fund so that we can grow this scholarship to reach our goal of making this the largest scholarship in the country, continent and the world.

And I leave you with the wise words of Maya Angelou, American poet, social activist and good friend of Dr Martin Luther King Junior who died last month.

She said, "You can only become truly accomplished at something you love. Don't make money your goal. Instead, pursue the things you love doing, and then do them so well that people can't take their eyes off you."

She also said: "Nothing will work unless you do."

I thank you