

Welcome Address by the Executive Secretary of the Tertiary Education Trust Fund Arc Sonny S.T Echono at the TETFund Desk Officers Workshop on TETFund Intervention Programmes in Beneficiary Institutions.

It is with pleasure that I welcome you all to this very important workshop for desk officers of the Fund. As desk officers of the various intervention lines, you carry out a very significant role in the conception, reconciliation and implementation of the Fund's programmes and process. You are the critical interface or intermediary between the Fund, and your Chief Executives, who are the accounting officers of the intervention allocations. The significance of this workshop can therefore not be overemphasized. It becomes even more glaring when we consider the synergy and continuous interaction that is needed between the Fund and your institutions as reflected in the frequency of submissions and communications we have with your institutions on a daily basis. I do sincerely hope that the essence of this workshop, which is to engage, dialogue, discuss and challenge us on ways in which we will improve in our operations and smoothen the process of accessing interventions and their implementation by our beneficiary institutions is realised.

The choice of the theme "Improving TETFund Intervention Programmes and processes in Beneficiary Institutions" was deliberate. As I have stated above the Desk Officers are the interface between the beneficiary institutions and the Fund regarding all activities and interventions from the beginning to the end. The Desk officers are responsible for the day-to-day operations that exist between the Fund and the institutions and are therefore positioned strategically to perform tasks and functions that requires that they are fully informed on the nature and methods of TETFUND operations always. As a result, the Desk Officers of our institutions are expected to be fully equipped and knowledgeable about our guidelines and mandate.

This workshop is expected to bridge the gaps that exist between the Fund and our beneficiary institutions regarding our procedures and processes with regards to all our intervention lines. There shall be presentations by the departments of the Fund that process and reconcile these intervention lines. These presentations shall update us about new policies or changes in our operations or personnel where necessary.

It was in 2022 that my first interaction with heads of institutions took place. It was the first time I engaged the heads of institutions to get inputs for the years 2023 intervention budget. It was also intended to listen to the problems facing our beneficiaries and to look at ways that

we can resolve such issues. We discussed issues related to distressed projects and other problems facing institutions. It was really engaging. It was at the same meeting that I shared my vision and interest in the promotion of research and innovation and computer and information technology in our intervention programs across institutions. I am pleased to note, that indeed we have made some progress in the actualization of these set goals and aspirations which I shared with your heads of institution. However, I must say there is still much to do. Beyond our successes, we must look at the challenges and shortcomings in the actualization of our mandate for which you our desk officers are no doubt, stakeholders.

Distinguished ladies and gentlemen some of the policies and engagements listed below have been carried out with the aim of improving the efficiency and effectiveness of our mandate and interventions across our beneficiary institutions.

1. Review of the Audit Process: We took proactive steps to address issues related to distressed projects across institutions, by revisiting our audit process and implementing a robust Monitoring & Evaluation policy, we have been able to achieve smoother and faster execution of physical infrastructure interventions.
2. One-Day Interactive Engagement with Heads of Beneficiary Institutions: We initiated this session to gather valuable feedback on TETFund intervention projects. This input has been instrumental in refining our strategies and ensuring that our projects are tailored to meet the specific needs of beneficiary institutions.
3. Workshop in Collaboration with the Bureau for Public Procurement: To ensure due process and seamless project implementation across institutions, we partnered with the Bureau for Public Procurement in conducting this workshop. This has further enhanced the transparency and accountability of our operations. This arose because most officials of our public Tertiary Institutions are not fully conversant with laid down procedures, standards, and processes with regards to the award and execution of public procurement in line with the act. Such ignorance many times has led to avoidable problems that hinder the smooth and timely execution of TETFund intervention projects in tertiary institutions across the country.
4. Engagement with beneficiary institutions individually, that have distressed project with a view to understanding the problems and preferring solutions were possible. This has significantly reduced the number of abandoned projects that hitherto was rising in beneficiary institutions.

5. The budgetary provision for security infrastructure and completion of project in our 2023 intervention guidelines to enable us solve some of the persistence problems in our intervention projects.

In the light of these efforts, it is obvious that the Fund has taken deliberate actions that are aimed at solving persistent problems and making our process more efficient.

We have noted the frequent change in the appointment of heads of institutions and desks officers across institutions in the country and also noted that, these newly appointed officers find it difficult to understand the responsibility of interfacing with the Fund on the various intervention programs and the needs of their institutions. This we believe shall be addressed by this workshop. Again, every now and then new institutions are enlisted as beneficiaries of the fund and therefore need to be informed and educated on the Fund's operations, procedures, and mandate. The Fund's guidelines have recently been updated and shall be made available to you soonest.

I want to take this opportunity once again to remind you of the significance of this workshop and urge you to utilize this platform to discuss some of the issues affecting your institutions and our intervention lines. Your ideas, suggestions, and contributions on how best you think we can improve our intervention lines remain valuable and significant to our operations.

Distinguished ladies and gentlemen, this workshop is being organized to familiarize heads of our institutions and TETFund desk officers with the Fund's operations, standards, and benchmarks which will enable you to attain transparency and effectiveness in accessing TETFund interventions. It is my sincere hope that at the end of the workshop the various Heads of our public tertiary institutions and desk officers will be equipped with the knowledge of the relevant guidelines, procedures, and processes of the Fund. It is also hoped that the heads of the institutions and desk officers will appreciate the objectives of this workshop. I wish participants fruitful engagement as we go through the paper presentations.

Thank You and God Bless.