



## COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

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### Press release

#### **Makerere to start regional psycho-trauma project**

A multi-disciplinary team of experts from Makerere University School of Psychology, School of Liberal and Performing Arts, Margaret Trowel School of Industrial and Fine Arts and the Department of Performing Arts and Film are working together to start up a Makerere University Regional Psycho-Trauma Project. This was revealed during a half day stakeholders meeting held at the University on 30<sup>th</sup> April to launch the project.

The project that will last five years is aimed at addressing psycho-trauma related challenges in the East African region, South Sudan and Eastern DR Congo through a Psycho-Trauma Regional Centre that will be located at Makerere University. It is expected to cost USD 1,819,300.

The project will provide avenues for enhancement of standardized training for collaborators and organizations involved in psycho-social activities. It will also coordinate partnerships and networks of entities involved in psycho trauma work; coordinate the implementation of psychosocial interventions and enhance therapeutic healing of communities as well as multidisciplinary research in the area of psycho-trauma.

Addressing participants during the meeting, the Dean, School of Psychology, Assoc. Prof. Peter Baguma, said the project will be instrumental in addressing mental health challenges given the high rate of mental illnesses in the region. He noted that many East

Africans suffer Post Traumatic Stress and Disorder (PTSD) due to the high number of traumatizing events in the region. Uganda and other countries in the East African Region as well as South Sudan and DR Congo have experienced and continue to experience a number of calamities that tremendously affect people's mental health. These include armed conflicts that result into sexual exploitation, gender-based violence, rape and internal displacement; natural calamities; domestic violence; HIV/AIDS; acid attacks; child abuse; traffic accidents and poverty.

In Uganda, studies show that 30% of the population suffers mental illness. A survey conducted by a team of British and Ugandan psychiatrists in 2008 established that the prevalence of post-traumatic stress disorder in northern Uganda is higher than that ever recorded anywhere in the world.

The project implementers will deploy a multidisciplinary approach encompassing mitigating the effects of trauma, capacity building, knowledge creation, awareness raising and advocacy to deal with the problem of psycho-trauma. The project will be implemented in close collaboration with key stakeholders in the region that include governments, universities, NGOs, individuals and researchers already involved in trauma work. "We are hopeful that by the end of the five-year project, we shall have trained and equipped 160 organizational staff with the best skills in handling trauma cases. We also hope to have facilitated 20 students to do their masters and PhDs in the field of mental health," Assoc. Prof. Baguma said.

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