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PRESS RELEASE

MAKERERE TO INTRODUCE COURSE ON CLIMATE CHANGE

The **School of Women and Gender Studies** in the College of Humanities and Social Sciences at Makerere University together with a team from the Gender Equality Studies and Training Programme (GEST) from the University of Iceland; Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development; and Ministry of Water and Environment is developing a short course on **Gender and Climate Change**. The initiative is aimed at increasing awareness about the dangers of climate change and facilitating decision makers and implementers to design strategies of mitigating climate change effects.

This follows joint research on gender and climate change that was conducted by the School of Women and Gender Studies in the districts of Mbale, Kasese and Nakasongola to establish the Impact of and Strategies for Mitigation and Adaptation to Climate Change in Uganda. The study was sponsored by Iceland International Development Agency (ICEIDA), The Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA) and The Royal Norwegian Embassy.

The research team discovered that climate change is taking toll on Uganda's economy as well as the health of people, specifically in the rural communities. "In Mbale, women have resorted to using plastic jerry cans and old shoes for cooking due to limited access to natural resources like wood fuel that most rural communities rely on to prepare meals. The practice is not good because it can result into health complications," said Dr Consolata Kabonesa, the Dean of the School of Women and Gender Studies, also one of the senior researchers on the project.

Dr Kabonesa said prolonged droughts are increasingly depleting vegetation cover in semi arid areas like Nakasongola. Research findings also indicate that heavy rains in most parts of the country have become destructive due to frequent flooding, hailstorms, landslides and lightening. The situation has resulted into food shortages as food crops and plantations are persistently destroyed by the heavy rains.

Dr Kabonesa further noted that the impact of climate change on the health sector is visible in rural communities because of increased incidents of malaria, cough, flue and ulcers that result from stress. "There is need for an urgent solution to avert the situation. The School of

Women and Gender Studies has teamed with the University of Iceland to design a short course on Gender and Climate Change to address some of the issues that may lead to climate change,” she said.

The course will focus on creating awareness about the impact of climate change, how its effects can be mitigated and the coping and adaptation strategies that work. It will be fully developed in 2012 with the partners and will be piloted in different districts upcountry. The course targets community leaders, NGOs and CBOs involved in the campaign to mitigate the effects of climate change.

Facts about climate change

The causes of climate change can be divided into two categories, human and natural causes. It is now a global concern that the climatic changes occurring today have been speeded up because of man's activities. In Mbale for example, the persistent rains coupled with regular encroachment and cultivation on the slopes of Mountain Elgon resulted into landslides in March 2010 that claimed over 350 lives. Even with constant warnings by the government about the cracks on the mountain, people are resistant to move away.

The natural variability and the climate fluctuations of the climate system have always been part of the Earth's history however there have been changes in concentrations of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere growing at an unprecedented rate and magnitude. The United Nations, governments and many top scientists around the world believe that we must act now to stabilize and arrest further changes.

Key remarks about the School of Women and Gender Studies

The School of Women and Gender Studies, College Of Humanities and Social Sciences, is a multidisciplinary academic unit that is at the forefront of academic and community initiatives to address gender and development issues from an African perspective.

Established in 1991, the School has grown into a vibrant institution with national and international outlook. In executing its mandate, the School of Women and Gender Studies works through a comprehensive strategy that includes teaching; research, publication and dissemination; knowledge transfer partnership and networking and advocacy; and gender mainstreaming. The School seeks to contribute to development in Uganda and the region at large through ensuring that gender is an integral part of the development process.

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