

Makerere University gains capacity for climate change monitoring.

By Joshua Turyatamba

Makerere University is fast becoming a key player in climate change monitoring. This comes as a result of the continued and ever growing collaboration between the university and the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation- NORAD.

This dates back to 2002, when NORAD first entered collaboration with the Department of Geography in a project code named NORAD-1. The project, worth Ug Shs. 1 billion aimed at creating a logistical framework and planning strategy for the department.

As a result the unit of Meteorology was introduced, offering postgraduate science courses and the study climatology. Prior to that, students who wished to pursue studies in those areas had to go to the University of Nairobi. Since then, five students have graduated with Masters in climatology. This has contributed to the Department's capacity.

The Department is now focusing on setting up a centre for climate change monitoring. Currently, the department has the capacity to make predictions on impact of emissions and climate change up to a scale of 25 to 30 kilometers using the Regional Climate Monitoring-RCM model.

Unlike the widely used Global Climate Monitoring-GCM model which gives predictions on a far larger scale such as the entire sub-Saharan region, RCM has the potential of predicting for example, the climate scenario of Teso region in 5 years time and how policy can be tailored to deal with such a situation.

The meteorological unit also currently has access to Providing Regional Climates for Impact Studies-PRECIS, which is a regional climate modeling system developed by the UK meteorological office.

According to Dr. Charles Basalirwa, the head of the Geography department, NORAD has been very instrumental in the transformation of the department. In 2007, the two parties entered into yet another initiative worth 500m shillings aimed at developing curriculum for an undergraduate syllabus in climatology. Dr. Basalirwa, says that the department is actually the fourth largest recipient of NORAD funds in the university.