WOMEN FOR GREEN ECONOMY MOVEMENT UGANDA

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COMMUNIQUE ON ADVANCING GIRLS' RIGHTS, WELLBEING AND EQUAL PARTICIPATION IN A CHANGING CLIMATE AHEAD OF THE INTERNATIONAL DAY OF GIRL CHILD.

TO:
Permanent Secretary
Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development
Kampala, Uganda

INTRODUCTION

Women for Green Economy Movement Uganda (WoGEMUganda) is a community-based, women-led organization committed to advancing women's and girls' rights, participation and leadership for inclusive, just and sustainable development in Uganda.

As Uganda joins the world to commemorate the International Day of the Girl Child on 11th, October, 2026, WoGEMUganda reaffirms its commitment to ensuring that every girl can live with dignity, access quality education and healthcare, feel safe from violence and exploitation, and participate meaningfully in decisions that affect her life and future.

We commend the Government of Uganda, local authorities, teachers, parents, civil society and development partners for the efforts made to promote girls' education, child protection, gender equality and climate resilience.

However, through our community engagements with girls and young people in oil-affected communities, we continue to hear about challenges that affect their education, wellbeing, safety and future. It's important to note that Gender norms and Climate change increasingly deepening these challenges through water scarcity, loss of livelihoods, poverty, displacement and disruption of education. Girls often bear a disproportionate burden of these impacts.

WoGEMUganda therefore calls for greater attention to the intersection of climate change, girls' rights, education, mental health, protection and meaningful participation**,** ensuring that girls are not only protected but also recognized as leaders and agents of change.

OBSERVATIONS

1. Mental health and psychosocial wellbeing

Climate change is not only affecting girls' physical lives; it is also affecting how they feel, cope and experience their daily lives. Climate-related disasters, displacement, loss of livelihoods, food and water insecurity, disruption of education and increased responsibilities at home can create stress, anxiety, fear and emotional distress. Girls who experience violence, displacement, poverty or prolonged absence from school may face even greater emotional challenges. Yet, in many vulnerable communities and schools, safe spaces and accessible psychosocial support remain limited.

2. Inadequate water, sanitation and menstrual hygiene facilities

Lack of safe water, private sanitation facilities and adequate menstrual hygiene support continues to affect girls' dignity, comfort and participation in school. For some girls, menstruation can mean missing lessons or staying home because the facilities and support they need are not available.

3. Girls need meaningful participation, not symbolic inclusion

Girls are often spoken about and spoken for when decisions about their lives and future are being made. Their voices, however, are not always heard or taken seriously. Girls must be recognized as rights-holders, leaders and agents of change—not simply as beneficiaries of programmes. Their views should meaningfully inform decisions that affect their education, wellbeing, environment and future.

4. Environmental challenges are affecting girls and their families

Across many communities, water scarcity, environmental degradation and declining household resources are placing additional pressure on families. As water and firewood become harder to access, girls are often among those expected to walk longer distances to collect them, exposing them to exhaustion, insecurity and other risks.

5. Unpaid care work is limiting girls' opportunities

Many girls carry responsibilities such as collecting water and firewood, caring for younger siblings, cooking and cleaning. When these responsibilities become excessive, girls lose valuable time for school, rest, play, friendships and personal development.

Girls should not have to give up their education, childhood or dreams because of responsibilities that should be shared by families, communities and society.

OUR CALL TO ACTION

In light of these concerns, WoGEMUganda calls upon Government, local authorities, schools, development partners, civil society organizations, communities, parents and the private sector to take practical and lasting action to protect girls' rights, education and wellbeing in the face of climate change.

1. Ensure continuity of learning during climate-related emergencies

Government and education authorities should develop practical continuity-of-learning plans for periods when floods, droughts, extreme weather and other emergencies disrupt access to school. These plans should provide safe alternative learning approaches and support girls to return to school quickly after disruptions.

2. Protect girls from increased risks during emergencies

Climate-related emergencies can increase girls' exposure to violence, exploitation and other protection risks. Emergency preparedness and response should therefore include safe spaces, child-protection services, referral pathways, psychosocial support and accessible mechanisms for reporting and responding to violence.

3. Reduce the unpaid care burden on girls

Families and communities should ensure that increasing household pressures caused by climate change do not fall disproportionately on girls. Investments in accessible water, clean and affordable energy, childcare and other essential services can reduce the time girls spend on unpaid domestic work and give them more time to learn, rest and pursue their dreams.

4. Strengthen water, sanitation and menstrual health facilities in schools

Every girl deserves to attend school with dignity. Schools should have safe and reliable water, adequate and private sanitation, handwashing facilities and appropriate menstrual health support. These services are especially important in communities experiencing water scarcity and other climate-related pressures.

5. Integrate self-care and wellbeing into school life

Girls need safe spaces and practical skills to understand their emotions, manage stress, cope with academic and social pressures, build healthy relationships and seek help when they need it. Schools should strengthen access to age-appropriate psychosocial support and create caring environments where girls can speak about their wellbeing without shame, stigma or fear.

We believe that when girls are safe, supported, heard and empowered, they can shape healthier, more resilient and more just communities. Investing in girls today is investing in Uganda's future**.**

6. Integrate Climate Education into Learning

Schools have an important role to play in helping young people understand and respond to the changing climate. Climate education should equip girls and boys with age-appropriate knowledge and practical skills on climate change, environmental conservation, disaster preparedness, adaptation and resilience.

Girls should not be seen only as vulnerable or affected by climate change. They are thinkers, innovators, leaders and problem-solvers with ideas and solutions that can help build more resilient communities. Creating opportunities for girls to learn, experiment, lead environmental initiatives and develop solutions will help them see themselves as active participants in shaping a sustainable future.

7. Give Girls a Meaningful Voice in Climate and Education Decisions

Girls deserve to be heard on issues that directly affect their lives, education and future. We urge policymakers, schools, communities and development partners to create safe and meaningful spaces where girls can express their views and influence decisions.

Girls understand the challenges they face in their homes, schools and communities. Their lived experiences are valuable knowledge. They should therefore have opportunities to participate in climate action, environmental initiatives, school leadership and community decision-making not simply be invited to attend, but genuinely listened to and taken seriously.

OUR COLLECTIVE COMMITMENT

The challenges facing girls do not exist in isolation. Poverty, discrimination, limited access to education and healthcare, violence, harmful social norms and climate change often reinforce one another, making life even harder for girls who are already vulnerable.

Our response must therefore look at the whole girl and the realities surrounding her**.** We must address the immediate challenges she faces while also confronting the deeper inequalities that continue to limit her opportunities, choices and voice.

As we commemorate the International Day of the Girl Child, WoGEMUganda calls for a renewed and collective commitment to ensuring that every girl has the right to learn, to be safe, to be heard, to dream and to participate in shaping her own future.

We urge all stakeholders to move beyond commitments to meaningful action. Let us build education systems and communities that are inclusive, safe, climate-resilient and responsive to girls' realities**,** particularly for those living in communities most affected by climate-related shocks.

When we invest in girls, listen to their voices and create space for their leadership, we are not only changing individual lives we are building stronger, feminist, equitable, more just and climate-resilient communities for everyone.

Cc:

Ministry of Education and Sports.

Department of Youth and Children affairs

For more information,

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