

A Monthly from the East African Sustainability Watch Network and INFORSE East Africa

## Uganda School Year Starts Amidst Escalation of Firewood Prices!



Institutional firewood energy saving stove at Victorious Primary School, Kampala Photo: Kimbowa R.

In Uganda, the school calendar officially starts on Monday February 5. Cooking in many Ugandan schools is done using firewood. Reliance on wood for cooking has contributed to rapid deforestation. The National Forestry Authority (NFA) also revealed that Uganda loses about 92,000 hectares of trees as a result of deforestation annually attributed to demand for firewood, charcoal, timber and other forest products, among others. *The New Vision* (June 2023) estimated that for a full term, a day school of 500 learners needs 625 trees, equivalent to cutting down an acre of eucalyptus or pine trees.

Uganda's National Climate Plan (Nationally Determined Contribution) notes that majority of the Ugandan population is rural-based and has limited access to the electricity grid. As a result, they depend on biomass for basic household energy needs. In 2005, the vast majority (almost 99.5%) of the direct combustion of fuel for energy use in the residential sector was from biomass sources.

The situation does not seem to be shifting significantly. The Uganda Bureau of Statistics' Consumer Price Index (January 2024) shows that firewood prices increased by 9.4 per cent in January 2024 compared to 7.3 per cent in December 2023. In reality, this is being felt already by ordinary folks. For example, only one or 2 split pieces of eucalyptus now cost Ugshs 1,000. This means that a family of 4 people would need a minimum of 4-5 pieces / day to cook food and boil water costing about Ugshs 5,000 per day. The charcoal price is more challenging ever since the Presidential ban was slapped on charcoal sale in Northern Uganda, which has been the current main source. Hence, the option of cooking with charcoal might translate into doubling of the cost of cooking per day in many places as the quality of charcoal is also unreliable.

As firewood continues to contribute to the high deforestation rate in the country, we certainly need an urgent redemption in our cooking and lighting for schools and other institutions in Uganda. This also calls for an adjustment in consumer lifestyles and culinary practices in favour of energy savings and efficiency.

Devices including the inefficient three-stone fireplace that has no place in this period when the country is in dire need of cleaning cooking options. Efficient electric cooking devices also need to be brought on board. Uganda's Energy Policy (2023) underscores the need to address the energy challenge through increasing electricity access and uptake of alternative modern forms of energy, enhancing utilisation of energy-efficient practices and technologies, and promoting sustainable utilisation of biomass. What is needed is moving this from policy to practice

According to Report (2023) titled: 'Uganda 100% Renewable Energy Scenario and Plan by 2050', by Uganda Coalition for Sustainable Development (UCSD) and the International Network for Sustainable Energy (INFORSE), a low electricity demand growth compared to planned generation capacity is likely to exert pressure on consumer tariffs. Affordability is also impacted by other factors including pricing that is in turn affected by foreign exchange rate fluctuations, inflation and the performance of energy service providers. Models for more uptake of clean cooking technologies and options for residential/institutional users like solar home systems, LPG, biogas and improved cook stoves, for lighting, heating and clean cooking need to be scaled up by Government and development agencies in the run up to 2030 (affordable and clean energy) target. **Read more about 'Uganda 100% Renewable Energy Scenario and Plan by 2050', by Uganda Coalition for Sustainable Development and the International Network for Sustainable Energy from [https://www.inforse.org/africa/pdfs/PUB\\_UGANDA\\_100\\_Renewables\\_Scenario\\_Plan\\_by\\_2050\\_Report\\_Jan\\_2023.pdf](https://www.inforse.org/africa/pdfs/PUB_UGANDA_100_Renewables_Scenario_Plan_by_2050_Report_Jan_2023.pdf)**

## Youth in a Drive to Encourage Use of Energy-Efficient Cook Stoves in Nebbi District



Youths of Aratarach group, Oryere village, Akworo sub county in Nebbi district preparing materials for stove construction



A domestic energy-efficient stove in use



Firewood sellers at Angal-Nyaravur market in Nebbi

In the heart of Nebbi District, a remarkable transformation is underway as the community wholeheartedly embraces the construction of energy-efficient stoves in a bid to promote sustainable local energy solutions and improved livelihoods for poor rural communities.

This initiative geared by Joint Energy and Environment Projects (JEEP) in Partnership with Uganda Coalition for Sustainable Development (UCSD) has gained remarkable traction, with enthusiastic participation from the youths, who have eagerly adopted the idea under the guidance of Trainers of Trainees (ToTs) under the *Climate Action for Sustainable Livelihoods (CAISL) Project*. Thus builds from an earlier Project: *The East African Sustainable Energy and Climate Action (EASE-CA) project (2019-23)*. To date they have constructed domestic energy efficient stoves for 87 households.

An average household in Nebbi is made up of 5 people. This means that each cookstove constructed serves 5 lives impacted as these efficient cook stoves dramatically improve indoor air quality, improving health and save money or time that would otherwise be spent on purchasing or collecting fuel wood. On the contrary, the open fires (three-stone fire places) are very inefficient and generate enormous quantities of smoke, which are harmful to the health of the women and children while cooking.

The success of this intervention can be attributed to the proactive involvement of the youths and local leaders, who have become torchbearers in the path towards sustainable living. The ToTs serving as mentors and educators have played a crucial role in passing on the essential skills and knowledge of constructing the domestic energy saving stoves to other members of community. Through their guidance, the youths have not only embraced the concept of energy-efficient stove construction but have also taken ownership of the process. However, this journey has not been without its challenges. For example, sustaining the momentum of the project requires consistent support and encouragement, which, unfortunately, has been lacking. Another significant challenge is the scarcity of essential construction materials, for example anti-hill soil, a vital component in stove construction, is in short supply. In addition, the short supply of tools such as molds, pangas, hoes and spades further complicates the process since the groups have to share the few tools available. This slows down the pace of disseminating the stoves.

Despite these obstacles, the youths remain resilient, driven by a belief in the positive impact of energy-efficient stoves on the daily lives of the community they live in. The commitment of the youths through the ToTs is a beacon of hope for the sustainability of this initiative under the CAISAL Project. As efforts continue to address the challenges head-on, the community's determination to overcome hurdles and build a greener, more energy-efficient future stands as a testament to the power of collective action to *Make Nebbi Green*.

This intervention is part of the one and half year *Climate Action for Sustainable Livelihoods (CAISL) Project* in Nebbi district that seeks to make Nebbi district a JEEP Model district in climate mitigation measures and built-up community resilience, accessibility to environmentally friendly solutions and advocacy skills. With a special focus on youth and women participation, this intervention is in partnership with the Nordic Folkecentre for Renewable Energy (NFRE) with support from CISU Denmark.

## Kikandwa Environmental Association Rolls out Local Climate Action in Mityana District



Kikandwa Environmental Association (KEA) is a community-based development organization based in Mityana district in Uganda. It was founded in 1999 with a purpose of addressing rural development issues and natural resources management that was going out of hand.

KEA action was motivated by the need to address the alarming low levels of agricultural productivity, high level of food insecurity, low income in the rural communities in addition to shielding natural resources against rapid degradation.

Since then, KEA has been focusing on improving the food security and nutrition situation, poverty reduction, improvement of soil fertility, planting and growing indigenous and fruit trees, practicing analog, agro-forestry and community forestry (through the *Half+Half 1000Acre Community Forest* concept); as well as promoting community road rain water harvesting.

According to KEA's Executive Director – Mr John Kaganga, 'These seemingly 'micro-level' interventions have greatly contributed to increase in vegetation cover in the area through restoration of the hitherto degraded landscapes'. In fact these practices and initiatives have converted Kasejere village into a noticeable 'forest village' amidst the glaring surrounding bare and degraded landscapes. Here are a few examples of KEA's work:



Tree seedlings ready for planting at KEA secretariat at Kasejere

A forest patch that has been conserved alongside a maize plantation in Kasejere



Intercropping to reduce soil erosion & increase soil productivity

KEA is now implementing a five-year project that started in 2022: 'Climate Smart Innovative Agro-ecology' in Kikandwa sub county in Mityana district supported by WRI/ AFR100 Fund / TERRA MATCH. The main Project purpose is to plant 80,000 fruit and indigenous trees, improve on peoples livelihood, food security, income, ecosystem restoration, soil fertility and biodiversity. The project seeks to facilitate planting trees including other interventions in four parishes: Kabongezo, Namwene, Kikandwa and Nakwaya parishes. The project also seeks to establish a Learning Agro-tourism Centre.



All these practices and initiatives are twined and tailored to agro ecological practices like diversified crop and livestock farming, agroforestry to enhance the ability of farms to withstand extreme weather events. This resilience is critical as climatic conditions become more unpredictable in Uganda.



For more information about KEA's work, please visit: <https://www.kikandwaenvironmentalassociation.org/>