

Clean But Not Attractive Enough: *Why Clean Cooking Technologies Are Not Popular?*

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The adoption of clean cooking technologies is still a challenge in Peri-urban areas. Through a rapid assessment study conducted in April 2019 by AGEs CONSIDERED (ACO) in Mende sub-country, Wakiso district, it was found out that 85% of households and small business in Mende use charcoal as the main source of cooking energy, thus imposing a huge demand on charcoal. This statistic was also found consistent/ close with other several studies including the 2016/2017 Uganda National Household Survey, which noted that 90% of households use biomass (firewood or charcoal for cooking).

According to UBOS *Statistical abstract 2018*, Wakiso district population growth is at 4% greater than the national annual growth rate of 3%. This presents a very high demand for food to this high ever increasing population which has led to the cropping of cooking businesses all over major and minor trading centers.

Taking a close look at the situation in Wakiso trading centers. It is evident that in evenings, so many Chapati, chips and mobile restaurants open up and all these use poor or low quality cooking stoves that consume a lot of charcoal

For instance Bob is one of the so many business men running a chapatti business in Namusera trading centre, he only runs it in the evenings since during day he rides a bodaboda. He says that he uses half a bag of charcoal a week to run his business, he explained that if he worked during day time and nights, he would use a full bag of charcoal a week.



Business men running chips selling businesses with very low energy saving stoves in one of the trading centres in mende sub-county. (photo credit: AGEs CONSIDERED)

With this case, one can easily make simple maths and notice that fifty people running similar businesses like Bob in the same trading centre would require 2,400 bags a year! This in return reflects that many trees have to be cut down to satisfactorily meet this high demand. This is a huge issue that requires serious interventions. From the Uganda National charcoal survey, 2016 policy brief report by Ministry of Energy and Mineral Development (the Green Charcoal project)., it was noted that the country loses 60 million metric tons of wood annually valued at UGX 1,179,385,920,000 for charcoal production alone.

In the earlier mentioned rapid assessment exercise conducted by AGEs CONSIDERED, it was found out that 35% did not know about better energy saving alternatives, 38% said alternatives like electricity are expensive and that they cannot afford it. 22% said charcoal is easier to find and accessible since supply is always guaranteed. 5% gave responses depicting that they lack access and information about energy saving and clean cooking stoves.

These responses show a very big gap in realising the achievement of clean cooking in peri-urban areas that are mushrooming every now and then in Wakiso and the rest of the country. The implications of ignoring this patent issue ranges from environmental issues including increased deforestation and its effects, financial issues including reduced revenue from associated wood products to health related challenges for example increased respiratory diseases from inhaling fumes as a result of poor cooking stoves and so many others.

Due to this fact ACO suggests the following recommendations to bridge this huge gap;

- a) Ministry of Energy and Mineral Development, Ministry of Finance Planning and Economic Development should subsidise on the alternatives like Liquefied Petroleum gas, Biogas and electricity to make them affordable to the low income earners
- b) Ministry of Energy and Mineral development and Ministry of Water and Environment and Civil society need to train the population and target groups like restaurant owners and other people that run such businesses on use of alternative energy efficient solutions.
- c) Ministry of Energy and Mineral Development and Uganda National Bureau of Standards need to promote standards for efficient improved cooking stoves and should popularize and disseminate them to such target populations
- d) Media engagements should be used regularly to educate the wider population about clean cooking alternatives
- e) Donor communities supporting the use of renewable technologies should also put emphasis on the clean cooking rather than promoting energy for lighting only.

Some of these recommendations can be addressed through adoption into the 2019 ongoing Energy policy reviews. But also AGEs CONSIDERED (ACO) is committed to supporting initiatives that come to solve this problem with support from the Renewable Energy CSO Network c/o Environmental Alert and other development partners.