

BY REAGAN SSEMPIJJA

**A** mention of charcoal automatically triggers images of black pieces of burnt timber. To the contrary, Aidah Tumuhirwe has innovated a new form of charcoal made out of domestic waste. Before going into this, Tumuhirwe used to make candles.

While she went around marketing her candles, people told her about their need for energy-saving charcoal. As the demand grew, she started thinking of how to do something about it.

“I made some research about energy-saving charcoal and I realised that one could actually make charcoal briquettes from domestic waste. Early this year, I started doing research on how to make these briquettes,” she says.

“I subsequently got my team working on a machine that would produce the briquettes. As soon as we finished building the machine, we taking producing the charcoal on a large scale,” Tumuhirwe adds.

Tumuhirwe does her business under her company, United Innovations Development Centre, located in Kireka, Kira municipality in Wakiso district. The company currently employs 10 permanent employees.

**How the machine works**

Tumuhirwe says the first step is to collect domestic waste, which they get from their neighbourhood in Kireka and other areas in Wakiso district. The waste is then dried and placed in another drum for combustion. The combustion process takes about five hours.

“We then make it ready for transfer to the grinding machine, which compresses it and forms a black solid piece. After compressing it we then transfer to the charcoal-making machine,” she says.

This machine then chops the dried solid piece into smaller

# TUMUHIRWE'S CHARCOAL-MAKING MACHINE A FRIEND TO THE ENVIRONMENT

PHOTOS BY REAGAN SSEMPIJJA



Tumuhirwe explains how the charcoal she sells is made



Employees at Tumuhirwe's workshop testing a new machine



Charcoal-making in progress at Tumuhirwe's complex

pieces of charcoal. The smashed pieces are then put in another machine, which reassembles the charcoal into another solid block of charcoal. The solidified block is then squeezed and passed through the 16 holes that shape a cylindrical form of charcoal briquette.

Tumuhirwe adds that the cylindrical briquettes are then made to dry and cool down so that they solidify more and get ready for sale.

They have also innovated another machine that makes bigger sizes of briquettes so that they too can supply schools and hotels which cook in large quantities.

They have manufactured another 10 machines to sell to other entrepreneurs interested

in the business.

**Other products**

Before coming up with the new charcoal-making machine, Tumuhirwe was involved in the making of candles. She explains how candles are made.

“The first step is to boil and formulate a block of wax. This block is then dried and left to cool so that it solidifies. This solidified wax block is then put into a metallic rack with cylindrical shapes. A thread made of fabric is passed through the middle of the shaped candle. The candles are cooled and ready for sale after this process,” Tumuhirwe says.

**Challenges**

“We would like to produce more

machines but it is expensive. It requires a lot of resources which we don't have at the moment,” Tumuhirwe says.

She also says they are facing a challenge of space. “We operate from a small area, yet what we do requires a lot of space, especially when it comes to storing and drying the briquettes.”

**Plans**

Tumuhirwe says they want to make a bigger machine that can produce over 20,000 briquettes per day.

“We also plan to acquire a bigger chunk of land so that we start operating on a larger scale. We are already looking around although we are financially constrained,” she says.

## Katale.ug eases your shopping experience

BY AHMAD MUTU

**T**he Katale.ug application is a web-based application developed by Brian Atwine, a graduate of computer science and his colleagues from Ndejje University. Their primary target is the group of the population that find a hard time going to market to buy supplies. They work in partnership with different supermarkets and product distributors.

To buy things on the platform, one logs on to katale.ug, browses and searches for the merchandise they want and “add to cart”.

“As you add the items, your total cost accumulates. You

are also able to remove goods from cart once you change your mind in the process of shopping. They offer a variety of locally-produced products, ranging from drinks to merchandise and groceries. We were among the pioneers to offer online shopping of groceries,” says Atwine.

They also have a short code \*252# through which to access the services, which include, payments, goods and services, school fees, banks and SACCOS, airtime, data, bundles, and money transactions. According to Atwine, while on the application, a user accumulates loyalty points which they can use to get free goods.

He explains that after shopping, one enters a few details which include physical

address and phone number through which payment is done using mobile money and an instant notification is sent.

Atwine adds that katale.ug does physical delivery of items.

He says they deal with local manufacturers irrespective of the size of the business.

“If one wants to have their products on the platform, they take to the platform and register, then the administrators do due diligence by checking if the product meets the quality standards and approve,” he says.

Katale.ug offers many other features like sending money across networks and events ticketing.

So far, they make about 100 transactions on the application weekly.

## Last minute grocery shopping tips

BY ANGELA NSIMBI

**D**uring the busy school term, it is important to plan the menu at home. Meal planning is crucial also when you need to pack a break time snack for school children.

**Healthy snacks**

Look out for healthy snacks for the children's break. Vary the menu with cassava chips, sweet potato chips, sandwiches, milk, home-made juice and fruit. Make the market your friend for a fresh supply of fruits and vegetables for good bargains.

**Juice**

Making juice is better than buying fizzy drinks because it is healthier. Besides, this is the season when mangoes and pineapples are in abundance. Use your blender to make the juice. Ensure that you also pack some for

yourself to cut down expenses while at the workplace.

**Bread**

Having bread is important because you can serve it in a versatile manner by ensuring that you vary the filling. For instance, tinned sardines cost about sh3,000 in most supermarkets. Buttered bread with such filling is a healthy and nutritious snack for the children and yourself.

**Flour**

Baking flour comes in handy, so always have some in store. Also, purchase a tray of eggs about sh11,000 because you can serve these in a varied manner. For instance, you can use boiled eggs as a filling for a sandwich or using the eggs to make French toast.

**Saving tips**

● Eggs are a must-have. Buy bread from big supermarkets because it is usually cheaper there. Always replace broken containers.