

the country under tight supervision of experienced UMLTA president, Brenda Mushabe, Hepatitis B was their endeavours to ensure quality of medical services in the country.

become unreachable, but everyone could access dad at any time," he said.

New taxes drive up prices of gas, solar power

By Pascal Kwesiga
and Joan Murungi

Patrick Kyomuhendo of Kikwatamigo village on the Hoima-Masindi road, installed a solar system for his parents in the same area in 2010.

He bought an inverter at roughly sh400,000 and a battery (200Ah) at sh620,000. He parted with sh500,000 for a panel and sh250,000 for a solar charge controller (20Amps) as well as sh15,000 for each bulb.

However, later the Government scrapped the 18% Value Added Tax (VAT) on some of the solar power appliances, reducing the price of the panel to sh300,000, sh130,000 for a charge controller and sh5,000 for a bulb.

But the Government transferred the tax to solar inverters and batteries in the previous financial year. As a result, the prices of the relatively better quality inverter (the

same brand Kyomuhendo bought in 2010) increased to sh700,000, from sh400,000, while the cost of a battery (200Ah) rose to sh1.1m, from sh620,000 five years earlier.

So, Kyomuhendo paid about two times higher last year for the same quality of battery and inverter to install a solar power system in his newly built home in Kikwatamigo.

Cost up

Kyomuhendo, who is an accredited solar systems installer, said the tax has increased the cost of solar power and that some people have resorted to buying 'substandard' appliances.

"There are people with mud-and-wattle houses with solar power now. Some of them installed solar power before tax was transferred to batteries and inverters, but now few are buying solar appliances because the cost has gone up," he added.

Olive Nahwera, the LPG (Liquefied

BETWEEN THE LINES:

The energy ministry permanent secretary, Dr Stephen Isabalija, noted that the need to raise revenue should be balanced with the desire to achieve transformational goals.

Petroleum Gas) co-ordinator at Total Uganda, said the 18% VAT on gas and solar appliances has driven up the cost of the products the company is providing to the people to supplement government effort to increase power access and reduce the use of toxic sources of fuel for cooking.

She explained that a cylinder containing 6kg of gas, plus a burner and grill now costs about sh200,000, but the same went for sh180,000 two years ago before VAT was introduced.

"We want more people to use sources

of energy that are not hazardous to their lives and enable many to have power which is the government's position, but the taxes are failing us. We appeal to the Government to reduce them," Nahwera said.

She was speaking during a press conference to announce the launch of an opened-ended sustainable energy use campaign by the energy ministry and Eskom, one of the power providers, at the ministry headquarters in Kampala yesterday.

The energy ministry Permanent Secretary, Dr Stephen Isabalija, noted that taxes could indeed be hindering the promotional effort for gas and solar power, stating that the need to raise revenue should be balanced with the desire to achieve transformational goals.

"I concede there is a challenge posed by tax. I think we need to enable the people to access power and gas. That is why the Government

is promoting free power connections now," he added.

Sustainable energy drive

Isabalija said the sustainable energy campaign is vital at the time when the Government is seeking to promote alternative sources of energy and increasing power consumption, as well as reducing its cost.

The campaign, which will be officially launched in Lira next week, will involve sensitising the people to embrace energy-saving technologies and using the available sources of energy in a sustainable manner.

The Government plans to increase power coverage from the current 24% to 80% by 2040. This will require increasing power generation from over 860MW today to 2,500MW by 2020 and 41,738MW by 2040. It will also require harnessing alternative sources of power, including solar and nuclear energy.