

Alex Tumulanye, says his innovative venture of turning waste into pavers enables him conserve the environment while making money.

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# He found treasure at a dumping site

**K**isugu-Kasanvu's dump spot looks as undesirable as any other garbage collection centre in the city.

However, on a random day, you will find a couple of youth collecting plastic bottles and polythene bags at the site.

The trash is packed in large piles next to the urinal areas at the dumping site.

The empty plastic bottles are manually wrapped up in creamy thick netted rope-like, voluminous sacks in an orderly manner by the team that manages the site.

You will discover that this trash is a treasure for them. The Kasanvu environmentalist group comprises three females and two males who believe in profit ventures that are big on environmental conservation.

## Starting out

"In 2006, KCCA entrusted me with this area to work together with residents and ensure proper disposal of the garbage wastes. After an environmental sustainability training from Hope For A Child, a non-profitable organisation under the initiative of KCCA, I discovered a way to utilise the rubbish," recounts Alex Tumulanye, the group chairperson and KCCA worker.

After acquiring adequate training in making of plastic pavers, Tumulanye was joined by Moses Mubiru, an environment student from St Lawrence University, who advocated for the idea at the University science exhibition aimed at environmental sustainability. "Through Mubiru's initiative, we managed to be recognised at the recently concluded university environmentalist competitions that happened at St Lawrence University early this year," adds Tumulanye.

The dumping site where they operate is enclosed with a fence and harbors a number of wooden shacks under which readily processed products and equipments are sheltered. Right in front of the shacks, lays the working space that is spacious enough for the making of plastic pavers. The group makes up to 1,000 pavers a day using polythene paper, soil and plastic bottles.

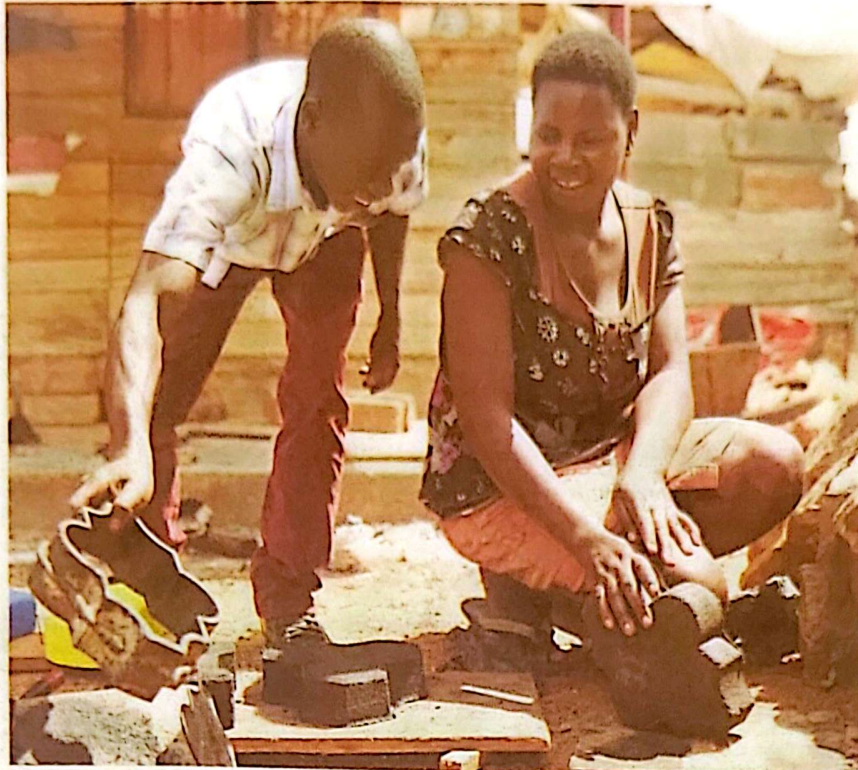
According to Faridah Nakirya, one of the Kasanvu group members they decided to gather all these disposed of materials to utilise them for other commercial and environmentally friendly needs.

Tumulanye reveals that in a persistent effort to keep the environment clean, the group also makes long lasting charcoal (briquettes) from trash materials such as banana peels, sugarcane peels, cassava flour and soil which costs Shs1, 000.

## Market

To increase product consumption and sales, product awareness and knowledge is essential.

According to Nakirya, people are not knowledgeable enough about the product and its incentives, which



Left: Alex Tumulanye making the plastic paver. Below (L): A woman holds polythene, one of the raw materials for making briquettes. PHOTOS MICHAEL KAKUMIRIZI

**1,500**

AMOUNT IN SHILLINGS FOR A PAVER AT KULUMUNYE SHOP

makes marketing the products hard. "Plastic pavers are actually cheaper at a cost of Shs1, 500 per paver unlike the commonly known concrete pavers. Unlike, concrete pavers ability to enhance the growth of plants, plastic pavers do not allow for plants to grow within due to their polythene nature that does not make it suitable for the survival of growing plants hence making it easy to maintain," she explains.

Paul Kato, a 38-year-old resident of Muyenga, speaks well of his acquisition of the plastic pavers. He says, "For the past 16 years, I have struggled with renovating and replacing cracked concrete pavers. But when a friend of mine introduced the new innovations of plastic pavers in his garage, I decided to opt for them too. I have never been disappointed as they are strong and pocket friendly."

## Challenges

Tumulanye says apart from the other easily accessed materials from waste products, machines are quite expensive.

"The major challenge apart from a slow market for the product is the cost of the necessary tools such as; mixers, crushers and a cooking drum. The machine that neatly forms the pavers costs Shs20m which money I don't have currently," he said.

In an endeavour to work within their means, the team concentrates on using the available materials and equipment such as the frying pan made from Katwe and paver shapers.

"We have hired a group of salesmen and ladies who have been tasked with increasing product awareness among Ugandans and policy makers through sales and exhibitions," Kulumunye further reveals.

And in this way, they hope that government officials may recognise their role in preserving the environment and offer them funds to purchase modified equipment.

## The making process

The necessary materials for the making of the plastic pavers such as; polythene paper, soil and plastic bottles. Faridah Nakirya, a member explains the process, "Put polythene in an average sized frying pan and heat it on fire wood till it melts into liquid, after which you mix sandy soil in the liquid and mingle it to solid form. Stuff the already heated up solid content in metallic paver shapers. Then cover the solid for two minutes and press the content using a cover shaper and cloth but be careful not to get any burns. Finally, leave it to cool for 15minutes." The process needs about four people for work to shift more swiftly. They group makes more than 1, 000 pavers in a day.

