

CHARCOAL RELIANCE CHOKES ENERGY TRANSITION GOALS

NOVEL STRATEGIES

Despite many efforts by the Government and development partners to promote clean energy cooking methods, charcoal use persists throughout the country. As the energy switch is a big part of various global and national initiatives, a conference of like-minded thinkers has proposed a different approach to curbing charcoal use among local communities, write **Aloysious Kasoma** and **Rhyman Agaba**

Uganda's heavy reliance on charcoal is increasingly emerging as a major stumbling block to the country's ambitious energy transition and environmental targets, according to experts at a high-level policy dialogue convened by the Economic Policy Research Centre (EPRC).

Held at the Sheraton Kampala Hotel recently, the dialogue brought together policymakers, researchers and energy-sector players to ponder on whether Uganda can realistically meet its national and global energy commitments, as millions of households remain dependent on charcoal.

At the heart of the discussions was a stark contradiction: Even as Uganda pushes for the adoption of cleaner energy and forest restoration, charcoal remains the primary cooking fuel – especially in urban areas.

Findings presented at the dialogue show that charcoal is still deeply entrenched in Uganda's energy mix. Nearly half – 48.6% – of urban households rely on charcoal as their main cooking fuel, with dependence in Kampala standing at an even higher 70.6%.

This persistent reliance comes despite sustained efforts by the Government and development partners

to promote alternatives, such as liquefied petroleum gas (LPG), electricity and improved cookstoves.

Uganda's Fourth National Development Plan (NDPIV) sets ambitious targets, including reducing reliance on traditional biomass from 75% to 50% and increasing clean cooking energy use to 50% by 2030. However, experts warn that current consumption patterns suggest the country is unlikely to meet these targets without a major shift in strategy.

"Low uptake of alternatives persists despite promotional efforts," the report notes, pointing to affordability constraints and



EPRC executive director Dr. Ssewa

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