



## An alternative fuel source: Make charcoal briquettes from banana peels

### Notes to broadcaster

These days there is increased pressure on forests as people cut trees for firewood and other purposes. In the last 30 years, for example, Uganda has lost half of her forest cover. Local people are being encouraged to adopt energy saving technologies that put less pressure on natural resources. One example is the use of banana peelings, commonly referred to as banachakol (banana charcoal), to make charcoal briquettes. The following program features an interview with a woman from a group of community workers known as Bakyala Tweyune ("Women in self-help"), who describes the advantages of banachakol, and the production process for the briquettes.

### Start of program

#### SIGNATURE TUNE

#### SOUND EFFECTS (PICK AXE CHOPPING FIREWOOD).

**Host:** If you grow bananas in any part of the world, you will be interested in our program today, because we are going to talk about how banana peelings can be used to make charcoal briquettes. This is a technology that will save many trees.

This technology started in Lungujja near Kampala , where a woman named Namusoke Immaculate, the founder of Bakyala Tweyune women's group, has innovated a new method of alternative fuel by turning banana peelings into charcoal briquettes. Our guest today is Rita Ashaba, a community worker from Bakyala Tweyune. Rita, thank you for coming to share with us this new technology.

**Guest:** You're welcome. Good evening listeners.

**Host:** How did you adopt the technology of banana peeling briquettes?

**Guest:** I have known the technology of banana peeling briquettes for five years, which has made me a constant user and promoter of the product. I grow bananas and besides using the peelings as animal feed for my goats and for manure, I now use them to make charcoal briquettes.

**Host:** So banana peelings have many different uses. Can you describe for our listeners how to make charcoal briquettes from the banana peels? What materials are needed?

**Guest:** You will need one-half basin full of fresh banana peelings, a quarter basin of charcoal dust, and a quarter basin of fine sand.

**Host:** Okay, banana peelings, charcoal dust and sand. Once I have these things together, what do I do?



**Guest:** First you have to chop the fresh banana peelings into small pieces. Once the banana peelings are chopped, then mix the three ingredients together - the banana peelings, the charcoal dust and the sand.

**Host:** Are these in equal amounts?

**Guest:** No, the banana peelings should be more, approximately half of the mixture. Charcoal dust and sand should each be a quarter of the quantity of the peelings.

**Host:** Okay, so we are mixing these three things together.

**Guest:** That's right. The sap in the banana peelings will tie up the sand and charcoal dust. Then you make the briquettes of a suitable size. They are put under the sun and are dried. Then they are ready for use just like that.

**Host:** That sounds simple and interesting. I bet it does not take long to dry does it?

**Guest:** The drying takes a short time, of course depending on the weather.

**Host:** Listeners before we hear about the advantages of using banachakol, let's have a music break.

### **MUSIC BREAK**

**Host:** We're back with our guest who has been talking about how to make banana peel charcoal briquettes. Rita what is the advantage of using the banana peel charcoal briquettes compared to using other forms of fuel?

**Guest:** If you live in a banana growing area, it will be easy for you to get the banana peelings. That's one of the benefits. The other things you need are simply sand and charcoal dust. All these things are found close to home, so women do not have to move long distances away from home in search for fuel.

**Host:** And I understand that the procedure of making the briquettes is also easy.

**Guest:** Yes. In most cases I ask my children to help and because of the ease, to them it is like playing. One more thing. You do NOT need a special fireplace to burn this charcoal. The charcoal burns for a long time. So that means one does not use a lot of it when cooking. Besides much less smoke is produced so the cooking place is cleaner and safer.

**Host:** From your experience in working with rural women how has the technology of using banachakol changed the lives of some users?

**Guest:** Because of banachakol women now have more time with their children at home, which means more care, one of which is that their meals are on time. For the many women groups I interact with, they have started self-help projects like zero grazing, mushroom farming and tailoring.



**Host:** Have you involved men in this new technology?

**Guest:** In the beginning some women feared to join the groups because their husbands did not approve of the venture. But after realizing the benefits of the technology, men have come in to help the women especially in marketing banachakol. Certainly everything that is about women concerns men.

**Host:** How is the demand for banachakol so far?

**Guest:** Demand is rising and we hope to purchase equipment to crush the peelings so that it is even easier. We also hope to build a larger drying area and of course we want to start employing people to sort banana peelings from garbage in areas where they are thrown.

**Host:** Rita, thank you for joining us today. Dear listeners that brings us to the end of our program about conserving our environment. I am grateful to Rita our guest who has told us a lot about the banachakol, a new source of fuel for cooking. Until next time cheers and have a good evening.

**SIGNATURE TUNE TO END PROGRAM.**

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**Information sources**

Progressive report on rural women's activities, by Bakyala Tweyune, 2004 (unpublished).

