



Live from Kenya

by Bella Adhiambo Deputy Director of EP Kenya

COOKING GOES BIO

Today was an eventful day no matter what side you look at it from. If you think the glass is half full you will celebrate- if you think the glass is half empty you will postpone the celebration for later. EPs pilot Biogas digester works! The gas did burn after a 2 month long wait with lots of modifications and improvisation done via email and phone text by EPs Dr. Ingo Hary. He was in the Mara in June to construct the biogas digester which is a simpler and comparatively cheaper model which uses Polyethylene tubular sheets instead of the heavier and more costly metal dome. This is the first of many digesters EP intends to construct in Mpuai households.

The project, aptly dubbed One Biogas Digester-One Household is on time to address the problems of shrinking forest land vis-à-vis increasing populations. For a community that largely relies on firewood for its cooking, their land is fast being stripped of its trees and other vegetative cover to meet the increasing demand. There was need to introduce alternative sources of energy that does not entail deforestation but instead relies on bio fuel produced using a substrate from cow dung and water. If there are two things that are in plenty around here, that will be cow dung and scorching heat from the sun- two things that drive the bio digesters. That wraps up the half full version of the story.

The half empty version is that we need a gas stove that works with biogas and not your usual LPG gas bought off petrol stations or supermarkets. This means the technicians have to make specific modifications on the gas stoves before Mama Seleton can start cooking using her very own biogas cooker-smoke free, soot free and as cheap as all the free cow dung her 30 cows produce everyday! Reto spent a better part of today shuttling between Maendeleo village (Friends of Conservation's biogas centre) and Josephat,s place (EPs biogas site) trying to figure out things. He could not have put it any better- we know we got it right all we need now is the right stove.

Word gets around fast and soon EP will have to construct the 2nd pilot digester- what can I say- Good luck picking on the 2nd household. The rest will be easy because there will be some costs to be incurred by the beneficiaries- relatively cheaper costs if compared to the costs of cooking using kerosene or firewood. At the risk of becoming monotonous, let us make another toast to the EP team! Next time we will applaud or compose songs in praise of EP, Kenyan style.

Bella Adhiambo

01/10/2011 Kenya