**BIOGAS ASSESSMENT PROJECT**

**Site ID: 31**

**Date: September 22, 2022**

**Interviewer:** Where did this digester originate from?

**Interviewee**: The project came through Tengani EPA [Extension Planning Area]. The basis of the project was to conduct a pilot project of 5 or 6 biogas digesters. I think the total number of digesters was 10, but the remaining digesters went to another village within Tengani T/A (Tradition Authority) though. When the people from the EPA came, they said a certain organization was giving us biogas digesters with an objective of reducing deforestation by tackling the use of firewood and charcoal for cooking. So, I think the people from Tengani EPA know exactly which organization it was.

**Interviewer:** When you say EPA, you mean the agriculture office as in Extension Planning Area?

**Interviewee:** Yeah

**Interviewer:** So they didn’t tell you which organization it was? Or, did you only engage with people from Tengani EPA?

**Interviewee:** I am not sure. The people were just the saying biogas, biogas.

**Interviewer:** Who built it?

**Interviewee:** The names are on this paper [hands over a handover document]

**Interviewer:** Oh, it is [name redacted]. How many people did he come with?

**Interviewee**: He came with 2 other people. So they were 3 in total. One was a respectable man in his late 40s, while the other 2 were simple young men.

**Interviewer**: Okay, did you help in the building process?

**Interviewee**: Yes, I was responsible for digging the hole and preparing feedstock, which was used to feed the digester. As for assembling the digester, they did the work and we were only observing.

**Interviewer**: How many were you on your side?

**Interviewee**: It was my family and I basically, plus some neighbors, who came to see the installation of the digester.

**Interviewer**: Like how many people?

**Interviewee**: 8 people of which 4 people were neighbors.

**Interviewer**: So, 8 of you were involved in digging, collecting water and making feedstock?

**Interviewee**: I did the digging alone. I also sourced manure alone. However, my family and neighbors assisted me in collecting water. Also, I hired people to help me transport the manure because it was a lot, and I was getting it from a far distant. I think it was 6 bags (50 kg) of cow manure. But, some I got from my cow house, because we used 12 bags to start it up.

**Interviewer**: Where did you get it?

**Interviewee**: At Chambutulo, the place I said you should call me when you were passing by.

**Interviewer**: Oh, some 2 km from here.

**Interviewee**: Yeah

**Interviewer**: When was it built?

**Interviewee**: I think the date is on the paper as well. Everything is there.

**Interviewer**: Okay, let me see. Yeah, it was built on 11 July 2017. How long did it take to build it?

**Interviewee**: They gave me pressure to do things in haste. I was told to do the work in 4 days. It took me a day to dig the hole, 2 days to gather feedstock, and another day for preparing and assembling the digester. After that, I was told to wait for 7 days to commission it.

**Interviewer**: You have told me you were getting manure at Chambutulo, where were you getting water?

**Interviewee**: I was getting water from a borehole behind those trees. I think it is half a kilometer from here.

**Interviewer**: Okay. You have also said you used some of your cow manure. How many cows did you have?

**Interviewee**: I had 5 cows... And, I was told to feed it daily with 20 Kgs of fresh cow manure. So that time it was simple for us because our cows were producing more manure than required.

**Interviewer**: Okay, did you buy the 6 bags of manure from Chambutulo?

**Interviewee**: Yes, I brought.

**Interviewer**: Like how much?

**Interviewee**: I did not buy it from one person. So, one person charged me K500 per bag and I got 2 bags from him. The other person charged me K300 per bag and I got 4 bags from him. I bought it from Chambutulo village because there was high demand for cow manure here that time. Everyone was sourcing cow manure to start up his or her digester, so it was a lot of fresh manure that was needed within that shot time. So, when we did gathered manure, they commended us for getting enough and quality manure. They even said that with that manure, it was going to start up easily.

**Interviewer**: Wow... Mmh, I can see that there are many people in this village, even more than a hundred. So, how were you selected as a beneficiary out of such a huge number of people?

**Interviewee**: Ah, I cannot speak for them why they chose me, but personally I think it is because of my hard work, commitment and proactiveness – I known for being prompt in doing things.

**Interviewer**: What do you mean when you say you are prompt and proactive? Can you elaborate on that?

**Interviewee**: As a lead farmer, when I’m told to do something by extension workers, I need minimal supervision, and I do finish work within the specified time. For example, when I’m told to make special type of ridges by extension workers, I do it on my own and on time. I do not wait for them. I take responsibility so they know I can do things by myself without being forced.

**Interviewer**: Did you know about biogas before?

**Interviewee**: No, I knew nothing about biogas.

**Interviewer**: So you knew about biogas when they came with the project?

**Interviewee**: Yes, before that I did not know anything about biogas. I only knew of firewood (laughs). And, I was getting firewood from those mountains.

**Interviewer**: It is far! Some 2 kilometers, I guess.

**Interviewee**: It’s 3 or 3.5 kilometers.

**Interviewer**: So biogas was a new thing to you…. And you were like what’s this?

**Interviewee**: and the way they explained it, we thought we would never use firewood again (laughs). They said that if they install it and work, some people would even be interested to buy it at K200000. So after hearing that we thought that we were blessed and we did everything to make it work, and make others want it. But, instead of them wanting it, we became laughing stocks and a byword for biogas failures. They said we are gullible, and easily enticed by petty things and that we wasted our energy for nothing.

**Interviewer**: (laughs) that’s interesting. How did you feel?

**Interviewee**: In villages, people talk a lot. Some talked out of jealousy and some it is just there nature. So I didn’t feel that bad, but it felt like it was true. We worked for nothing.

**Interviewer**: (laughs) you don’t know how you were selected… You don’t know the process?

**Interviewee**: On that, I don’t know what criteria they used to choose me as a beneficiary.

**Interviewer**: So they just came to you saying we are coming to give you a digester?

**Interviewee**: No, when the project implementers came with the project they had a meeting with the TA and the senior chiefs. So, it was the chiefs from different villages who chose who was going to benefit. From each village one person was chosen. But, I don’t know which criteria the chiefs used. Personally, I think they chose me because I am a hard worker and proactive. But, the chiefs know which criteria they used. To cut the long story short, the extensions workers liaised with the senior chiefs. The senior chief asked their subordinate chiefs to choose one person from their villages. So 5 villages were chosen, and one person was taken from each village. But, they were told that the person had to have cows, was committed and willing to use the digester. And most of all, the person was not supposed to be money-oriented. The beneficiary was to accept the digester without expecting to be paid for using it. Also, the digesters were supposed to be given to the people and not to the chiefs to themselves. If a chief was to benefit, had to be only one, because it was for the people; they wanted to see how people were going to manage it.

**Interviewer**: Clear! Why do think chiefs were not favored to benefit from this?

**Interviewee**: Only one chief benefited. I think the other chiefs maybe thought it was hard work to manage it. Or, they wanted to see how people were going to manage it, and then adopt it later. Also, if it had gone to a couple of chief, then we would have thought that chiefs are greedy. And, we could have thought biogas is for the chiefs – that’s what I would have thought personally. So, luckily, only one chief got it, Chief Sewe.

**Interviewer**: Okay, what were your expectations?

**Interviewee**: As a family, we expected to stop damaging the environment because they clearly said that we would not find time to go and cut firewood for cooking. So, our time was only to be spent on making feedstock for cooking. They said that we will be cooking everything on it; nsima, beans, meat, vegetables etc. They said it was fast, and it is more like cooking on an electric cooker. Therefore, I personally thought I was blessed to have it and that one of my problems was solved.

**Interviewer**: So you expected to save the environment, and to cook fast as well as modernly. What else were you told to expect from this?

**Interviewee**: Ah, nothing. It’s was just about cooking in time as it’s produces fire upon ignition and you don’t need to wait for the fire to pick up. So, it’s fast. Also, we expected to cook modernly without spending money, opposed to cooking on electricity. So, it was all good.

**Interviewer**: What kind of training did you receive?

**Interviewee**: There was no training. The simply taught us how to dig the hole, and how to make feedstock. That was all. (Take of shirt)

**Interviewer**: It is very hot. Let me take of mine as well. It’s hot. So, they only told you how to make feedstock?

**Interviewee**: Yeah, that was it. They told to us get manure, and we got manure; pour that in that bucket, we poured the manure in the bucket; add water, and we added water; mix it, and we mixed water and manure; then they told us to make a funnel, we made a funnel for pouring feedstock into the digester through one of the pipes. That was it! Can I draw how it looked?

**Interviewer**: Yeah, go on!

**Interviewee**: This was the bag, and to it, two pipes were connected. Flat rubber strips connected the pipes to it, and this is the pipe feedstock was poured. After feeding, the bag was expanding to this level (1 or 1.5 meter off ground) and it was releasing slurry. Once we saw the slurry we were not feeding it, we knew there was enough gas, and we feared that the bag would burst. After feeding it, it was taking 3 days to release the slurry at the outlet.

**Interviewer**: How did you make the outlet?

**Interviewee**: It was like this (keeps on drawing)… so they told us that the slurry can be used as fertilizer…. Oh, you have asked me a good question, I forgot that part…. So, this was the level ground, so they told us to dig a hole to be gathering the digestate and use it as fertilizer.

**Interviewer**: Oh nice, did you ever use the digestate as fertilizer?

**Interviewee**: (laughs) that’s a great one! What they did everyone was satisfied with, and everyone was keen to see it perform. Sadly, we did not get enough gas, so less feedstock was fed. Our focus was on making it to produce fire, which was very beneficial; we cared less about the digestate; our primary concern was gas and not the digestate. So, after failing to get fire, do you think one would mind about the “stupid” things.

**Interviewer:** Ah, no.

**Interviewee**: So we did not want to waste energy on that. Our energy was on the gas. So when we saw that the digester was not working, we thought that what they said about the digestate was also not true; we thought like “they want to kill our crops with digestate”…. When we saw that the digester was only producing fire for a minute or 20 seconds, we thought the same predicament might happen to our crops, if we used it as fertilizer. We thought it could not work on the crops, or even damage crops completely. But, all these ideas came because the digester failed to work. Then, that is when we started calling them, but they were just saying, “Wait, we will come”. Therefore, we never used the digestate because of how the digester performed. If it had performed, we would have tried it on our crops, and proceeded accordingly.

**Interviewer**: Okay, that is clear. The training was on feedstock preparation, and maybe on how to switch it on and off.

**Interviewee**: No, there was training. If you hire someone to do some electric wiring on your house with electricity, and then at the end he tells you switch on the bulb, can you say you have been trained?

**Interviewer**: Aah, no!

**Interviewee**: That is how it was. They told us to dig a hole. After that they were like”do you see how we are connecting the pipes?” And we were like “yeah!” Then, they were like “Don’t forget, keep it in your head”…. Then, we went to the stove and were like “do you see this control knob, turn it”. We did that and they were like “that’s how you switch it on”. Then after a very short time they asked us to switch it off and went on to ask what we were going to be doing with the fire. And, we told them expected to be cooking nsima and dish side of different items. Then they were like, the fire today is not strong enough, but tomorrow it will be strong enough to cook all that. So, after they sent, fire also went with them. It never produced fire after.

**Interviewer**: Of course, we have agreed that was not training. Still, I want to know that after that talk or so called training, how prepared to run or operate the reactor did you feel you were?

**Interviewee**: After all that we did not expect to go for training because they convinced us that we had learnt enough and that we had known everything that is necessary. So after that, we felt we didn’t need any training, and we expected that we would be cooking without issues… But, the moment they left this place, it was also the death of the digester. Now, it’s been for 4 years. We did not even use it for a year. So, we thought because it was installed in the rainy season that’s why it never worked. But, when summer came, nothing happened.

**Interviewer**: Why did you think that in summer it was going to work?

**Interviewee**: They said it works well when there is sunlight as gas production is high. They told us in summer we would be cooking the whole day for continuous days. So, we knew that in summer no matter what, it was going to work because it gets really hot here.

**Interviewer**: You had the right to say that you did not want to digester.

**Interviewee**: Of course, I had the right to say no.

**Interviewer**: Why did you accept it here?

**Interviewee**: They painted it as we would only struggle to get the first feedstock, but after that, we would be cooking without any problem. So when we heard that we thought it was worthy to accept it and look for the first manure, and then enjoy for the rest of our lives. They didn’t give us a time limit, they only said that it could only stop working if someone could come with a spear and pierce it… Thus, I was like feeding it is not a problem, and I also dig pit latrines, so digging a digester hole shouldn’t be a problem. Then, I went for it!

**Interviewer**: How did you meet your energy needs before the intervention?

**Interviewee**: I used firewood.

**Interviewer**: Okay… and you get it from the far mountains?

**Interviewee**: Yeah

**Interviewer**: Do you buy?

**Interviewee**: No, we just send children to go there.

**Interviewer**: Don’t you get arrested by forest officials there?

**Interviewee**: If you are not so lucky, yeah. But, they only arrest people who cut trees to make charcoal or timber.

**Interviewer**: Not for small dead wood and all

**Interviewee**: Yeah, if you go there and get dead wood, you do not get in trouble.

**Interviewer**: How did you differentiate cooking on biogas … Oh, you never used it, right!

**Interviewee**: (laughs) that is a difficult one to answer. You cannot think of cooking when we did not even boil water to make tea. So in truth, we do not know anything about cooking on biogas.

**Interviewer**: How did you manage your feedstock before the intervention?

**Interviewee**: We used to throw away some. Some we used as fertilizer in our farms.

**Interviewer**: Some you were just throwing away?

**Interviewee**: Yeah

**Interviewer**: Meaning you were getting more than enough?

**Interviewee**: Yeah.

**Interviewer**: Why didn’t you sell?

**Interviewee**: We do not normally sell. We only sell when we see that someone has a special purpose with it. (Stops and answers call)

**Interviewer**: Okay, moving on. On the day of commissioning, who was there on that day?

**Interviewee**: The same 3 people came.

**Interviewer**: Okay, after commissioning it, how did it work? Did you see fire?

**Interviewee**: Yes, I saw fire. Then, they said that the next we would cook without issues, or we could even cook the same but a bit later. But, they suggested starting it the next day because the sun had gone down. It was somewhere after 3 pm. And, all the digesters here were installed here around the same time. Before going, they gave a time to start it the next day. They said 10 am. They assured us at 10 AM everything was going to go smoothly, and not to worry. And, yes indeed the bag at 10:00 got full. But, when we tried to switch it on, it couldn’t produce fire. So we thought we had overdosed it, or it was because of something else we didn’t know. Then we decided to try it again at 3:00 p.m. but nothing happened. So we never used it for cooking. We never cooked in nsima on it. The fire that was coming more was very little that you could only cook maybe an omelette (laughs) and it would take you more than 15 minutes to cook an omelette, imagine. It was shameful. We tried to check the volume control knob. It was okay because they showed up how it’s works. It had 8 points, 3 was moderate, and 8 was the highest fire we could have got. Therefore, everything they told us was “useless”.

**Interviewer**: So how was the fire going off after that? Was it at once or it was taking some time?

**Interviewee**: Not in an instant. When we started it, it was producing little fire.

**Interviewer**: Like how long?

**Interviewee**: It was taking about 10 or 15 seconds to go off.

**Interviewer**: After that?

**Interviewee**: After that when we tried it, it was producing a low finger snapping sound like. We tried it again in the evening, nothing happened. And they came after some days to make us sign this paper. Then they told us that we just had no luck with it, and that was the last thing they said. And we were like we have used a lot of energy and money, we still want it to work, can you do something, we don’t want to lose and it’s not only us who will lose. The government would also lose. They have spent K200000, and you can’t just let it go like that. And, they didn’t say anything.

**Interviewer**: (laughs) when you were starting it up you said you used 12 bags of 50kg of cow manure. Maybe, there was something wrong with the initial feedstock. How much water did you add to the cow manure?

**Interviewee**: We cannot say the feedstock was not made right because we did everything according to their instructions and they were there. So technically, the installers made the feedstock even though we were the ones doing the whole thing. Moreover, they even said that it was good.

**Interviewer**: (laughs) yeah, how much water did you add?

**Interviewee**: I do not know how many liters we used.

**Interviewer**: Like how many buckets or drums?

**Interviewee**: I think it was 2 drums.

**Interviewer**: The 200 liters ones I guess.

**Interviewee**: Yeah, because we used a lot of water and it was a lot of work. But, because we wanted it so bad, that’s why we did everything possible. We wanted changed.

**Interviewer**: Yeah, I see. What were the operation requirements?

**Interviewee**: They said it needs to fresh manure and water, and that it requires to be fed on a daily basis. They told us to feed it with one bucket (20 liters) of manure and two buckets (20 liters) of water.

**Interviewer**: Where did you get the water?

**Interviewee**: It is within. We have a borehole just there [less than 200 meters].

**Interviewer**: How did you prepare the feedstock?

**Interviewee**: We used hands to mix the feedstock, and we did that because we really wanted it. After mixing, we had a funnel which we made by cutting a 5 liter plastic bottle and it was for feeding the digester bag. We made it because we did not want some of the feedstock to spill away.

**Interviewer**: After feeding it with startup feedstock, did you ever feed it again?

**Interviewee**: They told us to feed it after 2 days from the day it was commissioned. But, after we saw that, it did not work for those 2 days we didn’t feed. We did not feed it because we were told that gas is lost when one is cooking, so one feed it to replenish the used gas. So since we didn’t use it, there was no need to replenish it… so to answer your question, we couldn’t feed it, when it was not producing gas or fire.

**Interviewer**: So you only fed it once?

**Interviewee**: No, we feed it thrice. The first time was when we were starting it. Then after that, we fed it when we saw that it wasn’t producing gas. Then, again after we saw that it did not work, we fed it again. And, when the installers came, they said what we did was fine, and that the digester didn’t work because it was just that we were unlucky.

**Interviewer**: (laughs) what did they mean?

**Interviewee**: We were so mad with them and we even told them that they took the people of Nsanje for fools. We questioned them how was it possible for the 10 of us to fail; if 2 or 3 people had their digesters working that could have been a different story. But, imagine all the 10 people failed. And, we told them that not all the 10 people could be dull to make it work. Then, they were just saying it was not an issue such things happen in life, and that we were just not lucky.

**Interviewer**: Okay, what were maintenance requirements?

**Interviewee**: They gave us numbers to call whenever there was a problem. So when it did not work we called them, and they said would come in a space of 2 months. After some time they came.

**Interviewer**: Oh, they came?

**Interviewee**: They came with the handover papers. So we thought that they came to fix it but that was not the case. They just came so that we could sign the papers… But, you can’t say we are to blame that it didn't work. If it had worked for a certain time, and then stopped working that would have been a different story. But it didn’t work even though we did everything they told us. In fact, no one out of the 10 people used it. So we cannot say the digesters malfunctioned. It is simple and straightforward that the digesters did not work, and they issue of maintenance is way out of question - They gave us a dead thing. If it were a car, we would have said they gave us a car without an engine. And, I think what they were telling us about a biogas was wrong I mean, we did everything together but I never worked. So, maybe they were also learning about it, I don’t know. Or, maybe they installers saw this thing somewhere else and decided to try it here to steal from us.

**Interviewer**: You didn’t put your, money so how did they steal from you?

**Interviewee**: We paid money, the government paid money for us. The government could have given us money directly but it does not work that way. So, they paid the money for us indirectly. And they even said that they were only contractors meaning someone to give them the money to do the work here, and they told us the money that was spent on the digester. So, we take it as somebody gave us money and the installers stole the money from us. And, that thief has no remorse and is not considerate all. He did not even think of us. I mean, he should have at least allowed us to use it for some days… Imagine, the government gave us money and someone stole the money……. Not all of us were failures…. of course, we could not have all succeeded, but at least one person should have managed to make it work.

**Interviewer**: So you are saying the installers are thieves?

**Interviewee**: They are big thieves…And I always wonder, because you are the fourth person to come ask me about this, when you talk to them do they say these things are working? And, if they tell you that it’s working, it’s very unfortunate. If they say it’s working, why haven’t they gone on radio to say people in Tengani are using biogas. Why don’t they come and make us speak on radio to talk about the good thing the government has done for us? We hear people on radio people speaking about good things about certain projects, like agricultural scheme projects, we hear people talking about benefiting from goats that are given to community members to pass on amongst themselves, so that everyone has a goat. We hear people thanking the government and organizations on many things. But, why are we not thanking the government for the K200000 they gave us. Why is the government not following up on this? Why is the government not claiming back the money? So, we feel like the government and the contract are one. This was a scheme to siphon money. That is why I’m saying we were robbed money. And you as a messenger, you should go and inform the government that the people of Tengani who benefited from biogas project are saying ` you rob them money` - `The government robbed them money`.

**Interviewer**: (laughs heavily) really!

**Interviewee**: Yeah, the government and the contractor worked hand in hand to steal from us – The government and contractor stole money from us and we are very saddened it! The fact that biogas digesters came here in 2017 it’s just news. Who would know that there was a biogas digester here? No one. We were robbed money! I would have been very happy to share the stories of how it works in different season, its benefits and challenges, but I cannot because I never used it!

**Interviewer**: After you tried it, a day after commissioning, how long did it take you to call them?

**Interviewer**: If it’s a group thing, when you have a problem you don't go directly to the big guys. So, when I saw that it wasn’t working, I decided to ask you my colleagues, and they were like, oh, we also have the same problem. Then I was like I did this and that, and my colleagues were like we also did the same thing. So, whatever I did everybody who got a digester did the same. Then we asked questions, like why and what the problem was! I mean, if one had managed to make it work, we would have said the rest had a problem, but no single person managed to make it work. Then, we were like those people trick us then let us make a call. Then, they came after a week; moved around it, touched it and played around with it. Then, they were like we will come again, and up to date they have never come back.

**Interviewer**: When did they give you this paper?

**Interviewee**: It was the same week; they wanted to get their money fast so they had to hurry. Because without these papers, they would not have been paid.

**Interviewer**: Why didn’t you tell them that you weren’t going to sign on a thing that wasn’t working?

**Interviewee**: Can you read it?

**Interviewer**: Okay, “working but not fully. Single feeding done, revised today and needs monitoring”.

**Interviewee**: When they were giving us this paper, government officials were also there. When we were trying to switch it on, they were also there. And they told us that the people who funded it were also there…. You have said UNDP, right?

**Interviewer**: They came?

**Interviewee**: Yeah! They came!

**Interviewer**: Which day? On the day, you were commissioning it? Or, when they came to give you this paper?

**Interviewee**: On the day, they gave me this paper. It was as if from here they were going to give the contractors there money.

**Interviewer**: So after commissioning it, the installers were alone and they told you to try it again at 10 AM the next day. On the day you got this they came with project implementers or funders?

**Interviewee**: Yeah, after we tried it the next day, we reported the issue to the installers. Then, next time they came with this paper and those people. And we told them that we were getting nothing it, and it was better if you had just given us the money, or you should have come with a different thing… We wanted this and we did everything possible to make it work, but there is nothing; people envied us that we got this, but now we are looking like fools. We even told them to switch it on by themselves and see how it was performing, and when they did, it did not even stay for 15 minute and the flame was very little.

**Interviewer**: And what did they say?

**Interviewee**: That is why they wrote those remarks. So, I signed because they wrote what happened in the presence of the donors/project implementers.

**Interviewer**: Oh, I see!

**Interviewee**: But if it was my thing, I would have tussled with them and would not have given them the money. The work that was done was not worth of payment. So, if they paid them it’s either it was a plot or maybe out of pit considering that they lost money for transportation and all that. So, who ever paid them felt pit for them, but not us.

**Interviewer**: Have you seen this [sheet of intervention] before?

**Interviewee**: No

**Interviewer**: What do you think of this information and do you think it would have helped in your case?

**Interviewee**: I’m going to be repeating what I said. If this digester had worked for one week and stopped, then this information would have helped. But, the problem is that this digester did not work at all. So, this information could not have helped because this thing never worked.

**Interviewer**: And if they installers failed to fix it to the point that the project funder came whilst it was still working, it says a lot. It was a big problem.

**Interviewee**: This kind of information can only work after the innovation in question has worked or is working. I’m sure we could have got something like this if it had worked to serve as a reminder… So, money was lost at the end of the day…. And someone stole money... If they paid them, it was only for the transport cost from Blantyre to here. It was not for the work that was done…. But, if you give them just transport, it can also bring questions, like what was the transportation for, and it can create a lot of issues. So yeah, I think they just gave the people who came that day “a little something to buy Coca-Cola [bride]” and story was done!

**Interviewer**: Okay, I see. We are going towards the end of interview. How would you describe the current state of you digester?

**Interviewee**: The digester is completely dead; after laying there for some time certain people pierced the bag with a spear, so it’s completely damaged now. Then, after that, we decided to use the bag productively. That’s when we decided to use it a roof sheet for our kitchen to protect us from the rains. And, since the people who brought the digester here said, they wanted people to stop using tree for cooking but were not sincere, so we are using the same bag comfortably to do what they came to stop us doing. Instead of minimizing it, I can say they have perpetuated it…. And, I don’t know if you researchers do reach out to the people or it just ends in papers. I would have liked us to talk about it whilst I was working. It is sad that we are talking about a thing that is not around. So if it is possible, find out why it never worked, and take appropriate action.

**Interviewer**: I have seen you are using the pipes as clotheslines.

**Interviewee**: If they can come again, I can just say just give us clotheslines; we need a different intervention that can work. So, if they can come with a different project, we are willing to work with them. They could come up with solar technology for cooking, then a good project too because it can also conserve the environment.

**Interviewer**: We are going towards the end; we have like 5 questions remaining…. I have talked a lot and you have talked a lot, you are saying the installers were mere learners who just wanted to learn. Talking all thins into consideration, why do you think it did not work?

**Interviewer**: First, they came to learn from us. The installers saw this working somewhere but did not ask about its technicalities or fully understand its technicalities. They just looked at it at face value. So, they came to learn. But the problem is that when they came we thought they were experts and we were going to help us. They failed because they are learners. Or, it failed because they did not want to fix it. Maybe it works on paper, but on ground, it does not work… They gave money to a learner thinking they were giving it to an expert who was going to make it work. When they came, they were like we have also done this in different area, and it’s working there, like they knew what they were doing. Nevertheless, they failed. No expert can get zero out of 10…That is no teacher. They had 10 mathematical problems to solve and scored 0. If they scored one we could have said, it is the people to blame. And the learner (installer) himself explained that this area is conducive and that the change was 99% for digester to work because it’s a hot area, but he still failed. The installers were like we installed some in the northern region [cold area], then we can’t fail here. So, you can see they were talking about areas we didn’t know. So, I don’t if they really managed to install the digesters successfully there.

**Interviewer**: How do you meet your energy needs now that is not working?

**Interviewee**: We have gone back to firewood. And, sometimes we do make charcoal. Now, we cut trees, make charcoal and cook. They stole the money from us, so that is what the government wants.

**Interviewer**: And you don’t feel bad about the environment?

**Interviewee**: I have anger in my heart. If government was a person, I would have grabbed him by the neck to give back my money to use it for cooking….

**Interviewer**: It is tough!

**Interviewee**: Even now, if people ask me and I tell them that you are doing a research on biogas people will think you have nothing to do. That is what people would say.

**Interviewer**: (laughs) really?

**Interviewee**: That is true. It could have been nice if we could have showed the biogas while you are doing your thing... It did not work because it was a plot to steal money from us or because the installers were learners.

**Interviewer**: Do you have cows now?

**Interviewee:** Now, I don’t

**Interviewer:** What happened to your cows?

**Interviewee**: I sold them last year. Biogas failed first, before losing the cows. I sold the cows because I was going through financial problems. I could not sleep on an empty stomach whilst I had cows

**Interviewer:** How much did the reactor cost?

**Interviewee:** Itmust be more than K300000. I mean to assembly it and everything took more than K300000, but the bag itself did cost K200000. That is what they told us. They told us that it is very expensive. Though, it looked less expensive to us, but we didn’t care about that.

**Interviewer:** Who funded this? UNDP or government

**Interviewee**: I don’t know exactly; I think both.

**Interviewer:** Did you contribute anything in kind?

**Interviewee:** The biggest thing I contributed was the energy I used to dig the hole. I remember they just told me the dimensions for the hole. Every beneficiary did the digging work on his own. So, when we called them that we were done, they said they were going to come the next day. They came on Saturday to put the bag and they commissioned it on a Tuesday.

**Interviewer**: Was there any masonry wait that was involved?

**Interviewee**: They said that some installers line it with a brick wall. They said it is possible line it, even the digestate collection point too. They said they saw it somewhere, and that is why I keep on saying they were learners. They saw some people doing it somewhere and they thought of coming here to do it. Nevertheless, here only one person lined the hole. But, even though he lined it with a brick wall around, nothing worked.

**Interviewer:** What special items how to be imported from another country?

**Interviewee:** Idon't know, or maybe only the pipe. However, it is written that it was made in China, so I think it’s from China. I’m not really sure though.

**Interviewer**: What is your opinion of biogas?

**Interviewee**: I still have the desired to own an innovation for cooking. So, I would be grateful if they could the intervention again. I think, if an intervention comes again, it would really help save the environment. Therefore, the project installers need to think of ways of helping us again and restoring the environment… Maybe the government thinks that we have biogas; there is no biogas in Nsanje. Still, I think I would do us good if they could bring another intervention, but not this one. And, in all honest and sincerity, I can entertain biogas digesters again. For example, if they decided to bring the digesters to a different EPA, for example, Marka EPA. I could tell them that it`s a fraud, and that the project implementers are “big thieves”. If they cannot believe me, I will show them pictures or even ask them to come here and see it yourself, choose. Or, I can ask them just to ask the people of this community to hear about biogas digesters for themselves. And, I would even tell them that they shouldn’t bother digging holes for the digesters… More so, I would even go to the point of asking the people to send the project implementers away or come with a different intervention. So, please when you go back to the officials, ask them to bring solar intervention for us. We need to use the solar panels for charging our phone and even for cooking. It is easy because it uses the sun, and once it is installed, it does not require any tiresome work. So, they can bring a stove and even with one light bulb. We cannot complain long as we have energy for cooking. Thus, any intervention can come, but not biogas. Biogas is “zero” and people cannot embrace it here. If it can come, people would be saying, “Have you forgotten 2017?” Do you want to lose your energy on digging again? Biogas project can never be accepted here in Tengani because the previous one was a total disaster.

**Interviewer**: You have answered me my next question. I wanted to ask, if you could have design your own waste or energy intervention, what would you have chosen instead? You have talked solar

**Interviewee**: Yeah, solar. But, is there a solar system that can be used for cooking?

**Interviewer**: I think there is.

**Interviewee**: If there is solar system that can be used for cooking, then that is the end of the story - “solar intervention”. Even if it can have one bulb for lighting, that is okay. We just want an innovation we could use for cooking. And, the fact that it uses solar energy that’s a plus because the sun will always be there. Therefore, we want that, not biogas. Biogas is useless. It`s waste our time! We did put in a lot of effort but in vain. It’s meaningless.

**Interviewer**: What is the future of biogas?

**Interviewee:** It has no future. It’s just one way of stealing money from government. We word biogas is synonym with stealing government money to me. And, I think what UNDP did is not fair, they should have come here like you have done, so that we could tell them how we feel about biogas. I would like to tell them that they blew money on nothing; we did our part but it didn’t work. So, thanks for wasting money, we didn’t get any help… I feel the one who was coordinating the project, siphoned money from the project! Yeah. That’s the message. If you meet UNDP people, tell them we want Solar! And, let me be clear, it’s not like the whole government that stole from us, but someone in government stole from us.

**Interviewer**: That was my last question. Thanks a lot for your time, and most of coming to the depot to welcome, and for willing to help me locate the other beneficiaries. I am thankful. I am out of words!

**Interviewee**: In closing, any last words?

**Interviewer**: Thanks too for keeping your word. You said you were going to come today and you have done just that. I understand you said you were going to come earlier but using public transport is not reliable, and being a new place, it’s hard. If it was not coming on public, I could not have forgiven you on that. Thanks for coming here, and I have really enjoyed the conversation. To me, I did not feel like interview, and it is not like something I have done before. To me it was more like chat, so thanks.

**Interviewee**: Thanks for the complement!