

Press Release #BiogasUnite, 27.10.2021

Biogas entrepreneurs in Africa join forces to demand better working conditions and a regulation of foreign aid involvement in the sector.

#BiogasUnite is an initiative of local and international companies and entrepreneurs to improve the conditions for everyone in the biogas sector. Up to now, the biogas sector has been primarily driven by donor-funded projects and programs without creating a sustainable, fair and functioning biogas market anywhere. As a result, not only has market development largely failed, but markets are distorted, and the reputation of biogas as clean cooking fuel has been destroyed. African biogas entrepreneurs and international stakeholders are interested in working in reliable and protected environments, solid and competitive markets with equal conditions for all players and clear rules regarding technology and service quality to assure a good reputation of biogas among customers, partners and investors.

Background

The drop that broke the camel's back was yet another biogas program for Uganda. This particular country is already overserved by foreign organizations competing in the biogas sector. An overview of the funding and donor landscape in Uganda is provided below as an example. The situation differs from country to country, but the problem of a largely unprotected private biogas sector and a missing coordination of the activities of the aid industry is commonly shared between African countries. Despite repeated failures of programs and projects implementing organizations are not help accountable for the damage. Implementation just continues.

The supporters and members of #BiogasUnite share the concerns about ongoing and planned activities of international organizations and donors in the field of household biogas in Africa. There is an urgent need to prevent further damage and to involve local governments in setting the standards in their countries, and the private sector in decision making. For businesses and entrepreneurs, current conditions are unbearable.

As private sector representatives of the biogas market in Africa, local and international companies and entrepreneurs are taking the initiative to shape the future of biogas as a systems solution. The reasons why market development has failed generally relate to structural problems that programs or projects have not addressed. BiogasUnite has prepared a list of requests to guide governments towards a fair and sustainable private sector development. (see requests on next page)

The requests of #BiogasUnite to local decision-makers:

1. Accountability

- Implementing organizations have to be held accountable for the outcome of their programs and projects
- Failed biogas systems need to be repaired and made functional
- Real time documentation of functionality of biogas systems
- Provision of after sales service and maintenance beyond project or program duration

2. Limited Involvement of aid

- End all downstream involvement of aid, e.g. direct implementation of technology, contact to biogas users, short term intervention (less than 20 years)
- Aid restricted to upstream involvement, e.g. loans for enterprises (no grants, funds, donations), micro credits for end users, promotion of biogas as systems solution on national level (no logos of organizations)
- All activities channeled through one central institution (gov./private sector)

3. Transparency

- Past and current biogas implementation through aid funding must be listed in a publicly accessible data base incl. exact location, budget, organization, approach, functionality status of all system, customer service plan
- Detailed and verified (by private sector representatives) reports of past projects/programs made available, incl. Location of installed systems
- Source of funding, e.g. private donations, tax money, carbon off-set, etc.

4. Quality standards

- Active protection of reputational damage by setting binding quality requirements for all biogas technology providers/implementers
- Development of quality standards - example of Uganda Solar Energy Association
- Support companies to reach quality standards
- Organizational structure development

5. Private Sector involvement in decision making

- Biogas businesses must form an entity
- First address of the governments for decision making
- Development of policies and frameworks in favour of the private sector
- Exchange and mutual guidance towards fair market conditions

6. Advocacy

- For biogas as systems solution for energy, waste management, agriculture, health, income generation, climate change mitigation