

Tragedy to Triumph: Biogas in Daria Nagar

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“Ma!” That was the last word that Zayan said before drowning. A mere helpless child of five, who had fallen into the pond near his home. The sunlit realm of Daria Nagar, Cox’s Bazar is what bore this tragic story.

He went outside, looking for his mother, for she was the only family he had. Stepping out of his minuscule house made of tin, he walked across trees and bushes, and before he knew it, he had gone a little too far from his home. “মা? তুমি কোথায়?” “Ma? Where are you?” He screamed in desperation, looking for his mother. “Ma?”

As time slipped through his fingers, he accidentally stumbled upon a pond, fighting for his life. He did not know how to swim; he panicked as fear started to engulf him. He was ensnared in this cruel dance of survival. He tried to push himself up off the water, but that was of no use. His body was confused, gulping water and fighting for every last bit of air that could reach his lungs. Each gasp for air was like a note in the symphony of his desperation.

Suddenly, everything went black. Darkness engulfed his once bright eyes. Zayan was found an hour and a half later, by villagers looking around for him. Although he was found, fate had already decided its path. Nothing could be done. That pond now whispered the tale of an innocent child.

The death of her son was an intense shock to Nazma Begum, leaving her bewildered and in sheer disbelief. She had lost her son; she had lost herself. Who could’ve thought her life would have taken this turn when all she was trying to do was arrange gas to cook for her and her beloved son? Nazma’s life wasn’t the same. Nothing was the same. She couldn’t eat, she couldn’t sleep, and she couldn’t do anything without thinking of her son, Zayan.

She had left him alone to collect firewood from the nearby hills, only to return to this devastating news. In their village of Daria Nagar in Cox’s Bazar, the only way to cook was to go to the hills to collect firewood, just like Nazma had to. They also had to spend around 1000-1200 taka to buy LPG gas cylinders, which was a huge financial burden for the community members. The death of Zayan made people aware, but it wasn’t enough to change their ways. They needed a solution to prevent the deaths of more Zayans in the future.

The rest of Nazma's days passed the same way, except that her son wasn't there. She prayed every day for some miracle to take place; for someone to do something about the reason her beloved son was no more. Nazma knew something had to be done, but what could she do? She was barely able to make ends meet for herself. What could someone like her do? These are the thoughts that clouded her mind as the days went on.

One seemingly normal morning, Nazma went on with her daily tasks, thinking nothing of the day. However, some villagers informed her that some company was coming to their village later on to introduce something exciting. This news was enough to make her smile, but behind that smile hid the grief and agony of a mother who had lost her son.

Everyone gathered around a space where officials of an organization named 'Community Partners International' had called them. They informed the whole village that they had an exciting new technology for them. They had visited the village before to conduct interviews, however, Nazma hadn't really shown any interest in their work before and hence did not know what was going on in the village.

On that day, representatives from Community Partners International presented the idea of "Cooking With Biogas," an initiative designed to give rural communities like Daria Nagar a safer and more sustainable cooking alternative. They described biogas as a clean, sustainable energy source that is created when organic waste, including animal manure and kitchen scraps, breaks down in a biogas digester. The need for gathering firewood and the dangers involved may be eliminated if this biogas was collected and utilized for cooking.

A glimmer of hope started to appear as Nazma listened to the presentation amid the misery of her tragedy. She was really moved by the thought of a safer cooking technique since she knew that if there had been one available earlier, her beloved son might have still been alive. Life started to regain purpose.

Nazma moved forward and addressed the officials, determined to be a part of the change. She added, her voice cracking, "I lost my son to the dangers of collecting firewood." "I want to be a part of this initiative if it may stop even one more child from suffering the same tragedy. I wish to assist in introducing this technology to our community.

Both the people and the officials were moved by her statements. The project took on a feeling of urgency as a result of Nazma's tragic experience. They both agreed to collaborate in order to carry out the Cooking With Biogas initiative in Daria Nagar.

The biogas digester was built in the community as the first step in the process. Nazma and the other villagers made a concerted effort to gather the required organic waste for the digester. As soon as the biogas system began to run, it not only gave residents of the community a cleaner and safer cooking option, but also eased their financial burden from having to purchase expensive LPG gas cylinders in the past.

The biogas digester, a straightforward yet ground-breaking piece of equipment, served as the brains behind the Cooking With Biogas initiative in Daria Nagar. It was a solid dome-shaped building composed of bricks and concrete. Organic waste, including household scraps, agricultural waste, and waste generated from bathrooms was first gathered and mixed before being fed into the digester through an inlet.

Anaerobic digestion, a natural process where microorganisms broke down the waste in a lack of oxygen, was used to break down the organic waste once it was inside the digester. Methane gas, which was emitted as the waste broke down, was caught and kept in a gas chamber above the digester. The stoves in each home were then wired to this biogas, creating a consistent supply of clean energy for cooking.

Nazma was at the heart of the villagers' revolutionary shifts brought on by the adoption of biogas technology. She personally benefited from these improvements. The days of trekking through dangerous terrains to painstakingly get fuel from the hills were long gone.

Cooking became safer and more convenient for them now that biogas was accessible inside their houses. The villagers' women, especially Nazma, were relieved to no longer have to spend all day maintaining open fires and breathing in the harmful smoke that had previously harmed their health. Instead, they enjoyed cooking and did it with ease since they knew they were protecting their family from respiratory ailments and possibly, death.

Another significant factor was the financial relief that biogas offered. The burden of acquiring pricey LPG gas cylinders was removed, allowing the villagers to focus their limited funds on other critical requirements like providing for their children's education and healthcare.

Nazma's despair slowly changed into hope and rejoice with the project's success. She was proud of her community's resilience and willingness to adopt cutting-edge technology. Her initial anguish gradually gave way to the satisfaction of knowing that her son's memory was being preserved by the constructive transformation she helped contribute to.

As the months passed by, Nazma noticed something remarkable unfolding in her village. Children were liberated from the perils that formerly hid in the trees as they played freely and safely close to their houses. In sharp contrast to the sadness that had previously engulfed the community, there was now a smile on their faces and laughter on their mouths.

Nazma and her fellow villagers rejoiced in this new chapter of their life since it marked a significant transformation in their attitudes and priorities, not simply in terms of energy sources. They had discovered a road to a better, healthier, and more sustainable tomorrow, and they felt honored that they were on it together. Biogas was paving the path.

And so, the story of Daria Nagar—a tale of resiliency, change, and the power of deciding on cleaner and safer energy sources—began spreading widely. The previously downtrodden community now served as a bright example of how switching from dirty to renewable energy could make parents happy, secure children's futures, and save the very planet they walked on.