BLUE ECONOMY

BLUE EMPOWERMENT PROJECT

FEBRUARY BRIEF

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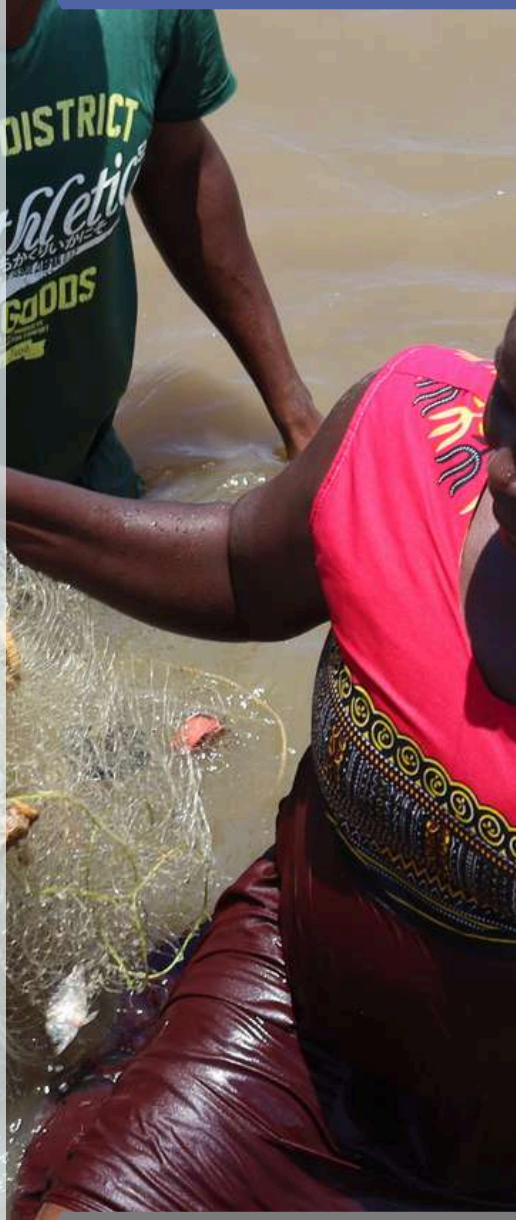


PROJECT ACTIVITIES

1. MONITORING AND EVALUATION AND INVESTMENT READINESS CAPACITY GAPS ASSESSMENT

The BE team conducted this activity in Kwale and Kilifi counties from the 17th to the 25th of February, 2025. The tasks involved visiting project sites and reviewing project activities as well as holding discussions with community members, mainly SACCO executive committee members from all four SACCOs in Msambweni, Lungalunga, Kilifi North, and Kilifi South sub-counties. The discussions focused on identifying investment readiness and capacity gaps, which will help ingenerate a training plan to bridge the gaps. These discussions were mainly guided by the following questions: what to start doing, what to continue doing, and what to stop doing.

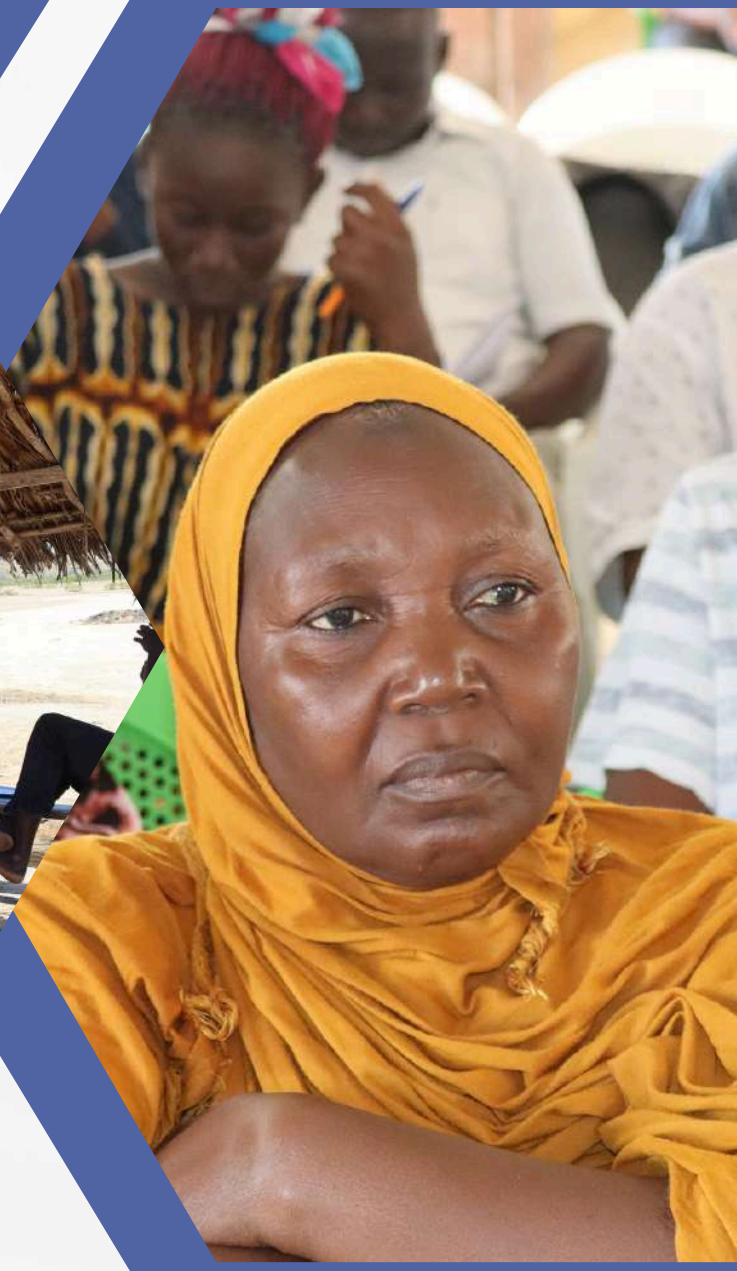
WHAT TO START DOING?

In response to the above question, the following were suggestions from community members:

- Mentorship sessions for SACCOs
- More inclusive training sessions on SACCO management, credit management, leadership, proposal writing, and value-addition for sea-weed, focusing more on practical applications rather than theory.
- Training community members on other methods of seaweed farming and community mobilization strategies to attract new members
- Acquisition of tools and equipment for value addition
- Investment in Hatchery for fingerling production, sea-weed fertilizer production, and manufacturing of animal feeds
- Diversification of seaweed products and product market training
- Benchmarking tours to learn from other farmers working on seaweed and fish farming

WHAT TO CONTINUE

1. Training of other women groups on gender, leadership, business management etc.
2. More sensitization and awareness-creation activities within the community



Project site visit.

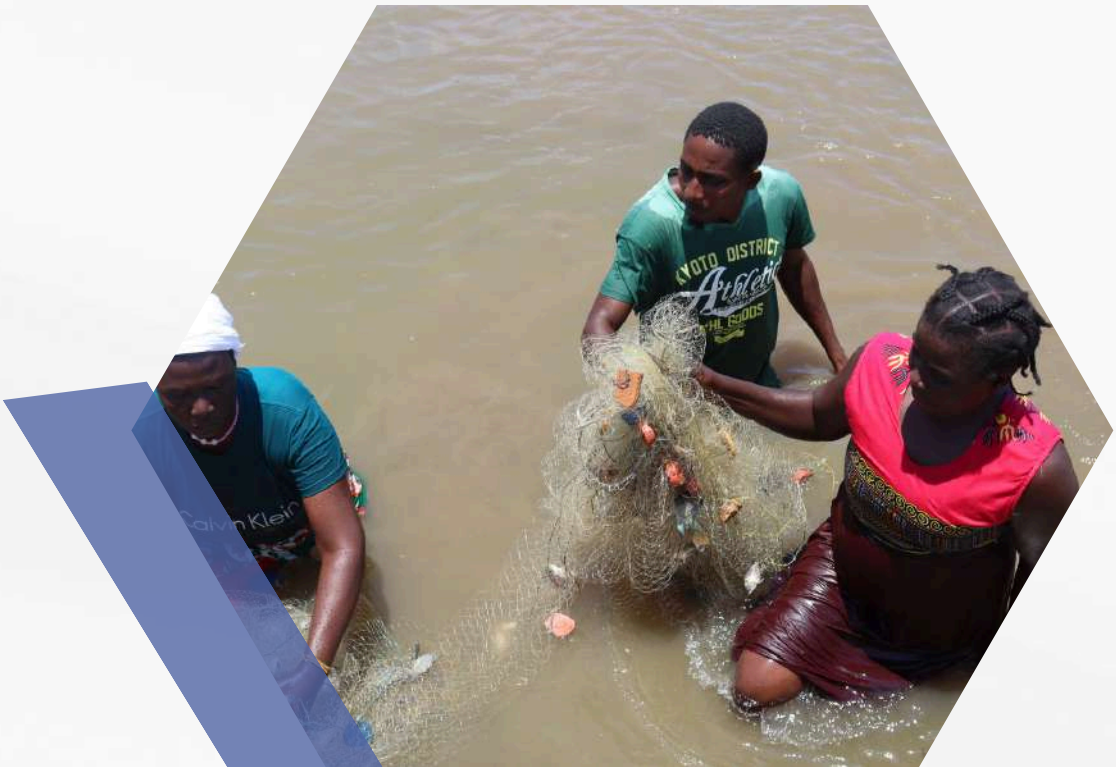
Seaweed farming at Kibuyuni and Kijiweni

The team visited the Kibuyuni site and discussed with Bahari CBO chair and field officer on the status of seaweed farming at Kibuyuni and Kijiweni. During the conversation, the following challenges were revealed:

1. Lack of monitoring of seaweed farms
2. Weak materials for making rafts
3. Lack of storage facilities for harvested seaweed
4. Lack of commitment from the IMTA committee

Recommendations

1. · Need to use High-Density Polyethylene (HDPE) materials for making rafts
2. Need to employ someone to monitor the IMTA cage and seaweed farms



MWAZARO PONDS

The team also visited BE Mwazaro ponds and assessed their status. However, there was limited progress in pond construction as shown in the pictures below.

EXPERIMENTAL SETUP AND ESTABLISHMENT OF THE IMTA SYSTEM – FEBRUARY 2025

The experimental setup for the Integrated Multi-Trophic Aquaculture (IMTA) system was successfully initiated, focusing on both seaweed farming and rabbitfish stocking. This setup aims to enhance sustainable aquaculture practices by integrating different species that support each other's growth while optimizing resource use

OFF-BOTTOM SEAWEED FARM

At Kibuyuni, the team worked alongside local farmers to set up an off-bottom seaweed farm, a crucial component of the IMTA system. The farm was stocked with Eucheuma denticulatum commonly known as spinosum, carefully tied to cultivation lines secured at an optimal depth to ensure good water circulation and sunlight exposure. The initial weight of the seaweed was recorded, forming the baseline data for monitoring growth over time.

During the setup, farmers were actively involved, sharing their knowledge and experiences while also receiving guidance on best practices. They also harvested a seaweed batch from one of the plots and it's from here that the seedlings used were obtained.

STOCKING RABBITFISH IN THE IMTA CAGE

On February 28th, the team also set up a netted enclosure within the larger IMTA cage to house the rabbitfish. Ensuring the structure was secure and provided sufficient space for water flow was a priority. Once the netting was in place, 30 rabbitfish fingerlings of varying sizes were introduced into the system. Each fish was measured for length and weight, marking the start of data collection that will be used to track their growth and overall health in the coming months.

With the IMTA system now in place, the next steps will focus on regular monitoring of fish growth, last bit of setting up of the seaweed rafts, checking on seaweed productivity, and water quality to assess system performance and the continued engagement with farmers to strengthen community participation and knowledge-sharing. This setup marks an important step toward implementing a sustainable and integrated aquaculture model, and look forward to observing its development in the coming months.

DOCUMENTARY OF BE ACTIVITIES

On the 20th of February, the seaweed harvesting, weighing, and replanting on floating rafts were documented (figure 4). On the following day (21st of February, 2025), the documentary crew interviewed various members participating in the BE project, including the field officers (from Msambweni and Lunganga), the BE project manager, the leader of women, and the chairlady of Msambweni SACCO, who are involved in seaweed farming.

DOCUMENTARY OF BE ACTIVITIES

On March 1st, a documentary activity was carried out at Kibuyuni to capture the seaweed farming process in action. The filming integrated pictures from a video camera as well as a drone for overhead shots. The filming highlighted different stages of production, from planting to harvesting, sorting, and the monitoring process involved in seaweed farming. It also features activities at the SolCoolDry in Mwazaro where the clean-up of the harvested seaweed gets done which after is spread out on the drier sheets for optimal drying.

The documentary also showcased the diversity within the farming community, with men and women of all ages playing active roles in the process. Their dedication and teamwork underscored the importance of seaweed farming not just as an economic activity but as a way of life. In addition, Dr. Linus K'Osambo a key investigator within the Blue Empowerment (B.E) project was interviewed as part of the documentary making process. He provided expert insights, discussing the significance of seaweed farming and the IMTA system in the broader context of sustainable aquaculture. The documentation team will continue to conduct interviews with other BE team members.

NEXT MONTH

Other activities, including the publishing of a media training manual, a technology assessment brief publication, and a BE policy brief publication, have been re-planned for this month (March 2025).