

Aquaculture of Seaweed and Fish: Opportunities for Blue Economic Empowerment and Covid-19 Resilience of Fisher Women in Kenya (Blue-Empowerment Project)

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Key activity highlights

- Blue Empowerment Fund Establishment
- BEF Secretariate Meeting
- BEF Secretariate and Governing Board Meeting
- Hatchery Pond Renovation and Broodstock Stocking
- Construction of Wooden Ponds
- Construction of FTU lift
- Construction of Hatchery Shade
- Commencement of the SACCO Aquaculture Revolving Fund program
- BE Fish Value Addition and Business Incubation Training and Workshop
- BE Women Economic Empowerment and Advocacy Coalition in Kilifi and Kwale
- BE Communication and Dissemination Workshop

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1. Blue Empowerment Fund (BEF) Establishment

1.1. About the BEF

The Blue Empowerment Fund (BEF) is a spin-off initiative of the Blue Empowerment (BE) project that ends in February 2026. This project was funded by International Development Research Centre (IDRC). The fund was established in the final phase of the project to leverage on the achievements of the BE project and scale these gains beyond the project's jurisdiction. This is a sustainability plan to deviate away reliance on donor funding, which is sometimes unreliable, and explore other fund-raising options such as blended financing or investment financing. Since the establishment, a Secretariat and a Governing Board have been put in place to spearhead and oversee the operations of the Fund in line with the set goals and objectives. The Fund has established its presence in Kilifi County, and by extension Kwale county which were the primary project sites of the BE project. Several partnership opportunities have been explored, including with the local county government to foster its operations, leading to growing interests and potential commitments in future.

1.2. BEF Secretariate meeting

The BEF Secretariat met at Silver Palm Resort to refine the Blue Empowerment Fund (BEF) as a sustainability vehicle for the Blue Empowerment Project and to prepare for the inaugural Governing Board session.

1.2.1. Framing the Blue Empowerment Fund

Dr. Joel outlined BEF as a long-term framework to tackle systemic barriers facing women in the blue economy, notably limited access to technology, finance and coordinated business support. Members affirmed the role of collective, business-oriented structures (Chamas, SACCOs) to drive uptake of key innovations such as Fish Transport Units (FTU), integrated multitrophic aquaculture (IMTA) systems and hatchery units, and backed the creation of a Credit and Access Fund to provide pooled SACCO capital, transparent governance, a revolving credit facility and continuous technical capacity building.

1.2.2. Prioritization of BEF roles

Recognizing limited capacity, the Secretariat prioritized three core roles for initial rollout from the wider BEF framework:

- Partnership and Resource Mobilization Unit – to lead collaboration, fundraising and stakeholder alignment.
- Enterprise and Value Chain Development Unit – to strengthen business readiness in fish and seaweed value chains.
- SACCO Support & Integration Unit – to embed strong governance and financial accessibility within SACCOs.

These functions are intended to deliver early wins while laying the foundation for future expansion into additional BEF roles.

1.2.3. Role division and implementation focus

Leadership for two key workstreams was assigned: Elsie (with support from Benard and Christabel) will lead **Partnerships and Resource Mobilization Unit**, while Betty (with support Nazi and Victor) will drive **Enterprise Value Chain & Development Unit**. The enterprise workstream will support SACCOs, MSMEs and individual entrepreneurs in the fish and seaweed value chains in Kwale and Kilifi through business development services (extension, entrepreneurship training, masterclasses, market and investment linkages, benchmarking) and technology support (FTU as a service, inputs, fingerlings, value-added fish products and technical assistance). The Partnership and Resource Mobilization Unit will develop a flagship proposal targeting USD 4.5 million over three years for Business Development Support (BDS), technology support, digital innovation, revolving funds and research, with an incubation program of about USD 1.3 million as a priority, using conferences, proposals, side events and targeted outreach to map and engage financial and non-financial partners.

1.2.4. Preparation for the Governing Board

The Secretariat agreed on key elements for the Governing Board orientation, including member introductions and expectations, an overview of BE project and the transition to BEF, a review of the strategic roadmap, and clarification of the Board's role in guiding implementation and growth of the Fund. The meeting, chaired by Dr. Joel, closed with consensus that these steps position BEF as a robust mechanism to center women in blue-economy innovation and scale project impacts beyond the current implementation cycle.

1.3. BEF Secretariate and Governing Board meeting

The inaugural Governing Board meeting of the BEF was held on 9 October 2025 at Hotel Sapphire, Mombasa, bringing together board members from government, research, community groups and implementing partners to steer the transition from the BE project into a long-term financing and governance mechanism for coastal blue-economy enterprises.

1.3.1. Framing the Fund and transition from BEP

In his opening remarks, Prof. Tom Ogada, Executive Director for the African Centre for Technology Studies commended partners for four years of work translating BE project research into tangible livelihood gains for coastal communities and reaffirmed the vision of empowering communities, creating decent jobs, and centering women's leadership in the blue economy. The Board endorsed the shift from BE project to BEF to secure continuity, deepen financial inclusion for fisherwomen and youth, and scale impact across Kenya's coast.

Dr Benard Simiyu reviewed BE project's origins in addressing climate impacts, limited finance and gender barriers affecting fish and seaweed farmers, and highlighted key interventions such as fingerling transport technologies, training and capacity building, knowledge dissemination, market linkages, coalition building and value-addition training. Victor Omondi then outlined the BEF's

governance and operating framework, emphasizing transparent, community-anchored decision-making, clear partner roles, and a strong focus on measurable livelihood gains for women and youth.

1.3.2. Strategic focus: business support, partnerships and innovation pathways

Building on Secretariat discussions from 8 October, Betty Mohe and Elsie Wanjiku presented two priority workstreams: Business Development and Support, and Partnerships & Resource Mobilization. The Board agreed that BEF will invest in SACCO-based business support for financial literacy, technology and infrastructure access, mentorship and asset acquisition, while actively pursuing partnerships and fundraising through a flagship proposal, targeted outreach, and participation in key conferences and convenings. These combined efforts aim to strengthen SACCOs as vehicles for inclusive financing and to position BEF as a credible, well-structured fund for coastal blue enterprise development.

1.3.3. Reflections: governance, infrastructure and systems strengthening

In an open deliberation, members stressed the need for strong governance, accountability and learning systems. Bahari Community Based Organization Network (BCBON) representatives welcomed the formation of four SACCOs under BEP and called for sustained mentorship to ensure their long-term health. Kenya Marine and Fisheries Research Institute (KMFRI) representative highlighted BEF's potential to transform women's seaweed farming via fairer markets and more robust production systems and proposed a dedicated monitoring and evaluation unit and better integration of indigenous and scientific knowledge.

Board members underscored the importance of a legally grounded framework for BEF, a clear administrative structure, incubation centres for innovation, and a lending portfolio that allocates a defined share of resources to SACCOs while also supporting established blue-economy enterprises. IMTA was singled out as a core focus around which other blue-enterprise interventions can evolve.

1.3.4. Agreed priorities and Key Performance Indicators

The Board adopted a set of priorities and performance indicators to guide BEF through its first quarter:

- Finalize a comprehensive legal and administrative framework, including governance rules, procurement and financial-management procedures.
- Strengthen partnerships and resource mobilization to support sustainable blue-economy investments.
- Operationalize existing blue enterprises and infrastructure (e.g., hatchery and aquaculture units) and strategically integrate freshwater assets to complement marine work.
- Establish or design innovation/incubation centres for women and youth entrepreneurs and deliver targeted training for SACCO representatives on governance, financial literacy and leadership.
- Prepare a unified strategic document, detailed work plan and milestone-tracking framework, with legal support for compliance and partnership agreements.

- Conduct needs assessments for each SACCO to tailor capacity building, technical assistance, and financing to local priorities.



Figure 1: Members of the BEF Governing Board and the BEF Secretariat at the inaugural BEF meeting in Mombasa in October 2025.

1.3.5. AOB and next steps

Members committed to high standards of ethics and confidentiality and agreed to use defined communication channels for official BEF business. The next Governing Board meeting was scheduled for 22 January 2026, maintaining a three-month interval.

In closing, Dr Joel Onyango thanked members and partners for their engagement, noted that the BEF's public launch will follow securing a few additional strategic partners, and reaffirmed the Fund's mission to deliver inclusive, lasting social and economic benefits from Kenya's blue economy for coastal communities.

2. Backyard Hatchery and FTU Operations

2.1. Hatchery pond renovation and brooders stocking

During the fourth quarter of the year, broodstock pond was successfully renovated and stocked with Nile Tilapia (*Oreochromis niloticus*) brooders meant for fingerling production. The pond located at Maweni was filled with sea water transported from Kibokoni, the same site from which the brooders were sourced.



Figure 2: The concrete pond at the BE residence in Kilifi which has been stocked with Nile Tilapia broodstock for fingerling production.

2.2. Construction of wooden ponds

To support the hatchery operations, two additional wooden ponds were constructed for broodstock pairing and fingerlings nursery. Polythene paper was laid inside the tanks to help hold water. The ponds measure 10 ft by 10 ft by 3 ft high with a volume of approximately 300 cubic feet (8,500 litres).



Figure 3: the newly constructed wooden ponds to be used as broodstock ponds. the ponds will be lined with a pond liner to ensure water retention.

2.3. Construction of FTU lift

Since the beginning of the project in 2021, the fingerling transport unit (FTU) has always stayed in the car boot throughout even at times when it is not in use. This has led to inconveniences, especially when there are some cargoes to be transported from point A to B. This has also led to unnecessary load on the car resulting in higher fuel consumption. To solve this, we designed a manual lift that uses two manual winches and two pulleys that would be used to lift the FTU up by some inches to enable smooth onloading and offloading onto the car. This makes easy what would require up to 5 men to load or offload.



Figure 4: The FTU lift which uses two manual winches to lift the FTU up during loading and offloading onto the pickup

2.4. Construction of hatchery shade

The hatchery shade was constructed to house the tilapia fish egg incubator and protect it from direct sunlight. This would ensure ample conditions for egg incubation and hatching into fry/fingerlings.



Figure 5: The newly constructed hatchery shelter to provide shade and security for the tilapia egg incubation unit. It helps prevent direct sunlight on the hatching jars which previously increased water temperatures leading to high egg mortality.

2.5. SACCO Aquaculture Revolving Fund Program

Under the BEF, a SACCO Aquaculture Revolving Fund program has been established. The program aims to support fish farmers belonging to the women-led SACCOs in the blue economy sector in Kilifi and Kwale Counties by providing essential aquaculture inputs to boost their aquaculture production capacity and enhance their income potential. Potential farmers were recruited based on the following criteria:

- i. One must be a registered member of a SACCO under the BE project.
- ii. One must own a mariculture pond measuring 30 m by 40 m, active and well maintained.
- iii. The pond should be easily accessible and with adequate supply of water.
- iv. The pond must have guaranteed security.
- v. Pond owners should be willing and ready to undertake daily pond activities including feeding, cleaning and general stock safety at their own expense.

The selected ponds were strategically located within the intertidal zone, which allows them to be naturally replenished with seawater during high tides. In total five ponds were identified, four in Kilifi North subcounty belonging to members of Kilifi Kaskazini SACCO and one was identified in Lunga Lunga subcounty, Kwale County, belonging to members of Jititahada SACCO. To ensure these sites were technically viable for production, farmers were guided through pond preparation process, including liming to stabilize pH levels and fertilization to promote natural primary productivity, ensuring the ponds were ready for stocking. Notably, the selected ponds included: Umoja Multi-Purpose Self-Help Group in Kibokoni, Ihaleni Kakuluni Self-Help Group, Mtongani

Kidundu Conservation Group and Kadzifitseni Self-Help Group in Kilifi North and Mwazaro BMU Community in Lunga Lunga, Kwale.



Figure 6: A pond belonging to Ihaleni Kakuluni Self Help Group, selected for the SACCO Revolving Aquaculture Fund Program.

3. BE Capacity Strengthening Initiatives

3.1. BE fish value addition training and business incubation workshop

The training took place from 1st to 9th December 2025 at Mwazaro SolCool Dry Blue Innovation Platform, Kwale County, organized by Kenya Industrial Research and Development Institute (KIRDI), a consortium partner in the BE project. This training and business incubation workshop was designed to equip potential women entrepreneurs with practical skills in fish value addition, sales and marketing, and basic business management skill. The goal was to strengthen capacity to process and commercialize seaweed and fish-based products, hence enhancing income generating potential. The major topical areas of training included:

3.1.1. Good Manufacturing and Hygiene Practices

Participants were trained on basic conditions and standards to ensure food safety, focusing on preventing food contamination and control of health hazards. Through demonstrations, the participants were equipped with operations that maintain a food safety culture at every production level. The training involved good management practices (GMP), such as personal and environmental hygiene practices, health certification for food handlers, and requirements for processing raw materials and aids. Participants also learned to identify fresh fish and assess the quality of all raw materials and ingredients.

Overall, the training equipped participants with practical GMP knowledge, enabling them to utilize available facilities and resources, thereby enhancing fish quality, minimizing losses, and increasing consumer trust.

3.1.2. Fish Sausage Processing

Participants were practically trained on the preparation of fish sausages as a value-added fish product, with emphasis on correct formulation, hygiene, temperature control, and product handling. The training covered the standard sausage formulation for a 1 kg batch, where fish fillet formed the main ingredient (60%), combined with vegetable oil and fat, ice water, corn starch, sugar, curing salt, and approved food additives such as Sodium Tripolyphosphate (STPP), ascorbic acid, and monosodium glutamate (MSG), alongside locally available spices for flavour enhancement. Participants were guided on the preparation of curing salt and the safe use of additives to improve product texture, colour, and shelf life. The practical session demonstrated a step-by-step processing procedure, starting with filleting and pre-mincing the chilled filleted fish to prevent spoilage. Trainees learned the importance of maintaining low temperatures throughout processing, especially during dry chopping with curing salt and additives, followed by the incorporation of ice to achieve a sticky and uniform batter. The addition of spices, starch, sugar, and oils was demonstrated to achieve a smooth, homogeneous mixture, with strict control to ensure the final batter temperature did not exceed 10°C. Participants were further trained on sausage stuffing techniques, including the use of artificial casings, correct stuffing pressure, linking to desired lengths, and safe handling to prevent casing breakage. Proper packaging using food-grade materials was emphasized, alongside options for immediate cooking or storage through chilling and freezing. Lastly, the training covered different cooking and finishing methods, including

frying, boiling, and smoking, with clear guidance on temperature and time control to maintain product quality and prevention of bursting.

3.1.3. Fish Samosa Preparation



Participants were trained on the preparation of fish samosas as a simple and market-friendly value-added fish product, which is suitable for small-scale and household-level processing. The training covered the selection and preparation of ingredients, including minced fish fillet, onions, garlic, spices, and cooking oil for the filling, as well as the preparation of samosa dough using all-purpose flour, oil, water, and salt. The practical session demonstrated the step-by-step cooking process, beginning with frying onions in oil, followed by the addition of garlic and spices to develop flavour. Participants learned how to properly cook the minced fish filling to ensure food safety and good texture before

removing it from heat. Emphasis was placed on allowing the filling to cool slightly before wrapping to maintain product quality. Participants were further guided on dough handling and wrapping techniques, including rolling out the dough, cutting it into samosa strips, filling them correctly, and folding them into the traditional triangular shape. The use of a simple flour-and-water paste to seal the edges was demonstrated to prevent leakage during frying. Finally, trainees were shown the correct deep-frying method, ensuring the oil was sufficiently hot and frying until the samosas turned golden brown.

3.1.4. Fish Ball Preparation



Participants were trained on the preparation of fish balls as a value-added fish product. The training focused on various aspects, including proper raw material handling, ingredient formulation, and processing techniques suitable for small-scale production. The session began with guidance on the preparation of fish fillet, where participants learned how to scale, skin, and debone fresh fish, and how to handle frozen fish fillet through slicing and grinding to achieve a suitable texture for processing. It was then

followed by a practical session that demonstrated grinding, chopping, and mixing techniques using a mincer and blender to break down fish muscle fibers and achieve a uniform mixture. During this session, emphasis was placed on the correct addition of salt to extract salt-soluble proteins, which improves the binding and texture of the fish balls. Participants were guided on incorporating other ingredients such as eggs, flour, garlic, onions, fish sauce, and breadcrumbs to enhance flavour and structure. Participants were further trained on shaping, coating, and cooking methods, including forming uniform balls, coating them with flour, beaten egg, and breadcrumbs, and frying them in hot oil until golden brown on all sides. Options for packaging and freezing uncooked fish balls for later use were also highlighted to support flexible production and reduce post-harvest losses.

3.1.5. Fish Crackers

The training on the preparation of fish crackers emphasized how variations in ingredient ratios influence the taste, texture, and overall quality of crackers. This understanding enables participants to adopt the formulation to locally available raw materials. The practical session demonstrated the step-by-step processing method, beginning with cooking filleted fish to ensure an ease of mixing. Participants were guided to mix the filled while still hot to ensure binding, followed by the gradual addition of dry ingredients such as cassava flour, modified starch, salt, and spices. Emphasis was placed on adding water slowly to achieve the correct dough consistency and allowing the dough to rest to improve handling and texture.



Figure 7: Fish value addition training results: a pack of assorted products made by the trainees

3.1.6. Seaweed value addition demonstration

Participants were involved in practical demonstrations on the processes of handling seaweed from the landing sites to the final dried product. Participants were trained on basic skills, including hygienic ways of transporting seaweed from seaweed farms, preparation of drying premises, observing food safety protocols, packaging solutions suitable for seaweed transportation, ambient temperature and time for seaweed dehydration, packaging, labelling and storage conditions for dried seaweed. Participants were trained on how to process fish feeds from seaweed extracts and other locally available materials. Fish feed formulation was carried out using the FeedFormulator® program. The procedure involves drying and milling the mixed ingredients before being cooked to form a thick paste. The paste was extruded through a manual mincing machine forming long strands which were then collected and dried in the SolCool Tunnel Dryer.



Figure 8: A brief step-by-step demonstration of seaweed-based fish feed processing.

3.1.7. Business formalization, sales and marketing session

Participants were trained on business formalization and benefits of business registration, such as gaining access to government grants, low-interest bank loans, and larger retail contracts like supermarkets. They also gained knowledge on various sales and marketing strategies, including how to identify high-value clients, instead of relying solely on local open-air markets. Additionally, participants were trained on marketing & branding strategies, which entailed development of a Unique Selling Proposition (USP), branding & visual identity, and digital marketing strategies.



Figure 9: Value addition participants take part in the training sessions at the SolCool Dry Blue Innovation Platform in Mwazaro, Kwale County.

3.2. BE in Communication and Dissemination Workshop

The BE project, in collaboration with the Clare Capacity Strengthening (CS) Hub project conducted a communication and dissemination workshop in Kwale in December 2025 aimed at disseminating the outputs of the project with community members in the Kibuyuni and Mwazaro projects sites. The workshop brought together participants from Clare CS Hub drawn from within and outside Kenya and BE project members and participants from project consortium partners and community members. The participants were taken for an excursion tour of the integrated IMTA cage site in Kijiweni, seaweed farm plots in Kibuyuni, and the value addition platform in Mwazaro, where they learnt a lot about the project and its transformative impact on the local community, especially women. Information was disseminated through storytelling by women leaders and through knowledge outputs generated from the BE project.



Figure 10: Participants from BE and Clare CS Hub projects during the tour of seaweed farming plots in Kibuyuni beach, Kwale County.



Figure 11: BE and Clare CS Hub project participants interact, and share BE knowledge outputs with community members during the community stakeholder excursion dialogue in Kibuyuni Beach, Kwale County.

Here are some of the knowledge outputs that were printed and shared:

- i. [Blue Empowerment Project: Transformative Gender Training for Sustainable Development](#)
- ii. [Business Canvas Model: Inclusive Business Training Models for Coastal Fisher Women in Kwale and Kilifi County.](#)
- iii. [Institutionalizing and Catalyzing Gender Responsive Policies and Strengthening Collaboration and Coordination in Kenya’s Fisheries and Aquaculture Sector. Kilifi County Multistakeholder Policy Dialogue Report.](#)
- iv. [Institutionalizing and Catalyzing Gender Responsive Policies and Strengthening Collaboration and Coordination in Kenya’s Fisheries and Aquaculture Sector. Kwale County Multistakeholder Policy Dialogue Report.](#)
- v. Opportunities for Blue Economic Empowerment and Resilience of Fisherwomen in Kenya

3.3. Women’s Economic Empowerment and Advocacy Coalition

The Women’s Economic Empowerment and Advocacy Coalition (WEEAC) meeting was held in Kwale and Kilifi on 8th and 12th December 2025 representing a key milestone for the Blue Empowerment Project in promoting sustainable livelihoods and gender empowerment for the women in Kenya’s coastal



communities through IMTA. Convened by Bahari CBO Network, a consortium partner in the BE project, the meetings brought together the four women-led Savings and Credit Cooperatives (SACCOs), 2 in Kilifi and 2 in Kwale counties with these economic interventions complementing the initial advocacy efforts and capacity building trainings.

The convention of the two advocacy coalition meetings was designed to achieve the following set of objectives:

- **Formation of two women-led** advocacy coalitions, one in Kwale and another in Kilifi counties.
- **Development of solid advocacy action plans** – to create a clear and actionable roadmap for sustaining the ongoing advocacy efforts within the sector.
- **Deepening the understanding of rights** – to enhance the capacity of women and girls to understand and understand their rights to achieve better socio-economic outcomes.

Key Outcomes from the meetings:

- Formation of WEEAC: the dialogue held in Mwazaro village, Kwale county marked the official launch of this platform which is strategically designed to unify women's voices as the BE project transitions to its next phase. The strategic value of this unified front was articulated by Project Gender Lead Eva Komba, who explained the fundamental shift in power dynamics that a coalition enables: *"One voice is weak... But when women speak together, they gain bargaining power even with government."*
- Charting the Course: Development of Advocacy Action Plans: A second critical output of the December meetings was the development of concrete advocacy action plans. These plans are not just abstract wish lists, but strategic roadmaps designed to leverage existing and emerging policy opportunities at both the county and national levels. The coalitions will specifically engage with key policy frameworks currently under development, including the Marine Spatial Plan, the Sustainable Ocean Plan, and the Blue Economy Master Plan. The action plans also identify and target specific policy gaps that directly affect women's livelihoods. For example, a tangible advocacy goal emerged from the observation shared by Project Gender Lead Eva Komba: *"There is no seaweed policy in Kwale County, yet seaweed is a major livelihood for women"*. By developing these targeted action plans, the coalitions have established a clear, strategic direction for their future work. This ensures that their energy will be focused on achievable goals that promise to yield significant improvements for women throughout the blue economy value chain.

3.4. BE Media training: Amplifying voices in the Blue Economy through media

The Media Engagement Training for Women and Communities in Coastal Kenya was held from 4th to 6th December 2025 and was guided by the Media Engagement Manual and the Facilitator's Guide. The training was organized and facilitated by staff of Kenyatta University (KU) and Sea Moss Corporation (SMC), who are partners in the BE project consortium. The training was designed to strengthen the capacity of women entrepreneurs and community groups in the Blue Economy to use media tools to promote their enterprises, share their stories and engage stakeholders. The training adopted a participatory and practice-oriented approach, with facilitators adapting sessions to reflect the socio-cultural context of coastal communities and the availability of resources. The target participants included women entrepreneurs engaged in fisheries, seaweed farming and related micro and small enterprises, as well as community leaders and local stakeholders.

Key training themes included understanding different forms of media and their relevance for community enterprises, traditional and digital media tools, visual communication and storytelling, managing media inquiries and crisis communication, addressing online violence against women, using media for advocacy and tracking the impact of media engagement. These themes were delivered through short presentations, facilitated discussions, story-sharing activities, group work and hands-on practical sessions.

Participants practiced content creation using smartphones and widely used social platforms such as WhatsApp Business, Facebook, and TikTok. Practical activities included capturing photos and videos, converting visuals into social media content, developing simple stories for digital platforms and designing advocacy and communication campaigns relevant to their businesses and communities. Role-play exercises were used to build confidence in responding to media inquiries and managing reputational risks, while group discussions addressed digital safety and strategies for dealing with online harassment.

3.4.1. Key Findings

The media workshop revealed a strong shift in how women participants perceive, engage with, and use media as a tool for visibility, business growth, and advocacy. However, a significant gap remains: the workshop identified that the full potential of digital media tools has not yet been realized in rural areas. Many participants expressed that while the desire to connect is there, a lack of technical "know-how" and digital literacy prevents them from navigating social media platforms effectively.

Participants gained a clear understanding of the core elements of storytelling, with strong emphasis on how stories can be amplified through digital platforms particularly Facebook and WhatsApp. The sessions highlighted that effective storytelling goes beyond sharing information; it requires purpose, audience awareness, and consistent content creation for engagement.

Practical skills in visual content creation - a major highlight was learning tips for great photos, especially using mobile phones. Participants learned how visual storytelling improves credibility, reach, and audience trust.

Leveraging community media and local radio - working with local radio stations emerged as a strong affirmative action. Women recognized community radio as an accessible and powerful platform to: **Share local stories, promote enterprises, advance advocacy agendas.** This shifted perceptions of radio from a passive medium to an active tool for influence

Digital tools for business and communication - the workshop revealed that while many participants were active online, online marketing was underutilized. Sessions on mobile apps and digital tools bridged this gap. They went through Step-by-step guidance on social media visibility and profile setup, Creation of WhatsApp Business accounts by the end of the day with having Immediate sales reported by some participants through improved digital presence



Figure 12: BE media training participants receive their certificates of participation at the end of the three-day training session.

3.4.2. Implications of the findings

There is a need for continued training on media engagement, alongside simplified and accessible tools that allow participants to practically build their technical know-how. Strengthening these skills will support effective advocacy, raise awareness, and improve overall communication. Several key considerations that should be considered to ensure these efforts are impactful include:

- i. **Strengthening storytelling and content creation capacity at community level.** Institutions should invest in continued training on storytelling techniques and purposeful content creation tailored for digital platforms such as Facebook and WhatsApp can improve engagement and audience reach.
- ii. **There is a need to promote strategic engagement with traditional media like local radio and TV stations.** Supporting women to intentionally collaborate with community radio stations as an accessible platform for enterprise promotion, community storytelling, and advocacy increases success of their business
- iii. **Digital tools assist scaling business growth.** Expanding capacity-building efforts on the use of mobile applications and digital platforms for communication, online marketing, and customer engagement is paramount in creating awareness of businesses.
- iv. **There is need to institutionalize step-by-step support for setting up and optimizing social media.** To improve social media visibility and business profile setup on WhatsApp Business will assist in sustaining digital sales outcomes
- v. **There is a need to build an agency in handling media inquiries, negative feedback and online harassment and representation.** Training of women on managing media

interactions, including use of appropriate language, clarification processes, escalation mechanisms, and narrative control. As well as Developing guidance and practical tools to help women respond professionally to criticism, manage online harassment, and protect their personal and business reputations.

- vi. **Priority should be given to enhancing advocacy and shaping policy through media engagement.** Support women to design and implement intentional advocacy campaigns by defining clear goals, identifying target audiences, selecting appropriate media channels, and articulating clear asks to decision-makers.

3.4.3. Conclusion

The media training was a success, having equipped the participants with a deep understanding of the power of their voice and how to use it, as well as being equipped with practical digital and media skills for their use. Moreso, the training enabled a critical shift from a fear of media engagement to a position of informed confidence and agency. Participants not only gained practical, immediately applicable digital skills such as content creation and platform management but also underwent a mindset shift, recognizing their own voices as powerful assets for business growth, advocacy, and policy influence. As the training came to an end, the women left with clear action plans, active platforms, and renewed motivation, ready to amplify their impact and drive meaningful change as strategic communicators in the Blue Economy.

As the BE project ends, most of the ongoing activities are wrap ups on the pending activities from the various project work packages.

These activities were undertaken in fulfillment of the projects specific work packages and the overall achievement of objectives which include:

- To profile and document gender responsive challenges, potentials, and opportunities for commercial and sustainable adoption of fish seaweeds IMTA for economic development of coastal fisher communities.
- To map socio-technical pathways that can support enabling policies, technology uptake, and governance frameworks for IMTA adoption and women fisherfolk empowerment.
- To design, set-up, test and optimize gender transformative fish-seaweeds IMTA solutions for the socio-economic empowerment, COVID-19, and Climate Change resilience of fisher women.
- To promote knowledge translation, dissemination and learning for IMTA systems upscaling, climate change and COVID-19 response strategies for the local community and women empowerment in Kwale and Kilifi counties.