

A grand initiative to empower fisher women in Kenya's coast

The Blue Empowerment project aims tackle barriers for the empowerment of fisher women in Kenya's coast through climate-smart integrated multi-trophic aquaculture (IMTA) of seaweeds and fish for improved livelihoods and resilience

By Luseka Mwanzi

The Blue Empowerment project is a low-carbon, gender transformative initiative, with the aim of contributing to tackling barriers for the empowerment of fisher women in Kenya's coast..

The project focuses on adoption of climate-smart integrated multi-trophic aquaculture (IMTA) of seaweeds and fish for improved livelihoods and resilience. It is anchored in sustainable development goal (SDG) 5 on the crucial role of gender equality in development processes as well as in the Kenya Vision 2030. The expected main beneficiaries of the result of this project are women, and the core model will include building agency, resources, and institutional structures.

Project objectives

The Blue Empowerment Project aims tackle barriers for the empowerment of fisher women in Kenya's coastal region through adoption of climate-smart integrated multi-trophic aquaculture (IMTA) of seaweeds and fish for improved livelihoods and resilience. Specifically, the project aims 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;
- Map socio-technical pathways that can support enabling policies, technology uptake, and governance frameworks for IMTA adoption and women fisherfolk empowerment.
- Design, set-up, test and optimise gender transformative fish-seaweeds IMTA solutions for the socio-economic empowerment, COVID-19 and Climate Change resilience of fisher women.
- 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.



Women in Kibuyuni Village in Kwale County sorting of seaweed before processing into various products.

Implementation Approach

The project will engage the Beach Management Units (BMUs), technological institutions, women groups, private sector, policy makers and other stakeholders in the Blue Economy to study, co-design, deploy model IMTA farms and use them as platforms to gain practical insights, evidence and generate data for adoption towards sustainable development in the coastal region.

The methodological thrust of this project is a gender-transformative approach that has been applied in recent studies (Gopal et al 2020) to generate insights that can challenge gender.

Aquaculture and Women Empowerment

By Luseka Mwanzi

In Kibokoni Village of Kilifi County in Kenya, women have always depended on men to go get fish. And, therefore to supplement their household income, women have often depended on forests where they cut trees to sell as for firewood in the local market.

But this economic activity, apart from being destructive to the environment, it is also not sustainable. For this reason, women in Kibokoni came together to form Umoja Self-Help group where they were supported to venture into aquaculture as a new form of economic activity. They came together and dug ponds and started fish farming. And now, the economic tide is slowly shifting in favour of women; interestingly, men and the youth are also benefiting.

“We used to suffer so much because we had to go to the forest, cut trees for firewood and sell in Kilifi and also making coconut leaves. But when this project came, it started to help us. We were supported to dig the ponds and later we got prawn fingerlings from the creek,” said Christine Tsori, the chair-lady of Umoja Self-Help group in Kibokoni.

The ponds enable women to get fish throughout the season unlike the Ocean where there are times when the fish is scarce.

“We get fingerlings from the creek and farm them in the ponds. Because if you farm prawns in the ponds, it takes three months and harvest. Prawns only take 3 months to mature. So in one year, we harvest three times” she revealed.

The Blue Empowernet is meant to take aquaculture production in the coast region to the next level.



Women in Kibokoni harvesting fish from the ponds. The Blue Empowerment project is working with the women to enhance production.

What to expect in 2023

Quarterly Webinars

The project has lined up webinars to be held every quarter. The next webinar will be in March 2023. Details and link to the meeting will be shared as the date approaches.

A Book on Blue Empowerment

Mid 2023, ACTS looks to publish a book on the blue empowerment of women while analyzing the barriers, challenges and opportunities in the fisher-folk communities in coastal Kenya. We shall inform you of its release in due course.

A Hackathon

The project has planned for an innovation challenge in 2023. We welcome you to come and present your idea on how to empower women in the Blue Economy and win a prize for your team!

Studentship

To achieve our outputs for work stream 4 and 5, the project shall be recruiting 2 students for the PhD fellows. This will be advertised in our website. <https://blueeconomy.acts-net.org/>

Project Partners

The project is being implemented by the African Centre for Technology Studies (ACTS) in partnership with Kenya Industrial Development Research Institute, (KIRDI) Kenyatta University, Kenya Marine and Fisheries Research Institute (KMFRI), Bahari CBO Network and C-Moss Corporation.

For more information contact: jonyango@acts-net.org or lmwanzi@acts-net.org

Facebook: African Centre for Technology Studies - ACTS

Twitter: @ACTSNET