

Youth in Sustainable Aquaculture

The YISA programme Q2 impact stories

March - May 2025



In partnership with

Table of contents

Introduction	2
YISA progamme impact, goals and key interventions	4
YISA programme partners based activities	
How crab farming is protecting mangroves in coastal Kenya	5
From coop to pond: navigating the transition from poultry to aquaculture	8
From two wheels to soybean fields	10
Turning curiosity into impact: Grace and Sam’s black soldier fly venture	12
The Kibaokiche Fish Farmers’ journey: livelihoods beyond the ponds	14
Empowering young people in Kenya through fishing	16
Kosimbo youth group celebrates a great catch	17
Photo highlights of Q2 YISA programme partners	19

Contributors

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Introduction

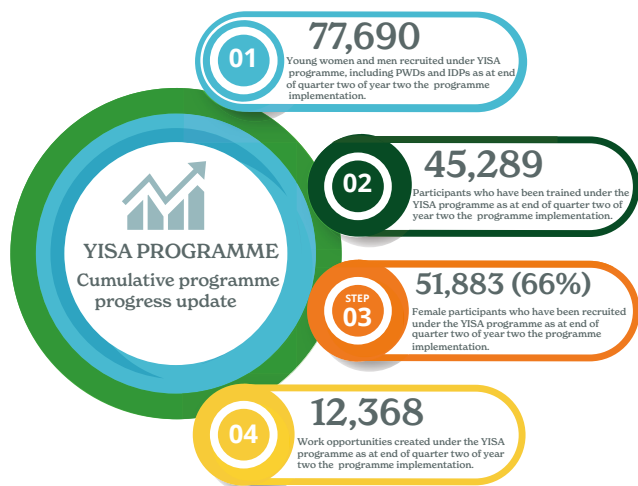
This issue highlights some of the baseline and stories of the Youth in Sustainable Aquaculture (YISA), a partnership programme with the Mastercard Foundation and consortium partners led by Farm Africa that aims to strengthen resilient livelihoods through innovative aquaculture practices, enabling work opportunities for young women and men.

Launched in 2023, the programme’s goal is to create 150,000 jobs for young women (127,500) and men (22,500), including internally displaced persons (IDPs) and persons with disabilities (PWDs), in Kenya’s aquaculture sector across Kisumu, Homa Bay, Busia, Kakamega, Siaya, and Kilifi counties.

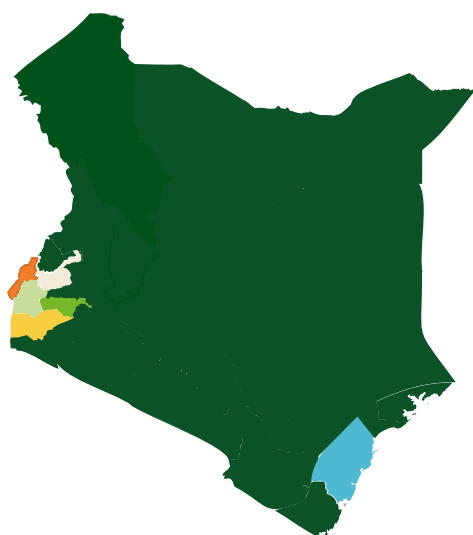
In the first year of programme implementation, which ended in November 2024, the YISA programme successfully onboarded 47,738 young women and men. In the first two quarters of the second year (December 2024 – May 2025), we have onboarded an additional 29,952 bringing the total cumulative number of participants to 77,690. Of these, 66% are women and 33% are men. Of the total number of participants, 1,844 are persons with disabilities (PWDs), and 2,096 are internally displaced persons (IDPs).



To date, the programme has created work opportunities for 12,368 with direct accounting for 10,863 and indirect jobs are 1,505 across the aquaculture, mariculture, soybean production, and Black Soldier Fly (BSF) value chains.



Programme counties



Background

The surge in demand for fish in Kenya represents a promising avenue for economic expansion through the aquaculture sector. Fish consumption is rapidly increasing with population growth and a shift towards healthier protein sources.

Kenya's aquaculture sector holds immense potential for economic growth, offering employment opportunities for young women and men. However, despite this potential, the sector remains largely untapped by young people due to challenges such as limited awareness, skills, access to resources like capital and land, market constraints, and perception issues.

What we are doing

To address the issue and create employment opportunities for young people, the Mastercard Foundation in partnership with Farm Africa and consortium partners including Echo Network Africa Foundation, Lattice, Aquarech, Ramogi Institute of Advanced Technology, Hydro Victoria, and Livingwood Consultant Ltd. is implementing the Empowering Youth in Sustainable Aquaculture Markets and Job Creation programme also known as the Youth in Sustainable Aquaculture (YISA) programme.

Programme value chains

Aquaculture
Mariculture
Soybean production
Black Soldier Fly production

(Bottom left) Edison Kashindo, a member of Mida Marine Conservation, holding one of the crabs undergoing crab fattening. Photo: Farm Africa / Maurice Goga.

YISA programme impact, goals and key interventions

Programme impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To enhance resilient livelihoods through innovative aquaculture practices to enable work opportunities for young women and men.
Programme goal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To facilitate 150,000 inclusive, meaningful and dignified employment opportunities for young men and women as well as, persons with disabilities (PWDs) and internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Kenya's aquaculture sector.
Programme's key interventions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Outcome 1: Increase quality and productivity of fish (aqua and mariculture value chains) Outcome 2: Increase opportunities for financially disadvantaged young persons (entrepreneurship development along the value chains through trainings) Outcome 3: Growth of enterprises led or owned by financially disadvantaged people (enterprise development through markets and finance linkages) Outcome 4: Promote gender transformative approaches (deliberate linkages and training young women on leadership and governance).

YISA programme partners' key activities

Farm Africa	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lead partner supports monitoring evaluation and learning, technical expertise (aquaculture, mariculture, business delivery services, agronomy), builds capacity for key input market actors, and develops last-mile
Echo Network Africa Foundation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish a gender-responsive revolving fund to enhance equal access to finance for value chain actors, employ gender action learning system methodology to address gender barriers, and strengthen market actors' capacity in gender-transformative approaches.
Lattice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Train local service providers (LSPs) and ecosystem players to offer bundled services (input distribution, extension, produce aggregation). Establish a gender-responsive Challenge Fund to ensure equal access to finance for value chain actors.
Aquarech	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhance the use of technology in farming systems and input access while developing viable market channels, such as franchise models, to help local fish traders (mama samaki) access quality fish for their businesses
RIAT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhance collaboration between research and training institutions (eg RIAT, KEMFRI etc) to promote knowledge transfer and technology adoption to aqua value chain actors.
Hydro Victoria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify and build the capacity of BSF producers to boost the production of alternative protein sources for fish feeds.
Livingwood Consultants Ltd	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhance the uptake of LSPs by value chain players by connecting farmers to quality inputs, advisory services, and markets.

How crab farming is protecting mangroves in coastal Kenya



Members of Mida Marine Conservation Group led by Hussein Mdata (right). Photo: Farm Africa/Maurice Goga.

Along the Mida Creek in Kilifi county in coastal Kenya, the unsustainable exploitation of mangroves tress by local communities has spurred a group of young eco-friendly entrepreneurs into action.

The young women and men who make up the Mida Marine Conservation group are united by a common goal to develop sustainable businesses that protect the mangrove vegetation at Gate B, Kwa Shauruwa Tungo.

Group member Hussein Mdata explains, “We got involved in mangrove conservation because the local communities were overharvesting the mangrove tress as a source of income, which was harmful to the ecosystem.”

“When we saw mangroves being destroyed, we came up with the group to protect the mangroves, and at the same time raise awareness of the importance of mangroves,” adds Hussein.

In addition to mangrove protection, the group

engages in beekeeping, crab farming, excursions and tourism. According to United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), mangroves help in mitigating climate change by locking away large quantities of carbon emitted in the atmosphere. Further, they provide breeding and feeding ground for a range of species of fish, birds, insect and even reptiles.

The group's involvement in farming led them to connect with Farm Africa during a crab farming training course held at Gede Polytechnic in 2023. “In 2023, 15 members of our group involved in crab farming underwent a month-long training at Gede Polytechnic, organised by Farm Africa,” says Hussein.

“It was during this training that we learnt about a new programme called Youth in Sustainable Aquaculture (YISA), which had been launched that same year.”

During the training, the 15 members were

equipped with skills on crab fattening, management, monitoring and marketing. “It was through this training that we acquired the skills on how to rear the crabs,” Hussein adds.

After the training, the group decided to join the YISA programme to enhance their skills in crab farming as an alternative source of income.

“We were told that YISA is a five-year programme running through till 2028, and it was geared towards creating employment opportunities for young people. That is when we as a group decided to involve ourselves entirely in crab farming,” says Hussein.

Despite fully immersing themselves in crab farming, the group initially lacked adequate technical knowledge. However, with ongoing training and support from Farm Africa, they began to make progress.

“Before the training, we started with just two cages, relying on tips from neighbouring conservation groups already involved in crab fattening,” recalls Hussein. “But since we didn’t have enough knowledge, we sometimes fed the crabs late. During transportation from the traps, we didn’t handle them properly, and by the time we got here, some had broken legs.”

“Farm Africa gave us the training through the YISA programme, and that’s when we began to understand how to properly manage and fatten the crabs,” says Hussein. “We also gained valuable marketing skills. So, we can say that we’ve seen improvements and made real progress in crab fattening.”

What is crab fattening?



A caged crab. Photo: Farm Africa/Maurice Goga

Crab fattening is the process of rearing soft-shelled crabs until they develop hard shells,

signalling maturity. Juvenile crabs, typically weighing between 200 and 500 grams, are usually trapped by experts from nearby mangrove areas and sold to crab farmers. The crabs are then placed in cages, where they are fed regularly, their growth is closely monitored, and they are harvested once they reach a marketable weight, usually between 700 grams and one kilogramme.

Sustainable crab farming can support mangrove conservation by providing economic incentives to local communities. The income generated from crab farming enables communities to invest in protecting mangrove ecosystems, which are essential for the success of crab farming due to their role as critical habitats.

After receiving support from Farm Africa, the group established 100 cages, stocking 52 in 50 of them. “Through funding from the YISA programme, we were able to set up 100 cages as a starting point,” says Hussein.

“These cages serve as learning hubs for all 15 members, helping us practise and master the best techniques in crab farming, including crab management, monitoring and eventually harvesting. The goal is to sell the matured, hardened crabs to generate income.”

Although crab farming may seem less tedious than other forms of mariculture, it comes with its own set of challenges. The group has faced issues related to feeding, fatality as a result of improper water pH levels, and ensuring the security of the cages.

“We normally feed the crabs with fish waste and chicken intestines, but sourcing fish waste is a big challenge,” explains Hussein.

“We’ve spoken to local fishmongers to reserve the waste for us, but over time, they started asking for a token, so we ended up having to pay them to get the trash. Another challenge is crab fatalities. We lost six crabs, likely due to changes in water salinity. In addition to those, we also lost seven large crabs that were almost ready for sale—we suspect they were stolen.”

Despite the challenges, the group was able to sell 17 crabs out of the 52 crabs they had in cages: “We had about 52 crabs, and we managed to sell 10 kgs —these were just 17 crabs that had fully matured,” explains Hussein.

From the sale of the 17 crabs, the group was able to earn 10,000 Kenyan Shillings (KSH), 70% of which was reinvested in the project.

“We came up with a system for the 10,000 Kenyan shillings that we raised by selling the matured crabs. Those who do feeding and monitoring are members who have families. One of the aims of setting up this project was to have an alternative income-generating activity,” says Hussein.

“So we decided to motivate them. Thirty per cent of the proceeds will be given to those who are doing feeding and monitoring as a stipend. And 70% would be reinvested into the project by buying other crablets, feed and even helping a bit in the construction of the restaurant,” he adds.

The group is currently constructing a restaurant and a boardwalk through the mangrove area—an initiative they believe will enhance security and reduce crab theft. Additionally, the restaurant will open up opportunities for crab value addition and eco-tourism.

“To improve security around the crab project, we decided to build a restaurant so that there would be continuous activity in the area,” explains Hussein.

“We’re constructing the restaurant on the mainland, and we’re extending it toward the crab farming site via a boardwalk. Eventually, the restaurant will overlook the open sea, creating a lively environment that will help us keep the area secure,” he adds.

The YISA programme continues to empower young people, such as Hussein and his group, by strengthening their resilience through innovative and environmentally-friendly aquaculture practices that aim to create 150,000 dignified work opportunities for young women and men aged 18 to 35.

“Farm Africa gave us the training through the YISA programme, and that’s when we began to understand how to properly manage and fatten the crabs. We also gained valuable marketing skills. So, can we say that we’ve seen improvements and made real progress in crab fattening.”

Hussein

Member of Mida Marine Conservation Group



Some of the crab cages owned by the Mida Marine Conservation Group. Photo: Farm Africa / Maurice Goga.



A caged crab. Photo: Farm Africa/Maurice Goga.



A crab undergoing fattening process. Photo: Farm Africa/Maurice Goga.



Members of Mida Marine Conservation Group led by Hussein Mdata (right) Photo: Farm Africa/Maurice Goga.

From coop to pond: navigating the transition from poultry to aquaculture



Joseph Sika feeding the frywell at his Nyai Fish Farm in Siaya county. Photo: Farm Africa/ Maurice Goga.

Managing a business remotely can be challenging, especially when it requires constant, hands-on care like poultry farming. This realisation led Joseph Sika, a young ‘agripreneur’ and participant in the Mastercard Foundation and Farm Africa’s Youth in Sustainable Aquaculture (YISA) programme in Kenya’s Siaya county, to make a bold shift.

Amidst the disruptions of the COVID-19 pandemic, Joseph transitioned from poultry farming to fish farming. This venture offered him more flexibility, fewer disease outbreaks and better scalability while he continued with his university studies.

“When I was in my second year in 2020, during the COVID-19 outbreak, I was engaged in poultry farming,” Joseph explains. “But I realised I couldn’t manage poultry while being away. That’s when I discovered that with fish farming, I could employ someone to feed the fish in my absence. I also noticed that fish are less prone to diseases compared to poultry. That’s when I decided to

transition from poultry to fish farming.”

After venturing into fish farming, Joseph registered his enterprise as Nyai Fish Farm and chose to focus on the production of fingerlings (young fish). Sourcing fingerlings is one of the major challenges faced by fish farmers in the region.

“In our area, no one is engaged in fingerling production. Farmers have to travel at least two kilometres to access fingerlings, and by the time they transport them to their nurseries, often taking approximately two hours, nearly 75% of the stock ends up dead. I’ve ventured into fingerling production to help address this challenge and support fellow fish farmers in the region,” he says.

The impact of the YISA programme

Joseph is one of the YISA programme participants who received funding from the Challenge Fund, opportunities for financially disadvantaged young women and men.

The fund aims to ensure all actors in the programme's value chains have equal access to finance.

"After completing the incubation process, I developed my business plan, which was fortunately approved by the YISA programme partners. I received close to USD 9,000 to expand my fingerling production business," says Joseph.

Joseph says the funding has completely transformed his life.

"Through the Challenge Fund, I was able to construct a nursery pond where I now raise fry into fingerlings. In a month, I expect to generate approximately 1,000,000 Kenyan Shillings (KES) from fingerling production alone."

Besides receiving funds from the Challenge Fund, Joseph has benefited from several training sessions, particularly in business management, through the business development services offered by Farm Africa. He says this training has equipped him with the skills needed to effectively manage and eventually scale up his business.

"One of the key outcomes of the incubation process was the training on record keeping," he explains. "At the beginning, I was asked how far I had gone with my project and how much I had spent, but I couldn't provide accurate answers because I didn't have any records. Now, I document every shilling spent on the farm."

Joseph adds that he has also learnt how to maintain and grow his business over time.

"I've learnt how to ensure the business continues to expand, even after implementing what was outlined in my business plan. I've also gained knowledge on job creation, with a focus on creating meaningful employment opportunities for young people and using resources more efficiently."



Joseph's nursery at Nyai Fish Farm. Photo: Farm Africa/Maurice Goga.

Job opportunities through Nyai Fish Farm

In addition to expanding his business, Joseph is committed to tackling youth unemployment in Kenya by creating job opportunities for young people.

"As outlined in my business plan, I aim to create 36 dignified and meaningful jobs for young women and men within six to eight months. So far, I've employed seven young people on my farm," he says.

With his planned expansion, Joseph hopes to hire even more young people. "With the goal of producing 200,000 fingerlings per month, I'll definitely need more hands on the farm. Right now, I'm producing about 15,000 fingerlings monthly. Once I scale up to 200,000, I'll significantly increase the number of employees," he adds.

Dreaming beyond Kenya

Looking ahead, Joseph envisions uniting like-minded, visionary young people to establish a large-scale fingerling production company that can serve markets beyond Kenya.

"I have a dream of growing my business to a national – and even international – level," he shares. "I'm looking for visionary and interested young women and men so we can come together and build a company that specialises in fingerling production. My goal is to supply fingerlings not just within our region or country, but globally," Joseph says.

"As a participant, I can say the YISA programme is doing a great job. The training helped me, and I truly appreciate the support. They are making a positive impact."

Joseph
Founder,
Nyai Fish Farm

From two wheels to soybean fields



Erick sieving the harvested soybean seeds. Photo: Farm Africa/Maurice Goga.

In Siaya County, Kenya, motorbike taxi driver, Erick has transformed his life through soybean farming. His journey began when he was invited to join the Youth in Sustainable Aquaculture (YISA) programme, the Mastercard Foundation, Farm Africa and a consortium of partners' initiative that aims to enhance resilient livelihoods and create meaningful work opportunities for young people like Erick.

Since joining the programme, Erick has received technical training in the production of soybeans, an ingredient used in feed for fish and poultry: "We've had several training sessions, and as a result, I've gained a lot of knowledge about soybean farming."

Armed with his new knowledge and skills, Erick works as a Village-Based Advisor (VBA), recruiting and training young women and men in the YISA programme's soybean value chain. "As a VBA, my role is to recruit and train smallholder farmers on soybean production — from land preparation, planting, disease management, to harvesting and post-harvest handling," he shares.

Transitioning from maize to soybeans

Besides being a motorbike taxi driver, Erick also farmed maize to support his family. However, after one season of growing soybeans, Erick decided to stop farming maize and concentrate on soybeans.

"I used to grow maize and would harvest about four bags per acre," Erick explains. "But with soybeans, even with challenges, you can get around ten bags per acre. Without challenges, yields can go up to 18 bags per acre. Last season, I planted three acres and harvested ten bags — that experience convinced me to stop growing other crops."

Despite harvesting ten bags, Erick remains hopeful that this season will be more favourable. "Last season, the rains stopped just as the soybeans were at the flowering stage," he explains. "I had to hire a water pump to pump water into the farm since my farm is close to the river. If it weren't for the harsh weather conditions, I would have harvested more than ten bags," he adds.

Increase in household income

Soybean farming has transformed Erick's life, significantly improving his household income. With his soybean earnings, he has been able to pay a full year's school fees for his children and build a new home.

"In the past, my children would often be sent home due to school fees arrears," he shares. "But thanks to the proceeds from soybean farming, made possible through the YISA programme, I can now pay their fees for the entire year at once."

He adds, "I used to live in a small house within my father's homestead. After joining the YISA programme, I've been able to establish my homestead and build a three-bedroom house."

From a taxi driver to a soybean producer and aggregator, Erick's journey through the YISA programme has not only secured his children's education but also given his family a stable and dignified job and a home.

Erick is confident that he will soon have enough capital to scale up his aggregation efforts, thanks to the readily available market: local farmers, interested companies and the programme's challenge fund.

"We have a ready market from fish feed millers who use soybeans in production of fish feed. When they heard that I had soybeans, they came in numbers to buy. In addition, Farm Africa linked us with Thrive Agric, a company that will also purchase soybeans from us," explains Erick.

He adds, "Unfortunately, due to limited capital, I haven't been able to aggregate as much as I could. Many of my farmers still have more than 800 kgs of soybeans awaiting aggregation. But I'm confident that by the next planting season, I'll be able to aggregate more, as I've applied for the programme challenge fund."

The increase in of soybeans will also support fish farmers' businesses by increasing the availability of high-quality protein-rich feed for their fish.

Beyond YISA programme

Although the YISA programme is set to run for five years, Erick remains confident that his soybean production will continue long after the programme ends. He attributes this optimism to the availability of soybean seeds and a reliable market for the product.

"After five years, this programme will come to an end. However, it won't end with my farmers — nor will it end with the seeds. My farmers will continue growing soybeans, and I will continue with aggregation. In the long run, I plan to establish an aggregation centre where all soybean farmers can bring their produce," says Erick.



Erick's new built three bedroom house. Photo: Farm Africa/Maurice Goga.



Erick at his old house within his father's homestead. Photo: Farm Africa/Maurice Goga.

"I used to live in a small house within my father's homestead. After joining the YISA programme, I've been able to establish my homestead and build a three-bedroom house."

Erick
VBA, YISA programme

Turning curiosity into impact: Grace and Sam's black soldier fly venture



Grace and Sam at their BSF site. Photo: Hydro Victoria/Anne Nasumba.

In Kilifi County, a young couple has transformed curiosity into a thriving agribusiness that is turning heads — and waste — into opportunity. Grace and her husband Sam began their journey into Black Soldier Fly (BSF) farming in 2014 after watching a YouTube video on how BSF larvae could convert organic waste into animal feed.

Their first attempt at BSF farming was short-lived. Lacking knowledge and resources, they abandoned the idea — until fate intervened. One day, Sam discovered larvae thriving in a pile of discarded fruit waste near their rental home. This moment reignited their curiosity. They decided to try again, this time using discarded produce from a nearby grocer as feedstock. Through trial and error — keeping larvae under their bed in cut water bottles and learning how to manage the pupal stage — they slowly built up their skills.

However, success came with growing pains. Neighbours and their landlord raised concerns about the smell, forcing them to relocate to family land in Kibaoni. There, they cleared bushland and built a small structure to house their growing BSF venture. Shifting from fish waste to fruit waste helped reduce odours, winning over skeptical family members and creating a more sustainable

model.

Scaling up: BSF operations and revenue streams
Today, Grace and Sam operate a full-fledged BSF unit separate from their home. They collect over 1,100 kg of organic waste per week from local markets and hotels, converting it into BSF larvae that are sold to poultry and fish farmers. Their farm processes up to 40 tonnes of waste monthly, producing three tonnes of larvae during the low season.

The couple have reinvested their profits into a poultry enterprise and now raise up to 2,000 chickens, feeding them with nutrient-rich BSF larvae. This innovation has lowered their feed costs by 30% and shortened the chickens' maturity cycle by over a month. The couple also sells organic fertiliser made from BSF frass, further boosting their income.

Digital outreach and gender sensitivity

More than just producers, Grace and Sam are educators. They run a YouTube channel with over 2,000 subscribers and have trained more than 500 farmers and students, including cohorts from Pwani University.



Grace engages with YISA programme partners during partners field visit in Kilifi. Photo: Hydro Victoria/Ann Nasumba.

Their digital and in-person training efforts are helping demystify BSF farming and spread the practice across Kenya.

However, Grace's success as a young woman in BSF farming challenges deep-rooted cultural norms in her community. Traditionally, women in Kilifi are seen more as caretakers and socialisers rather than as part of the productive workforce. Through her contribution to the venture, Grace is shattering these stereotypes, demonstrating that women can excel in business with support from family and community.

The couple continues to defy gender stereotypes through their story. The family approach and role of men, understanding what their spouses are doing confirms the need to involve all actors in productive new ventures. This encourages their community to support and work with young women to pursue economic opportunities. Their story is a call to the entire community to recognise that empowering women like Grace brings not only individual success but also long-term prosperity for everyone.

Engagement with YISA programme

Through the Youth in Sustainable Aquaculture (YISA) programme, Grace has been trained as a Local Service Provider (LSPs) by Hydro Victoria and Livingwood Consultants Ltd, equipping her with further skills to train other young women and men in BSF farming as a viable business venture. With support in capacity strengthening, access to finance, and market linkages, Grace is now on track to address some of the operational challenges the farm faces as they aim to scale up their production.

Additionally, she has applied for the programme's challenge fund that will help her purchase a tuk-tuk to transport waste, solar



The couple poses for a photo at their BSF unit together with young people from Mnarani and the YISA programme team. Photo: Hydro Victoria/Ann Nasumba.

power for backup, more waste collection and holding buckets/drums, and vibrating sieves to separate larvae from frass. The YISA programme grant will also aid the structural expansion of her shed room and a BSF production and breeding area to allow her to scale up her production from four tonnes to six tonnes per month – diverting over 60 tonnes of organic fruit waste from landfill and eventually reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Market linkages

The programme, through Hydro Victoria, has connected Grace to new market opportunities in western and coastal areas in Kenya with plans underway to engage feed millers for BSF larvae supply. Hydro Victoria is also working to enhance her business skills, enabling her to access more financing options through banks and revolving funds and access larger markets for BSF products.

Community inspiration

Grace and Sam's journey, from stumbling upon larvae in a sack of waste to becoming a thriving BSF business, is testament to their resilience, curiosity and intentionality. Their ability to adapt and learn together has transformed a simple household operation into a profitable and sustainable business. With the support of YISA, Grace is breaking cultural barriers and inspiring a new generation of young women to see aquaculture as a path to success and self-reliance. She hopes to generate five job opportunities for young people in her community through her BSF venture.

The Kibaokiche Fish Farmers' journey: livelihoods beyond the ponds



Jamal Kasim (centre) with his team members at their fish feed mill at Kayafungo. Photo: Farm Africa/ Maurice Goga.

From humble beginnings as a table banking group in 2018, Kibaokiche Fish Farmers, a group based in Kilifi County, Kenya, has become a promising model of young people's innovation and community transformation. The group, made up of four young women and seven young men, transitioned into fish farming, gradually expanding their presence across the fish value chain.

"We had no clear plan when we formed the group," narrates Jamal Kasim, the group's secretary. "But our goal was to create employment opportunities for ourselves and our community and enable members to become self-sufficient and financially empowered. After receiving training from the Kilifi County Fisheries Department, our journey into fish farming began, with just a single pond."

Kibaokiche Fish Farmers' determination didn't stop at a single pond. With a loan and a donation, they made a major step in expanding their enterprise.

"Eventually, we secured a loan from a microfinance institution, which enabled us to

construct our first fish butchery. With additional donor support from the Study Foundation through an asset finance grant, we purchased a freezer and essential processing equipment," explains Jamal.

As demand grew, the young fish farmers seized the opportunity to explore fish value addition opportunities using locally available materials such as charcoal. "In addition to selling fresh fish, we began frying and selling fried fish. This new direction created additional opportunities," says Jamal.

Strengthening operations through YISA

The group then sought to improve their financial management and operational skills by joining the Mastercard Foundation and Farm Africa's Youth in Sustainable Aquaculture (YISA) programme.

"I first learnt about the YISA programme when I applied to be a Local Service Provider (LSP) through Livingwood Consultants Ltd. As an LSP, my responsibilities include training farmers, mobilising participants, registering and recruiting them into the programme, and delivering essential services. It's a commercial role — I'm paid for the services

I offer, which has been a great source of motivation,” explains Jamal.

Jamal introduced the group to the YISA programme, which led to their registration and successful application for the Challenge Fund.

“We were grateful to receive a grant of USD 14,600, which not only transformed our group but also inspired young people across the wider Kayafungo and Gotani communities,” says Jamal.

“With the grant, we established a second fish butchery in Gotani and channelled the remaining funds into enhancing our operations,” adds Jamal.

They also branded 4,000 fish feed storage bags and procured raw materials to support their fish feed production unit. These strategic investments improved operational efficiency, reduced production costs, enhanced hygiene standards, and increased the group’s visibility in the market through stronger branding and value addition.

The group reports a notable increase in profit margins due to higher sales. “Before receiving the grant, our daily sales ranged between KES 12,000 and 15,000. Today, we’re making between KES 25,000 and 40,000 each day, thanks to revenue from both fish feed and processed fish products,” Jamal explains. “Value addition has been a game-changer. By frying and packaging our products, we earn significantly more compared to selling fresh fish alone.”

Recently, the group recorded a profit of KES 300,000, of which 60% was reinvested into upgrading infrastructure not covered by the grant. The remaining 40% was deposited into the group account to establish a revolving fund for members to access small loans and support their individual ventures.

The group has seen notable improvement in their living standards. “We have currently employed 11 members who each earn the minimum monthly wage of KES 60,000. This income has allowed young mothers in our group to comfortably support their families, including paying school fees and meeting other essential needs,” explains Jamal.

Future plans and sustainability measures

With growing demand, the group hopes to expand where they operate. “Our primary goal is to expand our operations by opening new outlets. The next targets are Kaloleni and Changanwe centres, where we already have loyal customers travelling long distances to reach us here in Kibaokiche. By bringing our services closer to them, we can increase our reach

and impact,” says Jamal.

They also plan to modernise their fish feed production. “Going forward, we plan to purchase modern machinery using internally generated revenue. Our goal is to meet regional demand and eventually export our products beyond the Coast region.”

Recognising the gaps in training and employment for young people, the group has a broader vision for community empowerment: “We plan to transform Kibaokiche into a training centre. Many young people in our area want to start businesses but lack the skills. Since we already have technical personnel within our group, we’ll offer affordable and practical training to equip them. This creates a win-win situation – trainees who start their own fish farms or butcheries will become our customers, buying feed from us and selling us fish. This will bridge the supply-demand gap in fish production and fish aggregation.”

As the YISA programme is time-bound, the group has already put sustainability mechanisms in place. “From every profit we make, we reinvest 40% back into the business. This ensures that even after the five-year YISA programme ends, our business will remain operational and sustainable,” says Jamal.

“We also hope that as a result of our success, we’ll be able to offer grants and support to other youth and emerging businesses in our community, just as YISA did for us. We want to mirror and extend the impact YISA has had on us to others.”



Mariam Charo at the new fish butchery at Gotani. Photo: Farm Africa/Maurice Goga.



Abdalla Kalama and Bakari Ndune mixing the ingredients of fish feeds during fish feed formulation. Photo: Farm Africa/Maurice Goga.

Empowering young people in Kenya through fishing



Yvonne and Risper Lwase beach. Photo: Echo Network Africa Foundation / Njambi Maina.

In Kenya's Lwase Beach area, a group of young men and women, the Fisher-fork Self-Help Group, is using fishing as a path to economic empowerment. Thanks to support from the Youth in Sustainable Aquaculture (YISA) programme delivered by the Mastercard Foundation and Farm Africa and consortium partners including Echo Network Africa Foundation, Lattice, Aquarech, Ramogi Institute of Advanced Technology, Hydro Victoria, and Livingwood Consultant Ltd.

Yvonne Otieno, Chair of the group, expressed her excitement towards the support and training they have received through the YISA programme: "Through the programme, we received a boat that aids in daily fish feeding, monitoring and overall cage security. We were very happy when we got the cage and having the boat has significantly reduced our operational costs. Previously, we rented boats and paid fishermen, which posed a plethora of challenges and inconsistencies".

Formed in 2024, the group comprises of 22 members; 20 young women and two young men. Through the YISA programme's Revolving Loan

Fund, the group has been provided with a cage, stocked with 38,000 high-quality fingerlings (young fish), and trained in bookkeeping, cage management, Gender-Based Violence (GBV) awareness and group dynamics. The training has made a significant impact on the surrounding community, where many of the group members did not have a reliable way of making money.

"There was a great deal of idleness and widespread vices. But this cage has given us a sense of agency and purpose. We want to repay the loan and build upon the existing once-in-a-lifetime opportunity," Yvonne commented.

"The training sessions equipped us with technical expertise on fish rearing and the group is therefore confident that they will not only repay the KES 4.3 million in four to five cycles, but we will also diversify from the seed investment," says Yvonne.

The group has also learnt a holistic approach to strengthening the entire aquaculture value chain. "We have a lot of arable land that is bare. We were not cognisant of the value addition that short-yield crops such as soybean bring to the wider aquaculture sector," comments Risper

Anyango, the group's treasurer and a married mother of five.

Working with beach management to address GBV issues

Moreover, partnering with Lwase Beach Management Unit (BMU) has enabled the group to address prevalent and emerging gender issues such as Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence (TFGBV), a challenge influenced by cultural norms, social media and unemployment, among other factors.

Both Yvonne and Risper are under the age of 30,

representing the programme's primary target group, young people aged 18–35, 85% of whom are young women. In a bold shift from tradition, plans are underway to prepare these young women in the group for leadership roles within the BMU, a space historically dominated by older men.

"YISA has shown us that with training, coaching, mentorship, vision-mapping and the determination to see through plans, anything is possible – including women's leadership, participation and governance," remarks Yvonne.

Kosimbo youth group celebrates a great catch



Members of the Kosimbo Self-Help Youth Group celebrate the successful sale of fish harvested from one of their ponds. Photo: Farm Africa / Maurice Goga.

In Kisumu, Kenya, the Kosimbo Self-Help Youth Group celebrated a great catch thanks to aquaculture. With support from Farm Africa, Aquarech and the Mastercard Foundation's Youth in Sustainable Aquaculture (YISA) programme, the group harvested 2.2 tonnes of fish in April 2025 from their five ponds at Kosimbo Aquapark, which were stocked in October 2024.

"We have successfully harvested a total of 9,386 fish from our ponds, which amounts to two tonnes of fish. This harvest has generated significant revenue totalling KES 700, 650," shares Florence, the Vice Secretary of the Kosimbo Self-Help Youth Group.

The group joined the YISA programme in August 2024 through Aquarech, an implementing partner, and they have since made notable progress.

"Through the YISA programme, we have learnt so much, and with the proceeds from the harvest, our children can now go to school without any problems," shares Florence.

At first, the group faced challenges in establishing the aquapark, as the majority of the young members did not own land. "When we heard about this programme, we talked to our parents, who donated the land where we established the Kosimbo Aquapark – and today, we are reaping

the fruits of that decision through this successful harvest,” Florence adds.

The group, formed in July 2024, began as a small, community-driven initiative with 27 members – 16 women and 11 men. “Originally, we were involved in table banking and merry-go-round activities, while some members engaged in small businesses,” explains Florence. “After being recruited into the YISA programme, we came together to explore the opportunities in aquaculture and how we could integrate it into our community development efforts.”

The impact of the YISA programme has been profound. Not only has the programme helped the group to manage their pond effectively, but it has also inspired community growth and empowerment. “The community now sees us in a different light. We are no longer just a small group but a thriving aquaculture enterprise,” says Florence.

As the group looks to the future, it seeks to expand its operations. Florence states, “We aim to establish fish cages and a learning centre dedicated to educating young people about aquaculture.” The group is resolute in its commitment to using their knowledge acquired through the YISA programme to enhance sustainability within the community and to build upon their existing successes.

Message to young people

The Kosimbo Self-Help Youth Group calls on young people who aspire to join the programme, “I encourage young women and men to join the YISA programme because it will empower them with the skills needed to sustain themselves. The programme helps you learn how to manage your own ponds and achieve your goals, just like we have done.

With the right skills and right fingerlings, you can reduce the production cycle and improve your outcomes”.



Young women and men from the Kosimbo Self-Help Youth Group carrying fishing net in readiness for harvest. Photo: Aquarech/Priscillah Aketch.



Young women from the Kosimbo Self-Help Youth Group carrying freshly harvested fish from one of the ponds . Photo: Aquarech/Priscillah Aketch.



Members of the Kosimbo Self-Help Youth Group grading and sorting after fish harvesting. Photo: Farm Africa /Maurice Goga.

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Florence

Vice Secretary, Kosimbo Self-Help Youth Group

Photo highlights of Q2 YISA programme partners meeting held from 14 to 15 April 2025



YISA programme partners during quarter two partners meeting held on 14 and 15 of April 2025 in Kisumu, Kenya. Photo: Farm Africa/Maurice Goga.



Evans Adiang and Fred Juma of RIAT and Hydro Victoria sharing a light moment during YISA programme partners meeting. Photo: Farm Africa/Maurice Goga.



YISA programme partners during the quarter two YISA programme partners meeting. Photo: Farm Africa/Maurice Goga.



Jane Bundi and Jacinta Kariuki from Echo Network Africa Foundation during the YISA programme quarter two partners meeting. Photo: Farm Africa/Maurice Goga.



YISA programme Business Development Services Technical Lead, Gabriel Kitetu, during the YISA programme quarter two partners meeting. Photo: Farm Africa/Maurice Goga.



YISA programme Manager, Teddy Nyanapah during the quarter two YISA programme partners meeting. Photo: Farm Africa/Maurice Goga.



YISA programme partners during the YISA programme quarter two partners meeting. Photo: Farm Africa/Maurice Goga.

Shoppers

Merycline Nyende and Antony Wesaya, YISA programme participant in Kakamega county. Photo: Farm Africa/Maurice Goga.



YISA programme: Quarter two impact stories

The YISA programme quarter two impact stories provides up-to-date insights into the progress of programme implementation and highlights impactful stories from the field.

Cover photo: members of the Kibaokiche Chirindo Asumin (Left), Mariam Abdalla (centre) and Margaret Saumu. Photo: Farm Africa/Maurice Goga.



To learn more about the YISA programme, please contact the Farm Africa Kenya team.

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