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# Youth in Sustainable Aquaculture

## The YISA program Q1 2026 impact stories

December 2025 - February 2026

 Kenya



In partnership with



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## Introduction

This issue highlights some of the stories of the Youth in Sustainable Aquaculture, a partnership program 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.

## 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.

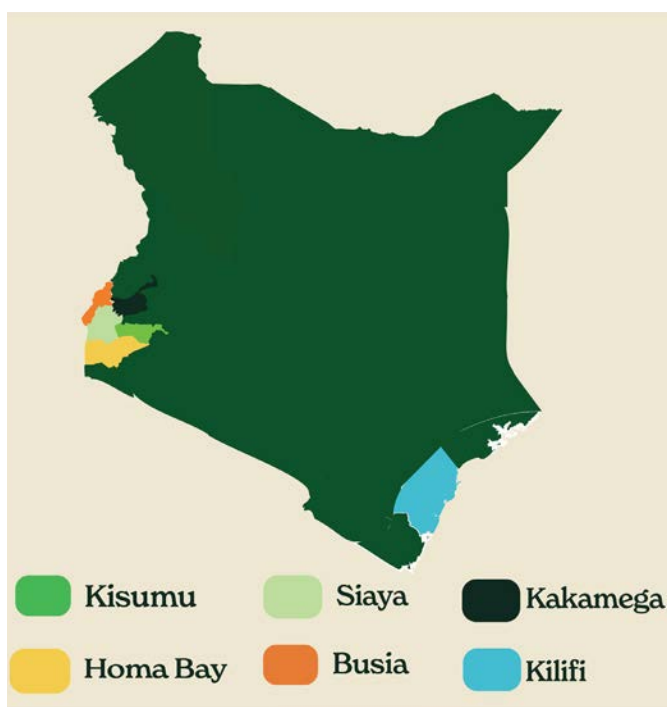
Kenya's aquaculture sector holds immense potential for economic growth, offering employment opportunities for young women and men. However, despite this potential, the sector remains largely untapped by young people due to challenges such as limited awareness, skills, access to resources like capital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



## What we are doing

To address the issue and enable access to dignified and fulfilling work 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 program also known as the Youth in Sustainable Aquaculture (YISA) program.

## Program counties



(Bottom left) Bilhah Akoko en route to stocking fingerlings and feeding the fish in the cages at Usigu Beach in Siaya County. Photo: Farm Africa / Maurice Goga

## Program value chains

Aquaculture

Mariculture

Soybean production

Black Soldier Fly production

## Program progress update

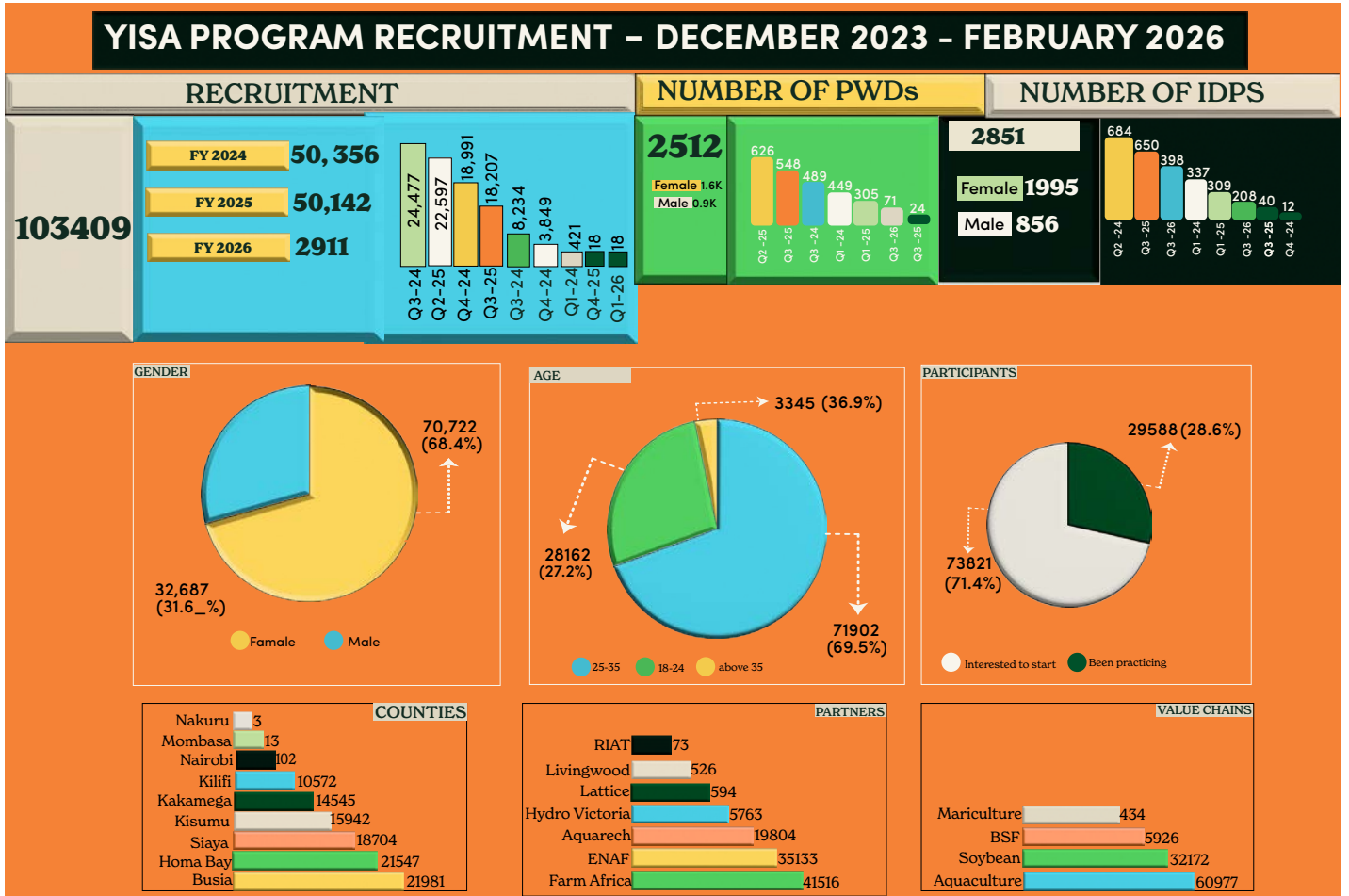
Launched in 2023, the program's goal is to create 150,000 jobs for young women (127,500) and men (22,500), including internally displaced persons (IDPs) and persons with disabilities (PWDs), in Kenya's aquaculture sector across Kisumu, Homa Bay, Busia, Kakamega, Siaya, and Kilifi counties.

In the first and second years of program implementation, which concluded in November 2025, the YISA program successfully reached 57,757 young people with work enabling intervention that included technical training, access to finance, entrepreneurship support, value chain development, market linkages and gender inclusion. Of these, 25,106 participants were trained in year one (December 2023–November 2024), while 37,751 were trained in year two (December 2024–November 2025).

By the end of quarter one of year three (December–February 2026), an additional 395 young people had been reached through training in technical skills, business development, coaching and mentoring. This brings the total cumulative number of participants to 58,252.

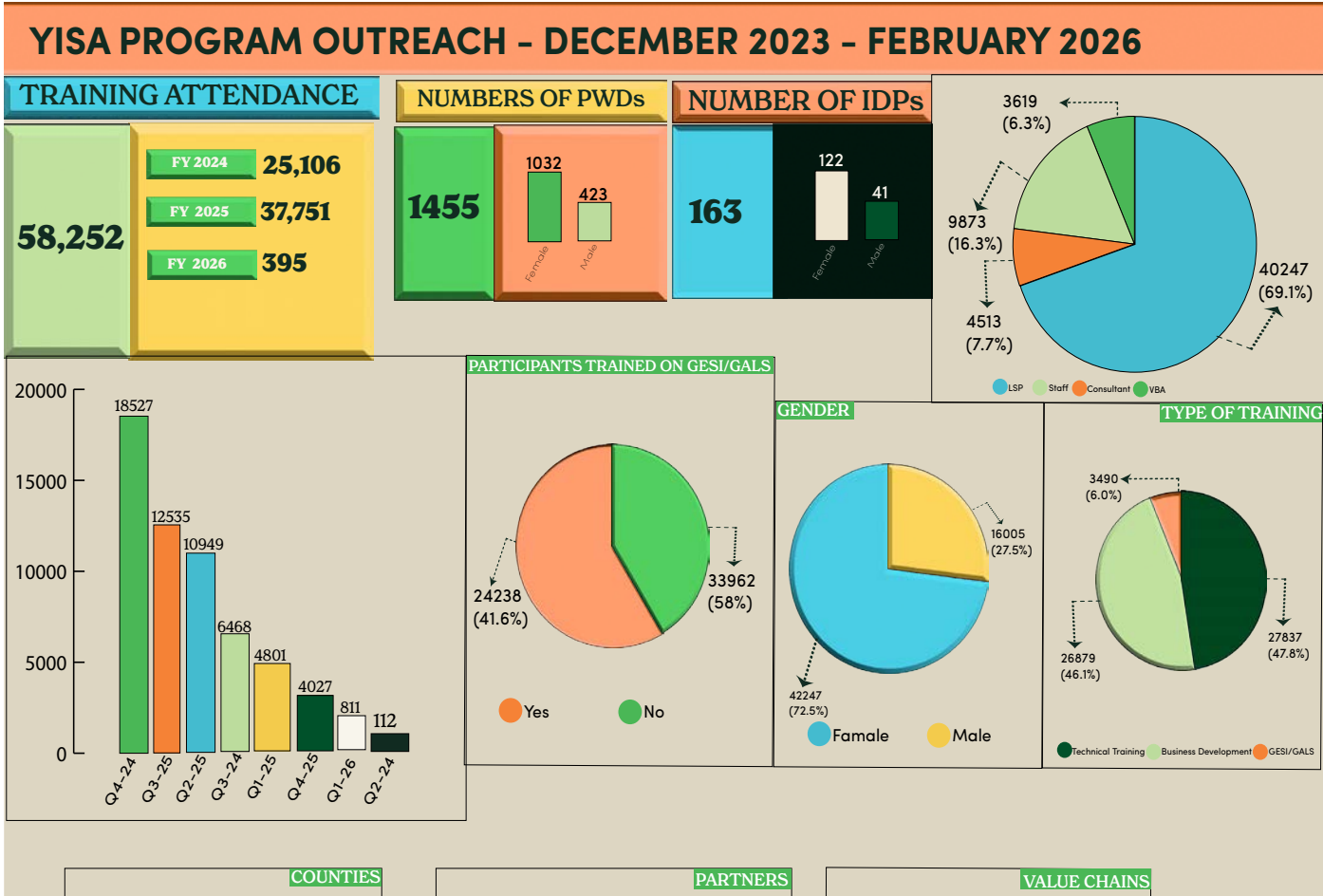
Participation in the program reflects a strong emphasis on reaching young women. Young women account for 72.5% of participants, while 27.5% are young men. The program has also made deliberate efforts to promote inclusion, with 1,455 participants identified as persons with disabilities (PWDs).

To date, the program has created work opportunities for 52,434 young women and men across the aquaculture, mariculture, soybean production, and Black Soldier Fly (BSF) value chains.



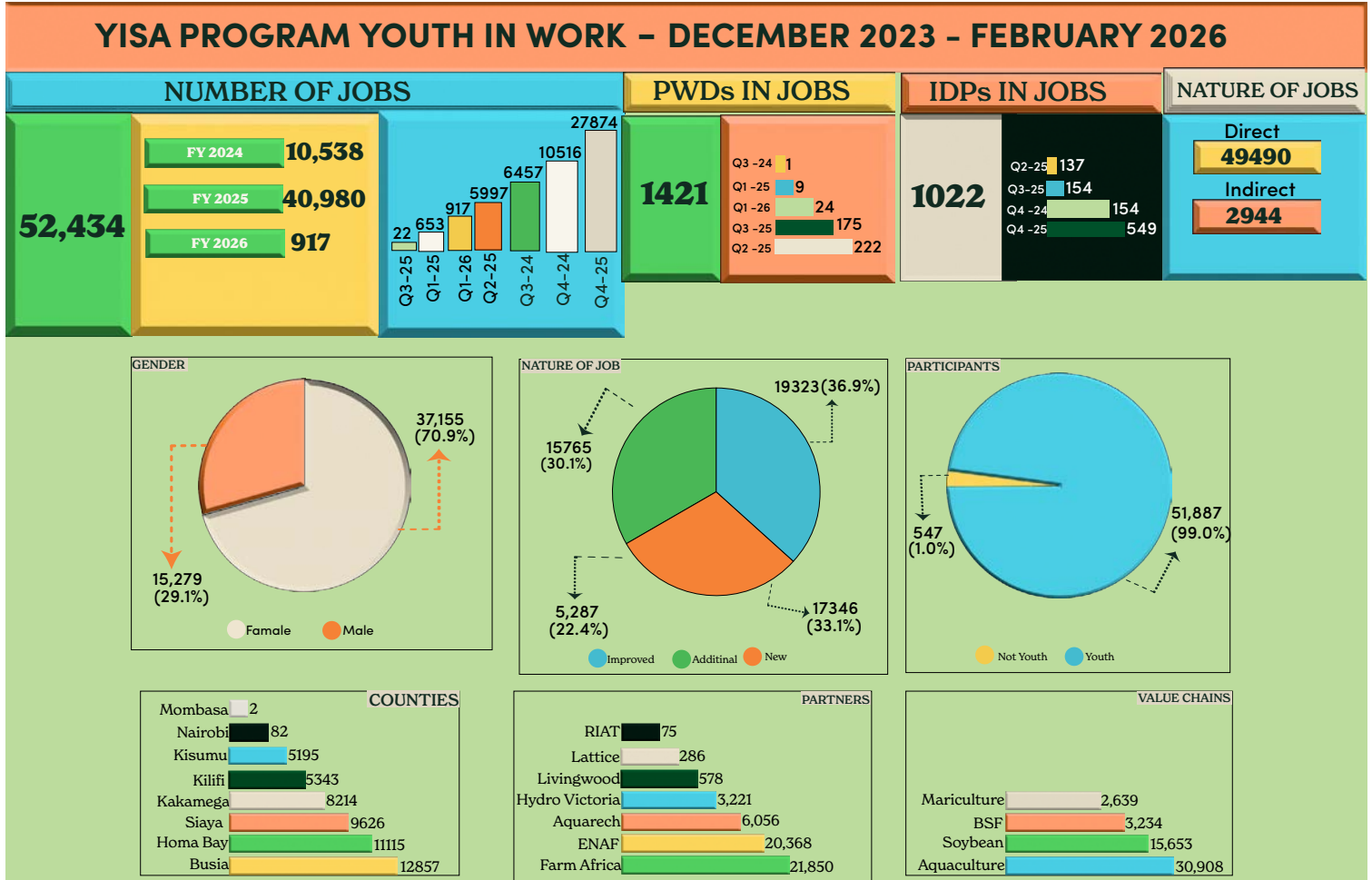
# 103,409

young women and men recruited  
in the YISA program with 68.4% being  
young women.



58,252

young women and men who has been taken through work enabling interventions, 72.5% being young women.



37,155

young women in work as at February 2026 representing 71% of the total number of youth in work.

## YISA program impact, goals and key interventions

Program impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To enhance resilient livelihoods through innovative aquaculture practices to enable access work opportunities for young women and men.</li> </ul>
Program goal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>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.</li> </ul>
Program’s key interventions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Outcome 1: Increase quality and productivity of fish (aqua and mariculture value chains)</li> <li>Outcome 2: Increase opportunities for financially disadvantaged young persons (entrepreneurship development along the value chains through trainings)</li> <li>Outcome 3: Growth of enterprises led or owned by financially disadvantaged people (enterprise development through markets and finance linkages)</li> <li>Outcome 4: Promote gender transformative approaches (deliberate linkages and training young women on leadership and governance.)</li> </ul>

## YISA program partners’ key activities

Farm Africa	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>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 distribution models, targeting 35,000 job creation.</li> </ul>
Echo Network Africa Foundation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>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.</li> </ul>
Lattice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>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.</li> </ul>
Aquarech	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>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.</li> </ul>
RIAT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Enhance collaboration between research and training institutions (eg RIAT, KEMFRI etc) to promote knowledge transfer and technology adoption to aqua value chain actors.</li> </ul>
Hydro Victoria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify and build the capacity of black soldier fly (BSF) producers to boost the production of alternative protein sources for fish feeds.</li> </ul>
Livingwood Consultants Ltd	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Enhance the uptake of services delivered by LSPs by value chain players by connecting farmers to quality inputs, advisory services, and markets.</li> </ul>

# Bilhah Akoko: building a thriving aquaculture enterprise



Bilhah Akoko feeding the fish in one of 30 active cages under Billy Fish Farm at Usigu Beach in Siaya County. Photo: Farm Africa /Maurice Goga

The career path of Bilhah Akoko, a 26-year-old Political Science and Public Administration graduate, took an unexpected turn after developing a passion for aquaculture, a sector she now leads in both practice and innovation from fingerling production to fish aggregation.

“I was introduced to aquaculture by a friend, and along the way, I developed a passion for it. Today, I am fully engaged in fish farming, producing fingerlings, running cages and managing an aggregation center,” she shares.

Bilha’s journey in aquaculture began in 2019; however, the dream was disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Early attempts at fish farming were marred by inconsistent supply, post-harvest losses and limited markets.

“I started my journey in 2019, operating a small restaurant. Unfortunately, the business collapsed during the COVID-19 pandemic, which led me

to focus entirely on fish farming. Today, I run Billy Fish Farm, where we produce Nile tilapia fingerlings, operate ponds and cages for grow-out tilapia, and manage an aggregation center that sources and supplies fish from multiple smallholder farmers. We also have a smart kiosk fish eatery,” she recounts.

“When I first started, my farm had only four ponds and ten inactive cages at the lake. Supplies were inconsistent, and post-harvest losses coupled with late payments from buyers made the business financially risky. At the time, the business was unregistered, informal and prone to setbacks,” she added.

That all changed when she became involved with the Youth in Sustainable Aquaculture (YISA) program, implemented by Farm Africa in partnership with the Mastercard Foundation. Through the program, Bilha received technical training, business development services and guidance on safeguarding practices, empowering

her to professionalize her enterprise.

### How YISA made a difference

Bilhah got involved with the YISA program in 2024 after being recruited as a local service provider by Livingwood Consultants Ltd. At the time she was working as an aquaculture extension officer in Homa Bay County where she learned about the YISA program from one of the participants she trained.

“While working as an extension officer in Homa Bay County I supported fish farmers across Suba North and Homa Bay sub-counties, I came across information about the YISA program through a group I belonged to someone shared a post about opportunities for Local Service Providers (LSPs) under the YISA program,” recalls Bilhah.

With support from YISA, Bilhah and co-founder Georgina Achieng successfully applied for KES 1.1 million from the challenge fund, which enabled them to establish a fully equipped aggregation center in Kisumu.

“The funding helped us purchase deep freezers and crates, and renovate the space, turning it into a professional hub for fish aggregation and distribution,” she says.

Further, through the YISA program the duo were able to expand their operations.

“Before I joined the YISA program, we had around ten cages at the lake, but they were inactive. Today, we have expanded to 30 active cages with the capacity to hold nearly a million fish. This growth has been possible because of YISA’s support, particularly through the aggregation model that now sustains our farming operations. In addition to cage farming, we aggregate fish from our own farm, Billy Fish Farm, and also buy from small-scale farmers in the surrounding areas. This allows us to supply the market more efficiently while creating opportunities for other farmers.”

Currently, Billy Fish Farm has two aggregation outlets in Kisumu and Kakamega, with plans to establish a third aggregation outlet in Homa Bay. Bilhah reports the two outlets aggregate an average of 1-2 tons of fish, supplying traders and buyers as far as Nairobi, Migori, Eldoret and Mombasa.

Bilhah also leveraged the program’s technical knowledge to produce her own fingerlings,

reducing reliance on suppliers, improving quality and cutting costs. Her farm now operates across the full aquaculture value chain, from production of fingerlings up to table-size fish, aggregation and a smart kiosk eatery promoting fish consumption in the community.

She attributed the business success not only to the funding they received but also the business development training she got from YISA program, which enabled her to develop a business plan.

“Through the BDS we developed a business plan that we are working towards and I can gladly say we’ve achieved almost the business plan I prepared after the BDS training I got from Farm Africa as an LSP. We have covered it almost three quarters the way in less than a year because we are turning one year in December now for the aggregation. The BDS program has really enlightened me on business management issues, how to go about the business,” says Bilhah.

### Impact on livelihoods and community

Through her enterprise, Bilhah has created over 40 direct and indirect jobs, paying salaries that support families and generating reliable income for local fish traders. On average, 65 traders access fish from her aggregation centers every day, improving local food security and ensuring fish reaches a wider market.

“At Billy Fish Farm, it gives me a lot of satisfaction to see people benefiting from the business through job creation. We have created employment opportunities for 57 young people and our employees are earning decent incomes. At the aggregation center, some earn up to KES 45,000 per month, while the majority earn around KES 30,000. Knowing that these jobs are helping support families makes me proud, because it means Billy Fish Farm is contributing to improving people’s livelihoods.”

The aggregation outlets brought relief to fish traders who were struggling to get fish for their business, but can now get the daily supply of fish from the aggregation outlets.

“Another impact is that we are providing a reliable market for traders by making fish more accessible. When I was starting out, I saw how much traders struggled to find consistent fish supplies. Now, by providing fish regularly, we are helping them run their businesses more smoothly. When traders are assured of supply from us, they are also assured of sales in the market, which means they can support their families. In that way, Billy Fish Farm is already supporting many households through the fish supply chain. Fish is also highly nutritious, so by making it more available in the community, we are helping improve people’s diets and livelihoods both locally and beyond,” she explains.

### Lessons learned and advice to young people

“Aquaculture is not easy; it requires passion, dedication and resilience. The YISA program equipped me with the technical, managerial and entrepreneurial skills needed to succeed. Challenges remain, including market fluctuations, employee management, and scaling operations, but with commitment and strategic planning, success is achievable. I can say I am even surprised of the steps that I have made as Bilhah from the time I joined YISA in 2024 to right now because there are things that I have done that I did not imagine I could do within that span of time,” remarks Bilhah.

“The knowledge, mentorship and funding from YISA gave me the confidence to formalize my business, expand operations and plan strategically. Today, my children go to school, my family eats well and my enterprise supports many other families,” she concluded.

She encourages young people who are passionate about aquaculture to cultivate dedication and resilience, noting that challenges are inevitable but often provide valuable opportunities to learn. With commitment and persistence, she believes success is possible.



Bilhah Akoko and one her workers stocking one her cages at Usigu Beach in Siaya County.  
Photo: Farm Africa /Maurice Goga



Bilhah Akoko feeding the fish in one of the pond out grow at Billy Fish Farm in Siaya County.  
Photo: Farm Africa /Maurice Goga

“The knowledge, mentorship and funding from YISA gave me the confidence to formalize my business, expand operations and plan strategically. Today, my children go to school, my family eats well and my enterprise supports many other families.”

Bilhah Akoko

YISA programme participant

# Breaking barriers on the lake: how YISA helped Antalia Ondiek transform her cage fish farming enterprise



Antalia Ondiek checking removing dirt from the hapa net on one of her cages. Photo: Livingwood Consultant Ltd /Nancy Omondi

For the past five years, Antalia Awuor Ondiek has been farming tilapia in the waters of East Yimbo, Siaya County. When she first ventured into cage fish farming, she operated a single 5 x 5 meter cage and relied largely on the theoretical knowledge she had gained during her college studies in aquaculture.

Although she had an academic background in the field, the practical realities of running a fish farming enterprise proved challenging.

“In college, we learned mostly theory,” Antalia explains. “When it came to cage construction and management, I depended entirely on the constructors. I did not know how to measure or

supervise the process myself.”

## Challenges before joining YISA program

Before joining the Youth in Sustainable Aquaculture (YISA) program, Antalia faced several production and business challenges that limited the growth of her enterprise.

The high cost of commercial fish feed was the most significant obstacle. When she could not afford the feed, she often turned to alternative options such as “Ochonga” (freshwater shrimp) to sustain her fish.

“Feeds are very expensive. When I could not afford them, I used Ochonga as an alternative to keep the fish alive,” she says.

## YISA intervention

Through the YISA program's targeted technical training delivered by consortium partner Livingwood Consultants Limited, Antalia strengthened her practical aquaculture skills.

The training covered aquaculture best management practices, including cage construction techniques, water quality monitoring, feed management and proper stocking density. She was also introduced to digital monitoring tools such as Clappia and ODK, enabling better record-keeping and informed decision-making.

To reinforce learning, Livingwood conducted four on-site mentorship visits and maintained regular phone-based follow-ups to support her progress.

The program also addressed gender barriers within the aquaculture sector. In Antalia's community, cage construction and management were largely seen as male-dominated roles.

## Transformative results

The improvements brought about through YISA support have significantly transformed Antalia's enterprise.

With better feeding strategies, improved water quality monitoring and structured mentorship, her survival rates increased from 70% to 85%, while the average fish weight improved from 400 to 450 grams.

Production nearly doubled from 700 to 1,300 kilograms per cycle, and her income rose from KES 60,000 to KES 120,000 per harvest.

During the program period, Antalia also expanded her infrastructure. She installed a new 9.5 x 4m cage, which is now operational and completed construction of a larger 6 x 6m cage, currently awaiting net installation.

Her growing confidence in reinvestment reflects the knowledge she has gained through the program.

"Before, I feared stocking because losses were high," she says. "Now I do not fear buying fingerlings or feed. I understand the system, and I know I will recover my investment."

## Expanding markets and creating jobs

YISA's support has also helped Antalia expand her market reach. The number of traders purchasing

her fish has grown from four to 15 regular buyers, including Mama Samaki vendors.

Previously, she sold fish in small quantities to individuals. Today, buyers often book her fish before harvest, attracted by the consistent supply and improved quality.

The enterprise has also created new employment opportunities in the community. Antalia now employs four young people – one caretaker and three support staff – contributing to local livelihoods.

The growth of her business has also strengthened her household stability. "I can now comfortably pay school fees for my siblings and meet their needs without stress," she says.

## Inspiring young women and men

Even before joining YISA, Antalia occasionally provided informal extension advice to other farmers due to her academic background. Through the program, she strengthened her role as a Local Service Provider (LSP), training and mentoring other fish farmers in East Yimbo.

Her farm has since evolved into a demonstration site, where young women and men come to learn practical cage fish farming techniques.

"Young girls think aquaculture is for men," she says. "I tell them if I can manage cages here on the lake, they can too."

Antalia plans to install nets and stock the newly constructed 6 x 6m cage to further increase production in the coming cycles. To sustain and scale her enterprise, she hopes to access affordable quality feeds, reliable fingerlings and durable cage nets.

Without the targeted mentorship, training and follow-up support provided by YISA, Antalia believes she would still be operating a single cage with limited production and market reach.

Instead, she has doubled her income, nearly doubled production, improved survival rates, expanded market networks, created employment opportunities for young people, and emerged as a model female aquaculture entrepreneur in Siaya County.

# Mukuyu Youth Group revives fish farming in Lugari through the YISA program



One of the fishponds owned by the Makuyu Youth Group.

In Lumakanda village, Lugari sub-county in Kakamega County, a group of young farmers is transforming aquaculture in their community. What began as a small horticultural youth group has evolved into a promising fish nursery enterprise, thanks to support from the Youth in Sustainable Aquaculture (YISA) program.

The Mukuyu Youth Group, made up of young men and women aged between 25 and 30, initially focused on horticulture and had little experience in aquaculture. Although some members had an interest in fish farming, they lacked the technical knowledge needed to start and manage a successful enterprise.

Before joining YISA, the group had limited understanding of fish production systems.

“We had the interest, but we did not know where to start,” the group members explain. “We lacked the knowledge on how to rear fish from the beginning all the way to the point of selling.”

## YISA builds skills and confidence

Through the YISA program, the Mukuyu Youth Group received technical training and mentorship that equipped them with the skills required to establish and manage a fish nursery.

The training covered key aspects of aquaculture including pond management, stocking procedures, sampling techniques, feeding regimes and monitoring production indicators such as feed conversion ratio (FCR). The group also learned how to determine proper stocking density to ensure efficient use of their production space.

YISA has continued to provide hands-on extension support, guiding the group gradually in implementing best nursery management practices.

## Growing production and livelihoods

The impact of YISA's support is already visible in the group's growing enterprise.

Before the program, the group operated two fishponds. Today, they have expanded to three ponds, increasing their production capacity.

The group has stocked 10,000 fingerlings and harvested 4,800 fish, generating approximately KES 48,000 in income. Their growing enterprise has also created 15 direct and indirect jobs, with eight women actively involved in the production activities.

Beyond income, the group has gained valuable technical knowledge that allows them to confidently run a fish farming enterprise.

"Now we understand the entire process of fish farming," one member explains. "From selecting a suitable site for a pond, to stocking, management, harvesting and even marketing our fish."

## A reliable source of quality fish seed

Through nursery production, the Mukuyu Youth Group is also playing an important role in strengthening the local aquaculture value chain.

The fingerlings produced in their nursery are primarily supplied to outgrower farmers within the Mukuyu cluster, ensuring that local farmers can access quality fish seed without traveling long distances.

This reliable supply of quality fingerlings has improved productivity among surrounding fish farmers and helped increase the availability of affordable fish within the community.

## Changing perceptions and inspiring young people

The group's success is already inspiring other young people in the area to explore aquaculture as an alternative to traditional rain-fed agriculture.

The Mukuyu Youth Group now hopes to position itself as a local aquaculture learning hub, where other young farmers can come to learn practical skills and gain confidence to start their own

enterprises.

"I used to love eating fish when I was young, but I believed fish could only come from the lake," one member reflects. "I never imagined I would see fish swimming just a few meters from our farm. Now we not only have a reliable source of protein for our families, but we also earn income from the sales. With that money I can even buy milk and bread for my child."

## Overcoming challenges through knowledge

Like many small-scale farmers, the group initially faced challenges, particularly the high cost of fish feed.

"Starting fish farming almost discouraged me because of the high cost of feeds," another member explains. "I even thought of going back to maize farming. But through training I learned that I can produce azolla and fertilize the pond to supplement feeding. That knowledge revived my hope."

Continuous mentorship from extension officers has also played an important role in their journey.

"Walking alone in any circumstance of life is difficult, especially fish farming," a group member says. "The extension support we receive makes us feel like we have a companion who believes in what we are doing."

## Looking ahead

The Mukuyu Youth Group is committed to expanding its enterprise sustainably. The group plans to reinvest profits from fingerling sales to increase production and install additional hapa nets in idle ponds within their network of farmers.

By working closely with local fish farmers and sharing knowledge with other groups, they hope to scale up fingerling production and strengthen aquaculture in the region.

"Now we understand the entire process of fish farming, from selecting a suitable site for a pond, to stocking, management, harvesting and even marketing our fish."

# Kinyaule Youth Group's crab fattening journey



Members of Kinyaule Youth Group led by Caroline Furaha (center). Photo: Farm Africa/ Maurice Goga

In Kinyaule village in Magarini Sub-county, Kilifi County, a group of 17 young people has turned an opportunity for training into a promising mariculture enterprise. Kinyaule Youth Group, made up of young men and women aged between 18 and 35, is now engaged in crab fattening, supplying live crabs to hotels in Magarini and Malindi.

Before joining the Youth in Sustainable Aquaculture (YISA) program, most members of the group depended on small-scale fishing and casual labour, particularly at the nearby salt pans. The work was physically demanding and the income was irregular, making it difficult for many of them to consistently meet their daily needs. Growth opportunities were limited, and most young people worked individually with little coordination or support.

## Discovering opportunities in mariculture

Their journey began after attending a sensitization meeting conducted by a County Fisheries Officer, where they learned about the YISA program and the opportunities available in aquaculture. Interested in improving their livelihoods, the young women and men participated in training facilitated by Local Service Provider Faswila Khambu, which introduced them to mariculture and crab fattening, a concept that was new to many of them. It's an activity that benefits both people and planet: generating reliable incomes for young people, while also promoting conservation of the precious mangrove ecosystem.

"We were trained on how to use the natural creeks within the mangrove ecosystem to farm species such as crabs. This has enabled us to earn an income and provided us with an alternative

way to sustain our livelihoods,” explains John Mramba, the Group Coordinator.

Through the program, the group received technical training on aquaculture and mariculture production, covering key aspects such as site selection, cage construction, feeding and marketing. The group was also supported with 106 crab cages, 75 starter crabs, additional pipes to construct 50 cages, and marine board partitions for lids. These resources enabled the group to establish demonstration farms and begin crab fattening in a structured manner.

In addition to technical skills, the group received business and entrepreneurship training that strengthened their capacity to manage their enterprise effectively. They learned about business planning, financial management, record keeping and market research. This training helped them understand the value of their product and how to negotiate better prices in the market.

“The business training helped us understand market dynamics and how to negotiate for better prices. Before that, we did not fully understand the real value of crabs, but once we started farming, we realized their market value. Currently, we sell directly to hotels at KES 1,800 per kilogram,” says Sidi Katana, the vice chair of the group.

Continuous extension support from field experts also played a key role in strengthening the group’s production practices. According to Caroline Furaha, the group’s chairperson:

“The guidance and support we received from field experts taught us the proper techniques for handling and feeding crabs. As a result, crab mortality has reduced, they grow faster and reach the required weight, which allows us to get better prices in the market.”

## Results and impact

Since joining the program, the group has recorded significant progress. They moved from having no crab cages to operating 106 cages, stocked 75 crabs, and harvested 106 crabs, generating KES 60,760 within five months. The enterprise now supports 17 young people, including 11 women, providing an additional source of income for their households.

“As a group, we truly recognize and appreciate the support we received through the YISA

program, where we were supported with 106 crab cages and 75 starter crabs. This support enabled us to begin production and achieve sales worth KES 60,760 in just one production cycle,” shares Masha Kazungu, the project coordinator.

Beyond income generation, the project has contributed to important social changes within the group. Initially, many members believed that crab handling was dangerous and mainly a task for men. However, women in the group have now gained the confidence and skills to actively participate in all aspects of crab farming.

“At the beginning, we were even afraid to touch crabs because we believed it was men’s work. Today, we confidently handle them, feed them, and manage them without anyone’s help. We have even elected women to hold all leadership positions because we now believe in our ability to lead,” recalls Priscar Katizi.

The income generated from crab sales has helped complement members’ livelihoods, although the group has chosen to reinvest most of their earnings back into the enterprise.

“In total, we sold crabs and earned KES 60,760. The production costs during that season were KES 17,740, leaving us with a profit of KES 43,020. After consulting with all members, we agreed to reinvest the entire profit back into the project to help purchase more crabs and construct additional cages,” says Lydia Dhahabu, the group’s treasurer.

## Inspiring the community

The group’s success has also begun to attract attention from other young people in the community. Their progress has inspired more young people to show interest in mariculture, particularly crab farming. Members of the group now share their experiences and technical knowledge with others who wish to start similar enterprises.

The group has even started receiving requests for crab seed and technical guidance. Recently, they received an order from another youth group in Malindi.

“Nowadays people come to us to ask how we started and request training on crab farming. Recently, we received an order from the Uyombo Youth Group in Malindi to supply them with 70 juvenile crabs,” shares Kazungu.

### Future plans

Looking ahead, the group plans to expand their enterprise and increase the number of crab cages from 106 to 156. They also aim to improve their production cycles and explore additional mariculture opportunities such as prawn farming and value addition.



The crab cages owned by the Kinyaule Youth Group. Photo: Farm Africa/Maurice Goga



The young people harvesting the crabs.



Harvested crabs.

# From limitation to opportunity: Chakol PWD Group's soybean farming transformation



Members of Chakol Disability Group during of the harvesting of soybean.

In Chakol Ward, Teso South Sub-county of Busia County, livelihoods for young people with disabilities have long been shaped by limitation rather than opportunity. Many members of the Chakol Disabled Self-Help Group relied on small plots of maize farming, low-return indigenous chicken rearing, or irregular casual labor on other people's farms. Income was scarce, unpredictable and rarely enough to support long-term plans.

For the 41 members of the group, 27 of them being persons with disabilities, economic independence often felt out of reach.

Things began to change in 2024, when the group encountered the Youth in Sustainable Aquaculture (YISA) program, implemented by Farm Africa in partnership with the Mastercard Foundation. The program introduced them to new opportunities in agribusiness and producing soybeans used to make fish feed.

At the time, the group had already invested modest savings into indigenous chicken production. Although the activity showed some promise, the returns were too low to meet their needs or ambitions. After engaging with YISA, the group made a bold and strategic decision, they sold all their chickens, raised KES 34,000, and deposited it in their bank account, choosing to start afresh with soybean production.

For many members, soybeans were familiar only as a food crop rather than a commercial opportunity. What they lacked was technical knowledge, capital and market access.

## Building skills, confidence and scale

Through the YISA program, the group received hands-on technical training in soybean production, business development services, and the Gender Action Learning System (GALS). Extension officers from the Kenya Agricultural and Livestock Research Organization (KALRO) worked closely with the group, providing

continuous agronomic support and technical guidance.

With this support, the group established a ten-acre demonstration farm, producing 3,680 kilograms of soybeans. From this harvest, 500 kilograms of seed were distributed among members, enabling them to begin soybean production individually and ensuring that the benefits extended beyond the group.

Their success soon opened new opportunities. Through the YISA Challenge Fund, the group received KES 1,028,000 to expand soybean production to 20 acres. Farm Africa further supported the initiative by facilitating access to land at the Busia KALRO Centre and linking the group to structured markets for both soybean seed and grain.

### Results that changed lives

By the end of the production cycle, the Chakol PWD Group produced 7,886 kilograms of certified soybean seed, which was sold to KALRO at KES 140 per kilogram, generating a total value of over KES 1.1 million.

For the first time in the group's history, members shared KES 140,000 in profits: income earned collectively, transparently and with dignity. The group also retained KES 200,000 in savings and leased six additional acres of land for three years, securing a strong foundation for future growth.

Perhaps even more significant was the shift in perception within the community. The group members, once viewed as dependants, had become employers, hiring fellow community members and young people to work on the soybean farms.

"We have moved from beggars to employers. Today, we give community members work to assist us on the farm," says Ayub Omuse group's youth chairperson.

### Individual stories of transformation

For Edwin Obwako, a group member, the transformation has been deeply personal. Before joining the initiative, he often had no work, or depended on occasional construction jobs. Today, Edwin earns income from working on the group's soybean farm and has begun building his own small enterprise.

Using his savings, Edwin purchased 13 chickens

and leased one acre of land, where he produced soybeans worth KES 13,715, generating a clear profit.

"Before YISA, I had no direction. Now I save, invest and plan. Even the landowner I paid used the money to pay school fees. The benefits go beyond me," shares Edwin.

### A ripple effect across the community

The group's success has extended far beyond Chakol. The soybean seed produced by the group has been distributed by KALRO to farmers across the region, covering 329 acres and generating an estimated 131,000 kilograms of soybean grain.

The group's growing confidence has also positioned its leaders as champions of inclusion. The Busia County Government has selected the group's chairlady to serve as a trainer and motivator for other PWD groups, helping replicate similar success stories across the county.

### Looking ahead

Today, members of the Chakol Disabled Self-Help Group are no longer focused on survival; they are planning for growth and sustainability. Individual soybean production among members continues to expand, while the group is also diversifying into poultry and sugarcane farming.

With secure access to land, growing savings, strengthened skills and reliable market linkages, the group has laid a strong foundation for long-term economic stability.

What began as a bold decision to sell a few chickens has grown into a powerful story of agency, resilience and inclusion, demonstrating that with the right support, young people with disabilities can move from the margins to the center of local economic transformation.

"We have moved from beggars to employers. Today, we give community members work to assist us on the farm."

Ayub Omuse  
YISA programme participant

# Beyond the farm: bringing BSF production, technology and knowledge exchange to a university community



Austine showcases a demo Black Soldier Fly (BSF) breeding net at a greenhouse in Kibabii University. Photo: Hydro Victoria/ Anne Nasumba.

At just 20 years old, Austine represents a new generation of young innovators who see agriculture not only as farming, but as a platform for technology, knowledge exchange and community transformation. Rather than simply learning about Black Soldier Fly (BSF) production, Austine is helping shape how institutions and communities understand, practice and discuss this emerging agricultural solution.

A member of the Bunyala Agri-Climate Community-Based Organization (CBO) in Port Victoria and a student at Kibabii University, Austine has always been drawn to the food and agriculture sector. He describes himself as an 'agripreneur and innovator', driven by curiosity about how technology can transform farming systems.

His journey into farming BSF, a high-protein ingredient used to make fish and poultry

feed, began through the Youth in Sustainable Aquaculture (YISA) program, when the Hydro Victoria technical team conducted training for members of his CBO.

"I am naturally curious about innovations. When I heard about BSF farming, I wanted to understand it deeply. YISA opened that door for me," says Austine.

For Austine, the training experience stood out not only because of the technical knowledge shared but also because of the inclusive and practical approach used by the trainers.

"The training sessions were practical and engaging. The trainers even explained things in our mother tongue, which gave us a deeper sense of ownership. Whenever someone didn't understand, they patiently repeated the explanations," he recalls.

While many young people who attended the training quickly established BSF units at home,

Austine chose a different path. Instead of starting a personal enterprise immediately, he decided to introduce BSF farming within his university community.

## Introducing BSF at Kibabii University

After gaining practical experience through his CBO, Austine realized that BSF production had not yet been explored at Kibabii University. Determined to bridge that gap, he approached the university's Department of Agriculture and presented a proposal highlighting BSF as a circular economy solution for waste management and sustainable feed production.

"After learning about BSF production through Hydro Victoria and practicing at our CBO, I decided to take the idea to Kibabii University, where BSF farming was not yet being practiced. I pitched it as a circular economy solution for managing waste in the school," he explains.

Using the simple but powerful model he had learned: waste in, frass out, larvae for feed; Austine successfully persuaded the department to explore the idea further. With support from the university, a greenhouse was allocated to the Agricultural Students Association, where a pilot BSF unit is now being developed.

Today, Austine spends much of his weekends and free hours sharing BSF knowledge on campus, coordinating learning sessions, conducting demonstrations, and collaborating with fellow students to experiment with organic farming using frass, the nutrient-rich by-product of BSF production.

## Innovating beyond the farm: The "Taka ni Mali" App

Austine's vision for BSF goes beyond physical farming. Recognizing that many young people struggle to access reliable agricultural information, he and his friends developed a mobile learning application called "Taka ni Mali" (Waste is Wealth).

The app serves as a digital learning platform for aspiring BSF farmers and features BSF video tutorials, a chatbot trained on BSF production knowledge, interactive quizzes with progress tracking, and a beginner's guide to starting BSF farming.

"It's a learning companion. Students can use it even before they start farming," Austine explains.

So far, the application has attracted 124 active users, most of whom discovered it through word of mouth. "Although the app is not yet generating income, I see it as a platform that expands BSF knowledge and builds confidence among young farmers who want to start," he adds.

## New opportunities through innovation

Through the YISA program, Austine gained more than technical knowledge, he gained confidence and a sense of purpose. "I gained the confidence to walk into spaces and make bold proposals," he says.

His curiosity about BSF also sparked a deeper interest in biodiversity and environmental science. "If one insect could completely change how I viewed flies, what about other species?" he reflects.

This curiosity led him to participate in the "We Are Nature: Youth Biodiversity Challenge," where he presented a winning proposal for an AI-based mapping system to identify and restore natural fish breeding zones in Lake Victoria.

"I remain very keen on using science and technology to solve our local problems," he says.

## Challenging gender norms through BSF

Through his work with both the university and the CBO, Austine began noticing interesting gender dynamics around BSF farming.

"Female students and group members are often more willing to learn about BSF farming than their male counterparts," he observes.

At the same time, he noticed that some participants still believed that income-generating activities culturally belonged to men.

Determined to challenge this perception, Austine actively promotes gender inclusion in agricultural entrepreneurship.

"I encourage women to invite their male friends so we can work together. Equality starts with income, because income gives independence," he explains.

Interestingly, the usage patterns of the Taka ni

Mali app reflect a similar trend. “Most of the app’s users are women, which challenges the idea that ventures like this belong more to men than women,” he adds.

### Bringing BSF home

While much of his time is dedicated to BSF knowledge exchange, university initiatives and app development, Austine is also beginning to build his own agricultural venture. Together with his brother, he recently started a poultry unit at home.

With access to organic waste from the local market and fishing communities in Busia, integrating BSF production into their poultry system will be a natural next step.

### Challenges along the journey

Despite his achievements, Austine faces challenges common to many young innovators. Limited financial resources make it difficult to establish a fully equipped BSF production unit.

“As a student without a steady income, I can’t build everything I imagine just yet,” he says.

The Taka ni Mali app, although impactful, is also yet to generate revenue. “For now, it’s like charity work to educate people. But publishing costs and app hosting remain a challenge,” he explains.

Another challenge is misinformation about BSF among farmers, particularly poultry farmers who expect BSF larvae to completely replace commercial feed. “Some farmers want to rely entirely on BSF larvae for poultry feed, but I always explain that BSF is a supplement, not a full replacement,” he says.

To navigate these challenges, Austine relies on mentorship from Hydro Victoria trainers, university professors, and continuous self-learning through research and online resources.

### A vision rooted in technology and impact

Looking ahead, Austine believes that BSF farming holds vast unexplored potential, particularly when combined with technology and data.

“I want to bring more value addition into BSF farming: things people have not even imagined yet,” he says.

His long-term vision is to develop technology-driven solutions that use BSF biotechnology to address food security, waste management and

climate challenges.

For Austine, the future of agriculture lies in innovation, creativity and youth participation. “We are the solutions we are looking for. You don’t need to hold a jembe (hoe) to contribute to agriculture,” he says.

“Whatever you have: skills, curiosity or knowledge, use it. Be innovative and participate actively. We are doing this for our future.”



Inside the greenhouse allocated to the Kibabii Agricultural Students Association (KASA), Austine and a KASA member inspect the larvae feeding trays. Inset: The ‘Taka ni Mali’ app’s interface. Photo: Hydro Victoria /Anne Nasumba.

“After learning about BSF production through Hydro Victoria and practicing at our CBO, I decided to take the idea to Kibabii University, where BSF farming was not yet being practiced. I pitched it as a circular economy solution for managing waste in the school.”

Austine

YISA program participant

# From casual fish seller to successful aggregator: how YISA transformed James Fikiri's business



James Fikiri stores a marine tilapia in one of his freezers. Photo: Farm Africa/Maurice Goga.

With support from the YISA program, a young entrepreneur in Kilifi County turned a small fish stall into a thriving aggregation enterprise, creating jobs and improving livelihoods. James Fikiri, a fish trader at Gogoni Market, began his journey in the fish business as a casual employee, selling fish on behalf of an aggregator within the market. Today, he is a renowned fish aggregator in Kilifi County through his Fikiri Samaki Poa business: a transformation he attributes to the support he received through the YISA program.

“In 2024, I was employed by a fish trader here at Gogoni Market, earning KES 200 a day selling fish,” Fikiri recalls. “Through that experience,

I learned key business skills, and despite the frustrations, I decided to start my own business using the little capital I had managed to save.”

With limited capital but armed with knowledge gained from his previous employment, James began selling fish at the open-air Gogoni Market. At the time, he could only afford about 10 kilograms of fish per day.

“With just KES 3,000, I started by buying fish in small quantities because I did not have enough capital or a storage facility. Any fish I could not sell by the end of the day, I had no option but to consume,” he explains.

## A turning point through the YISA program

A turning point came for James when two officers

from the YISA program visited the area, recruiting young people to join the program.

“I thank God because, as I continued with my business, two officers visited us here at the market to inform young people about the YISA program and Farm Africa. Many of us registered, and later we were called to attend a series of trainings,” he says.

During the training, James and other participants received both technical and business development training, equipping them with practical skills in fish production as well as agribusiness management.

While running his business, James faced numerous challenges, including limited time for selling and the need to dispose of his fish at lower prices due to the lack of proper storage facilities.

“Because I did not have a storage facility, I was often forced to sell fish at a throwaway price just to recover the money I had used to purchase it. In addition, operating in an open-air market limited my selling hours. I could only sell in the morning and evening because of the scorching sun,” he explains.

His challenges also extended along the supply chain. He was unable to engage fishermen directly or travel to landing sites to source fish due to inadequate capital to cover transportation costs. In addition, he lacked essential storage equipment, such as a cooler box.

### Scaling the business through the YISA Challenge Fund

Through the YISA program, James transitioned from selling fish under the scorching sun. With support from the program challenge fund, he was able to establish his own fish aggregation shop within the market.

“In November 2024, I received a message confirming that I had been received KES 302,600, which I had applied for through the challenge fund under YISA program. After receiving the funds, I took some time to plan because it was close to the festive season, and the prices of many items had already begun to rise,” he recalls.

James used the funds to purchase a freezer, two cooler boxes and a weighing scale. He then used the remaining amount to increase the stock in his fish aggregation business, growing his capacity

from aggregating 10 kg of fish to over 100 kg.

“Today, I can aggregate more than 100 kg of fish because I now have enough capital and proper storage facilities. Even if I don’t sell all the fish immediately, I know they can be safely stored,” he says.

### Increased profits and job creation

The investment significantly increased sales and improved the business’s profit margins.

“After receiving the funds, there was a sharp increase in my business profits because I was able to aggregate fish worth KES 50,000 or more, sometimes reaching up to 200 kg. From these sales, I now record a profit of not less than KES 20,000 per month.”

In line with the program’s goal of promoting youth employment, James’s business has created two full-time jobs and 11 casual job opportunities for young people who support the day-to-day operations of the enterprise. The two full-time employees each earn KES 16,000 per month, while the casual workers are paid on a commission basis.

### Improving family livelihoods

As the breadwinner of his family, the funding brought significant relief to his household. He notes that the support from the program has made a meaningful impact on his family’s well-being and financial stability.

“If you compare the life we used to live in the past with the life we live now, the difference is clear. Before I received the funding, I sometimes had to use money meant for the business to buy household necessities. But today, things have improved; my brothers are now in school, thanks to the income from the business,” notes James.

### Expanding to new markets

Despite the progress, the business still faces challenges that limit its ability to maximize profits from the fish aggregation enterprise. James notes that one of the main challenges is the high cost of transporting fish from the landing sites to the shop. He also cites the high cost of electricity, which he attributes to the freezers that consume a significant amount of power.

However, he remains optimistic that the business will continue to grow, enabling him to establish another aggregation center in Marafa, Kilifi. He

has identified a promising business opportunity there, noting that many residents currently have to travel all the way to Gogoni to purchase fish. Setting up a center in Marafa would therefore bring the product closer to the community while expanding his business.

His message for fellow young people is clear: “If you get the opportunity to join the YISA program, do not hesitate. It is a program that truly works; I have witnessed its impact myself. I am where I am today because of the YISA program.”



James Fikiri with two of his employees at the fish aggregation shop. Photo: Farm Africa / Maurice Goga.

“If you compare the life we used to live in the past with the life we live now, the difference is clear. Before I received the funding, I sometimes had to use money meant for the business to buy household necessities. But today, things have improved; my brothers are now in school, thanks to the income from the business.”

James Fikiri  
YISA programme participant

## From small beginnings to a thriving aquaculture enterprise: Samuel Ojuka’s journey with YISA

Three years ago, Samuel Ojuka started fish farming in Siaya County with little more than curiosity and determination. Unlike many in the sector, he had no formal aquaculture training. His first pond measured just 210 square meters, and the only fish he had were those swept in by floods during the rainy season.

“I did not even know how to stock properly,” Samuel recalls. “The fish in my pond were just those brought by floods. I had no technical knowledge, no weighing system, and no proper management.”

Without access to quality fingerlings (young fish),

Samuel relied on whatever seed he could find, which led to uncontrolled breeding, overcrowding and stunted growth.

“The fingerlings kept multiplying inside the pond instead of growing. The pond became overcrowded, and the fish could not reach a good market size.”

Market access was another major challenge. The pond’s location made it difficult for Samuel to access inputs, quality fingerlings and buyers. Before joining Youth in Sustainable Aquaculture (YISA) program, Samuel had no structured income, did not weigh his fish, and never tracked survival rates.



Samuel Ojuka prepares an outgrow fish pond. Photo: Livingwood Consultant Ltd / Luiza Obor.

### Turning the tide with YISA

Samuel's fortunes changed when he joined YISA. Through the program, he received technical training from Livingwood Consultants Limited on water quality management, fishpond management, aquaculture best practices, and business development services, including marketing platforms and life skills development.

In addition, he gained practical experience, including fish cage training at RIAT, hatchery management at Daraja Aqua Gem, and pond and cage management in the Lake Basin and learned to use digital monitoring tools, including Clappia and a digital ticketing system for submitting reports.

"These exposure visits opened my eyes. I began to see aquaculture not just as a pond, but as a full business value chain," shares Samuel.

Regular on-site mentorship through five follow-up visits, combined with phone-based guidance, ensured he applied the knowledge effectively.

### Measurable transformation

With YISA support, Samuel expanded his pond from 210 m<sup>2</sup> to 300 m<sup>2</sup>, introduced proper stocking, and began monitoring survival rates, growth and weights. Today his survival rate has increased from 70% to 80%, the average fish weight has improved from 200 to 250 grams, and his production is consistent. He now earns approximately KES 53,000 per production cycle.

"Before YISA, I never weighed my fish. I did not know the survival rate or growth performance. Now I monitor everything," he says.

The business has also created local employment, engaging 10 young people, including three women, contributing to gender inclusion and youth empowerment.

### Expanding influence and services

Beyond his farm, Samuel serves as a Local Service Provider (LSP), mentoring over 100 farmers on effective pond management, sourcing quality feeds and fingerlings, and plans to set up a fingerling nursery with a modern incubation

system to improve local access to quality seed.

“I want to establish a modern incubation unit so farmers can access quality fingerlings locally.”

### Household and community impact

Aquaculture has strengthened Samuel’s household food security, supplemented by crops like beans, maize and vegetables. He can now comfortably pay school fees and support his siblings, while providing a sustainable protein source for the community.

“Aquaculture has improved my life. I can now pay school fees for my child and support my siblings. Our living standards have improved.”

Reflecting on his journey, Samuel believes aquaculture offers immense potential for young people.

“Aquaculture offers young people more than income; it offers independence, innovation and a sustainable path to feeding the world. With skills, patience and commitment, today’s youth can become tomorrow’s leaders in food production. The water holds opportunity. With knowledge and dedication, aquaculture can turn youth into entrepreneurs.”



An outgrow fishpond. Photo: Livingwood Consultant Ltd / Luiza Obor.

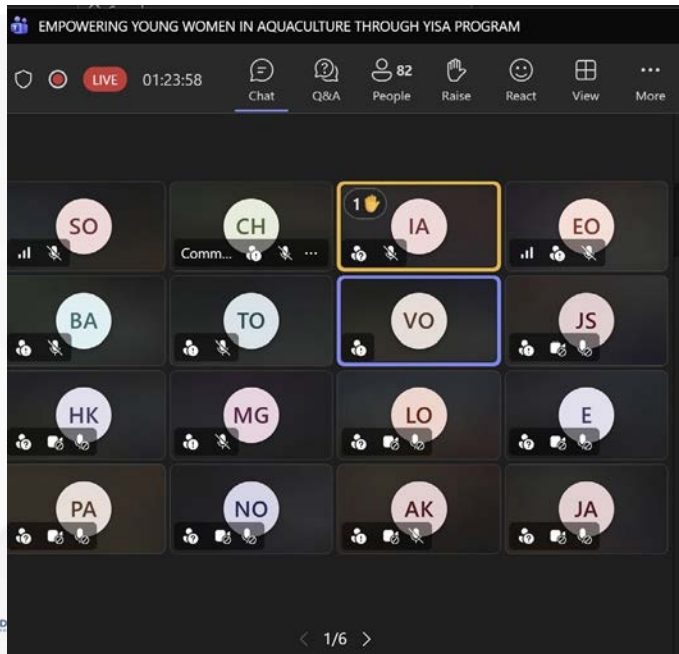


An outgrow fishpond. Photo: Livingwood Consultant Ltd / Luiza Obor.



Ready an outgrow fishpond. Photo: Livingwood Consultant Ltd / Luiza Obor.

# YISA program highlights role of women in transforming



The Youth in Sustainable Aquaculture (YISA) program marked International Women’s Day by hosting a webinar that highlighted the critical role young women play in driving innovation, productivity, and resilience within Kenya’s aquaculture sector.

The discussion brought together program partners, government representatives, entrepreneurs and program participants to explore how targeted investments in women can strengthen aquaculture value chains and unlock economic opportunities for young people in Kenya.

Speakers emphasized that while aquaculture presents significant opportunities for employment and food security, structural barriers continue to limit the meaningful participation of young women. Addressing these barriers, they noted, requires coordinated efforts from both state and non-state actors to ensure women have access to resources, leadership spaces, and markets.

## Addressing structural barriers in aquaculture

Evans Okacha, Deputy Program Manager for the YISA program, highlighted the structural challenges that young women face when trying

to participate meaningfully in the aquaculture sector.

“Young women face exceptionally unique challenges when engaging in aquaculture, particularly around access to and control of critical resources such as land, capital, and decision-making spaces,” he explained.

According to Okacha, when the program began operations in western and coastal Kenya, it encountered deeply rooted gender norms that restricted women’s participation in aquaculture production.

“It may surprise many people that even within the program implementation counties, it has not been common practice for young women to drive production in aquaculture. When the program started, we found restrictive gender norms that limited young women’s participation,” he said.

These barriers were also reflected in leadership and governance structures within the sector.

“Women were often excluded from decision-making spaces such as Beach Management Units, which play a critical role in managing access to key production resources like lakes and oceans,” he added.

To address these challenges, the program has

implemented several targeted interventions designed to improve women's access to resources, finance, and leadership opportunities.

One of the most significant interventions has been the introduction of a catalytic financing mechanism to support youth-led enterprises, particularly those led by young women.

"The program established a catalytic fund with a strong component of interest-free revolving loans that allow young women's groups to access capital for production and trade," explains Okacha.

Through this financing model, young women participants in different program value chains, including aquaculture, mariculture, soybean and Black Solider Fly are able to access capital to grow their enterprises.

The program has also worked to address the issue of land access by supporting women to formalize their land-use arrangements.

"We have supported young women's groups to document their relationships with landowners through formal land lease agreements. This helps safeguard them as they scale their enterprises," Okacha noted.

Beyond financial support, the program has invested in capacity building and institutional engagement to address gender norms and improve women's representation in sector leadership.

"Beyond financing, we have invested heavily in training and engagement with key stakeholders, including Beach Management Units, to ensure women are integrated into leadership structures and that the environments in which they operate are safe," he said.

To further support women within the program, gender-responsive support systems have been established across the counties where the program operates.

"The program has established 13 gender desks across the counties where we work to ensure that issues affecting young women are addressed quickly and effectively," Okacha said.

These gender desks work closely with referral partners, including law enforcement and legal institutions, to respond to gender-related

challenges that may affect participants.

According to Okacha, the program's interventions are already producing significant results.

"To date, more than KSh160 million has been provided to youth groups that are predominantly composed of young women, enabling them to access and control critical factors of production."

"As a result of these interventions, young women now make up the majority of youth participating in the program. 71% of the youth in work are young women of the total number of youth in work which is at 52,434," he said.

Despite this progress, Okacha emphasized that continued investment is needed to achieve full gender inclusion within the sector.

"While we are proud of the progress made so far, we recognize that we are not yet where we want to be. However, it is important to celebrate the progress we have achieved together."

### Women entrepreneurs driving change

During the discussion, young women entrepreneurs shared how mentorship, training, and business development support from the YISA program have helped them expand their enterprises.

Bilhah Akoko, a Local Service Provider working with participants along the aquaculture value chain, explained that she joined the program while already involved in fish farming at a small scale.

"When I joined the program, I was producing fingerlings and fish on a small scale," she said.

Through the program's training, mentorship, and business support, Bilhah has significantly expanded her enterprise.

"Through the support from the YISA program, my business has grown very fast because of the commitment I have put into it and the opportunities that the program has provided," she explained.

Through YISA, she established an aggregation center in Kisumu to meet growing demand for fish in the market.

"We managed to open an aggregation center in Kisumu where we supply fish to traders,

and because of the high demand, we are also investing more in fish farming to ensure that there is always fish available.”

The expansion has also created employment opportunities within the community.

“Initially, I only had three employees, but today the business has grown to employ 17 direct staff and about 40 indirect workers who benefit from the business,” Bilhah said.

Venessa Ominde, of Soldier Fly Diverse Limited, also highlighted the role of women entrepreneurs in strengthening aquaculture value chains.

“Through the support of the program, I’ve been able to expand my BSF portfolio. Initially, I was only offering extension services, BSF rearing and breeding solutions, and live larvae,” she explained.

Today, the company produces additional products derived from BSF.

“Now we are able to offer dried larvae and extract oil from BSF, which is used both in cosmetics and as a fish feed supplement because BSF is rich in omega oils.”

### Building skills and confidence

Antalya, another participant in the program, emphasized the importance of technical training in strengthening women’s participation in aquaculture.

“Through the YISA program, I have developed strong technical skills through the trainings we have received. These trainings have helped me understand aquaculture better and improve how I manage my fish farming activities.”

She noted that practical training combined with ongoing support helps women build confidence and become active participants in the value chain.

“When women receive hands-on training and continuous extension support, they gain the confidence to manage farms effectively, improve yields, and participate in decision-making within the aquaculture value chain.”

### The importance of co-creation and policy engagement

John Roche, Gender Advocacy Champion in the County Government of Homa Bay, called for greater community involvement in program

design and implementation.

“One barrier we often overlook is attaching programs too closely to donors,” he said.

“When communities and women are involved in designing programs from the beginning, they articulate their priorities clearly and take ownership of the process.”

He also highlighted the importance of policy frameworks such as the County Integrated Development Plan (CIDP) in strengthening women’s voices in the aquaculture sector.

“Even during the midterm review of the CIDP, we should bring women together and strengthen their advocacy so their priorities in the aquaculture value chain are reflected. When we implement these interventions, we are simply responding to their aspirations.”

### A young women-centric approach

Jacinta Kariuki, Gender Lead for the YISA program, emphasized that the program’s design is grounded in evidence and informed by the lived realities of young women.

“Our program is evidence-based. Through gender analysis, we identify gaps and design interventions that respond directly to those challenges,” she said.

The program also seeks to challenge assumptions about what young women can achieve within the aquaculture sector.

“We place young women at the center of implementation to minimize risks and ensure their voices shape the interventions.”

According to Kariuki, the program actively works to understand the aspirations and realities of the young women it serves.

“We ask ourselves: who is ‘Maimuna,’ the young woman between 18 and 35? What does she want? Instead of designing programs for Maimuna, we design them with Maimuna.”

The webinar attracted strong interest from stakeholders across the sector, with 168 participants joining the discussion and 82 following the full two-and-a-half-hour session live.



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## Youth in Sustainable Aquaculture

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### INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY WEBINAR

Investing in women to drive productivity, resilience,  
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Cleaning of soybean harvest by members of the Chakol Disability Group.

### YISA program: Quarter one impact stories

The YISA program year three quarter one impact stories provides up-to-date insights into the progress of program implementation and highlights impactful stories from the field.

Cover photo: Harvesting of fish by YISA participants at Ogal Beach. Photo: Aquarech/Priscillah Aketch.

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