

ADVALUE PILOT TRAINING REPORT

Module 2: Transdisciplinary Research | Pwani University | Date: 8th - 12th December 2025

INTRODUCTION

From December 8th to 12th, 2025, Pwani University hosted the second module of the ADVALUE project, focusing on Transdisciplinary Research methodologies. ADVALUE (Advancing Sustainable Agricultural Value Chains through Strengthening Transdisciplinary Skills and Cooperation in East African Doctoral Education) is funded by the European Commission under the Erasmus+ Programme. This five-day intensive training brought together doctoral students and researchers from across East Africa to build essential competencies in participatory research methods for addressing complex sustainability challenges in agricultural value chains.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

The training successfully delivered five core learning objectives. Participants developed robust understanding of systems thinking and analysis, learning to identify complex interactions between environmental, social, economic, and institutional factors in agricultural value chains. They gained competencies in stakeholder engagement and mapping, learning to systematically identify and assess actors from smallholder farmers. Participants acquired practical skills in qualitative data collection tool development, crafting Focus Group Discussion guides and narrative interview protocols under guidance from Jana Mazancová and Maria Restrepo. They mastered qualitative data analysis methods including coding, content analysis, and thematic analysis, and engaged in hands-on analytical practice, moving from raw transcripts to meaningful insights with confidence.

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

Stakeholder engagement activity led by Munene Kithama went beyond traditional stakeholder mapping to actively involve participants in envisioning their roles within transdisciplinary research ecosystems. Stakeholders were asked to reflect on how they see themselves relating to the module content and to articulate their specific interests in transdisciplinary agricultural research. Through guided discussion, participants expressed strong interest in bringing diverse researchers on board to work together, recognizing that complex agricultural sustainability challenges cannot be solved by single disciplines or isolated researchers.

The training employed diverse pedagogical approaches including interactive lectures that incorporated real-time examples from participants' contexts, active breakout discussions where participants collaboratively solved methodological problems, and a transformative field excursion to Farmer Field Schools where students observed how learning takes place in the farmer Field Schools. Farmers described the Farmer Field School experience as highly impactful, noting that it strengthened their knowledge of agroecological practices and enabled them to learn from each other.

Participants left with concrete research tools—FGD guides, interview protocols. They gained conceptual frameworks for approaching sustainability challenges through transdisciplinary lenses. The emphasis on matching methods to research questions expanded participants' methodological

repertoires, while peer networks across East African institutions created communities of practice extending beyond the training week.



Active participation during the transdisciplinary session at Pwani University.



Participants visit farmers in Takaungu, Kilifi, Kenya to learn through a Farmer Field School.



Focus group discussion during the Transdisciplinary training session at Pwani University.



ADVALUE trainees and trainers pose for a group photo after the participatory photography training session.