

International Livestock Research Institute

Review of the MoreMilk project module on communication skills and nutrition
messages

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Acknowledgements

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Executive summary

The *More Milk: making the most of milk* (MoreMilk) project is a five-year initiative funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and the United Kingdom Department for International Development and implemented by the International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI) and partners. The project aims to improve child health and nutrition outcomes through milk consumption. With this goal in mind, the project will generate evidence on how informal milk markets can be leveraged to improve nutrition and health, especially in peri-urban settings.

ILRI organized a half day meeting on 2 April 2019 at its Nairobi campus to review a training module on **communication skills and nutrition messages** that would be used in training milk vendors in peri-urban Nairobi. Nutrition experts, communication experts and development organizations working in agriculture for nutrition and health were invited to review the proposed content.

The participants reviewed the proposed module that had the following learning objectives: (1) communication, (2) what your consumer needs and (3) communication skills and nutrition messages.

The overall outcome was that the module was crucial for training of milk vendors. However, some suggestions were made on how to improve its structure and content. There was also a consensus to combine learning objective 1 with the first part of learning objective 3 since they're both on communication.

Though not part of the program, considerations were also given on the proposal, and implementation of the research project while ensuring sustainability.

Introduction

Millions of people in Kenya consume milk and dairy products every day. Not only are milk and dairy products a vital source of nutrition for these people, they also provide livelihood opportunities for farmers, processors, shopkeepers and other stakeholders in the dairy value chain. But to achieve this, milk distributors and private sector need basic information and communication skills in effectively passing information on how milk and dairy products can better contribute to human nutrition and what role they (private sector, milk vendors) can play in increasing access to safe milk in low income settlements.

The MoreMilk project is a five-year initiative funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and the United Kingdom Department for International Development and implemented by the International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI) and partners. The project aims to improve child health and nutrition outcomes through milk consumption. With this goal in mind, the project will generate evidence on how informal milk markets can be leveraged to improve nutrition and health, especially in peri-urban settings. One of the primary components of the project will conduct a randomized control trial to evaluate the health and nutrition benefits of a training, certification and marketing scheme for dairy vendors in the informal sector. As part of that intervention, ILRI and partners are developing various training modules.

ILRI organized a half day meeting on 2 April 2019 at its Nairobi campus to review a training module on **communication skills and nutrition messages** (the fourth in a series of four modules) that would be used in training milk vendors in peri-urban Nairobi. Nutrition experts, communication experts and development organizations working in agriculture for nutrition and health were invited to review the proposed content.

Workshop proceedings

The meeting was called to order at 9:15 a.m. by Esther Omosa. The session started with a brief introduction by all the participants. Thereafter, at 9:30 a.m., Silvia Alonso, the research scientist in charge of the project gave a detailed overview of the project. She emphasised on the goal and overall objectives of the project; and how the module on communication and nutrition messages, that was to be discussed during this meeting, fits in the project. A brief highlight of the other three modules was given to provide a background of the work that had already been covered in relation to the current module. The project will be implemented through a randomized controlled trial that will include testing market interventions to improve safety of milk and nutrition indicators in children within peri-urban Nairobi. The intervention will include training and certification of vendors in the informal sector in peri-urban Nairobi.

The project is specifically targeting these three classes of milk vendors:

- Milk bars (sell milk and eggs)
- Shops (sell other products and liquid unprocessed milk)
- Street vendors (sell at specific points in the street)

Participants raised the following points after the project introduction:

- Need for clarity in the milk vendor certification process and the authority to provide the certification: It was noted that this may be done in one of the two options provided: Certification through the Kenya Dairy Board; Secondly, certification through vendors demand (by market itself). The route to be used needs to be clarified.
- There is need for the project to give key clues on how the training skills built will be sustained over time to have impact even after the project ends.
- There is need for more discussions with other stakeholders like the Nutrition Unit of the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Agriculture, UNICEF among others in case it hasn't yet been held.

- There is need for clarity on what will be measured in children and how it will be done. It was noted that the project envisaged measuring calcium, protein, Vitamin B12 intake. Need to consider inclusion of anthropometric measurements of the children. This is a basic monitoring of child health status.
 - A 24-hour recall would be done at baseline and after intervention i.e. end line.
- Need to clarify if the project is only measuring outcomes on children only; or on children and their caregivers?
- The project should establish knowledge and practice on milk and milk products for the target population, at the point of entry (baseline) so that you can tailor the messaging to suit the gaps.

The introduction session was followed by an overview of the training module and its sub-objectives.

Thereafter, the participants formed two groups, divided the module content amongst the two groups and started the review process. Below are key matters raised or need to be changed.

Learning objective 1: Communication

- Merge learning objective 1 (communication) with learning objective 3a (communication vehicles).
- Simplify language so as that it is understood by the target audience.
- Define communication under learning objective 1.
- Consider examples of questions for vendors from facilitators. This refers to correct way of phrasing and a wrong way of phrasing the same question/ answer to a customer.
- Consider communication models that will not incur financial costs to the vendors and consumers. This way, they will be sustainable e.g. word of mouth.
- Differentiate methods and channels of communication and contextualize to target audience.
- Voice of delivering information recommended to be instructive not suggestive.

Learning objective 2: What your customer needs

- This needs to come before the communication module because when vendors understand what their customer wants, they can tailor their communication accordingly.
- Leave the credit issue unspoken. It is a good opportunity but at the same time sensitive. It may make the businesses not be profitable due to delayed payments, even if it may increase customer loyalty. However, the only component that may be encouraged is advance payments by customers.
- Additional inputs to increase customer loyalty e.g. waiting benches in shops for customers.
- Merge and summarize all introductions into a general one at the beginning
- Remove the word 'tip' and put the content in a box, summarise it in a simple language.
- Tailor messages to different categories of vendors e.g. on hygiene, recommend covering of milk containers to prevent dust to street vendors; on cleanliness of milk bar for vendors who own milk bars.
- The key points in this module can be summarised/merged as follows:

1. Price
2. Quality and safety
 - ❖ Adulteration
 - ❖ Freshness
 - ❖ Storage and handling
3. Convenience
 - ❖ Variation in quantities
 - ❖ Proximity to milk outlet
 - ❖ Credit facilities
 - ❖ Consistency in availability
 - ❖ Variety of milk products/value addition
 - ❖ Packaging materials; handy if have forgotten one from home
4. Hygiene (facility and vendor)
 - ❖ Vendors should be healthy
 - ❖ Dust coats and caps
5. Vendor presentation and integrity

Learning objective 3: Nutrition messages

- Recommendation on quantities should be mentioned to put the knowledge out there hence encourage gradual adoption of the recommended quantities. It may not
- Ensure messages are scientific, but at the same time simple and generalised.
- Dissemination: have short messages (maximum eight messages) and each message should be simple and clear, to enhance retention when shared with customers.
- Have a detailed guide for the facilitator on each of the selected messages.
- Consider one or two messages on milk safety, milk hygiene. However, any message on aflatoxin in milk should be carefully crafted, so as not to affect the sales of the vendors negatively;
- Be careful in use of sensitive nutrition words in the messages. For example, milk contains fat, sugars. It may make customers assume that it will lead to weight gain and reduce their consumption.
- Use pictures/illustrations.
- Focus the messages on the target group to be evaluated in the project. Remove messages on other population groups.
- Pre-test the selected nutrition messages in areas outside the study area to ensure that they are well understood by the target audience.
- Possibly translate the selected messages into Kiswahili, once they are pre-tested and agreed upon.
- On options of communicating the nutrition messages: Include all modes of delivery, and let the vendor choose what works for them and would be sustainable for them.

Other matters were raised that were not within the objective of the half day meeting but may be important to be considered in the project:

- Consider including milk dispensers in the project, as they are a huge source of milk in the selected areas (and other areas too).
- Messages to target care givers not only not only customers at vendor shops who may not be the caregivers. Cannot modify project to account for that but can find alternatives through which communication to customers can also reach care givers.
- Check on design of the research. Who is being evaluated? The decision-maker at household level, the vendor or the one sent to buy the milk? This may raise serious gaps in the research.
- Other questions to include in the evaluation of the project: Measure at vendor level; milk shop customer level and child level (at household). Also consider: A pre- and post- question on 'Where was the source of information' so that the project can clearly evaluate whether the vendors have been successful in passing information.
- Need to balance between 'push' and 'pull' factors for the project. It would be good to have an arm, where the customer/household has been empowered and can demand for good quality milk; not only the vendor pushing milk products out.

The meeting ended at 1:15pm.

Workshop program

TIME	ITEM	RESPONSIBLE
8:30am	Introduction by participants	Emmanuel
8:50- 9:10am	Overview of the project and objectives of the meeting	Silvia
9:10-9:20 am	Brief presentation and overview of the module	Angela
9:20am- 10:00am	Group work: Each group reviews on learning objective	Participants
10:00am- 10:30am	Report back from discussions (one rapporteur per group)	Participants
10:30am- 10:45am	Tea break	
10:45am- 11:00am	Brief presentation/Overview of nutrition messages	Angela
11:00am- 11:15am	Self-reflection on nutrition messages	Angela
11:15am-11:45am	Discussion on nutrition messages (in plenary)	Participants
11:45am- 12:15pm	Group work: Identification of most appropriate channels of comms for the messages	Participants
12:15pm-12:30 pm	Summary	Angela
12:30pm	Closure and lunch	

List of participants

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