

# Gendered barriers and opportunities among milk traders in the informal sector in peri-urban Nairobi

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## BACKGROUND

Informal milk trading in peri-urban Nairobi plays a key role in supporting both livelihoods and nutrition, particularly among women and men from poor households:

- Milk provides essential nutrients to those who consume it directly.
- Milk trading is a livelihood strategy and source of income for both women and men: they can purchase food and finance other household needs

This study is part of the More Milk project. “MoreMilk: Making the most of milk” is a five-year project that aims to enhance milk safety and child nutrition in peri-urban Nairobi. MoreMilk focuses on training milk traders to improve their milk handling (for better consumer safety and nutrition) and business practices (for improved trader livelihoods).

Anecdotal evidence has suggested that women and men who engage in informal milk trading face different constraints.

This study analyzed the gendered constraints and opportunities faced by milk traders in peri-urban Nairobi for MoreMilk to better address the needs of women and men milk traders thereby enhancing milk safety and improving their livelihoods.

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Main research question: ‘What are the gendered opportunities and constraints in informal milk trading in peri-urban Nairobi?’

Sub-questions:

1. ‘What are the opportunities offered by dairy trading vis-à-vis other businesses?’
2. ‘What obstacles do you face as a milk trader?’
3. ‘What obstacles did you face when wanting to improve your business?’



## METHODOLOGY

We conducted a qualitative study in 2017 comprising of:

6 single-sex focus group discussions

49 semi-structured individual interviews

4 key-informant interviews

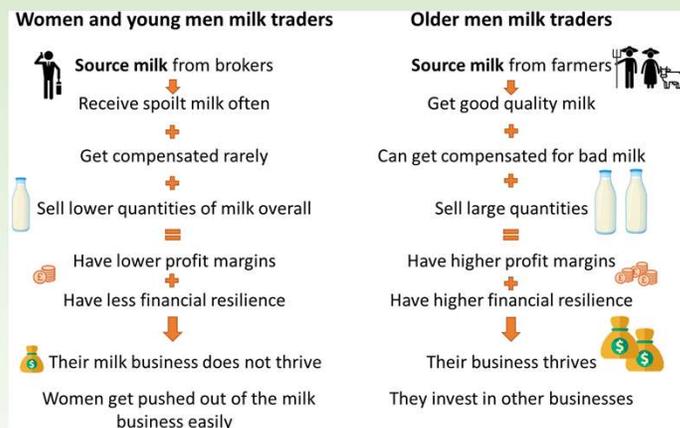
with men and women milk traders (both current and former)

in Dagoretti, a peri-urban area of Nairobi, Kenya

## FINDINGS

**Opportunities:** Informal milk trading is a viable business: it requires little financial investment – important for women and young in particular.

**Constraints:** Gender norms discourage women from travelling to rural areas and from using public transport. As a consequence, women are disadvantaged in 3 key areas for milk business: purchasing prices, quantities of milk sold; and milk quality received from providers.



## CONCLUSIONS

- Informal milk trading has a strong potential to support the economic empowerment of women milk traders – if the constraints that women face are addressed
- Milk trading is less lucrative for women than for men who are also more financially resilient. Women are easily pushed out of the business.
- The training-certification-marketing intervention is one way of addressing some of the constraints that women milk traders face.

## CONTACT

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