

Impact Story 23: Kiosk Vendor Training in Kenya

THE OPPORTUNITY

The desire to embrace healthier eating habits is widespread, yet many people face obstacles when trying to translate these goals into action, particularly in food markets. This challenge stems from differing and sometimes conflicting understandings of what qualifies as healthy and desirable food choices. Local Small and Medium Businesses (SMEs), which constitute the primary source of food for consumers, are oriented toward optimising efficiency, sustaining their operations, and securing their livelihoods.

When GAIN looked closer at the point of purchase, we realised the vegetable kiosk vendors (or last mile sellers) in these communities are often trusted and communicative influencers about the best value and nutritional items.

Therefore, providing these vegetable kiosk vendors with proper information for the food items that they sell could activate them to become nutrition ambassadors, thus influencing consumer food choice and consequently household and individual nutrition practices.



THE SOLUTION

GAIN, along with the Kenya Tea Development Agency Foundation (KTDA Foundation) coordinated and implemented a training package for the vegetable kiosk vendors within the community. It was targeted at food vendors and small traders around tea factories and other stakeholders around their business sites.

The training was intended to enable the traders and for vegetable kiosk vendors around the tea factories to realise the potential role they could play in influencing the healthy food choices of the customers, and how this socially responsible role can still converge

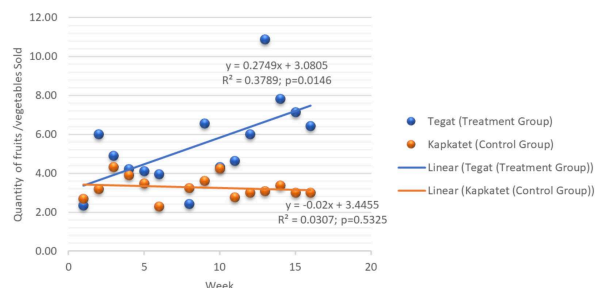


A trained Kiosk vendor' displaying educative food tags in market

with their business objectives for growth and sustainability in their local markets. The training course aimed at equipping the vegetable kiosk vendors with key nutrition information messages and build their confidence to disseminate these as desirable and aspirational for their consumers. To combat an initial low uptake from kiosk vendors, GAIN ensured the trainings were held in the local dialect and had small participant numbers to allow deeper exchange. GAIN also included sections on improved selling techniques, the business cycle, and the consumer; to offer business development skills alongside the nutrition training. In addition, the vendors were also issued with food tags which contained basic nutrition information to guide their customers on nutritious food items at the point of sale.

THE IMPACT

To assess the impact of the educative food tags alongside the basic nutrition training provided by GAIN to the vegetable kiosk vendors, a quality improvement activity was conducted among select group of vendors with a specific focus on the sale of fruits and vegetables within the tea factory catchment in Kericho. The quality improvement study involved 80 trained vendors allocated into 2 groups (40-control, 40-intervention) who were followed for a period of 16 weeks, the intervention being the food tags designed by GAIN. The study used the restocking cycle as a proxy to estimate the sales turnover due to general lack of sales data by the vendors. The underpinning assumption for selecting



Graph: 'Quantity of food (fruits & vegetables) sold in Togat (Treatment Group)', 'Kapkatet (Control Group)' by 'Week'

re-stocking as a measure was that if the products were bought, they would be consumed by families within the neighbourhood of the kiosk. In addition, re-stocking was considered a less demanding measure (from the vegetable kiosk vendors perspective) than recording sales. If the tags increased the purchase of these products, there should be an increase in the amount of these products the kiosk vendors have to buy.

Both groups were trained on nutrition and basic business skills, but only the intervention group received the Food tags with key nutritional messages.

A graph was plotted to illustrate the quantity sold (dependent variable) over time (independent variable) for both treatment and control groups. The results, depicted in figure show that higher sales occurred in the intervention group starting from week 7, coinciding with the introduction of food tags.

The study yielded notably positive outcomes. Vendors who received food tags along with training to elucidate them to customers experienced a significant rise in the quantity of fruits and vegetable sold. This: (1) underscores the importance of vendors in facilitating healthier choices and, (2) highlights the potential impact of food labelling on altering consumption patterns in predominantly informal markets, emphasizing the importance of enhanced training.

There are two implications of these findings. First, that it is possible to work with vegetable kiosk vendors and link their desire to strengthen their business skills with providing information to consumers on healthier food choices. To date, most of the discourse around health information on food items has been on packaged goods in supermarket settings. This study suggests that there is potential for reshaping consumer choices through a hybrid approach of some labelling plus improving the understanding of vendors. As most food purchases in low-income settings take place outside supermarkets, this is a significant finding

Second, that simple information on food quality, in this case "food tags", can significantly change buying habits in favour of healthy food groups such as fruits and vegetables.

These outcomes are promising, particularly considering that a significant portion of consumers in Africa and Asia rely on local markets for their food. They underscore that straightforward and readily accessible guidance at the point of sale can be an effective strategy within informal market settings to promote the adoption of healthier dietary choices.