

ALLIANCES KK SYNTHESIS REPORT OF THE FIRST PHASE
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Alliances KK

This report was produced by the Swiss Development Cooperation funded Mercy Corps Georgia implemented Alliances Kvemo Kartli Programme, a market development programme working in the dairy, beef and sheep value chains in Dmanisi, Tetrtskaro and Tsalka municipalities of Kevmo Kartli. The programme is run according to the M4P Making Markets Work for the Poor approach which focuses on generating pro poor opportunities for growth to promote systemic market change through facilitation with the private sector and other key market players such as local government or legislative bodies.

For more information please go to www.allianceskk.ge

ABOUT THIS REPORT

Qualitative data which allows the programme to capture changes in peoples' and businesses' behaviour, attitudes and practice, has been collected from interventions sufficiently mature (qualitative measurement takes place annually) and has been aggregated according to the programmes three main areas of operation: 1) *Developing Livestock Services for Farmers*, 2) *Developing Market Access for Farmers in the Dairy and Meat Sectors* and 3) *Addressing Community Concerns: Facilitation in Governance*. These results have then been synthesized with the results of the programme's quantitative results measurement, which provides the numbers on how many men and women and businesses have been impacted, how much money has been generated in the form of income attributable to the programme and how many jobs have been created. The results collated in this report provide an illuminating picture of the changes occurring as a result of the interventions undertaken under the first phase of the Alliances KK programme.

NOTES

Gender: Alliances takes the matter of ensuring that the impact of the programme reaches both women and men very seriously. Much thought has gone into designing the strategy and programming to reach them. All data that is collected is gender disaggregated and analyzed so that in the report below, a clear picture of the effect on women can be observed.

Baselines: All information included in this report is measured against a baseline taken from before the intervention started to ensure a real before and after scenario can be established and valid comparison made.

Research: All narrative in this report is based on research, study and data carried out by the programme. The narrative has been enriched by reference to the original programme reports which include *Alliances KK Focus Group Survey*, *Market Analysis*, and *Gender Analysis* and four main pieces of research commissioned or undertaken by the programme, *A Remote Sensing Survey in to the Rangeland Condition in Kvemo Kartli and Samstkhe Javakheti Regions of Georgia*, *Beyond Statistics the Informal Economy in Rural Georgia*, *The Characteristics of Hay Production in Dmanisi, Tetrtskaro and Tsalka* and *Land Ownership and the Development of the Land Market in Georgia*. All reports and research are available on the Alliances KK website at <http://www.allianceskk.ge/index.php/en/downloads.html>

 DEVELOPING LIVESTOCK SERVICES FOR FARMERS

Alliances KK works with private sector providers of livestock services previously very poor or absent which are essential for farmers seeking to maintain or improve the productivity and health of their cattle, these include:

Veterinary services: the programme has facilitated a national input supplier, *Roki Ltd*, to work with local veterinary pharmacies to provide well-equipped veterinary pharmacies with trained personnel & embedded advice alongside the provision of well priced modern and well stored drugs

Breeding; the programme has facilitated local farmers to become service providers offering natural service by improved bulls for a fee

Nutrition: the programme has facilitated a local business man to improve his door to door deliveries of brewer's grains a nutrient rich by-product from the brewing process and the production and sale of affordable combined feed

Newspaper: the programme facilitated a local newspaper to include quality agricultural content, an expanded coverage area, Azeri, Armenian and Georgia language editions and rural as well as urban selling points.

VETERINARY SERVICES

Following the collapse of the Soviet Union veterinary service provision disintegrated with services that were absent, scanty and offered poor quality and poor value for money and resulted in farmers with little or no confidence in the services on offer and a lack of trust of vets and veterinary provision in general which made work to resume services more difficult. The programme has facilitated a national input supplier to link with local veterinary pharmacies which are often little more than a small room with a few patent medicines to provide well-equipped local veterinary pharmacies with trained personnel & embedded advice offering well priced modern and well stored drugs which has contributed to an increased level of confidence and higher level of trust in the quality and appropriateness of the services offered. Negative opinions are being dispelled and this is resulting in an increased consumption of services, as well increased efficiency in the use of the services themselves with positive improvements for farmers in the health and productivity of their cattle. The intervention which started in February 2012 has to date generated resulting in 352,449 Gel of sales. Now the vet services are being used by a larger cross section of farmers than before. Previously treatment was only accessed by the 'active farmer' who more or less managed to get the vet drugs they thought they needed through trips to Tbilisi, now however 'passive farmers' who only ever used vet treatments in extreme cases are regularly accessing the service. Farmers have begun replacing on farm remedies or a default of no treatment at all, by professional vet services. The operation of the improved local vet pharmacy has enabled the satisfaction of and a growth in farmer's interest in diagnosis and methods of treatment and livestock husbandry in general.

The vet pharmacies offer coverage in all 66 communities of the programme area. Farmers receiving local consultation and treatment reduce their transportation costs, save their time and their energy. The improved vet service has contributed to the increase of cattle live weight and income. Internal parasite related conditions have decreased by 11–14%; regular vaccination has increased by 15%; treatment against external parasites has increased by 11%; postnatal diseases have been reduced by 5–7% and

milking and live weight has increased by 5–15 %. The increased usage and accessible locations of the vet pharmacies is enabling timely treatment and prophylactic management by farmers safeguarding the health and net worth of livestock to the tune of 37,424 Gel of income for 3,672 farmers of which 10,446 Gel was income for 722 women to date. Indirectly the changes are farther reaching four new vet pharmacies based on the model have opened inside and outside the programme area and a rival firm operating in the same market niche in a different region has expanded its services to match those offered by Roki Ltd.

The changes have also affected women who are traditionally responsible for livestock husbandry, cleaning, feeding the animals, milking and processing dairy products and are often the first to note the incidence of disease can detail the symptoms and request drugs for treatment. However women often have very limited freedom of movement either due to cultural and social reasons or pure lack of transport, traditionally it is men who go to town regularly resulting in for women very restricted access to even informal information networks. Therefore when service provision was largely limited to Tbilisi women were very restricted in what they could effectively do. The programme in a second stage of facilitation with Roki in February 2013, developed satellite vet points in the rural villages which has opened up access to women situated in more rural areas and without transport. To date there have been 27,694 GEL of sales to women in the region. Local vet Akaki Gorjomeladze and a female customer Dali Beridza put it succinctly:

‘I have been a vet in Tsintskaro Village for many years. I knew representatives of the ROKI Company but I hadn’t been able to open a vet-pharmacy because I had no time to travel to Tbilisi to buy drugs. I was telling farmers to buy and bring medicines from Tbilisi by themselves in order to vaccinate or treat their animals. I opened a vet-pharmacy when ROKI began supplying our region with medications. Vet medications are basically demanded by women. Every morning and evening when taking their cattle to the village herd they observe their cows and if they identify anything strange they come to the vet pharmacy on the way to receive some consultations and to take vet medication with them. I have been consulting for malefarmers as well. If they have a question for which I have no answer I use "ROKI"’s hotline.’

‘The opening of a Vet Pharmacy in the village is very important. Until now I had been asking various people to buy vet drugs for me. Now I can go to the Vet Pharmacy and select vet drugs by myself. The vet pharmacy shop assistant provides me with consultation concerning animal disease prevention and also new vet drugs. I now see that there are many new vet drugs that I had no information about before.’

BREEDING

Breed stock which had been maintained on the collective farms of the soviet period disintegrated on the collapse of the Soviet Union. The collectives were disbanded and all farmers allocated a small amount of land with access to pasture. As civil war and economic and political crises progressed small farmers developed a mode of diverse mainly subsistence farming with a few cows for dairy, possibly sheep, pigs, chickens and cropping for livestock feed and human consumption with any surpluses sold often to a network of intermediaries who work through the villages bringing produce to Tbilisi and other regional markets. Barter and non cash transactions became common place as salaries became scarcer, a surplus of

potatoes could be traded for help with the harvest, cheese traded for hay and so on. In amongst this the most was made of the natural pasture that supplements the small land plots and cattle are sent daily in village herds watched over by a herder. In this context breeding became irregular, casual and non-commercial, with poorer quality bulls remaining in herds. In a system reliant on very few external inputs the local unimproved breed is well adapted but offers limited scope for improved productivity or specialization in dairy and meat when inputs do become available. The programme facilitated local farmers to offer organized natural breeding services with an improved breed bull for a fee of 10-15 gel which to date has resulted in coverage of 49 communities and 6,168 Gel values of sale.

The intervention does not claim to be producing optimal breeds but certainly results to date are showing a marked improvement. With the improved breed calves being on average 16.5 kg more than local breed's live weight at birth increasing to 21.5 kg at two months and 30.1kg at four months¹. Farmers have sold new born improved breed calves at a higher price than local calves of the same age, based on the higher live weight of the improved breed calves. The difference in the selling price was 50gel/calf.

Artificial insemination (AI) has been tried many times in Georgia but has largely failed to date being suited to larger farms with synchronized management systems and a management plan into which the costs are absorbed into overall productivity. Natural service with an improved bull has allowed farmers to access a service more familiar to them and with less risk, the success rate to date is 83%, approximately 40% more than in the AI undertaken to date in Georgia. Where pregnancy does not occur farmers can take the cow back for another service easily. Paying for the service has been a hurdle for many especially in the first year but as the results become clear as the new calves are born more people are willing to pay. Much attention has been paid to record keeping previously unheard of, as this lays the foundation for breed management. As the local bull service provider Leri Samadashvili and female customer Natela Akhvlediani explain below:

‘Farmers pay 15 Gel/insemination, I explain to them the importance of establishing a price for the service and they agree but from those who cannot pay cash I can receive payment in the form of hay. I collect data to identify success of this business and to have a base of my regular customers. I plan to show to farmers results for birth weight, growth rate and milk yield of the improved versus local breed cattle to promote the business, now I have done 50 inseminated cows and I am very satisfied with the results.

‘I got two improved breed calves after having two cows serviced. They were 13 kg more than local breed's birth weight. I decided to sell the male calf and keep the female as my priority is to increase milk yield and to improve the breed of milking cows. As the weight of the new born calve was 33 kg I sold it for 50 gel more than I could sell the local one for. Now the weight of 4 month old calf is 88 kg and the local breed is 58 kg. I used the service for all my cows this year’.

53,962 Gel as attributable income has been generated for 593 farmers locally so far, with 221 calves born in the first year from 261 services and 620 services performed this year with demand rising.

¹ Figures for female calves, the males are slightly lower. The programme is tracking the growth rates with a control group of twenty local calves against the data for a group of 10 male and 10 female improved breed calves. The birth weight of the improved breed calves is however based on a sample of 221, 109 male and 112 female.

The bull service is at the moment seen predominantly as an activity in the male sphere although women are closely involved in breeding on the level of usually being the first to know if the cow is on heat, in addition women farmers are clear in prioritizing female new borns to increase milk yield as their priority is selling milk and cheese. And women are beginning to use the service, to date 26 women have used breeding services for their cattle and 80 women received information training by a female breeding specialist concerning the reproduction cycle of cows; heat detection and natural and artificial insemination in breed improvement. The outreach of the services is allowing these women to make management decisions as highlighted by Jujuna Phertviashvili, of Gantiadi Village

‘I will only use the improved breed bull service from now on, as my new born improved breed calf looked more like a 1 month old at 40kg at birth. I have three more cows and unfortunately last year I could not crossbreed my other two cows with the improved bull because they had already been inseminated in the herd and their calves weighed only 20kg at birth. I have already used the service again this year and will keep my other cows from the herd bulls when they are on heat’.

NUTRITION

Previously the programme area offered very limited alternatives for affordable nutrition above the largely grass fed, hay and maize stover diet used for livestock based on the maximization of hay and pasture resources. Hay itself signifies a huge expense for farmers particularly in a bad year where untimely rain means a soaring hay price. In addition it is signifies huge labour with most harvesting done by hand, machinery services being carried out by old inefficient machines in short supply and which offer poor value for money². In addition where access to market for dairy products is limited or risky the farmers cannot justify the allocation of precious cash to nutritional inputs where the end point of the investment is unclear. The programme facilitated a local merchant Ednari Antadze to expand his operation which had started with the buying of brewer’s grains from the brewery and the transporting and selling of the grains in his village. Brewers Grains are an excellent energy rich by-product of the brewing process however in the winter they are not produced and cannot be kept for long therefore as well as expanding the merchant was also facilitated to produce an affordable combined feed product and helped to find ways of disseminating information about the benefits of these products in his marketing. He also buys and sells hay often taking payments in kind which makes up the third arm of his business. To date his feed is available in 31 communities with a value of 243,239 Gel values in sales which translates into 473,351 Gel of attributable income for 479 farmers of whom 85 are women. Indirectly however the numbers are much higher, three more brewers grains suppliers have started new businesses selling brewers grains in different parts of Georgia based on the model after consultation with Ednari, former larger scale farmer customers have begun buying direct from breweries and distributing to their smaller neighbours and the sale of combined feed in vet pharmacies is impacting many more.³ With a new mill and system for producing combined feed and large advance orders for the product the business is set to grow. Ednari Antadze explains his business below:

² The inefficiency and break downs of the old machines means that hay takes a long time to make is of poor quality (e.g. the old machines pick up a lot of dust and make loose bales) and are very expensive in terms of fuel to run.

³ These instances of crowding in have happened recently and precise numbers have not been ascertained yet.

‘I have been offering a new product-Combined Feed to my customers since March with a different distribution model, not providing door to door as with Brewers Grains but selling the product through villages’ shops, municipalities’ markets, vet pharmacies and animal nutrition shops, it is easier and more profitable for my business. I have orders for 10 000 sacks of combined food in Batumi and 1000-1500 sacks in Dmanisi municipality for November. I have also started selling BG’s to distributors from Samstkhe Javakheti, who are taking it back and selling it to farmers. I found a place for a storage building and bought a mill and will buy 100 tons of maize in autumn when it is cheaper to produce the product the whole year round, especially in the winter period when the sale of brewers grains stops and I can offer this food to the BGs’ customers as demand in winter for extra nutrition is high. I rented 70 hectares of pastures this year to produce more hay, I also purchased 50% more hay from the same customers to whom I sell BG’s. I purchased all necessary machinery equipment for hay processing. I sell this hay in Ajara and the Marneuli lowlands. The business plan done by First Consulting Company (a business consultancy facilitated by the programme) helps very much, I have increased the number of customers by 60% and am covering 18 villages directly.’

Ednari embeds advice and information as part of the service when distributing the products or trading in hay with his clients, about feed requirements throughout the year and which of his products will provide the best gains in milk and meat. Farmers use this information to manage their resources. Where for example the supply of BGs is limited it is prioritized for milking cows, increasing the milk yield of a local breed cow by an average of 1.5 litres per day. Farmers also state that they like the labels on the combined feed which are simple and informative telling them of the composition inside the sacks. They also like the quality control, in the past when buying bran as the main source of additional feed they state that the quality was so variable that it was sometimes little more than dust. As a customer Alexandre Bolkvadze illustrates below:

‘After the opening of cheese production enterprise in my village I have tried to pay attention to cattle feeding, I have found out about BGs benefits from the cheese producing company owner, I contacted Ednari and he began distributing to me and my neighbours. The BGs distributor then informed me that for another product, combined feed, he was not delivering to door but selling from the vet pharmacies, I go there three times per week and it is not problem for me to take it. I know from a small advert on the sack that the product contains: 40% bran, 40% maize, 15% barley and 5% oilcake, it is good that we know what the product is, before I used only bran and I was not sure of its quality. We have more choices and better quality now.’

Although only 85 SSLP women are recorded as are purchasing nutritional input for their cattle with a value of 28,204 GEL the figure is likely much higher as whilst filling data women generally put a male name as the family name and their husbands' mobile phone numbers, because most women do not have mobile phones (a factor across all interventions). As the brewers grains distribution is door to door it allows women a high degree of access to information and control over whether to buy or not, and whether to feed their cattle with BGs or combined food. As with animal health and breeding they are the first to see the benefits of feeding these products to the cattle as explained by Natel Iremadze, a customer below:

‘I increased my income from milk after I gave Brewer’s Grains to my cows. Each cow now produces 2 litres more milk/day. 2 more litres in winter, at winter prices is an additional 2 GEL for me per day.’

INFORMATION

The only source of information in the programme area on programme inception was a local newspaper with a circulation of 150 copies available by subscription only, produced once a month, ceasing production over the summer vacation and with no agricultural content. The main sources of information were from neighbours and friends often passed through informal male gatherings the 'birjas', or from very general items related to agriculture on the main TV news channels.

The programme facilitated the newspaper and there is now a circulation of 1000 to date of which 351 are being sold in the selling points and 649 are sold by subscription and an estimated readership of 3,403 of whom 1192 are women. Farmers now have access to agricultural information which includes information about new laws, technical advice and market prices available through subscription and through selling points in the villages as well as main towns. As a reader Qetino Bekauri highlights below:

'The local news and the troubles of local farmers are not a priority for television. I have never seen any programs about veterinary, breeds of cattle, diseases; however, this information has now appeared in the local newspaper.'

The programme knows that information is passed between people and information applied and services used due to the information in the newspaper however the extent and nature of this spread of information beyond the concrete figures will be ascertained in a further study this autumn.

Content was shaped according to the priorities identified of a rural audience by an initial customer survey. Subsequent surveys have shown that 81% in Dmanisi, 71% in Tsalka and 50% in Tetrtskaro municipalities think that the newspaper Trialetis Express is a way to solve information gaps. Farmers have remembered articles concerning new born improved breed calves and used the same bull service. Local and central government representatives have used the newspaper to solve the problems that have arisen related to agricultural policies.

The low levels of trust and confidence in what was previously on offer and the reliance on informal information sources and hearsay has changed to increased interest and trust towards the information provided in the local newspaper bolstered by the provision of articles from professional sources such as articles from the veterinary input supply company.

There has been a focus on articles targeted at women who are after all the main point of contact with the cattle. Women like to read about milking procedures and hygiene rules. They like stories profiling women as they can copy them. Now that service provision in breeding, nutrition and veterinary services are available more widespread coverage in the area they can read about and then apply the means to improve livestock husbandry. The newspaper is also distributed through public schools, where teachers are the main source of information for village women. Information poverty has always been more severe for women as they do not have the same culture as men of gathering in public on the street to chat. This however is being addressed by the rural selling points of the newspaper which give women with limited mobility access to the newspaper as explained by Nazi Abashidze a female reader:

‘I see in the newspaper that there are a lot of interesting topics for women, I like to read about milking procedures, hygiene rules, and also women’s profiles in agriculture because it works better to copy successful models and use the same services. For me it is important that I can now buy the newspaper in my village shop as I do not go out of the village. I read the information on the governmental programmes. Sometimes TV channels cannot report on these programmes in-depth’.

The changes have also spread beyond the newspaper itself. A former journalist of the newspaper decided to establish her own newspaper as she saw profitability of the business and demand from rural areas, copying the model and including 2 pages of agricultural information, distributing 1200 subscription copies a month and a the local regional website in conjunction with the newspaper has started including agricultural content and a section ‘what people think’ copied from the newspaper which showcases the opinions and concerns of local rural people.

THE BUSINESS PERSPECTIVE

The longevity and growth of the impacts generated depend on the businesses involved and on their continued commitment and understanding of how to grow their businesses in the rural environment. Without programme investment in these businesses they would have been unable to enter the thin and risky markets characterized by the programme area, the returns on investment calculated for the businesses will generally be negative until three years of running time which provides an indication of how prohibitive investment would be without programmes facilitation which includes a co-investment mechanism. The businesses supported by the programme have shown increased potential for business profitability through various improvements and innovations they have made to their business practices.

Clients formerly unaware of the value of forward projections, business planning, marketing and record keeping have moved to planned and organized businesses practices, improving their understanding of market and their business proficiency. Facilitation has including business support services and consultancy. The veterinary input supplier Roki Ltd entered a previously unknown market based on customer surveys and the development of an understanding of the market potential and the vet pharmacies to which it is linked keep data bases which allow the company to track disease outbreaks and successful treatment which regulates the supply and choice of drugs and information provision. Bull owners are now understanding the importance of charging a fee (showing the value of the service) and keeping records to improve their service. The feed supplier has understood the value of diversification for cash flow across the year, information provision as a means to improve sales and the distribution networks for bulk sales and the newspaper felt confident enough to branch into selling points from the subscription only model from the strength of customer feedback based on the improved content, design and value for money.

DEVELOPING MARKET ACCESS FOR FARMERS IN THE DAIRY AND MEAT SECTORS

Cheese is made in many households by women and beyond what is required for the household is usually sold to intermediaries at the front gate. Where an enterprise which collects liquid milk is present in a village women prefer to sell liquid milk as opposed to cheese as it considerably reduces their labour, saving their time and energy for other income generating purposes, household and family welfare related

tasks or leisure. They also save on the cost of wood or gas for heating milk and are saved the worry of making a sale in the absence of storage facilities. Food safety and hygiene has become the pivotal issue affecting the dairy industry in recent years. Despite two major players in the dairy industry who still obtain their raw milk from milk collection centres in villages rather than large farms, most dairy products are produced either at the household or micro enterprise level and are sold in the network of markets and small mini markets in towns and cities supplied by intermediaries who buy from the farm or by women farmers themselves who when located in less remote areas travel to urban markets on mini buses with their produce. The consumer market however has changed in recent years, supermarkets are increasingly being established outside of Tbilisi and customers expect ‘quality’⁴ from the packaged products which are sold at a premium from within them, expecting them to be safe to eat.

The food safety and hygiene code of Georgia lacks outreach and is enforced patchily however as Georgia moves towards partnership agreement with the EU will only gain in importance. Consumer groups are also gaining in strength and news items on food poisoning incidents⁵ and a consumer programme which tests food products in the supermarket at random are adding to public awareness and governmental and retail responsibility.

The programme facilitates rural businesses supplied by small farmers who offer the best bet in terms of being able to develop successful business models with potential for considerable expansion. The programme works to overcome key constraints to increasing their efficiency and ensure that they are no longer restricted in growth and in danger of being closed down or losing market access through being unable to make the investments or find the technical know-how to enable them to comply with food safety and hygiene requirements. The programme has worked hard on developing food safety and hygiene consultancy services which are willing to develop regionally appropriate services with information that is targeted to rural dairy businesses and their women milk suppliers. With the result that farmers who supply these enterprises with milk and who have a knowledge of clean and safe milking practices and who are better linked to the services noted above can invest in their livestock’s productivity and make guaranteed sales of their higher quality milk to more efficient, productive and secure local businesses.

TWO CHEESE FACTORIES

The programme targets medium tier dairy enterprises with access to a good supply of milk and strong markets. Two relatively mature interventions are BMB Ltd and Sakdrioni with 5t and 2.5t of milk respectively per day collected in peak periods and with markets in Tbilisi and Batumi. One of the key factors for obtaining a regular supply of milk from such a fragmented supply base are strong community and social links without which businesses will fail. The programme has clearly noted that start up dairy businesses without these links routinely fail to be able to obtain milk. From the facilitation of these two dairy businesses 385,054 Gel in additional attributable income has been generated for 1,317 farmers to date.

⁴ When broken down ‘quality’ covers, being new and not out of date, having been stored properly, being clean and being safe to eat.

⁵ Stories of food poisoning incidents have only become news worthy in recent years.

For Sakdrioni uncompliant, dirty and unsafe places for processing large amounts of milk, the use of bath tubs and old washing machines for processing and storage meant that Sakdrioni was in danger of eventual closure or being gradually barred from the market due to a serious un-compliance with FS and H and an inability to supply an appropriate product. With the help of programme facilitated FS and H, environmental and business consultancy, a custom premises was designed, built and equipped to meet the specifications and requirements of a village based cheese making enterprise.

Clean, high quality⁶ milk is fundamental to the success of a dairy business seeking to break into the burgeoning market where compliant supply and production technology increasingly matter. A fundamental problem of dairy programming hitherto in Georgia has been the limited success in tackling the problem at source i.e. with the women who milk the cows. This was due mostly to barriers to surrounding women's access to information. Where milk is sold to a milk collection centre or enterprise men usually become the point of liaison for meeting and payment with the MCC and information is passed to them and then second hand at best to the women of the household. Women have simply not had access to information concerning milking and hygiene as highlighted below by a female worker at the Sakdrioni factory and Mariam Gabadze a milk supplier:

‘It was something new even for me and our suppliers, that apparently you should not bring milk to the enterprise with open-top vessel, because it allows contamination. We know how to make cheese, but we don't know what a milk safety and quality is. I have been trained well in the issues of hygiene now, and once a month I will meet with the people who bring milk to me daily; and I will give them new piece of information.’

‘I happened to do wrong things in case of Mastitis – I would still use the milk, and I did not even know that you should put the first streams of milk in a dark vessel in order to observe milk. And in fact my cows often have Mastitis.’

Tailored food safety and hygiene trainings adapted to the village context are integral to ensuring that the milk quality issue addresses this fundamental issue. The trainings are provided in Azeri and Armenian as well as Georgian, an original assumption that Russian as a lingua franca did not hold true in the villages. 32 staff from cheese production enterprises have received trainings on FS& H rules and procedures and 98 female milk suppliers have been trained. ‘Active’ women are selected for the trainings who pass on information to their friends and neighbours. In addition to the Tbilisi based consultant, 2 local consultants (1 Georgian and 1 Azeri) have been trained to provide local trainings and be on call for advice and recommendations. The enterprise itself is thus now understands the value of quality milk and how to ensure it and are enabled to control incoming milk with the aid of a Lactoscan⁷, record keeping and the women suppliers knowing how to control the quality of their milk through simple measures.

⁶ Here this means milk that has not been stripped of its fat content, has low bacteria counts is free of foreign bodies and has no water added.

⁷ A machine which analyses a sample of the milk and detects for example if water has been added and fat content.

392 female milk suppliers now have stable and improved access to a market for their milk. This figure shows those who use their own name rather than the male name for the household and it seems to be an indication of greater control over household income⁸. However as milkers and cheese producers all women in participating households benefit. The portrait of this female supplier is of a woman up to 40 years of age who is milking and selling milk and has a control over the money this brings in. She no longer makes cheese for sale, making cheese needs time and wood, which is hard to collect so she has more free time due to selling milk; she saves one hour in the morning and one hour in the evening which is used for house work and gardening, chatting with neighbours, watching TV and going to bed earlier. When there is more than ten litres of milk and the cheese factory further than 150m away the man of the house takes the milk informed of the price by the woman.

A clear indication of the effect on the milk with an immediate economic benefit to the enterprise has been that where before they needed from 9 litres of milk to produce a kilo of cheese the enterprise now needs 7. The enterprise also now sells its cheese for one gel above market price at 10.5 GEL/kg as market vendors and consumers have noticed the lack of bad smell, the clean taste and the longevity of its life compared to other cheese on the market. The enterprise has also provided 2 new full time jobs for men and 2 new full time jobs places generated for women. For the suppliers it means access to a more stable income throughout the year and a better price of more than 0.05 Gel per litre due to the improved quality. The enterprise also invested in equipment to produce additional products, cottage cheese, butter, and smoked cheese diversifying income streams. Presently the enterprise in summer takes the entire milk of three villages and in winter eight, currently building a storage facility Sakdrioni will grow to cover more. For all suppliers in the longer term stability and profitability incentivize investment in what is now a more attractive option particularly with veterinary, breeding and nutrition services available locally and some are buying more milking cows or keeping more calves. Guliko Bolkvadze a milk supplier puts it succinctly:

‘Before I had a financial problems and I had to sell a cow. Currently I have 2 cows and I am going to buy one more because I know that I can always sell the milk’.

GAINING A Foothold in Meat: Shulaveri Slaughterhouse

The meat market system in Georgia is complex and opaque with a dense informal network of interests, markets and intermediaries. In recent years slaughterhouses became an investment of choice for powerful well connected businessmen seeking and able to arrange control of large segments of the market. In 2011 laws introduced overnight by the government in favour of two large new and well connected slaughterhouses barred for a time any meat except theirs from entering Tbilisi which led to a huge overnight increase in the price of beef. In addition to these, each town has scores of currently unregulated meat shops and road side butchers. Under the previous administration enforcement by the National Food Agency had begun to check and fine these operations enforcing the law which states that backyard

⁸ This is an assumption based on research the programme has carried out to date, however the results of a large women’s economic empowerment survey are being processed and seem to verify this assumption.

slaughter for commercial enterprises is illegal. This meant that meat shop owners had to use a slaughter house and have a valid certificate for their meat and so compliant local slaughterhouses benefitted. However with the change in government in October 2012 regional enforcement once again weakened and the meat shops are once again slaughtering themselves often in full view of the street. In the current environment of patchy governance surrounding enforcement of food safety and hygiene and other regulations, where money and connections have sway and the roadside butchers operate unregulated, the small to medium enterprise suffers. Ironically as SME's are so few they attract the full weight of the limited outreach of enforcement and taxation and therefore must pay taxes and invest in equipment, premises and personnel that allow them to comply with all requirements.

Shula slaughterhouse operated against these odds from day 1. Beginning operations at the advent of the new meat ruling in 2011 the programme facilitated the enterprise to become food safety and hygiene and environmentally complaint with veterinary inspection, laboratory space, allocated zones, processing and waste management systems and improved efficiency and welfare in the slaughtering process. Once operations commenced it served the local meat shop owners slaughtering and processing up to 8 heads of cows and buffalos a day salting and selling the hides to a local leather producing factory which covered the running costs of the abattoir. The enterprise was tailored to local needs and could slaughter to order and offer lower prices than the larger slaughterhouses operating at a huge loss. 1, 100 farmers benefited during this period of operations with 98, 8651 gel generated as attributable income. However two factors killed Shula's service model. The opening of a large local slaughterhouse by a powerful local player who controlled all meat shop interests locally and the relaxation in enforcement which allowed back yard slaughtering to recommence. Squeezed by powerful interests who brooked no legitimate competition from above and by scores of local roadside butchers operating under the radar from below who no longer needed to use the service, survival became impossible.

The owner then came to the programme with the proposition for a new working model. With the help of a business consultant the client changed to a business model focussed on sourcing direct from farmers and selling the processed meat in compliant own brand meat shops branded 'Shula's Meat Products'. Local famers benefit from vastly reduced transaction costs and losses from transportation to market, losses in weight from walking cattle and opportunity costs. Shula benefits from begin able to control the value chain. As the owner Zaza Chokhonelidze explains below:

'The slaughterhouse fully meets Food Safety Standards. Two years of experience of working in this field has assured me that my business cannot solely depend on cattle brought to me by meat intermediaries. I have made the decision to purchase cattle from farmers myself, slaughter them and distribute meat at my meat shops which I will open in Marneuli, Bolnisi and Dmanisi. It will offer the farmers another choice for sale besides the livestock market and traders who are coming to their villages from time to time. Working with me the farmers will sell from their door and not have to take them to market and my transport will be free and I will offer a better price per kilo. My business is moving forward, I have had excellent business consultancy and I am sure of my plans.'

ADDRESSING COMMUNITY CONCERNS: FACILITATION IN GOVERNANCE

Although seemingly an odd pairing two main issues severely limiting the livestock market system and the lives of small livestock farmers are addressed by working with various levels of government, with local government as the focal point: the first being the weaknesses in the official systems surrounding animal disease notification and control and the second the lack of access for women to decision making at the community and municipal level.

ANIMAL DISEASE NOTIFICATION AND CONTROL

One of the greatest risk to the farmer is livestock disease. With few livestock and no form of insurance the illness or death of even one animal can have a disastrous impact on a household. In the programme area cattle zoonoses⁹ including anthrax and brucellosis are endemic as are other main disease such as foot and mouth. Transhumance¹⁰ is a major part of livestock system for sheep and to a lesser extent cattle in Georgia with animals moving to the higher pastures from low land grazing in winter. Approximately 300,000 animals move twice, up and down on long established routes in spring and early autumn. Such a confluence of animals is of course conducive to the spread of disease. However in recent years government vaccination has been patchy, sporadic or non-existent, public information including public health warnings lacking and diagnosis and treatment procedures ill resourced, stretched and characterized by a lack of transparency. A small number of people die each year of anthrax in the Kvemo Kartli programme area and animals are incorrectly disposed of, buried in commonly used land or near water courses in plots which are unmarked. The programme maintains a database of official figures and locations of infection based on laboratory tests provided by the National Food Agency (NFA) and cases confirmed by laboratory tests or diagnosed only by symptoms by a network of private vets, clearly distinguishing between each to monitor outbreaks and providing an alternative source of information with a different perspective of scale than the government figures alone.

An Advisory Committee was established by the programme which was originally intended to provide external accountability to the programme but has in fact resulted in a efficacious forum for the meeting of private and public sector actors which allows for the development of linkages and the spread of information between key players who would not normally meet. The main topics of discussion have surrounded the Animal Movement Route (AMR) on which the animals travel which runs through all the programme municipalities and which has been in political stalemate for years and is of particular concern. Key members of national government ministries and agencies have attended the four meetings held thus far with tangible results in the form two concrete initiatives to date one in the form of improved information being more widely disseminated on the government anthrax and FMD vaccination campaign and one the commissioning of a feasibility study of the AMR the precursor to the development of a management plan. The Governor of Kvemo Kartli comments on the outcome of one of the meetings below:

⁹ Zoonoses: diseases that can be transmitted from animals to humans

¹⁰ Transhumance: the seasonal movement of people with their livestock between fixed summer and winter pastures.

‘I have not had such type of meeting during the four years, since I was appointed as the governor of Kvemo Kartli Region; normally we react to find a solution of already occurred incidents. I am glad that in this case we deal with prevention which will significantly simplify damages; I would personally involve parliamentary representatives of this region in adoption of legislative amendment on the Livestock Movement route.’

Local municipalities have been unclear of their role and remit in disaster risk mitigation which includes animal disease control and quarantine. Three municipal DRR Working Groups have been established in each municipality for defining and strengthening their role of whom 28% are female members. To date 66 village representatives have been trained by the groups, 15 750 SSLP HH’s have received information and increased awareness of the national vaccination campaign and measures are being put in place for managing the animal movement route through monitoring and patrol during the livestock migration period.

Political instability is a high risk for the programme as a whole and its effect is doubly clear in these interventions where regular changes in personnel have often brought a hiatus in activities. However where these changes have worked the efficacy of the local government is appreciable. Once municipality has added a land use function to its DRR WG as explained by the he Head of the Dmanisi DRR WG Gogi Barbakadze below:

‘In 2013 Dmanisi municipality revitalized the DRR WG by adding the new members and functions to it. Now we are focussing not only on Animal Disease Control and Disaster Risk Reduction but also on target use of agricultural land. Municipal DRR WG will identify non-privatized, leased pasturelands and other types of state/municipal lands for their effective and target usage. Very soon will enter into force a new law on self-government and we will get the right to manage the municipal lands. At this time the municipality does not have any data on land and its usage. Almost every day we receive land-related complaints from our farmers we have to deal with. The municipality hasn’t had even a proper car to go to high mountains for identification and monitoring pasturelands. So after this co-investment we will be able to deal with municipal land related problems. Also DRR WG will set up a base for future when the Law returns land to municipal ownership.’

WOMEN’S ACCESS TO DECISION MAKING

In the initial programme surveys an issue which came up repeatedly was the disenfranchisement of women in the public sphere. Literally feeling as if it was not their concern to discuss or even know about issues of concern to the community or municipality they were not invited or encouraged to join the community meetings held by village representatives and did not feel that they had a legitimate right to physical access to the local government building and what services or information were available. No overt effort was made on behalf of the municipality to cater in any way to rural women’s needs or include them in public life despite the gender law enacted in 2010 which decreed that all local governments should have in place a set of gender sensitive measures. The programme exploited this fact and began a three pronged intervention focused on gender awareness at the municipal management level, on the development of simple guidelines distilled from the law for the training of village representatives to ensure the inclusion of women in community decision making and the creation of Women’s Rooms in the

municipal buildings, women friendly resource and information spaces for women and children with internet, tea and coffee, library, trained staff and a children's corner.

Initially subject to some measure of scepticism three Women's Rooms open to all comers began functioning co funded by local government in February, 2013 and have served 792 people to date of whom 487 have been women and 305 men. The women using the room come for diverse reasons, to use the internet, the library, to have consultations and to leave children there while they undertake other business which they could not do before with the children with them. Information sources are very scarce and the internet access is highly prized, used even by local teachers as a resource. The room is used as a venue for meeting and classes. The WR staff member carries out a signposting service to other local government departments or information but also offers input on topics surrounding legal issues of land, divorce, or other matters such as health or the need for help as in the case of Nani Pharjveliani states below:

'I needed 4, 000€ in order to take my child to Germany, at one of the clinics for treatment. My family did not have this amount of money and I did not know where to go and to whom to ask for help. My friend told me about the Women's Room and suggested me to go there and find out if I could have a help from the municipality self-governance budget. I faced a warm atmosphere at the Women's Room; people there understood my problem and planned a charity concert. The self-governance budget allocated funds as well and now my child is healthy. It is good that this kind of people work at the Women's Room. They organized another charity concert for children suffering from leukaemia. I am involved in this activity as well and I support them with a great pleasure.'

The children's corner is also now being utilized as a crèche for women working in municipality building. Village representatives also use the rooms as a hub. Their reaction on receiving training has been highly positive and women's participation at community meetings has noticeably increased, 155 women have participated in Dmanisi municipality since the trainings began from 50 previously. As Village Rep Tamaz Chochishvili illustrates below:

'Representatives of villages have received manuals in which are provided our duties concerning women's participation during the meetings considering village issues. Men and women went through the manual in order to identify their roles in the development of the village. 15 women attended the last meeting. 3 of them have united in order to follow the issues considered at the meeting. They also now participate in Sakrebulo (municipal committee) meetings.'

The rooms are attracting national parliamentary attention at a time when a new law devolving more power to local governments is due to come into force and the government is looking for successful models to promote throughout Georgia. The activities above are seen as a potentially replicable and practical model which tackles an issue; gender; which one politician stated has had *'more talked about but less done than any other in Georgia.'*