

ALLIANCES  
LESSER  
CAUCASUS  
PROGRAMME

SERVING THE RURAL MARKET:  
QUALITY DEVELOPMENT AND PRODUCT DELIVERY OF MEDIA TO A NON URBAN  
AUDIENCE

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CASE STUDY

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### SERVING THE RURAL MARKET: QUALITY DEVELOPMENT AND PRODUCT DELIVERY OF MEDIA TO A NON URBAN AUDIENCE

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#### INTRODUCTION: INFORMATION IN ALLIANCES

Paucity of information, poor quality information and absence of information are constraints running through each intervention the Alliances programme addresses. The delivery of appropriate information to the target audience is one of the key constraints addressed in every intervention and is essential for intervention success. The main sources of agricultural information are often 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. 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. It was natural therefore for Alliances to examine entry points in the media sector.

Following the facilitation of two regional newspapers one in Alliances Samstkhe Javakheti in 2008 and one in Alliances Kvemo Kartli with facilitation starting in 2011, the low levels of trust and confidence in what was previously on offer in those regions and the reliance on informal information sources and hearsay has changed to increased interest and trust towards the information provided. Focus on articles and distribution<sup>1</sup> targeted at women milk suppliers who are the main point of contact with cattle have led to copying and use of the service provision in breeding, nutrition and veterinary services. The use of these services made available in the region through programme intervention bears out the developing synergy between supporting functions, market access and rules under the three programme outcomes respectively. Bolstered by proof of the rural market for agricultural information and seeking wider impact, the programme also began the facilitation of a national TV channel, targeting their weekly agricultural magazine programme in early summer 2013.

The following case study profiles the facilitation by Alliances KK of a local newspaper *Trialitis Expressi* and a national TV channel broadcasting an agricultural magazine programme *Chveni Ferma*. The original Alliances facilitation from 2008 of the *Southern Gates* newspaper was presented in a case study: *Alliances SJ Mini Case Study: Southern Gates Newspaper Product Diversification and Commercialization in a Non Commercial World* at the M4P Hub Conference held in Brighton in November 2011.<sup>2</sup>

#### WHO IS THE ALLIANCES PROGRAMME

From March 1<sup>st</sup> 2014 the existing Alliances programmes were merged into the **Alliances Lesser Caucasus Programme**, including an expanded area in Kvemo Kartli and the Autonomous Region of Ajara and operating until the end of February 2019<sup>3</sup>. The Swiss Cooperation funded Mercy Corps Georgia implemented Alliances programmes began operations in 2008 with Alliances Samstkhe Javakheti, based on the Making Markets Work for the Poor approach (M4P), working with key market players in the livestock sector with a target group of small scale livestock producers. It then in

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<sup>1</sup> E.g Articles on food safety and hygiene in milking and cheese production and the distribution of newspapers through public schools, where teachers are the main source of information for village women.

<sup>2</sup> A summary is available in the proceedings on P29-30 and the case study is available on <http://www.allianceskk.ge/index.php/en/downloads.html>

<sup>3</sup> The target group are Small Scale Livestock Producers who own up to ten or fewer breeding cows. This figure was extended from the original 5 or fewer breeding cows to cover the variance across the different agro ecological zones of the new programme region as well as the impact of the programmes and natural patterns of growth witnessed since the programme commenced in 2008.

2011 expanded into three municipalities of Kvemo Kartli Region with Alliances Kvemo Kartli (2011-February 2014). Both programmes exceeded their targets in quality access for rural women and men to key services such as veterinary medicines and advice, breeding, nutrition, information and finance and in improved and sustainable access to markets for the sale of dairy, meat and wool to robust food safety and hygiene compliant businesses. Evidence of systemic change is now being seen in supporting functions in nutrition and veterinary input supply and rules; concerning gender in local government, to date.

**TRIALETIS EXPRESI NEWSPAPER AND TV PROGRAMME CHVENI FERMA:**

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**COUNTRY:** Georgia (Kvemo Kartli Region)  
**SECTOR/S:** Beef & Dairy & Wool  
**TARGET GROUP:** Small-Scale Livestock Producers (SSLPs: 5 or fewer breeding female cows)  
**NUMBER OF ENTERPRISES SUPPORTED:** 2

**INTERVENTION 1:** Facilitation of research, development, launch and marketing of an agricultural supplement in an existing local newspaper aimed at reaching farmers with information and articles.

**INTERVENTION 2:** Facilitation with TV programme *Chveni Ferma* (Our Farm) to improve content and linkages to appropriate content providers in particular regular Food Safety & Hygiene slots and advertising of the programme in Tsalka, Dmanisi and Tetrtskaro municipalities.

**TOTAL COST OF INTERVENTIONS:**

Intervention 1: Phase 1 - \$8,362 with 32 % co-investment from partner; Phase2 - \$13, 226 with 30% co-investment from partner.

Intervention 2: \$66, 646 with 70% co-investment from partner.

**IMPACT TO DATE<sup>4</sup>:** The newspaper *Trialetis Expressi* intervention began in January, 2012. Two years from the date of the intervention from a circulation of 150 copies which was comprised of four badly printed pages produced quarterly and sold only through subscription, there is now a circulation of 1200 with a twelve page copy produced every month, 35 %<sup>5</sup> of which are being sold in rural selling points. There is an estimated readership of around 4,000<sup>6</sup> of whom an estimated 43% are women. Coverage has increased from one to three municipalities and the newspaper is available in Georgian, Armenian and Azeri languages to better serve the ethnically diverse market.

Economic impact on the income of SSLPs is difficult to calculate, but 84 % of farmer readers who were surveyed said they had adopted a new practice and 23% purchased a new input and services as a result of reading the *Fermeri* supplement. 53% felt that they are in a stronger bargaining position with buyers since they have had access to the information contained in the supplement, 51% felt more authority with/knowledge to offer other farmers through informing them of market prices or advice on agriculture. 2 (2.36) additional adult members borrowed the newspaper from a subscriber/buyer. Therefore per one copy 6 people receive information from the newspaper.

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<sup>4</sup> Here reported to the end of the phase February 28<sup>th</sup> 2014.

<sup>5</sup> 351 of which are being sold in the selling points and 649 are sold by subscription

<sup>6</sup> See paragraph below. The recent impact survey (November 2013) which had a statistically significant results found that 3(2.61) additional people read the newspaper for each buyer or subscriber. A further 2 (2.36) people receive information given to them from someone who has read the newspaper. Information from the newspaper is therefore reaching up to 6000 people at the peak circulation to date of 1000 copies.

6800 farming HH has consumed regular quality agri information through national TV programme *Chveni Ferma*. Eight months since the facilitation of Channel 1 and their TV programme *Chveni Ferma* began, in June, 2013, seven agri-business enterprises facilitated by Alliances KK have been featured in the programme with a specific focus on Food Safety and Hygiene. The programme has a hotline, the number of which is shown at the end of every programme. Before facilitation hotline calls per episode were on average 30, now there are an average of 90 and following the first episode in October where a problematic issue was broached for the first time (programmes to date have focussed on being overwhelmingly positive and uncontroversial) 150 farmers called in. The enterprises featured have reported significant volumes of calls from buyers following the episodes emphasising their liking of the food safety and hygiene controls and therefore endorsement of the quality of the product. The programme is now also influencing the official sphere. The National Food Agency is responsible for all veterinary and phyto sanitary controls over livestock value chains but has limited and patchy outreach which includes a weak connection between its field officers to the national office resulting in poor information flows, extension and remit. Following recent programming showing how lapses in food safety and hygiene controls have been effecting the businesses portrayed<sup>7</sup>, the central authority has contacted the business shown and instructed its field officers to further investigate and deal with violations. New management have recently made cuts in programming in the channel, for underperforming programmes and those of limited popularity and quality and *Chveni Fermeri* has survived unscathed both in time slot and frequency, due to its improved content (which elicited official praise from the MOA of Georgia) and improved ratings. The annual average monthly viewing figure pre intervention was 15,066 and the eleven month (intervention running time) average monthly viewing figure of 23,698 seems to indicate a significant increase.<sup>8</sup> In terms of rural viewing an impact assessment at the seven month mark noted a 22% increase in viewing of the programme from the baseline.<sup>9</sup>

### THE LOGIC BEHIND THE INTERVENTIONS

In 2011 when the Alliances programmes reviewed their facilitation with the newspaper *Southern Gates* in Samstke Javakheti<sup>10</sup> from 2008, the emphasis was on developing ‘commercialization in a non commercial world’ reflecting the long history since the fall of the Soviet Union of government, oligarchs, bilateral donors and NGOs funding Newspapers, TV and radio resulting in poor attention being paid to the business side of media i.e. profitability and commercialization and a subsequent lack of motivation to expand readership into rural areas where 55% of the population reside. This untapped market was therefore unable to access important information on farming such as new technologies, market prices and where to find inputs and services. This in turn had a knock on effect on businesses being held back and disadvantageous transactions for intermediaries and farmers reliant on hearsay. The facilitation successfully improved appropriate content and vastly improved

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<sup>7</sup> E.g. Official vets signing inspection certificates for cattle but not actually inspecting them.

<sup>8</sup> Looking at ratings themselves are slightly problematic as set top boxes are only placed in urban centres of over 40,000 inhabitants and therefore record the urban viewing figures.

<sup>9</sup> From 8% to 30%

<sup>10</sup> Stewart, T., Bradbury, H. & Lomidze, N. (2011) *Alliances SJ Mini Case Study: Southern Gates Newspaper Product Diversification and Commercialization in a Non Commercial World*. Presented at the M4P Hub Conference Brighton November 2011. For more information see the [M4P Hub Conference Proceedings](#).

circulation with survey results showing the application of knowledge from technical advice to new technologies and the whereabouts of input suppliers, contained in the newspaper for feeding into improved livestock husbandry and agricultural practices. However the newspaper did not adopt a commercial sales model and remained a subscription only newspaper and continued to derive a significant proportion of its funding from donors. In fact the improvement in the quality and relevance of the newspaper led it to become increasingly attractive to donors and funding sources, which in a donor rich environment it could be argued is a partially sustainable outcome.

Subsequent facilitation in *Trialetis Expressi* newspaper and *Chveni Ferma* a weekly agricultural magazine programme on a public national television channel, have revealed continued distortion through funding, a lack of commercialization and understanding of the potential to be found in the large rural market and perhaps most significantly a deep urban and rural divide, a public misperception of the fundamentals of rural livelihoods and small rural business and a complete inability on behalf of the media products on offer to serve the needs of the rural population. In the newspapers any agricultural content tends to focus on items from the Ministry of Agriculture mostly relating to laws and on TV there was almost no quality agricultural programming on local, regional and rural issues with only short items included in the daily news, relating to reports on activities of the MOA. Rural men and women, farmers and SME's are still living in an information vacuum underserved by media. The intervention logic therefore was to facilitate both entities to develop the potential of this untapped market through the delivery of tailored, quality products which would serve the needs of the rural resident and contribute to business sustainability.

In September 2011 the Editor and Owner of the only newspaper in the programme area *Trialetis Expressi*, Tsalka, met with the programme proposing that the programme fund her printing costs a model used before with other donors. The newspaper had no agricultural content; however she did show a real desire to improve her newspaper. The programme therefore proposed a development model similar to that which had been tried and tested by Alliances in SJ, i.e. to develop specific quality rural content in the newspaper and furthermore to improve the sales model from subscription to sales points in remote rural locations.

In June 2013 seeking wider impact, Alliances approached Public Broadcaster #1 a national channel producing the only agricultural programme on TV *Chveni Ferma* a half hour agricultural magazine programme which was started through funding from SDC, who funded a run of 7 months of weekly programmes. The programme continued following the end of the funding however its popularity in and relevance to rural audiences was very limited focusing mainly on large farmers and new technology, with no emphasis on the private sector, or SME's and issues of real note such as those related to animal disease, access to pasture or Food Safety and Hygiene laws. Alliances proposed the development of improved content which would make use of the businesses facilitated by Alliances and to develop and include regular food safety and hygiene slots. As a publicly funded entity the profitability of the programme per se would not be improved, however improved ratings would lead to a stronger position for petitioning for the allocation of a larger percentage of the broadcasting budget. In March, 2014 Public Broadcaster Channel 1 management was changed and a number of TV programmes were cancelled due to poor content. However *Chveni Ferma's* contract was extended due to improved content and quality which had even resulted in a letter of thanks from the Ministry of Agriculture of Georgia due to quality reporting of agricultural themes. The budget of *Chveni Ferma* has not however been increased due apparently to financial problems at the station; nevertheless *Chveni Ferma* is still operational and has retained the same broadcasting slot and frequency.

### THE UNDERLYING MARKET CONSTRAINTS AND CONSEQUENCES IN GENERAL

There is still as in 2011 a climate of external support<sup>11</sup> from donors, government and oligarchs to regional and national media in Georgia, one which has become perhaps less pronounced at a national level as changes in government have resulted in greater independence in TV in particular and greater emphasis on commercialization, however regional level donor support to news agencies and TV continues unabated<sup>12</sup>.

Information provision in rural areas however remains dire, complicated by an urban construct of rural life that either highlights the paucity of the farmer's skills and knowledge on the one hand or enshrines them as upholders of national and cultural values to be abstractly preserved on the other, neither of which serve the modern rural resident or small and medium rural enterprises trying to survive as suppliers, producers and citizens with the normal needs and requirements for public goods and services in a small and rapidly changing country.

Farmers have in general no formal access to information on market prices, improved agricultural technology or where they can buy inputs and services. This information is mostly obtained through other farmers and friends, which is not deemed very reliable and in the case of market prices cannot be verified. According to the Focus Group Survey of the programme area which was carried April-June, 2011, 50% of male and 30% of female respondents agreed that their main problems in accessing information were: a lack of newspapers and timely information regarding agricultural issues. Information obtained from other farmers and the TV (the news) were considered to be the most important information sources for farming techniques and market prices for cattle, cheese and dairy products, however, the reliability of these sources was not rated highly by farmers.

### THE NEWSPAPER TRIALETIS EXPRESI

*Trialetis Expressi* had a circulation of a four page edition of 150 copies, available by subscription and nominally produced once a month, ceasing production over the summer vacation and with no agricultural content. Revenues of the newspaper were generated by subscription through mainly public entities such as schools and government offices and grants from donors for printing costs to cover the inclusion of specific content. Their business model was not sustainable, especially given that the availability of donor funding was in decline, given that there were fewer donor funded projects in the area and the editor appreciated that they should be looking towards diversifying their income for the longer term viability of the product.

### MARKET WEAKNESSES OF TRIALETIS EXPRESI

- ❖ Low penetration of the rural market: *Trialetis Expressi* covered 45 villages in Tsalka, however, during the focus group survey it became apparent that farmers in rural areas did not receive information through the newspaper, with no mention of it at all. Public officials were the main subscribers of the newspaper.

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<sup>11</sup> This can include activities such as donors buying broadcasting time for several months, to broadcast programmes or stories prepared on some topics. Due to not developing a commercial model, after finishing such projects media organizations do not continue to report on these issues, hoping for more funds from other donor organizations as their own resources are insufficient.

<sup>12</sup> E.g. A local TV station received a grant from USAID for about 28,000 USD to prepare TV programmes on local self-government issues, buying broadcasting time for 11 months, following this the TV programme stopped.



## ALLIANCES LESSER CAUCASUS PROGRAMME CASE STUDY

- ❖ Lack of market relevant content: The newspaper was primarily urban centric with nothing in it for rural residents; i.e. nothing on farming. When articles on farming did appear they were written and paid for by donor-funded projects, with agricultural content ceasing with the funding.
- ❖ Lack of knowledge of commercial advertising: No commercial advertising was carried out in the newspaper. The newspaper had survived for 9 years on subsidies from the local budget and donors with 80% of revenue coming from grants. Some income was however generated through sales although the price point was high for the poor quality of the product.
- ❖ Customer research and marketing activities had been never carried out.
- ❖ Journalists lacked the capacity and relevant experience to serve a rural audience.

### FACILITATION: TRIALETIS EXPRESI

Alliances-KK met with *Trialetis Expressi* and discussed ways to develop a more commercial model of the newspaper which would be based on improved agricultural content shaped by the results of a customer survey, as a way to increase readership in rural areas. The editor was unsure, as she had little commercial experience however she wished to proceed as donor funding was becoming harder to find and she desired to improve her newspaper, so the first offer was made. Initially the idea had been mooted of some form of franchise agreement with the other regional newspaper *Southern Gates* previously facilitated by Alliances SJ. However the editor of *Trialetis Expressi* received a scathing reception from the *Southern Gates* editor (though other staff were very helpful) which through initially dispiriting, induced in her a spirit of competition to succeed. She decided that the agricultural content should take the form of a supplement. Alliances KK received the first application form on 28<sup>th</sup> of November 2011. On the 30<sup>th</sup> of November 2011 the Application Review Committee discussed the application of *Trialetis Expressi* and in January, 2012 the agreement was signed. The facilitation included:

#### Step I

- ❖ Design and implementation of market research which would enable *Trialetis Expressi* to document farmer needs according to which a supplement would be developed and to interview potential advertisers and explore market opportunities.

#### Step II

- ❖ Development of a business plan and supplement design according to the market research; which included changing the design, improving its content and value for money, defining themes and sections for the supplement e.g. market prices, 'What farmers think section', content tailored to women, staff trainings and marketing.
- ❖ Linking the newspaper with key market players and sources of technical content and advice: Agricultural experts, agricultural NGO's, independent consultants, commercial players, rural advisory services, extension providers, service providers, and farmers.

#### Step III

- ❖ Printing of the newspaper with new design.
- ❖ Expansion of the newspaper in two new municipalities in two new languages.
- ❖ Development of rural selling points and improved distribution network.
- ❖ Business consultancy and support services.

**IMPACT: TRIALETIS EXPRESI**

After two years following the start of the intervention peak circulation has reached 1200. An impact assessment carried out in November 2013 showed that of these 1000 copies, 351 copies are being sold in the rural selling points and 649 are sold by subscription with an estimated readership of up to 4000, (up to 3 additional people per one copy) 43% of whom are women and a estimated further 2000 people receiving information from the people who have read the newspaper.<sup>13</sup> The newspaper is now available through selling points in remote villages as well as main towns. Farmers now have access to agricultural information including information on farming techniques, market prices and local services and products and local firms are advertising their products and services. The readership has expanded based on a commercial model and helped to diversify the newspapers income sources and it now covers all its costs from adverts and sales. The improved content and quality was not limited to the farmers supplement and has impacted the newspaper as a whole. As with the previous newspaper facilitation, the improved quality and outreach has attracted more external funding particularly from government who are using it to insert information related to agriculture which they wish communicated to the rural population. Subsequent surveys have shown that 67% in the covered municipalities think that the newspaper *Trialetis Expresi* is a way to solve information gaps. In particular of those surveyed:

- ❖ 84 % of interviewed farmers 33% of whom are women have adopted new practices, including: timely vaccination, preventive activities on animal diseases, cattle feeding and husbandry, the feeding of new born calves, market prices, new technologies in cultivation, bee keeping advice, use combined feed, potato growing & timely vaccination. They state that they have increased their productivity/income due to the information clearly linking getting information and increased productivity, but are unable to produce concrete figures as to the amount of increased income.
- ❖ 53% of interviewed farmers, 20% of whom are women feel that they are in a stronger bargaining position with buyers since they have had access to the information contained in the supplement, because they know prices in advance and the prices reflect the market prices in Marneuli and Tbilisi..
- ❖ 23%, 10% of whom are women have purchased agricultural inputs mentioned in the supplement. Most of them named combined feed, vet drugs and seeds.
- ❖ 51%, 20% of whom are women feel that they have more authority with/knowledge to offer other farmers through being able to inform them of market prices or advise on agriculture.

Other key points of note include:

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<sup>13</sup> 1, 97 adult members within the family read the supplement “*Fermeri*” (including buyer/subscriber).  
 1, 64 people outside of the family read the supplement.  
 3,61 people in total read 1 newspaper  
 2, 36 people receive information from the supplement without buying or reading it from those who buy/subscribe.  
 5, 97 is the total number of people who receive information from 1 newspaper



*Bolstering local service providers<sup>14</sup> and the synergistic effect:* Articles on services in the area and adverts for them have led to farmers using the services e.g. articles on nutrition leading to use of Brewers Grains and combined feed and articles on new born improved breed calves leading to the use of the improved bull service. This has been particularly noted among farmers where programme facilitated dairy enterprises are in operation and are providing an improved<sup>15</sup> and stable source of income.

*A channel of communication:* Local and central government representatives have used the newspaper to solve problems that have arisen related to agricultural policies through further information dissemination.

*Developing trust:* 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 a programme facilitated veterinary input supply company who supplies locally.

*Women's Economic Empowerment:* There has been a focus on articles targeted at women who are after all the main point of contact with the cattle. Women have reacted favourably to articles 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 with 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 mostly female and 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 and who have more limited mobility. This however is being addressed by the rural selling points of the newspaper which give women with limited mobility access to the newspaper.

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

*Improved Business Practices:* The newspaper editor formerly unaware of the value of forward projections, business planning, marketing and record keeping has moved to planned and organized businesses practices, improving their understanding of market and their business proficiency.

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<sup>14</sup> Most of these have been facilitated by the programme, the area having almost no service providers before. The programme has focussed on developing services in veterinary services, breeding and nutrition under one outcome for small scale livestock producers who are selling their milk and meat to programme facilitated dairy and meat suppliers. The rationale being that farmers will only invest where they have the incentive, in the form of a sustainable market, to do so.

<sup>15</sup> Enterprises with a clean supply of milk from Food Safety and Hygiene trainings for suppliers are paying 5 tetri more /litre and saving at the enterprise level as the better quality leads to less milk being required per kg of cheese. Typically whereas 9 litres was required before not 7.5 litres is required.

### PUBLIC BROADCASTER TV PROGRAMME 'CHVENI FERMA'-OUR FARM

The Agricultural TV Programme *Chveni Ferma* has been broadcasting weekly since May 2010 on the Georgian Public Broadcaster #1 Channel with national coverage. The programme is the only one of the national TV channels with an agricultural programme. Georgia is a relatively small country but in the 2 years of broadcasting they had rarely been to the Kvemo Kartli Region, the programming determined by where large farmers on whom they were mainly reporting were located. The programme was presenting a superficial picture of agriculture in Georgia that had little or no relevance to the lives of the majority of the large rural population, in which over 90% of farmers in are small or medium scale livestock producers. They mainly reported on large scale crop production with new machinery on large plots. The popularity of *Chveni Ferma* was very low in the targeted municipalities, with only 8% of the population tuning in.

### MARKET WEAKNESSES OF TV PROGRAMME *CHVENI FERMA*

- ❖ *Lack of knowledge of target audience:* Lack of advertising of the programme among the rural audience and a lack of reporting on major topics of note to farmers including food safety and hygiene rules and lack of knowledge/information on FS and H and animal disease. This was compounded by a lack of knowledge of rural areas and inability to react to stories: The team was dependent on the channel car pool the cars for which have to be booked two weeks in advance leaving them no flexibility or reactivity for programme research. Large areas of Georgia were untapped
- ❖ *Inability to develop a better product:* Focus on a distorted picture of agriculture in Georgia where no problems exist, with rare examples of modern technology and large farmers being mainly shown in the programmes or niche, traditional artisanal production neither of which had much relevance to the majority of the rural population. For example no calls to the hotline or feedback were recorded from the whole of Kvemo Kartli. Lack of financial resources to improve the content of the programme: Due to low ratings and priority given to new programmes the programme was being allocated a very low proportion of the broadcasting budget.

### FACILITATION: TV PROGRAMME *CHVENI FERMA*

Alliances-KK introduced the idea of improved content which could leverage some of the SME's, market players and the related issues that Alliances had facilitated or worked with, as well as including technical advice, reporting on farmers' needs, perspectives and problems, adding to the public debate in the agricultural sphere and providing a voice for farmers through feedback to the programme and hotline. In addition given the abstract worries of farmers, in the absence of concrete information, regarding upcoming changes due to Food Safety and Hygiene laws a regular food safety and hygiene slot to deliver smart, simple messages to farmers was proposed. The underlying business rationale being that this would increase the number of viewers and improve their ratings on which budget allocations are made. Alliances KK received the application form on 27<sup>th</sup> of May 2013 and the agreement was signed on 25<sup>th</sup> of June, 2013.

### Step I

- ❖ Co-investment which included a branded vehicle for travelling to programme areas.
- ❖ Market research: with farmers and service providers to inform improved content.
- ❖ Facilitation with a Food Safety and Hygiene consultant for the development of the slots.

- ❖ Linking the production team with key market players and sources of technical content and advice: Agricultural experts, agricultural NGO's, independent consultants, commercial players, rural advisory services, extension providers, service providers, and farmers.

### Step II

- ❖ Marketing: Agricultural calendars and flyers with the programme logo, billboards on the main vet pharmacies and buildings in the targeted municipalities and spreading flyers through Women's Rooms (resource centres in the municipal buildings) and programme clients to target rural areas.

### Step III

- ❖ Discussions are underway for further facilitation to improve the programmes capture, analysis and use of viewing figures and viewer feedback.

#### IMPACT: *CHVENI FERMA*

Eleven months since the facilitation of Channel 1 and their TV programme *Chveni Ferma* began, in June, 2013, seven agri-business enterprises facilitated by Alliances KK have been featured in the programme with a specific focus on Food Safety and Hygiene. The programme has a hotline, the number of which is shown at the end of every programme. Before facilitation hotline calls per episode were on average 30, now there are an average of 90 and following the first episode in October where a problematic issue was broached for the first time (programmes to date have focussed on being overwhelmingly positive and uncontroversial) 150 farmers called in. The enterprises featured have reported significant volumes of calls from buyers from across Georgia including markets in Rustavi, Tbilisi and Batumi (on the Black Sea Coast) following the episodes, emphasising their liking of the food safety and hygiene controls and therefore the endorsement of the quality of the product. Before facilitation commenced 8% of farmers in the programme area watched the programme. In November following four months of remodelled episodes at the end of October 30% of interviewed farmers were watching the programme. Looking at ratings themselves are slightly problematic as set top boxes are only placed in urban centres of over 40,000 inhabitants and therefore record the urban viewing figures, however the annual average monthly viewing figure pre intervention was 15,066 and the eleven month (intervention running time) average monthly viewing figure of 23,698 seems to indicate a significant increase.

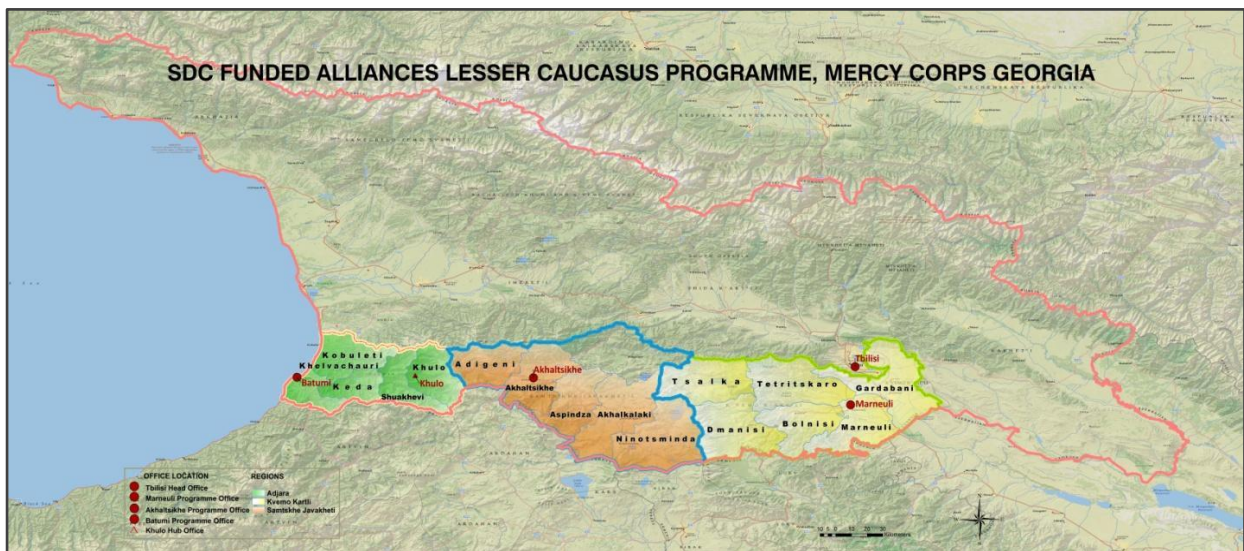
#### FUTURE ENTRY POINTS

There are new potential entry points for strengthening agricultural information provision in the new programme areas into which the programme will expand from March 2014. Media is present but weak with patchy coverage and the agricultural community is poorly served in terms of dedicated agricultural topics and information. As previously noted donor funding in the form of buying broadcasting time and determining the content of regional media is routine.

One constraint increasingly emerging is that of the capacity of journalists themselves most of whom have a predominantly urban focus and very little knowledge pertinent to the rural audience. The programme anticipates that as media service of the rural segment grows, capacity building opportunities for journalists to enhance their knowledge of crops, livestock and agricultural management will influence the sector systemically.

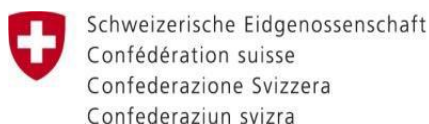
**WHO IS THE ALLIANCES PROGRAMME**

From March 1<sup>st</sup> 2014 the existing Alliances programmes were merged into the **Alliances Lesser Caucasus Programme**, including an expanded area in Kvemo Kartli and the Autonomous Region of Ajara and will operate until the end of February 2019. The Swiss Cooperation funded Mercy Corps Georgia implemented Alliances programmes began operations in 2008 with Alliances Samstkhe Javakheti, (Alliances SJ 2008- December 2014) based on the Making Markets Work for the Poor approach (M4P), working with key market players in the livestock sector with a target group of small scale livestock producers. It then in 2011 expanded into three municipalities of Kvemo Kartli Region with Alliances Kvemo Kartli (2011-February 2014). Both programmes exceeded their targets in quality access for rural women and men to key services such as veterinary medicines and advice, breeding, nutrition, information and finance and in improved and sustainable access to markets for the sale of dairy, meat and wool to robust food safety and hygiene compliant businesses. Evidence of systemic change is now being seen in supporting functions in nutrition and veterinary input supply and rules; concerning gender in local government, to date.



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