

Transforming veterinary services for women smallholder farmers in post-Soviet Georgia

One initiative of the ALCP programme in Georgia

SLIDE 1: Overview



Healthy Herds Georgia

How ALCP transformed veterinary services for 440,000 livestock farmers in post-Soviet Georgia

Interventions
Innovation & investment in input distribution networks & provision of vet services in remote areas

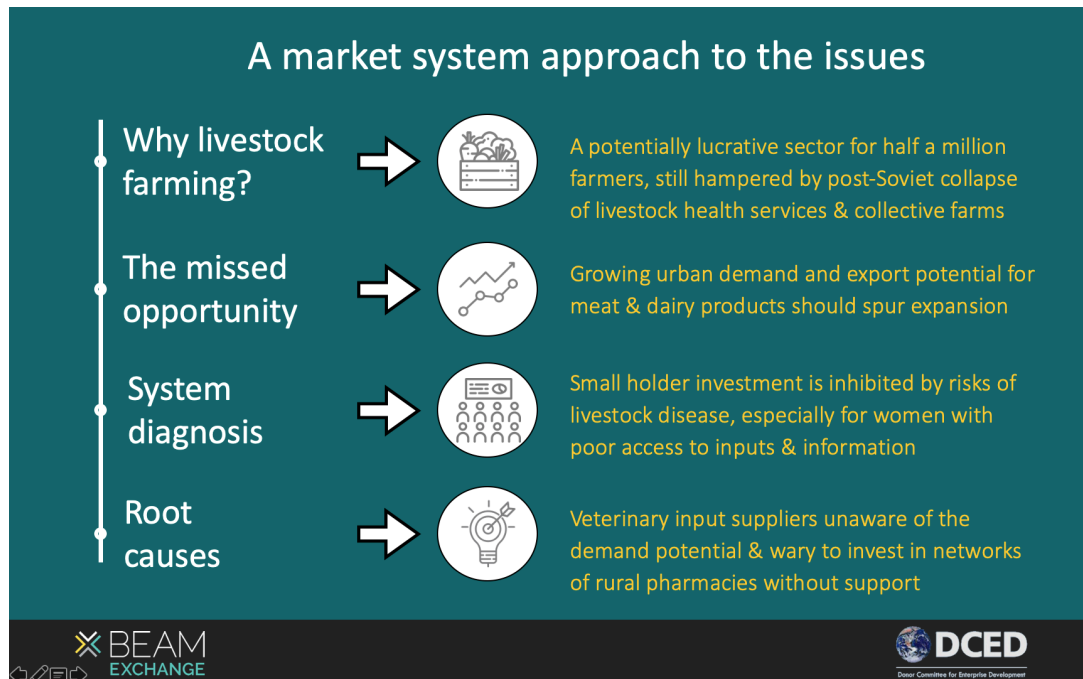
System Change
Widespread transformation of veterinary input distribution practices and access to services

Impact
Increased income from livestock farming for 400,000 rural households

- This presentation tells the story of one successful initiative between 2011 and 2017, by the ALCP (ALCP) programme in Georgia.
- This initiative, to re-build accessible veterinary services in remote areas, enabled at least 400,000 small-holder farmers (many women) to step up livestock production.
- It involved investments and innovations in distribution of livestock health inputs, services and access to critical information from mini-pharmacies, driven by engagement with a leading veterinary input manufacturer & importer.
- These changes were taken up at such a large scale that access to quality veterinary inputs and good advice about how to use them, has become the 'new normal' for livestock farmers in Georgia and increasingly across other parts of the southern Caucasus region (Armenia, Azerbaijan) and Turkmenistan.

SLIDE 2: The market systems perspective



The ALCP programme chose to work on issues in livestock production because:


1. Livestock are an important source of food and supplementary income for half a million rural households (in which women often play a main livestock husbandry role).
2. Urban and export market demand for quality-assured meat, cheese, other dairy products is strongly expanding. But local production is still hampered by the post-Soviet collapse of public livestock health-services.
3. Women and remotely located smallholder farmers were particularly inhibited by their poor access to veterinary services, information and products. Untreated, livestock disease lowers productivity and creates powerful disincentives to invest in herds.

Maintaining livestock health is crucial for the resilience of families, and that depends on the accessibility and availability of veterinary services. Early gendered market-research (2011) by ALCP found that, except in the main towns, services in Georgia had all but ceased to function: only 8 -14 per cent of farmers had access to local veterinary services, and just 5 - 8 per cent were using appropriate products, such as de-worming drugs. Farmers, especially women for whom cultural norms discouraged travel to cities, had particular difficulty accessing services that were expensive and far from their villages.


ALCP also found that manufacturers and importers of veterinary products had no rural distribution channels. As a result small-holders had little exposure to their products and were largely unaware of the benefits of appropriate livestock health treatments.

The underlying reason for this was a failure to recognise the potential of small-holders as reliable customers, and an unwillingness to take risks to recruit them. Hence no strategy or investment plan to reach them.

SLIDE 3: Interventions that catalysed innovation and behaviour change



MSD interventions that catalysed innovation & behaviour change





Piloting training & support for rural pharmacies
Co-invested with large veterinary manufacturer / importer to test a new business model for remote vet-pharmacies


Expanding rural outreach
Experimented with & then scaled-up investment in micro-pharmacy businesses to transform access

Disease-diagnosis & medicine development
Co-invested in laboratory facilities to overcome critical constraint to better veterinary services

Online agro-information portal
Co-invested in new 'Agroface' platform that links farmers with consultants, buyers, financial services, weather forecasts & production calendars







ALCP had a vision for lasting change with widespread impact. It centred on engaging at least one of the main veterinary importer / manufacturing companies to invest in an innovative distribution network, supported by product development and information and advice. Realising the vision required four significant business innovations, launched in partnership with Roki Ltd between 2012 and 2017, as ALCP learned more about the veterinary services market.

1. Pilot training & support for rural pharmacies (starting 2012)

Starting with five existing pharmacies in the Kvemo Kartli region, ALCP co-invested 60% of the costs for Roki Ltd to provide veterinary training, a regular weekly supply of products at wholesale prices, information material and telephones directly connected to Roki's advice hotline. Later Roki expanded the pilot to eight further pharmacies in Samtskhe region.

2. Establishing rural micro-pharmacies to expand rural outreach (from 2013)

ALCP struck a deal with Roki to expand outreach to rural women by establishing and training pharmacists for dozens of new low-cost micro-pharmacies in the Kvemo Kartli region. When the model was proved to work (in 2015), Roki decided to scale-up their distribution model to the Ajara region, and later nationally. They also set up two new warehouses for nationwide distribution. ALCP's initial contribution (59%) for capital equipment was reduced to 33% at this stage.

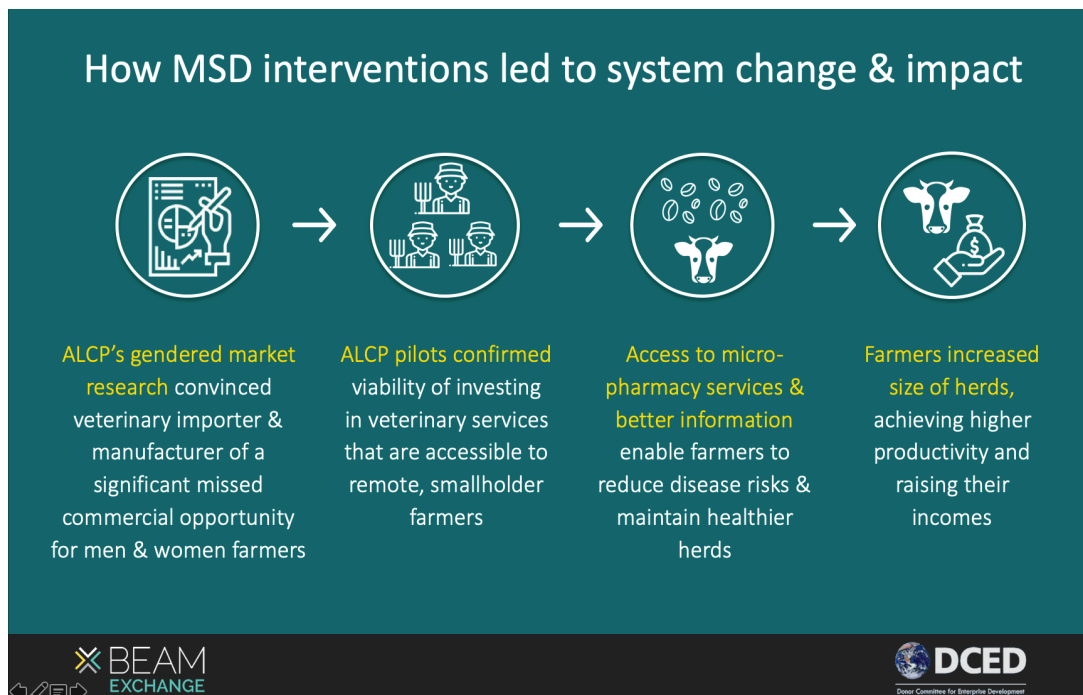
3. Laboratory set up for developing and testing vaccines

As a third step ALCP supported Roki (with a 33% co-investment) to set up a laboratory. This enabled Roki to diagnose infectious animal diseases, research and produce new medicines. Previously they had relied on the government laboratory, which was painfully slow, resulting in a production backlog.

4. An agro-information portal to directly deliver advice to farmers (from 2016)

Finally, to help scale-up rural distribution to the rest of Georgia (as well as to Armenia and Azerbaijan), ALCP co-invested (31%) with Roki to develop an agro-information portal called Agroface. Agroface gives farmers direct access information on livestock management, helps them monitor animal diseases risks throughout the year, raises awareness of available treatments and connects farmers directly to stakeholders in agriculture who are also platform members including, government agencies, finance and insurance institutions, NGO's and consultant organisations. It embodies the companies vision to see small farmers develop into a sustainable commercially viable entity with access to the latest advice and innovations.

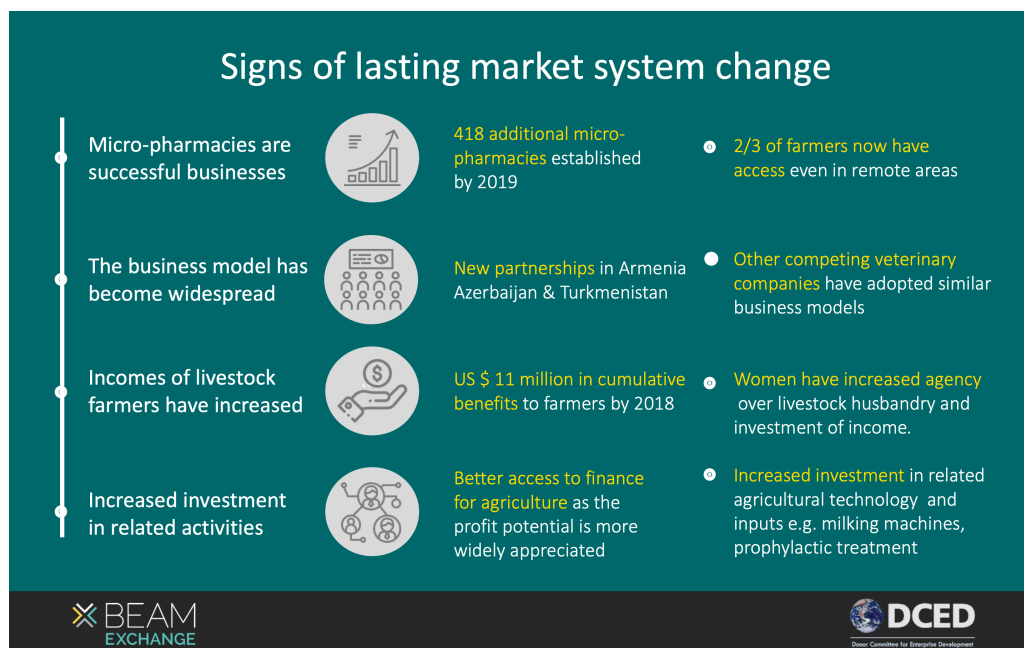
SLIDE 4: The logic of how ALCP's MSD interventions led to systemic change and impact



ALCP's theory of change in this MSD approach incorporated the following logic:

- A. ALCP's gendered market research and negotiations convinced at least one major veterinary product manufacturer / importer (Roki) that the smallholder farmer market had enough potential to justify experimenting in distribution innovation.
- B. Pilot interventions with Roki confirmed that investing in rural distribution channels to make veterinary products and information more accessible to smallholder farmers, produced viable returns.
- C. The reach of information and services for smallholders was significantly extended by co-investing in a new business model with hundreds of innovative micro-pharmacies and a digital information portal. Other input companies began to adopt and adapt the same model, creating a 'new normal' in the Caucasian veterinary industry.
- D. Improvements in access to veterinary service enabled smallholder farmers to increase productivity, reduce the risks and consequences of livestock disease. As a result they could earn more and invest in larger herds to supply more milk and meat to the burgeoning slaughterhouses and dairy factories.

SLIDE 5: Indicators of lasting market system change & impact



The following results indicate how well ALCP's intervention in the veterinary sector worked:

Micro-pharmacies proved to be successful business model

- By 2019, Roki was distributing and offering training and support to 418 micro-pharmacies in rural areas, so given two-thirds of Georgia's smallholder farmers better access to veterinary services. Some were newly established, and some have expanded their business model and vastly improving their services,
- Most new micro-pharmacies (85%) were created outside ALCP's programme area and without ALCP co-investment.

The business model has become widespread

- The two main other Georgian veterinary suppliers, Invet and Megavet, have adopted similar practices for investing in distribution channels and services.
- By 2018, similar models were taking off with partnership for Roki in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan.

The incomes of livestock farmers have increased (and women have been empowered)

- By 2018, an estimated 449,000 farming households had benefited, and the cumulative income increases for livestock farmers were valued at US \$11 million.
- There has been a distinct shift in gender-norms in the industry, with the needs of women livestock farmers being given particular attention for the first time. They report greater control over animal husbandry practices and the use of income.


Investment in related farm-activities has increased

- Credit for livestock farming activities has become cheaper (from 8% -> 5%) due to lower risks from livestock disease and subsequent increased incomes from milk and meat supply.
- As a result, farmers have invested in prophylactic treatment, improved animal husbandry and farm development and technology – for example, milking parlours that greatly reduce women's labour and improved cattle sheds.

SLIDE 6: An extra note about the gendered impact of ALCP's work in veterinary services



An extra note about the gendered impact of ALCP

Research shows that women tend to diagnose livestock disease first.
Yet, a male perspective of livestock production & veterinary services needs predominated, largely due to travel constraints on women.



- ALCP enabled access for women through:
- satellite micro vet pharmacies
- equitable gendered trainings
- hot lines & SMS services
- tailored outreach & information
- trained female vet pharmacists

57% of households with women members served
252,000 women received veterinary information through micro pharmacies
53 jobs created for women in veterinary sector



ALCP is particularly proud of the programmes impact on gender-related issues in the livestock sector. Their research had showed the women are typically more involved than men in the daily routines of smallholder animal husbandry, and tend to be first to diagnose livestock disease. Yet a male-dominated perspective of the industry and the needs of livestock farmers predominated. Cultural constraints on women's ability to travel outside the home area were a particular problem given the lack of pharmacies and veterinary services in rural areas.

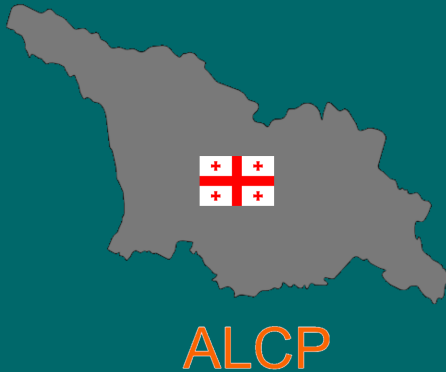
ALCP's interventions made a dramatic difference to women farmers by addressing several constraints:

- Micro-pharmacies made access possible for women who could not otherwise travel to the main towns and cities
- Equitably-gendered training opened up the delivery of pharmaceutical services to women
- Telephone hotlines, SMS and later the Agro-Face portal made information available
- Information and outreach was tailored to women's needs allowing them to improve their command of animal husbandry and milk production.

As a result, ALCP estimate 57% of households with women farmers have now been served, with more than quarter of a million having received information. And for the first time, 53 jobs have been created in the veterinary pharmacy sector

SLIDE 7: Extra background information about ALCP

Alliances Caucasus Project (ALCP) in context





An MSD programme of the Swiss Agency for Development Cooperation (SDC), implemented by Mercy Corps. ALCP works in the livestock sector (meat, dairy, wool, honey) within Georgia, and with regional trade to Armenia & Azerbaijan.

Economic sub-sectors
Livestock, dairy, meat, honey

Total Budget
US \$ 24 m between 2011 – 2022

Impact (by 2019)

- Estimated income benefits for 460,000 farmers & small businesses
- Attributable income increase: US \$ 41 m

The Alliances Caucasus Programme (ALCP) was created to address rural poverty in south Georgia and the transition to a durable market economy, by helping small poor livestock farmers gain better access to markets, information services and public goods works. Ensuring these benefits include women was a particular priority.

The programme is a Swiss Development Cooperation project implemented by Mercy Corps – Georgia. Work began in Samtskhe Javakheti district in 2008, and was then expanded to two other mountainous regions: Kvemo Kartli in 2011, and Ajara in 2014. It is currently in its third and final phase with additional support from the Austrian Development Agency: working from Georgia but with a regional mandate for cross border trade with Armenia and Azerbaijan and export in dairy, meat honey and wool.

The programme's Results Measurement system has twice been successfully audited as meeting the DCED Standard.

Phase I 2008 – 2013	Budget:	approx US\$ 9 million at 2018 rates
Phase II 2014 – 2017	Budget:	approx US\$ 7.5 million at 2018 rates
Phase III 2017 – 2022	Budget:	approx US\$ 7.5 million at 2018 rates

Achievements:

From October 2008 to September 2019:

- 459,708 income beneficiary households
- US \$ 41 million generated in aggregated net attributable direct and indirect income for farmers, businesses and employees

For more detail go to www.alcp.ge/index.php?cat=2

Main references

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