



# Center for Agribusiness and Rural Development

## MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

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### LOCAL ACTORS JOIN FOR INCLUSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & GOVERNANCE IN THE SOUTH CAUCASUS (JOIN)



Regional development in Armenia is in a transition period. Although there are some good examples of both local and central government support in implementing economic and social reforms targeted to increase the well-being of the local population, still, there are challenges that need to be addressed from the public, private and NGO sectors.

An ADC-funded “Local Actors Join for Inclusive Economic Development and Governance in the South Caucasus” (JOIN) project is being implemented by CARE Österreich and CARE International in the Caucasus together with partner organizations – the Center for Agribusiness and Rural Development (CARD) Foundation in Armenia and the Civil Development Agency (CiDA) in Georgia. JOIN builds and expands on the achievements of the STAGE I and II projects and includes the private sector as an actor that sustains and scales the economic benefits of the project activities – in line with CARE’s program strategy.

The project covers the border regions of Northern Armenia (Lori, Tavush and Shirak) and Southern Georgia (Samtskhe-Javakheti and Kvemo Kartli). The overall objective is to contribute to poverty reduction in the border regions through improved

cooperation between government, civil society and the private sector in the socio-economic field.

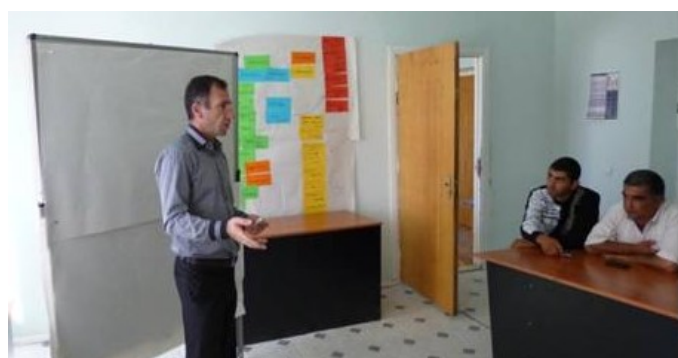
JOIN is a three-year project that works through three discrete but mutually supportive expected results: local government, civil society and the private sector jointly plan gender-sensitive local development plans for sustainable economic development; sustainable Business Development and Information Centers (BDIC) provide market-relevant information and trainings to local government, civil society and private sector in support of strengthening local value chains (in selected fields of agriculture); institutionalized coordination mechanisms between national and involved local stakeholders are established to effectively address local socioeconomic development needs.



The theory behind the project is that the combination of locally owned planning processes, better availability of market relevant information and improved skills at a local level, and the greater awareness of higher level stakeholders and stronger coordination of development efforts, will promote a favourable environment for socioeconomic development and thus contribute to poverty reduction in the border regions of Armenia and Georgia.



One of the main activities undertaken in the frame of the project in 2012 was a start-up conference held in Tbilisi in April 2012 to bring together local and central level actors with the purpose of launching the project and acquainting national and local-level actors of each other's priorities, initiatives and programs. During the conference, dairy products, canned food and beverages produced in the target regions of both countries were exhibited as well.



Local Development Working Groups were formed in target communities, the members of which are representatives of local government, CSOs and the private sector.

A consulting company, "Business Pareta" LLC, was hired to facilitate with WGs the development of Local Market Development Plans (LMDP) for Noyemberyan and Amasia communities. The LMDPs were developed in accordance with the "Participatory Appraisal of Competitive Advantages (PACA)" methodology.

Within the project, research was conducted on the access and availability of information and agricultural services in seven remote urban and rural areas in Armenia. The research findings showed that the

main problems of rural entrepreneurs are associated with the marketing of their products. These research findings will serve as a base for developing the services that will be provided by the Business Development and Information Centers.

In fall, 2012, at a newly opened Farm and Veterinary Service Center (FVSC), established by CARD, in the Azatan community of the Shirak region, the first BDIC was established as a platform for information exchange. The research on access and



availability of information and agricultural services showed that an information network could be effective if it links the government, territorial administrations and self-government bodies, respective educational institutions, development organizations and other relative organizations. The BDIC



is considered to serve as a hub for providing information flow and accessibility for the rural population efficiently. The main services provided by the BDIC will be: assistance in information and reference services, business training/advisory services and provision of e-tools and e-resources.