## Conclusion

This book grew out of a feeling shared by many of us whose work in the agricultural sector has been affected by gender roles at all levels that the role of gender is viewed too much as an obstacle or a constraint, when working with gender can actually free up resources and enable us to participate in more rewarding and more sustainable development of the agricultural sector.

Based on this optimism about the possibilities for field implementation, we also felt that the problems created by gender inequality are by now fairly well understood in the academic debate, and what was needed was a source of inspiration for implementers. While we do work with a theoretical framework, outlined primarily in Chapter 2, we hope that what is most useful about this book is the highlighting of actual experience which has served to reinforce this theoretical model.

The many examples of successful gender transformation strategies used in this book do not fit into one neat category. We relied on the experience of those who contributed to the book and constructed our chapters after much discussion of what material was available. However, there are a number of general patterns that can be discerned in the case studies provided:

- 1. Gender roles affect how systems work at all levels: from the individual, to interactions within households and communities, to local, regional and national institutions, to the global socio-economic institutions and systems.
- 2. Agricultural production is an economic activity greatly affected by the way in which men and women interact at all levels, and enabling them to interact in new ways will free up important resources for food production and poverty alleviation.
- 3. Solutions to the problems created by gender inequality need to be implemented as part of a greater package which will allow support and reinforcement to come from all levels.
- 4. In terms of the agricultural sector, "Think Globally, Act Locally" is a useful approach. Policies and enabling environment should be in place, but action is necessary at the local level.
- 5. Local action requires that there are structures which facilitate the use of grassrootslevel knowledge and participation.
- 6. While it is important to analyze the situation of the individual, very little can be done in terms of transformative change if individuals do not organize themselves in some way, both to press for change, and to make it feasible to reach them with programs and investments. This is why women's self-help groups and cooperatives have played such a crucial role in agricultural development in Africa.

7. It is important to build constructive settings or enabling environments in which greater equity can be achieved with a minimum of confrontation and conflict. People are the resource whose input into agricultural production and rural development needs to be strengthened: conflict saps strength.

## Ways forward

The original inspiration for writing this book came from the realization that there have been many successful attempts to improve gender equity in the agricultural sector which have both served to strengthen "agency" (as the empowerment of the individual is referred to in our analytical framework) and improve the productivity of the agricultural sector.

Recent analyses of the need to increase food production to reduce hunger and keep pace with a growing world population have highlighted the need to achieve that increase with very little expansion of cultivated land, which has been the "escape route" to avoid mass starvation in the past.<sup>1</sup> There is simply not enough land left – especially if we are to preserve crucial ecosystem services. Faced with the necessity to intensify production, most analysts look to improve systems to increase yields, and then to new plant varieties and cultivation methods.

While this book has as its premise that social justice and gender equity are worthwhile goals in and of themselves, there is strong evidence, as discussed in Chapter 1, that transforming gender roles in agriculture could also greatly increase the productivity of women farmers across sub-Saharan Africa, thus making much better use of the resources we have at our disposal to fight hunger.

Throughout the chapters we look at transforming visible and invisible socio-economic structures at the level of the individual, the household, the community and the institution. We seek to point out concrete examples where the inclusion of gender analysis in addressing a problem has been successful in supporting sustainable change at all these levels. We consistently return to the multi-faceted nature of the problems created by inequitable gender roles and how solutions result in both greater justice and greater efficiency.

This book is not the last word in how to implement transformative change in gender roles in the agricultural sector. We have not been able to go into great depth in any of the areas, and further academic research is needed to pinpoint weaknesses and quantify results in terms of agricultural production. Our focus has been on only one continent: Africa, and then we have relied heavily on the field experience of co-authors who are primarily from eastern and southern Africa.

However, we do want to contribute a positive and hopeful note to the debate on addressing global hunger, gender inequality and poverty. Yes we can and yes, we have already proven it can be done!

<sup>1</sup> See, for example, FAO (2009). How to Feed the World in 2050. Background paper for High-level Expert Forum in Rome, Italy, 12–13 October 2009. Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN. http://www.fao. org/fileadmin/templates/wsfs/docs/expert\_paper/How\_to\_Feed\_the\_World\_in\_2050.pdf.

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SIANI is a member-based network that supports and promotes Swedish expertise and provides an open and interactive platform for engagement and dialogue in a global context. Our mission is to enable sustainable food security and nutrition for all.

SIANI facilitates activities across the sector, with diverse membership, including government, civil society, private sector and academia. It provides the opportunities to come together to address a wide variety of areas within the global agricultural and development sector which include focus on food security, poverty reduction and environmental sustainability.

SIANI operates in line with the Swedish policy agenda and pushes for policy coherence across sectors. Our aim is to establish long-term form of institutional support for Swedish policy development and to strengthen the capacity and competence of Swedish institutions.