



Gender equality reduces poverty

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SWEDISH
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Cover: Angela Mukababirwa, her husband Ivan and their three children live in western Uganda. As a mother and woman she shares everyday life conditions with millions of female small farmers around the world: long days with responsibility for children, home and farm. But becoming a member in the local farmers' cooperative, supported by SCC, has changed her life. Nowadays, she and Ivan divide the chores between them.

Cover photo: Edward Echwalu

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” When I sell my baskets, I get money so I can support my household. The women’s group also has a system for savings and loans where we take turns borrowing. I’m always encouraging others to become members because it’s long-term work that will be here for future generations too.”

Betty Wambua, age 47, Chairwoman of the Kikuthuko Women’s Group, Kisesini, Kenya.

It's time to walk the talk

The toughest job in the world is to be a women farmer in Africa. Women are the main producers of food. At the same time, women own or control a small percentage of the land and only receive a fraction of all credits. Whilst women carry out most of the work in agriculture, men continue to take the decisions, negotiate the prices and pocket the income.

If women farmers had the same opportunities as men, harvests would increase enough to keep 100 million people from going hungry, according to estimates by FAO.

In short – women farmers lack power and influence. The Swedish Cooperative Centre (SCC) has been supporting poor people to help themselves for more than 50 years. We know for a fact that when women have increased influence, they take decisions that benefit the whole family. Children eat better. More girls go to school. Empowering women breaks the vicious circle of poverty.

In order for change to happen, women farmers need to be organised. Today, they are underrepresented and lack collective voice. That is why SCC supports local farmers' organisations in their work towards gender equality.

Some concrete results:

- In 2010, the female membership in Zambia National Farmers' Union (ZNFU) increased from 37 to 44 per cent. Female representation increased from 21 to 24 per cent of the total leadership.
- At the last annual meeting, the bylaws of *Nyakatonzi Farmers' Union* (NFU) in Uganda were amended so that there must be three women on the board next time a new executive is appointed. Some of the cooperatives affiliated to NFU now have women on the boards.

To shed further light on the challenges, we have interviewed close to 350 female farmers in Southern and Eastern Africa. The results are presented in this study. The women express that they want more knowledge, better health care and the opportunity to sell their produce on a market. That would give them the opportunity to improve their agriculture and living conditions.

SCC wants to help reduce poverty – not only on paper, but in practice. We want value for money and results that last.

Supporting the development of women farmers is not about good will or charity – it is about rights. It is also about a good sense of business. Ensuring that women are on board means more opportunities for all.

To further our commitment, SCC has decided that (at least) half of our support will go to women. That may sound obvious, but unfortunately it is not. In fact, most development cooperation support benefits men more than women and may even perpetuate prevailing inequalities.

Our commitment

- SCC will not support partner organisations that are not prepared to invest in gender equality.
- SCC will ensure that at least half of our development cooperation budget is directed to poor women.

Our demands

Gender equality is one of the three main priorities of the Swedish development aid. Yet, it is not possible to find out how much reaches women. We want a fair distribution of Swedish development aid. We want equality in practice, not only on paper.

SCC wants the Swedish government to:

- Ensure that at least half of Sweden's development aid goes to women, starting with the 2013 budget.
- Develop a system that makes it possible to plan, budget and follow up that at least half of all development cooperation goes to women.
- Ensure that Sweden's representatives in bilateral cooperation and multilateral organisations such as FAO and IFAD* actively promote gender equality as an integral part of support to agriculture development.

The Swedish government, civil society and other development actors have a responsibility towards those we say we are there to support. We need to ensure that we are walking the talk. Poor women and men have a right to development and that right starts with increased influence and opportunity for poor women to improve their lives and those of their families.

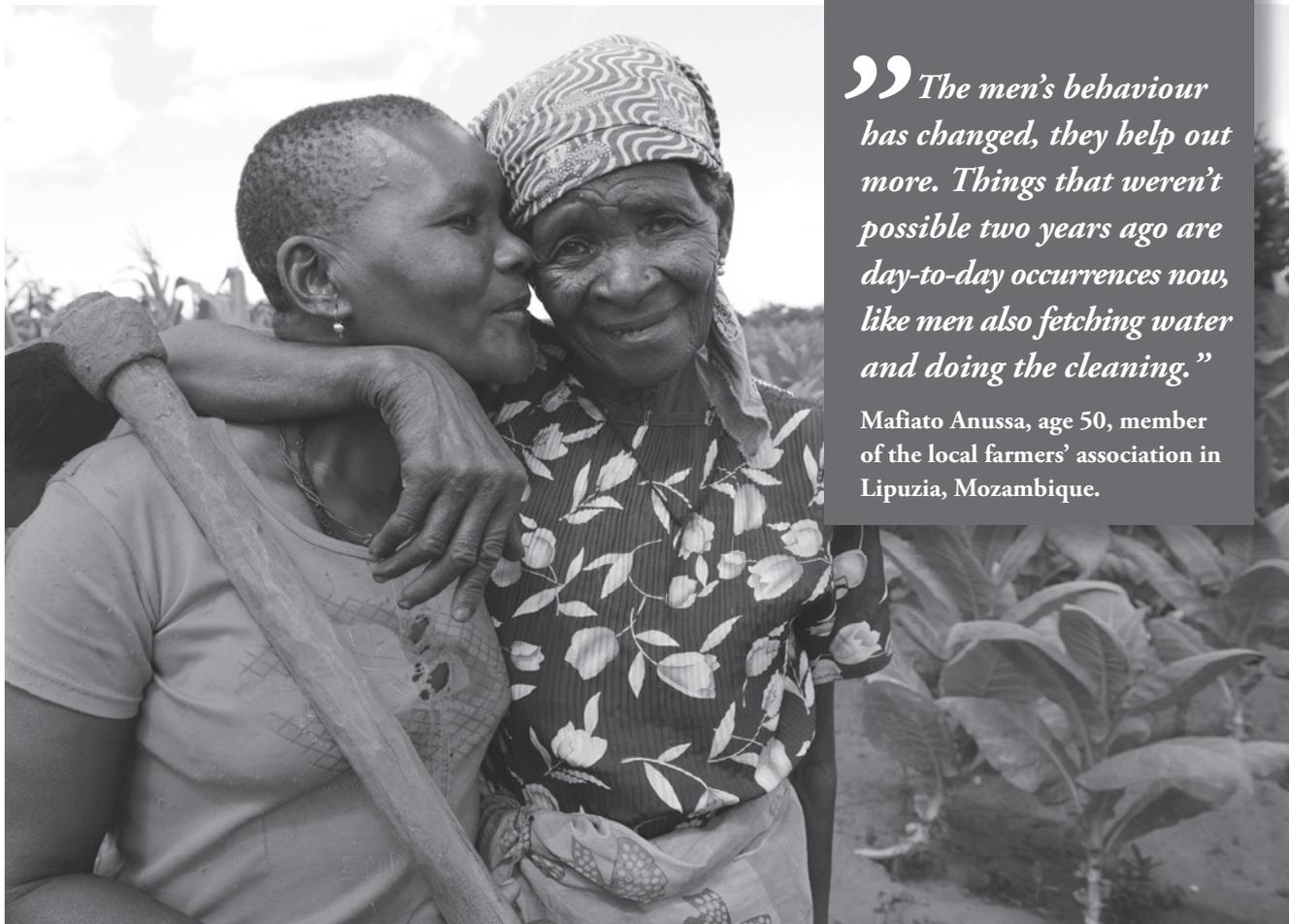
That is a precondition if we are going to eradicate poverty and injustice, once and for all.

Swedish Cooperative Centre

* FAO = Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

IFAD = International Fund for Agricultural Development

Photo: Sergio Santimano



” *The men’s behaviour has changed, they help out more. Things that weren’t possible two years ago are day-to-day occurrences now, like men also fetching water and doing the cleaning.* ”

Mafiato Anussa, age 50, member of the local farmers’ association in Lipuzia, Mozambique.

Mafiato Anussa (left) and her mother, Awessa Djana, live in Lipuzia, one of the poorest regions of Mozambique. Her membership in the farmers’ association has enabled Mafiato to take part in a number of study circles. She has learned to use new growing techniques, resistant crops, and how to prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS. But the biggest difference she sees is in the home.

How female farmers view their work

Women in developing countries are at a disadvantage in agriculture and their rights are not respected. Many studies show that gender equality is extremely important for agricultural development and food security. There is no lack of policy documents and reports on how we should support women cultivating the land in developing countries. Still, little has been done and the women’s own opinions are heard much too seldom in the debate on problems and possible solutions. In order to make their voices heard, in the spring of 2011 the Swedish Cooperative Centre commissioned an interview survey of women in rural areas in Africa.

A total of 345 women in eight African nations were interviewed: Malawi, Mozambique, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda. All the women interviewed are involved in cooperatives, local farmers’ organisations, savings and loan groups, or study circles sponsored by SCC

through local partner organisations. The interviews were conducted by SCC’s partner organisations in the respective countries.

The number of interviews is too small a sample to allow us to draw any general conclusions about African women in agriculture, or women in Africa who receive support from SCC. The interviews, however, provide a picture of the conditions for women cultivating the land in Africa, what problems and challenges they face, and what they see as the greatest needs for change that would enable them to develop their agriculture and improve their living conditions.

The women’s own stories will appear throughout the report – in the form of summaries of the opinions of the women that SCC’s partner organisations have spoken with, in quotations, and in longer excerpts from the interviews.

Discrimination against women in agriculture

Differences in education and knowledge

The women interviewed in the Swedish Cooperative Centre study seek opportunities for education. One of their main reasons for belonging to cooperatives or farmers' organisations is to gain access to knowledge.

Knowledge is also a point stressed by UN's *Food and Agriculture Organisation*. FAO's 2011 annual report, entitled *Women in Agriculture, Closing the gender gap for development*, states that the differences in education are significant and widespread. In 14 of the 15 countries for which FAO has data, female heads of household had less education than their male counterparts. FAO notes that the figures show that, regardless of region or level of development, in most developing countries, female heads of household are in a disadvantaged position.

At the same time, it can be concluded that the gap in education has decreased significantly in recent years, thanks to factors such as Millennium Development Goal 3, which addresses the elimination of gender disparity that discriminates against girls with respect to schooling. In most of the countries for which FAO keeps statistics, just as many girls as boys in rural areas now attend primary school. At the national level, it would thus seem that the problem of female farmers being disadvantaged when it comes to education is disappearing. But there remain certain differences, especially in South Asia and certain countries in sub-Saharan Africa. In countries that have otherwise succeeded in attaining gender equality with regard to education, in Latin America in particular the gap between the sexes remains among aboriginal populations, who are disadvantaged also in other respects.

However, farmers not only need formal schooling, but also

continual information on new farming methods, new types of crops such as those that tolerate drought better, tools, etc. Advice is therefore important but in many countries government extension services suffered cuts or disappeared completely during the economic crises of the 1980s and 1990s, resulting in IMF and World Bank demands for cutbacks and privatization, and have not been restored since.

In addition, women do not have access to the extension services that do exist. In its 2011 annual report, FAO refers to a study of close to 100 countries showing that only 5 per cent of all advisory services were directed to women, and that only 15 per cent of extension personnel were women. The study was carried out in the late 1980s, however, which perhaps says something about the importance placed on the topic. Further information shows that male advisors did not target female farmers to the same extent as they had the perception that women did not cultivate the land or because they believed that the men would automatically share their new knowledge. Women also have a harder time than men leaving the home and children, and it is sometimes seen as inappropriate for them to take part in meetings with men they do not know, limiting their participation in courses and training. Lower basic education for women may also contribute to their not being able to read course material and other information.

To empower women farmers it is therefore important to promote opportunities for them to participate in local organisations and women's groups. By working together, women for example gain better bargaining power with their husbands or when they go to sell their products as well as opportunities to discuss common problems. Depending on the prevailing



Photo: Tobin Jones

"I've used some of the money I earned through the women's group to pay the school fees for my children. I also bought some goats through the group's loan program. But the most important thing of all is that I've been able to attend study circles and gained important knowledge about things like bookkeeping."

Sabina Jonathan, age 40, member of Kikuthuko Women's Group, Kisesini, Kenya.

culture and norms, it can sometimes be necessary to arrange education and training in special women's groups. One disadvantage of this, however, is that the men may then see this in a negative light and slow down possible improvements. Mixed groups, for example study circles, are therefore preferable wherever possible.



In response to the question about why the interviewees belong to a cooperative or other kind of organisation supported by the Swedish Cooperative Centre, a majority answered that knowledge and loans are the most important reasons. Opportunities for exchange with others and getting new ideas are also important reasons for belonging. The women state that the cooperatives are their most important source of new knowledge. However, 6 out of 10 of the women interviewed also say that they need more knowledge to develop their farming. Many would also like the agricultural advisors to have more knowledge about the problems female farmers face.

Hard to get loans

For the women interviewed in the SCC survey, the possibility to borrow money was one of the main reasons for getting involved in cooperatives and other organisations. Many women had already taken loans, and others expressed the desire to do so.

Many studies that FAO refers to in its 2011 annual report also show that when women get better access to financial services like savings, credit and insurance, it leads to improvements in the children's nutritional standards, health and education. Credit is often needed to enable farmers to invest in things such as seeds, commercial fertilizers, etc. But the credit market is not gender neutral. In many countries, it is difficult for women even to open a bank account, and the fact that they are not registered as owners of land and other fixed assets means that their requests for loans often are turned down.

FAO's database shows that, in 7 out of 9 countries, households headed by women have fewer possibilities to borrow money than households with a male in charge. In only two countries, Ghana and Panama, was there no difference between the sexes in this respect. In many cases, the women's only possibility to get access to credits is through NGOs that work with savings- and loan groups.

One study cited by FAO states that women in Uganda receive only 1 per cent of the available credits in rural areas. Women view the shortage of loans as a significant barrier to improving their life situations, for example by expanding their agricultural activities or purchasing land, new seeds or other necessary inputs. It is noted that in Kenya 4 per cent of women receive credits, while the corresponding figure for men is signi-

ficantly higher, and in Bangladesh women in rural areas must make do with 5 per cent of the loans – despite special credit programs for women. A number of studies from Bangladesh also show that even when women succeed in getting a loan, it is far from certain that they will be able to retain control over the money. It appears instead that the funds often are used to promote men's economic activities.

In order to increase women's access to financial services, to begin with they need to get the legal right to take loans and open bank accounts. Secondly, they must learn what different types of loans and services involve. Therefore, FAO believes that government institutions, finance companies and NGOs should offer basic education in economics. Applications and contracts must also be adapted to women's level of education.

In recent years, insurance for small farmers has begun to emerge. However, such products are often designed with no consideration of gender differences. There are exceptions however, such as in India where one micro-finance institute offers insurance for damages due to weather to members of women's self-help groups. When it comes to illness, death and other events, both insurance and social security systems are beginning to emerge. But, for the most part, women in developing countries are still referred to relatively insecure informal safety nets.

For loans to women to lead to improvements in their situation, it is essential that they control the assets purchased or improved as a result of the loans. However, these are often registered in the name of the husband or another male relative. NGOs that work with loans have therefore started to demand that the assets be registered to the female loan recipients.

Cellular phones and other technology can make it easier for women in remote rural areas who have trouble getting to a bank. Other innovations can also have great significance. In Malawi for example, one bank has made it possible for women without identity papers to open bank accounts. The bank has also introduced new bankcards that permit only the account holder to withdraw money from the account. FAO reports that this has led to many women opening bank accounts.



The majority of female farmers interviewed have limited resources. Their income from farming does not cover their basic needs or those of their families, at least not all the time. 4 out of 10 state that they or someone else in the household has no cash at least once a month, 3 of 10 say that they sometimes have no access to health care, and 2 of 10 do not have enough water. A similar number, 18 per cent, say that they do not have enough food at least once a month. About half of the women have taken loans for their farming, many through savings and loan groups. Of those who have not taken loans, half say they would like to.



Photo: Cecilia Abrahamsson

*”The knowledge I gained from the **Zambian National Farmers Union** is priceless. The study circle material gave me a lot of new knowledge that I can pass on to my neighbours.”*

Martha Banda, age 42, Katete, Zambia.
Farmer and member of the **Zambian National Farmers Union**.

Land the most important asset

Land is the most important asset for households that depend on agriculture for their subsistence. Women’s access to land and control over it is a right. Control over land use is also a determinant in women’s economic independence because land is the foundation for producing food and income. Land also serves as collateral for loans, which can be an advantage but can also pose a problem. The national farmers’ organisation in Mozambique for example, is completely against using land as security for loans as small farmers then risk losing their most important, and sometimes only, asset.

In addition, in most African countries land is a social asset that is important for cultural identity and participation in decision-making and political power.

According to several studies referred to by, among others, *Sida in its Quick Guide to What and How: Increasing women’s access to land*, agricultural production and food security increase when women’s ownership rights or tenure security are enhanced. When women are empowered within the household, domestic violence is also reduced and children’s health improves.

But despite all the data suggesting that women should be granted the same control over land as men, statistics from all parts of the world show a gap in parity. According to FAO’s database on gender and land rights, inequality is greatest in North Africa and the Middle East, where only 5 per cent of those who control farmland are women. In South- and Southeast Asia, the corresponding figure is 12 per cent, in sub-Saharan Africa 15 per cent, and in Latin America and the Caribbean closer to 20 per cent.

Behind these numbers, however, hide large variations. Judging from the available statistics, inequality is even greater in West Africa, where women own or control only a few per cent of the land, than in Southern and Eastern Africa. Of the African countries where SCC works, FAO’s database indicates that when it comes to control of land women in Malawi have the strongest position; approximately one third of those who

control farmland are women. The corresponding figure for Tanzania, Zambia and Mozambique is 20 per cent, according to FAO. In Uganda, only 15 per cent of those who own or control land are women. But the statistics are not complete, and much of the data is 10-15 years old. For some countries, Kenya and Zimbabwe for example, data is lacking entirely.

Men also own more land than women. According to FAO statistics, families with a male head of household have more land to farm than those headed by women. In countries like Bangladesh, Pakistan and Ecuador, households headed by males have more than twice as much land as families with female heads of household.

There are gender differences when it comes to possession of livestock as well, according to FAO’s 2011 annual report. Men own significantly more animals and are also in charge of the larger animals such as cows and horses, while women look after chickens and goats.

The women who took part in SCC’s survey were asked the following question: How do you feel about women owning land? The responses showed that most of the women felt that this was an important issue and that it was good for women to own land. Many noted that, in general, land belongs to men, but that women should have greater possibilities to own land. They pointed out, however, that there are cultural barriers to this. Several women noted the problem of divorce or when the husband dies. According to tradition in some groups the man’s relatives take over the land while his widow and children risk having to leave their homes and livelihoods. ✓



Photo: Tobin Jones

“The job at the coffee cooperative’s processing plant helps me buy food for my family and pay for my children’s schooling. Even if the work is hard sometimes, I’m happy to have a job.”

Janet Mutuku, age 26, has worked for two years at Kasinga Coffee Factory, Kiinyuni, Kenya.

Traditional systems regulate land use

In Eastern and Southern Africa, it is common that all land in the country is formally owned by the State. Since before the time of colonization, however, there exist systems for allocating the arable land to different families, tribes or clans, so-called customary law or traditional rights. This allocation is done through the chiefs, village councils or other mechanisms, and the people given land in this way as a rule feel ownership and count on it being passed down in the family. However, the land is not seen as a commercial asset and cannot be sold.

Despite the distribution of land to white landowners during colonization, the adoption of new laws after independence and privatizations in the 1980s and 1990s, most of the land is still not formally registered but its use is regulated by traditional systems. In some cases, the traditional systems protect the rights of women, for example if the husband dies or in the case of divorce. But the reverse can also apply – that the system discriminates strongly against women. In some countries, like Tanzania, there are now laws that state that a certain percentage of the village council members responsible for allocating agricultural land must be women.

Women in rural areas often do not know what rights they have. Even if they do, it requires strength and courage – and often the help of NGOs or pro-bono lawyers – for them to assert their rights. The situation is made even more difficult by the fact that officials of local authorities and courts do not always know what is provided in the law. Corruption can also mean that representatives of the government and judiciary take the side of the stronger party.

Through colonization, in several African countries white European landowners were assigned some of the best land for large-scale cultivation of export crops such as cotton, tobacco and sugar cane. These large estates are sometimes still there and are governed by their own legislation. This occurs in parallel to the small farms that are regulated by the traditional systems where farmers mainly grow subsistence crops to feed their families.

Often the traditional systems contradict the land laws adopted after a nation’s independence. It also happens that a country’s constitution and laws that regulate gender equality and ownership issues stand in direct contrast to family- and inheritance laws. The issues are complicated and sensitive, and the progress of countries when it comes to aligning laws and regulations has therefore been limited. In this respect, Mozambican legislation that recognizes women’s rights and combines “customary” and “modern” law is an exception. Kenya’s new constitution, which came into force in 2010, provides women the legal right to own and inherit land.

Ownership issues are further complicated by the fact that, as a result of the economic crisis of the 1980s and pressure from the IMF, World Bank and bilateral donors, many African countries began to introduce laws that would provide individual property rights. The reason for this was that the individual ownership was considered necessary to increase the productivity of small farmers. Farmers would be given an incentive to invest and be able to use the land as security for loans.

The granting of individual property rights has gone very slowly, however, and the results have not lived up to the expectations of the proponents. Many experts therefore now believe that it is not the ownership as such that is important, but whether the farmers perceive that their tenure is secure. This is emphasized, for example, in a Sida memo, *Working with Rural Land Issues*. Another question is whether it is appropriate to enable the sale of agricultural land when many small farmers are completely dependent on agriculture and alternative options for making a living are lacking. If land becomes a commodity, there is a risk that small farmers will lose control of the only productive asset they have, for example if in need of cash due to illness, or if the village council, ministry officials, or others are bribed by investors with greater resources. In particular, women and other weaker groups are at risk of losing out with the introduction of individual property rights.

Land issues on the international agenda

Several years ago, the African Union (AU), the African Development Bank and UN Economic Commission for Africa began to draft guidelines for land policy and land reforms in Africa. A finished document was presented in 2008 and adopted by the AU. The guidelines state, among other things, that the patriarchal systems for social organisation that dominate in Africa tend to disfavour women and that discrimination is often reinforced by foreign role models of land laws based on the man as the owner or the one with the right to use the land. Improving women's access to and control over land requires a fundamental redrafting of both traditional systems and modern legislation. The guidelines stress women's rights to own and inherit land, and to take part in the structures that administrate land rights.

The involvement of African farmers' organisations in the drawing up of guidelines was limited. However, the guidelines recognize the importance of civil society's involvement in the drawing up of guidelines for land use. The importance of this issue has risen even more by the growing interest of foreign – and to some degree domestic – investors in land purchases or leasing of land. The phenomenon is often referred to as “land grabbing”, illustrating that it is a matter of land being taken from poor, small farmers.

FAO is currently working on voluntary guidelines for land tenure and, after extensive consultations with other UN agencies, governments, civil society and the private sector, presented a first draft in June 2011. The aim is for the guidelines to serve as support for states and others with respect to the use of land and other natural resources. In addition, the European Union (EU) has appointed a land rights task force, in which Sweden has participated. Sida also has a task force on land issues (see section on *Task force on land rights*, below).

On women's rights to land

A number of points in FAO's annual report for 2011 summarize what needs to be done in order to increase women's access to farmland:

- Discriminatory legislation must be reformed and various laws such as those regulating marriage and inheritance need to be made consistent. In this context, it is also important to consider customary law and work with traditional leaders in order to ensure the protection of women's rights.
- Education for local authorities that work with land issues is needed. Even women themselves must be educated so that they know their rights. Women must also be represented in the institutions and agencies where decisions are made, at both the local and national level.
- Bureaucratic procedures must be adjusted so that they promote gender equality. For example, there must be space for two names on land registration forms to promote joint ownership for men and women.
- Statistics and other data on women's situation must be produced so that the formulations, targets and various measures to promote women's land rights can be adapted to the local conditions.

Climate change the biggest problem

The women interviewed by SCC's partner organisations in the eight countries state climate change as the biggest problem with respect to their farming and living conditions.

Does this mean that climate change is a fact in Southern and East Africa? No, not necessarily.



“Since joining APROMM, I now dare to trust myself and my own abilities. I've decided to take up studying and my dream is to become a doctor.”

Catarina Mateus, Mecanhelas, Mozambique.
Member in APROMM, a women's association that supports vulnerable women.

People often feel that the effects of global warming are already noticeable, mainly as generally more unpredictable weather, longer periods of drought, and heavier rainfalls when the rain does come. But many researchers believe it is still too early to conclude that these are climate change effects and not natural variations in the weather.

The drought in Africa's Horn in 2011 got many people talking about global warming. But the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) concludes that experts still do not know whether the natural disaster is a result of climate change.

Because the threat of climate change is widely known, it is however possible that it is now regarded as a cause of extreme weather conditions of all types – even those that are due to natural variation. There is much talk about the climate threat and small farmers are dependent on the weather and thereby sensitive to changes in climate. This applies also to the women who receive support from SCC's local partner organisations and who participated in the survey.

With few exceptions, scientists also agree that climate effects will soon be tangible. The Fourth Assessment Report of the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) describes, for example the serious effects for African farming of longer droughts and more uncertain precipitation conditions.

The ability of agriculture to feed the world's population in the future, despite climate change, is one of the reasons for initiatives for investing in more organic farming highlighted by UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food, Olivier de Schutter. In a report issued in December 2010, de Schutter concludes that a fundamental shift in agriculture is needed in order to make it more environmentally sustainable, to secure access to food for all people, and to lift small farmers in developing countries out of poverty and malnutrition.

Instead of following agriculture practice that until now has tried to mimic industrial production methods, the goal should be to copy nature, states UN Rapporteur de Schutter. This entails efforts like striving to produce as much nutrition and energy as possible locally, integrating crop and livestock production, and crop diversification.

There is great potential in resource-conserving farming methods of this kind, says de Schutter. According to him, numerous studies from different countries in Africa conducted by various researchers and UN organisations show that harvests can more than double over a period of 3-10 years if these methods are applied.

As many as 90 per cent of the women interviewed think that a change in climate is problematic. People often feel that the weather is less predictable than it used to be, with longer periods of drought and heavier rainfalls when the rain does come.

A shortage of tools and inputs

The female farmers interviewed have a long list of needs and want a number of changes, for example: better access to farm implements, seeds, commercial fertilizers, and herbicides/pesticides.

Studies cited by FAO in its 2011 report show that there are big gaps between women and men when it comes to access to new farming equipment and the use of purchased inputs. In all of the countries studied, households headed by men use more commercial fertilizers, for example. In Ghana, one study showed that while 60 per cent of men used improved seeds, the corresponding figure for women was less than 40 per cent. Reasons for this were that women had less access to land, labour, and advice. A similar study in Kenya reported also lower education among female farmers and less access to credit as important reasons.

Even if ploughs and other implements are jointly owned, as shown in a study from 2010, *Gender discrimination and its impact on income, productivity and technical efficiency: Evidence from Benin*, women sometimes only get access to this equipment once the men are finished with it. Among other things, this can mean that, compared to men, women do not have time to bring in a second harvest.

FAO's annual report states that, if given access to new technology, tools and other aids, women could have more time for productive work – and thereby increase their yields from agriculture. One example applies to water: studies from Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania show that, on average, women and children in rural areas spend about two hours per day fetching water. Wood is another example; efficient stoves can reduce the amount of wood needed by more than half, saving time and energy for the women, as well as being better for the environment. Hoes and other tools adapted to women's needs can save time and make sowing, weeding and other tasks easier.

Access to good seed that is less susceptible to disease and insect infestation as well as knowledge about new labour-saving methods such as till-free farming are also important. For knowledge on seeds, methods and other innovations to reach women extension services need to be geared to their needs. Female advisors may encourage women to talk more openly about their difficulties as well as make it easier for men to accept women's participation in meetings and courses.

Access to technical resources and tools, to herbicides, seeds, and commercial fertilizers is identified as problematic by 70-80 per cent of the women interviewed.

Women disadvantaged in the market

An entire 95 per cent of the women interviewed felt that it was important for them to gain better access to markets to sell their products.

This is often a determining aspect for small farmers – both male and female. Access to land, credit, knowledge and advice, and tools and inputs, create the necessary conditions for production. But in order to get cash and be able to pay for the necessary goods, in addition to food, small farmers also need to sell some of what they produce. The interviews showed that more than half of the women sell at least half of what they produce.

As with other aspects of agriculture, female farmers are often disadvantaged. A study commissioned by FAO investigated coffee-producing households in Uganda. The study included 300 coffee-producing households, of which a third headed by women. The findings showed that these women were poorer, and had fewer coffee plants and less access to labour. This meant that the female farmers had, on average, considerably less coffee to sell than the households did where men were in charge. In addition, the men often chose to transport their coffee to the market where they received more for their coffee.

The women, on the other hand, as a rule sold their coffee to traders who came to their farms. The reason for this was likely that, in comparison to the women, the men usually had bikes enabling them to make their way to the market more easily.

In order for female farmers to get to the markets and other selling locations, it is essential that they acquire information on where prices are best and how to exploit the available opportunities to be better paid. One way to facilitate this may be for them to work together and thereby have bigger quantities to sell and stronger bargaining power. They can then also help each other with transport, negotiations with buyers, etc.

Just over half of the women said that they sell half or more of what they produce. This figure can seem high given the small fields they work. But it is likely due to an urgent need for cash, lack of storage facilities or other reasons for selling a large part of their harvest – then later needing to buy food, often at a higher price, for the rest of the year. Better access to markets and better education are the clearest needs noted by the women interviewed.



Angela has the world's toughest job

Angela Mukababirwa, age 38, lives with her family in western Uganda. As a woman and a mother, she shares her day-to-day lifestyle with millions of other female small farmers around the world. Long days with the responsibility for the children, the home and the farm. But, with SCC support, membership in the local farmers' cooperative has slowly changed her life.

Angela lives with her husband Ivan Mukababirwa, age 44, and their 3 children in a 3-room house. They do not have access to electricity. The family home is situated in a landscape of rolling green hills and you can hear the water rushing in the river nearby. Despite the idyllic background and access to water, the family faces many challenges every day. Getting to the highest situated plots of land can take hours, and everything must be carried up – and down. This is a heavy work when it is time for harvest.

Sale of coffee beans and cotton to the cooperative

Both Ivan and Angela work as teachers but their wages are not enough. Alongside their teaching jobs, they work as farmers. In January, schools are closed and Angela spends all her time on the farm and doing household chores. Together, they have 4.5 hectares of land.

– We grow bananas, corn and beans for ourselves; the coffee and cotton, we sell to our cooperative, says Angela.

Ivan and Angela both belong to the local Buthale Cooperative. Membership enables them to sell coffee beans and cotton at a better price than in the local market.

– Because all of the members sell their coffee beans to the cooperative, we have a better chance of negotiating higher prices, says Ivan.

New knowledge inspires

Many women in the village are responsible for the housework and the farm. It is heavy work from dawn to dusk. With SCC's support, the Buthale Cooperative has offered its members several courses and study circles. This has given members the opportunity to learn more about agricultural development, marketing and gender equality. Angela has taken part in study circles and at the same time inspired other young women to become members.



Angela goes to the river to get water several times a day.
– As women, we pull the heaviest load. We're responsible for the children, the home, and the farm. But in our family, we all help out with the housework and the farm now, says Angela.

Dreams of expanding her cotton crop

To be able to invest in new micro-enterprises and in the members' existing farms, the cooperative invites its members to join a savings and loan group – something that has changed the family's life. Both Angela and Ivan save money every month. Saving has helped them to ensure that they have enough money to pay the children's school fees, and has also allowed them to invest in new projects.

– We've started a small company on the side, and we've built a house in the nearby town of Kasese and are in the process of building one close to where we live. By renting out the houses, we can make some extra money, says Angela.

The family wants to use the money they save to buy more land and expand their farm.

– This year is the first year we grow cotton. Our dream is to become good cotton growers and be able to live off our farming, says Angela.

Text: Cecilia Abrahamsson Photo: Edward Echwalu



The illustration shows words frequently used in the open answers from the interviews with African women.

Source: United Minds

The participants

Seven out of 10 women interviewed have only 5 acres (approx. 2 hectares) of land or less to farm. The most common crops grown are corn and beans.

Just over one third of the women have 5-9 years of education, but there are also many who have no schooling at all.

Almost 70 per cent are married, 20 per cent are widowed, and the rest are divorced or have never been married. For the most part, their households consist of 6-9 people.

The women's responses

Gaining knowledge and the opportunity to borrow money are the most important reasons cited for being a member of a cooperative, local farmers' organisation, savings and loan groups, or other SCC-sponsored organisations.

Climate change was pointed out as the biggest problem of all. Ninety per cent of women see it is as very or somewhat problematic.

An almost equal number believe that the cooperative or farmers' association not offering adequate support is a problem. Six out of 10 say that women's lack of influence in the cooperative or farmers' association is a problem.

When it comes to the most important changes needed, most women responded that they want better access to training for female farmers and better access to markets for female farmers to sell their products.

Other changes seen as important are: better access to health care, more government programs to support female farmers, access to farm implements or other technical resources, mea-

sures against climate change, opportunities to save and borrow money, and more support from the cooperative or farmers' association.

"Education is the best thing I can give my children so that they can create a good life for themselves in the future."

Rose, age 49, Kenya

"It's important that the children have the opportunity to go to school so that they learn to read and write. It gives them the opportunity to get a job."

Fatima, age 42, Mozambique

Equality – a right and a way to boost production

Women do half of the agricultural work

Equality is a right established in the UN Declaration of Human Rights, as well as in a long list of other international declarations and conventions. Prohibition of discrimination based on gender is included in both the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

In 1978, the UN adopted a special Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Among other things, it contains a special paragraph, Article 14, on women in rural areas, which says that states must take into account the particular problems faced by women in rural areas. Among other rights, these women among other rights, shall have the right to training and education, credit and loans, equal treatment in land- and agrarian reform, and to organize self-help groups and cooperatives.

A number of conventions from ILO, UN's labour organisation, also address women's rights at work, for example, the demand for equal pay and non-discrimination.

From a rights perspective, however, FAO's annual report for 2011 is toned down – despite the theme of women and agriculture. The report focuses instead on increases in agricultural production that could be achieved in the developing countries if female farmers had the same opportunities as men. This is reportedly a deliberate strategy by those responsible for equality issues at FAO. At most of the agricultural ministries around the world, women's rights are not a high-priority issue. But if we can show that investing in women can increase the access to food, the interest in equality will increase.

FAO's annual report presents some new information and statistics on women and agriculture. This data partially contradicts the figures earlier seen in the debate, but which have now been found to be outdated or incorrect. Based on studies of the use of time and other data, FAO concludes that women make up 43 per cent of the agricultural workforce in developing countries. In sub-Saharan Africa and South and East Asia, the number is higher, with women performing half of the agricultural labour in these countries. There are, however, big differences between countries, and in Mozambique and Lesotho, for example, women are responsible for more than 60 per cent of the agricultural work.

The number of women working in agriculture has risen sharply in recent years in many countries. Reasons for this include the fact that many men are migrating to the cities and

the spread of HIV/AIDS, which means that women must take over the work when men become ill or die. A common figure has been that women stand for 80 per cent of the production of food in Africa. FAO now considers this figure as holding little meaning due to problems of definition, and because the cultivation of food crops requires different resources, labour, land, capital, etc., which are controlled by both men and women.

100 million fewer malnourished people

According to the UN, 1.4 billion people in the world live on less than 1.25 dollars per day, meaning that they are considered as living in *absolute* or *extreme* poverty, and an estimated 925 million people are malnourished. Almost 3 out of 4 of the world's poorest people live in rural areas and most make their living from farming or other agriculture-related activities. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has estimated that 70 per cent of the poorest people in the world are women. This means that about 700 million women and girls in rural areas are living in absolute poverty.

Many studies show that the productivity of fields controlled by women is lower than that of land cultivated by men. FAO found 27 studies that compare the productivity of female and male farmers, most of them from Africa. Most of the studies showed that male farmers had 20-30 per cent higher harvests. They also showed, however, that the gap was due to the men having better access to labour, information, inputs, and machines. One study in Malawi, for example, showed that women got up to 20 per cent lower corn harvests from their fields. But, if they had the same amount of commercial fertilizer as used by men the difference disappeared. Research from Kenya and Ghana confirm these findings.

FAO has estimated what would happen if women in poor countries had the opportunity to cultivate the land on the same terms as men. These estimates apply to about 35 countries for which there are statistics on how large a percentage of the agriculture is controlled by women and the percentage of malnourished people. They show that if the harvests of female farmers could increase by 20-30 per cent, that is, to the same level as men's food production, the food produced would be enough to reduce the number of malnourished people by 12-17 per cent.

This would mean that 100-150 million fewer people in the world would go hungry. FAO points out that in the long run, the increase in productivity would also lead to an increase in the demand for labour and locally produced goods and services.



”Education has made me stronger”

Juliana Kavindu Kingoto, age 41, lives in Kisesini on the outskirts of Kenya’s capital, Nairobi. Through support from SCC, Juliana has been able to take part in courses arranged by her women’s cooperative. There have been sessions where the participants talked about the equality of men and women. The discussions led to the empowerment of women both in their families and in the organisations they belong to. Juliana’s new knowledge has led to big changes for her family.

The insights gained from the education led to Juliana and her husband Josephat Ngila Mwela starting, for the first time, to make decisions together about how they would spend the family’s money – a big step toward increased equality. The most important thing for the couple right now is paying the school fees for their three children. Josephat and Juliana owe the school money, but are still hopeful about the future. They have a dream to build a better house and install electricity.

– The training has made me and everyone else in the cooperative who participated, stronger. We now know that we can change our situations ourselves, says Juliana.

The family owns a small farm that they previously could earn a living from. In recent years, long periods of severe drought have become increasingly common. Many people in East Africa testify to the climate having become less predictable. The SCC has also observed the impact that drought has on people in rural areas who participate in the projects operating there. Juliana and Josephat are forced to buy vegetables from the market because they can no longer grow their own food, and it is expensive for them.

The women in Juliana’s cooperative have for long manufactured and sold handicraft products as an extra source of income. Thanks to training on how to reach new markets, joining Fair Trade, and how to manage the bookkeeping, their sales have improved significantly.

– Membership in the cooperative has meant that I’ve gained a more stable income, but it has also made me see how important it is for women to have more of a say, says Juliana.

Text: Cecilia Abrahamsson Photo: Tobin Jones

Social and economic development

If differences between the sexes disappeared in agriculture, it would also lead to other social and economic gains, notes FAO.

Data from Africa, Asia and Latin America compiled in FAO's annual report clearly show that entire families benefit from women gaining more power and status in their households. Extensive research shows that when women are given greater influence over economic decisions, families allocate more money for food, health and medical care, and education. Numerous studies going back many years also link higher incomes and women's greater influence in the family to better nutritional standards for the children. This, in turn, enhances children's health and performance in school. A recent study from Malawi indicates that as women's access to credit increases, so does household spending on food and the food security of young girls. The same does not apply when men's access to loans increases.

The fact that inequality between the sexes is greater in South Asia than in Africa helps to explain why malnutrition among children is more common there than in sub-Saharan Africa, concludes FAO, referring to a research report from 2003. This is the case despite countries in Asia being more developed, from an economic standpoint, than many African nations south of the Sahara.

Greater gender equality can also have long-term effects on economic growth in that girls get better education thereby increasing the human capital. Improving education for girls also has other positive effects: they have fewer children and give birth later.

Most effective way of reducing poverty

Investing in women is not merely a matter of human rights. It is also important for increasing agricultural production, reducing the number of malnourished people in the world, and improving children's health, education and nutritional standards.

Investment in agriculture in developing countries as a whole, that is, in both male and female farmers, is important as well. According to the World Bank's annual report for 2008 focused on agriculture, economic growth in agriculture is two to four times more effective than growth in other sectors such as industry or services, if the desired goal is to reduce poverty.

In 2010, new studies showed that agriculture is even more important for the reduction of poverty than earlier thought. In poor, low-income countries, growth in agriculture is five times more effective when it comes to reducing poverty among the poorest, compared to growth in other sectors. In sub-Saharan Africa, agriculture can be ten times more effective in lifting the very poorest people out of poverty than growth that occurs in other areas.

These are the conclusions of the Nordic Africa Institute in a summary and discussion of new research. The research builds, in turn, on the results of empirical studies from close to 80 countries over the period 1980 to 2002.

The research shows that growth in agriculture has the greatest effect on poverty reduction in the poorest nations. The most important of all is to invest in small-scale farming in these

countries. Growth in this sector creates increased economic activity in several ways:

- An increased demand for inputs and resources to process and refine agricultural products.
- Increased consumption when the farming families spend their increased earnings primarily on locally produced goods and on education and health care.
- An increased number of job opportunities outside agriculture such as in crafts and services.
- Lower food prices due to the increased production, which increases the productivity of farmworkers and others with strenuous physical labour in that they can afford better food.

Thus, many of the positive effects on poverty from growth in agriculture do not occur in the agriculture sector but spread like ripples on the water to other labour-intensive sectors in rural areas, the Nordic Africa Institute states in the summary.

The research also shows that growth in agriculture is most effective for the very poorest, that is, people considered to live in absolute poverty and who get by on a dollar a day or less. For those earning two dollars a day, economic development in other sectors is more important.

In order for the effects to be as large as possible, the resources should also be as evenly distributed as possible. In countries with extremely unequal distribution of resources, the effects of growth in agriculture for the poor are not as great. The reason for this is that the benefits of growth fall mainly on those who own land or other productive assets such as large-scale farmers.

Rising prices lead to competition for land

In the 1980s, the investments of African countries in agriculture fell dramatically as a result of the deep economic crises they found themselves in. Extension services to farmers ceased, state purchasing organisations were privatized, research was sidelined, etc. International actors, above all the IMF and World Bank, argued that the private sector would fill the void left behind by the State. But private actors were to a large extent lacking and the result was instead stagnation or decline.

The situation was exacerbated by a severe reduction in support to agriculture. According to statistics from OECD's Development Assistance Committee (DAC), by the middle of the first decade of the 2000s, this support made up only 3.4 per cent of the total development cooperation. About 20 years earlier, the corresponding figure had been about 12 per cent.

In 2002, however, the African nations adopted the *Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme* (CAADP). The countries commit therein to analyse the opportunities and barriers to agriculture, to identify priority investments, and to consult with the private sector, farmers' organisations and other stakeholders. Even if implementation has been slow, many countries have now implemented these measures. Under the CAADP, every country must allocate at least 10 per cent of their national budget to agricultural development, and strive for yearly increases in agricultural productivity of 6 per cent.



May Chireya with her daughter Choice, age 38, and her son Trinity, age 5.

An old dream becoming reality

The Hazuidihope vegetable garden is situated in southern Zimbabwe. The garden forms a verdant respite from the otherwise arid landscape. This is where vegetable grower May Chireya, age 61, lives and works.

– We’ve been hit hard by the droughts. Every year, we have to go further and further to fetch wood and water, says May.

Seven years ago, there was severe drought in the region. It was then that May and 13 other farmers started the Hazuidihope garden society.

– Because we didn’t receive any support from the government and didn’t want to be dependent on assistance, we decided to address the problem ourselves, says May.

It took several months to prepare the land. Today, the society’s food crops include tomatoes, bananas, carrots and spinach.

– The harvest provides our families with food on the table and whatever is left over we sell to a restaurant or in the local market. Through the support of SCC, we’ve learned how to run a horticulture society. We’ve also received training in how to manage the bookkeeping, how to become entrepreneurs,

and learned to grow drought-tolerant cassava, May explains.

When the area was hit by severe drought again two years later, the horticulture society had grown cassava and was able to give it to all the villagers who needed something to eat.

– Two years ago, I also joined the Shanduko savings and loan group that was started with the support of SCC. Now that I can save and borrow money, I don’t need to worry about lacking money to pay school fees, and to buy seeds and medicine. I have three children and six grandchildren that I help to support, says May.

May has also started breeding rabbits, which provides the family with extra income.

– Receiving training and being a part of a functioning savings and loan group has allowed me to realize my dreams. I’ve started to build the brick house that I’ve always wanted. And most importantly, I can pay for medicine and school fees for my granddaughter Beatrice, age 14, who is disabled and lives at a boarding school many kilometres away from home, May concludes.

Text: Cecilia Abrahamsson Photo: Mnatsi Zhou



Photo: Tobin Jones

“By selling baskets, I get money so that I can cope with my household costs.”

Muia Muendo, age 40, member of Kikuthuko Women's Group, Kisesini, Kenya.

The latest figures, in most cases from 2009, show that 7 countries allocate 10 per cent or more of their national budget to agriculture. With the exception of Malawi and Ethiopia, all of these countries are in West Africa. An even greater number of countries, 17, attained growth of at least 6 per cent in 2009. The countries included Tanzania, Rwanda, Mozambique, Malawi, Lesotho, Angola, Namibia, Botswana and Ethiopia as well as a number of countries in West and North Africa.

The world food crisis of 2007-2008, which raised market prices for food and led to food riots in dozens of countries, created expectations that donors would recognize the importance of agriculture and increase their aid. However, despite a series of international meetings, speeches and promises from politicians, and the creation of a few new agricultural support funds, the actual increase has been minimal. OECD DAC's latest statistics show that the aid from DAC countries to agriculture in 2009 represented only 4.5 per cent of the total international development cooperation.

Warnings regarding the seriousness of the situation are not lacking. At the FAO conference in June 2011, for example, former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan (now chairman of the *Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa*, AGRA), stated that world food production needs to increase by 70 per cent by 2050, when global population is estimated to climb to over 9 billion. Against the background of world market prices, which rose in 2011 to the same heights as in 2007-2008, and the fact that an estimated 900 million or more people in the world are malnourished, Annan also urged the countries of the world to unite and ensure food security.

Annan made a call for initiatives on the part of FAO to improve control of the world's food stocks and to compile more accurate information on them in an effort to avoid fluctuations in the market and speculation. He called for fairer trade rules and subsidies to agriculture, and pointed out that the OECD countries spend about 380 billion dollars a year on agricultural subsidies in rich countries – according to rough estimates, close to 80 times more than world aid to agriculture.

Annan also criticized large-scale land investments that do not consider the local communities and provide them with new opportunities. Land investments are one of several trends that show how competition for agricultural land in Africa is intensifying. The cultivation of crops for the production of biofuels also contributes to increasing the pressure on agricultural land. In June 2011, the agricultural ministers from the G20 countries met to discuss food prices and to adopt an action plan. This plan was criticized by, among others, UN Special Rapporteur for the Right to Food Olivier de Schutter and the *International Food Policy Research Institute* (IFPRI), however, for being too vague and for not identifying clear priorities. They called for things such as measures to curb the production of biofuels. But the G20 ministers were content to note that they need to continue to monitor the issue. De Schutter disappointedly stated that the commercial interests in major biofuel-producing countries such as USA and Brazil made it impossible to come up with anything more concrete.

Swedish development aid to agriculture and gender equality

Policy documents stress the role of women

Several of the policy documents and strategies governing Swedish development aid raise issues dealing with agriculture and gender equality.

The policy for gender equality and the role and rights of women, which applies 2010-2015, establishes four areas for aid to focus on, namely political participation and influence, economic empowerment and working conditions, sexual and reproductive health and rights, and women's security.

The important role played by women in agriculture is emphasized. Sweden will therefore work to strengthen women's role in and livelihoods from food production, agriculture and sustainable natural resource management. Sweden will furthermore strengthen women and girls' rights to use, inherit and own land and other property, and promote women's entrepreneurship and possibilities to organize.

The policy for economic growth for 2010-2014 covers agriculture and notes that a large percentage of people living in poverty are economically active in agriculture and in the informal economy. Initiatives that have an impact in these areas are therefore of particular importance. The policy states that women should be given the opportunity to take part in growth processes on the same terms as men.

According to the policy for environmental and climate issues, which also applies 2010-2014, one of the areas that Sweden will focus on is access to food and the sustainable use of ecosystem services. This policy concludes that women's right to ownership and use of land should be supported by, for example, strengthened legislation in this area.

The biggest initiatives undertaken by Sweden in the agricultural sector are in Kenya and Mozambique, with disbursements of SEK 81 and 67 million, respectively, in 2010. Sweden also supports the agricultural sectors in Ethiopia, Zambia, Rwanda, Burkina Faso and Mali. In addition, support to the agricultural sector in Liberia is planned.

The government's appropriation directive to Sida for 2011 included a mandate to analyse the experience gained from work in agriculture and food security. In its response, Sida describes a number of on-going and completed initiatives such as the NALEP program in Kenya that offers advisory services, and a rural development program in Ethiopia's Amhara region. Global and regional initiatives are also described such as grants to research within the *Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research* (CGIAR) and support to an institute that works with insect research in Kenya, and a network for the application of biotechnology that includes developing crops that can withstand climate changes in East Africa.

In the analysis of lessons learnt, Sida states that agriculture in the developing countries faces big challenges. Some of the areas of particular importance for increasing productivity are mentioned.

Sida points out that initiatives should focus on small-scale farming. Experience from a completed program in Zambia shows that it is important to involve entire households in efforts to improve families' food security and at the same time develop their market thinking. Furthermore, initiatives regarding women's access to information and knowledge, and to land and other natural resources, are important.

Sida highlights that increased productivity in agriculture requires ensured access to land, regardless of whether customary law or modern legislation is applied. The completed program in Ethiopia shows that registration of user rights – and therefore better security of tenure – combined with access to credit, led to an increased disposition to invest. Access to markets is another important issue that was part of a now-completed aid program for organic producers in East Africa.

Investments in research and knowledge are necessary to increase productivity and adapt agriculture to climate change. According to Sida, the program in Kenya has showed that improved extension services to small-scale agriculture could lead to a substantial increase in production and incomes.

OECD countries' protection of their own markets negatively affects small-scale farmers in the developing countries and contributes to the erosion of incentives for their agriculture production, Sida notes. The under-investment of recent decades, both from governments and private actors, along with reduced development cooperation, has also contributed to stagnation of the sector. If the Millennium Development Goals to reduce poverty and hunger are to be achieved by 2015, more investments are needed.

Large-scale investment in agricultural land in Africa provides job opportunities and incomes, but the risks are also large such as violation of small farmers' rights, lack of transparency and corruption, says Sida. Development assistance actors therefore have a role to play when it comes to supporting positive initiatives and reducing the risks for the poor.

Decline in Swedish development aid to agriculture

According to Sida's response to the appropriation directive, Sida's support to agriculture and forestry fell by about one quarter between 2008 and 2010. Figures from Sida's statistics department show that the reduction is even bigger if we go back another year in time. According to Sida statistics, support to agriculture reached its highest since 2000 in 2007, when just over SEK 1 billion was disbursed. In 2010, this figure dropped to SEK 663 million. This means a decrease of about 33 per cent.

Sida reports that the reduction is not deliberate and that it is hopefully only temporary.

Some causes of the decline are, according to Sida, that agriculture is a difficult area of work and that the support to regional initiatives was cut down sharply in connection with the reduction of development aid after Sweden's GDP fell during the financial crisis.

Another reason is that the government decided that land strategies governing development cooperation with each separate country should only contain two or three prioritized sectors. The competition between sectors thus means that agriculture is not always included in their strategies.

The members of OECD's Development Assistance Committee (DAC) submit annual information on their assistance. The information is entered into a database that can be accessed via the OECD website. At the time of writing, the statistics available are for up to and including 2009.

Similarly to Sida's figures, OECD's numbers show a sharp decline in Swedish support to agriculture since 2007. The decrease amounts to about 20 per cent per year. The figures provided by OECD are, however, far lower than those stated by Sida itself. Much of the difference can be explained in that Sida includes programs for rural development in agricultural support. These programs can also include investments, for example, in infrastructure and education, but Sida sees this as primarily a matter of agriculture. OECD/DAC, on the other hand, categorizes rural development as so-called "multisector" aid.

The new web-based information service on Swedish development aid, *Open Aid*, indicates that 2 per cent of Swedish support goes to agriculture. According to *Open Aid*, the amount that was allocated to agriculture and forestry in 2010 was just under SEK 720 million.

OECD statistics on how bilateral aid is distributed lists 2.5 per cent of Swedish development aid directed to agriculture in 2009. At 2.5 per cent, Sweden falls below the average for DAC countries, which is 4.7 per cent. According to DAC statistics, the other Nordic countries allocated between 6 and 8 per cent of their aid to agriculture in 2009.

Additional to the Sida statistics and Open Aid figures reported, is the support to agriculture through Swedish NGOs. Sida's response to the appropriation directive states that agricultural support through the so-called "framework organisations" totalled just over SEK 100 million in 2010.

There is also aid channelled through Sweden's Ministry for Foreign Affairs. A few years ago, the government introduced a so-called "special investment" in food security of SEK 100 million. In 2010, 40 million of this went to the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences. The remaining 60 million went to the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa. AGRA works to develop agriculture in Africa through broad initiatives involving research, inputs, land issues, access to markets, agricultural policy, etc. The organisation is led by Africans and has extensive contacts and networks in the African countries but has been criticized for having an overly technical approach and for contributing to an increased use of commercial fertilizers and herbicides. Funding from Sweden is used for initiatives in Zambia, Malawi and Rwanda and aimed at increasing food security and incomes for small farmers, especially women.

For 2011, the government increased this special fund to SEK 225 million, which went mainly to African organisations and universities. The focus is on increased productivity and functioning markets for food production. Initiatives to enhance women's status and influence in the food sector are specially stressed.

Finally, Sweden contributes to the various UN agencies that work with food and agriculture issues. FAO receives budget support of SEK 40 million, in addition to special funding for various activities, including 130 million over three years to strengthen the developing countries' capacity to handle climate change, and to protect ecosystems and preserve biodiversity. The UN International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) receives funding from donor countries every three years. Presently, Sweden provides SEK 120 million per year. The UN World Food Program (WFP) works with food aid, mainly in conflict situations and natural disasters. In 2011, WFP received SEK 550 million from Sweden.



Photo: Tobin Jones

"My job at the coffee cooperative's processing plant gives me the income I need to cover my household costs. I encourage more women to become members of the cooperative so that they, too, can support themselves on their own and their children can go to school."

Irene Wambua, age 28, has worked at Kasinga Coffee Factory in Kiinyuni, Kenya, for one year.

A call for greater sustainability

Agriculture must undergo fundamental changes and become more sustainable. We are pursuing initiatives that work toward this new priority. This is what the Swedish Cooperative Centre, the Swedish Society for Nature Conservation and the Church of Sweden wrote in a letter to the Minister for International Development Cooperation Gunilla Carlsson.

One of the things requested in the letter, is support from the government's special investment in food security for a program developed by SCC. The purpose of the program is to enable 19 farmers' organisations in eight African countries to assist their members to improve their income and livelihoods, to protect their rights, and to get organised.

In the letter to the minister, the three organisations point out a clear trend in the international debate on agricultural development regarding a call for fundamental change toward more sustainable production methods in agriculture. An interdisciplinary report from 2008, *Agriculture at a Crossroads*, is one example.

The report was produced by 400 experts on behalf of the World Bank and the UN. 58 countries, Sweden included, have endorsed the report, the conclusions of which show that increased investments in agricultural development and a fundamental shift toward more sustainable production methods are needed to ensure that food and global resources will be sufficient for the increasing population. The report also underlines the need for initiatives that, to a greater extent than until now, are carried out in collaboration with small-scale growers and based on their requirements.

Another report, *The Future of Food and Farming: Challenges and Choices for Global Sustainability*, from the British government, calls for a broader set of goals than merely to increase returns and a strategy for "sustainable intensification". UN Special Rapporteur for the Right to Food Olivier De Schutter is pursuing a similar line (see above, *Climate change the biggest problem*). The same applies to UN's agricultural development fund, IFAD, and UNEP, the UN Environmental Programme.

Imbalanced equality in Sida-funded initiatives

In the first half of 2010, Sida commissioned an evaluation of the gender equality perspective of five Sida-sponsored agricultural programs in Kenya, Zambia, Ethiopia, Mozambique and Nicaragua. The evaluation showed that no systematic integration of gender equality had taken place in any of the initiatives. Some activities, however, did include the involvement and empowerment of women in the programs. This was particularly true of the program in Zambia, where agricultural extension services targeted men, women and children, which led to higher productivity and improved food security. The Zambian government was not interested in taking over the model when the Swedish support ended in 2008, but Sida commissioned an additional study of the program and hopes that it can serve as a model in other countries.

The recommendations from the evaluation stressed, among other points, the importance of not only conducting equality analyses but also ensuring that they are used to produce gender-specific data on the target group and to develop mechanisms for a follow-up of the result. It was further recommended that Sida's gender experts require a clearer operational mandate as well as more knowledge on issues that affect women and agriculture.

The action plan for how the shortcomings pointed out in the evaluation will be addressed has taken more than a year. The reasons for the delay are said to be mainly the reorganisation and personnel cuts at Sida. The action plan emphasizes that the gender advisors have been given a clearer mandate in Sida's

new organisation. However, operational guidelines are needed to integrate the equality perspective; it is a matter of how this should be done, not whether equality should be included in all initiatives. In Sida's previous organisation, this was not as clear, but the government's prioritizing of the gender issue means that it has been given more importance. Sida is therefore developing practical methodological tools that can be used, for example, in the formulation of goals and indicators.

Sida employees feel that the observed weaknesses in the evaluation reflect general difficulties of working with integration or mainstreaming issues. It takes time to raise awareness and knowledge. Gender equality and other issues that are to be mainstreamed into all activities and concern everyone tend, in addition, to lead to no one really being responsible.

Task force on land rights

Since the right to land is an important issue, Sida has had an internal task force on land issues. The aim of the group has been to take a holistic approach to issues dealing with land, and to identify what Sida can and should do in this area. The task force commissioned a survey of the initiatives in the area that Sida contributed to in the 2000s, and a summary of conclusions and lessons learnt. The survey shows that just over half of the initiatives implemented concerned land administration and registration, often promoting a shift to individual property rights. Two thirds of these initiatives were in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. Another common type of initiative, which applies primarily to Africa, involves promoting a decen-

tralization of land administration and management of other natural resources. Very few initiatives have gender equality or human rights as a primary focus. There are also few initiatives that deal with traditional systems of land rights.

The task force on land issues has produced a fact sheet on women's rights to land and how Sida could work with this issue. The fact sheet presents a long list of possible initiatives to support women when it comes to drawing up guidelines for land issues, legislation and its implementation, dispute resolution, and land administration. Examples include support to women's groups to participate in the drafting of reforms, assistance for local studies on the effects of existing legislation, and educating women as well as lawyers and officials, on the implications of new laws and regulations.

Market and investments

As noted, large-scale land investments, so-called land grabbing, mainly by foreign companies in Africa, are creating concern. A number of studies from 2010 point out a series of problems: investors primarily turn to countries with inadequate legislation and weak institutions, lack of transparency, weak bargaining position that often makes small farmers the losers in transactions, and corruption risks.

One example of the complexity of the problem is Mozambique, where a number of years ago Sida supported the establishment of the Malonda Foundation in the province of Niassa. The foundation's aim includes promoting domestic and foreign

investment in the province's forestry sector. According to Sida's website, Malonda has resulted in large areas used to plant forest, which provides timber and jobs. But a 2008 study conducted by the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences shows a number of problems. The majority of the people affected lack information, they have not been consulted in accordance with applicable law, and they feel threatened by the investors who restrict their access to the land they need for their farming.

However, within the framework of Sida's program to draw advantage of business activities to fight poverty, *Business for Development* (B4D), Sida would like to investigate whether donors can help small farmers to have an influence on land investments and thereby get more out of them. The thinking is that the large-scale investments will occur regardless of what other parties involved say, and that it is therefore better to try to establish a dialogue with the companies.

In a number of studies, Sida will start mapping out which companies are investing, what demands on social and ecological sustainability should be made, etc., with the ultimate goal to find out what is demanded from the farmers to meet the market.

In Liberia, Sida intends to launch a new program that will benefit small farmers, with a special focus on women and young people. The initiatives will be based on market thinking, and that the poor be empowered in their role as producers and entrepreneurs. At the same time, the aim is for the private sector to become better at meeting the needs of the poor.

Swedish Cooperative Centre's work with development cooperation and gender equality

Gender Equality – an integral part of all projects

Nearly one billion women in the world live in extreme poverty, close to 700 million of them live in rural areas. Agriculture is vital for them in order to put food on the table and earn an income from the harvest.

For more than 50 years, the Swedish Cooperative Centre has worked with poor farmers in the world. Gender equality has long been an integral part of every project. The work method applied is help to self-help, such as in the form of education that enables small farmers to live off their farming, and micro-finance projects that give poor people the opportunity to save and borrow money.

Poverty is not just about lack of money, but about having scarcity of opportunities. SCC therefore urges on to increase people's power and influence, and to strengthen women's role in society.

Improving living conditions for female farmers in poor countries is a matter of human rights. Many studies also show that gender equality is very important for agricultural development and food security.

More women in leadership positions

The Swedish Cooperative Centre always works with on-site organisations so that the projects will continue to thrive. Many of the farmers' organisations are still dominated by men, but SCC is working to change this and is starting to see results – both within the farmers' organisations and in cooperatives and other associations.

A concrete example of this is basic education for women. When women are given the opportunity to learn to read and write, their ability to make their voices heard and have influence within the organisation also increases. An important issue is the creation of opportunities for women to become members in farmers' organisations and cooperatives, something that can still pose a problem today as existing bylaws sometimes stipulate that one must own land to be able to become a member.

SCC also concentrates on leadership training for women and training in entrepreneurship to enable them to be able to increase their incomes, something that yields results both in the organisations and in the relations between men and women.

In the Zambia National Farmers' Union (ZNFU), for example, the number of women leaders in the districts grew

from 21 to 24 per cent between 2009 and 2010. The number of female members in ZNFU increased from 37 per cent in 2009 to 44 per cent in 2010.

At the last annual meeting, the bylaws of *Nyakatonzi Farmers' Union* (NFU) in Uganda were amended so that there must be three women on the board next time a new executive is appointed. Some of the cooperatives affiliated to NFU now have women on the boards.

Through shared savings and small loans, the savings and loan associations make it possible for many women to develop small projects and business ideas.

Where women have been able to increase their incomes thanks to savings and loan associations, they are met with greater respect from their husbands. In some places, the introduction of labour-saving cultivating methods and tools has meant that women now have more time to devote to activities that provide income. In other places, education in gender equality for both men and women has led to the men taking more responsibility for traditionally female chores and increased the cooperation between men and women. This has both led to better relations within families and yielded positive effects for the work in agriculture.

Since land and the right to land are important issues, even more significant due to the growing large-scale investments, SCC Southern Africa has initiated collaboration with *Women and Land in Zimbabwe* (WLZ), an organisation that focuses on women's land rights. WLZ's work mainly involves support to other farmers' organisations when it comes to strengthening women's position and lobbying for women's rights to land. If Sida grants the funds, work will commence on a new program in Zambia, the aim of which will include work on land issues and tenure. SCC has also supported gender equality training for government agriculture extension agents in Zimbabwe. In some parts of the country, this has resulted in efforts now being made to recruit more female advisors.

In Kenya, there is a project with a goal that includes efforts to involve more young people in agriculture. It is expected that education and advice on how to run effective business operations will help to raise the status of farming and inspire more young women and men to take an interest in the occupation. In Rwanda, farmers are trained to move from subsistence farming to activities that can provide an income from the harvest, among other things through counselling in bookkeeping and marketing.



“We have evolved as a family.”

Margret Biira

– We work together and there is no longer women's work and men's work, says Margret Biira.

“We share the work and make joint decisions”

Through their membership in the local cooperative, Margret and Zakalia have been given the opportunity to attend a course on gender equality, training that has changed the family's day-to-day life.

– We share the household chores now. We work together, there is no longer women's work and men's work, we are a family, says Margret.

In the village of Buthale in western Uganda, near the Democratic Republic of the Congo border, Margret Biira and Zakalia Muhindo live with their five children. The family grows coffee, bananas, beans and potatoes. The rolling green hills form a picturesque backdrop to the family home and it is hard to imagine that most families in the region live on less than two dollars a day. To gain new knowledge and the opportunity to work with their neighbours, both Margret and Zakalia joined the Buthale Cooperative Society. In addition to knowledge on new and improved farming techniques, they have more time for the family.

– After the gender equality training, the roles in our family changed. We help each other now. If Margret goes

to the river to get water, I prepare the food, says Zakalia.

But it is not just the division of labour at home that has changed. Last year, Margret became responsible for women's issues in the cooperative. She takes part in courses and inspires other young women to become members. All of the decisions that affect the family are now made together.

– We take care of the budget together, decide how we should divide the costs and what we should invest in, says Margret.

Neighbours and curious villagers have often laughed at the family's new roles. But Zakalia and Margret have shown that the change has been positive for the whole family. Incomes have increased and the conflicts are fewer.

– The neighbours have noticed that we've evolved as a family, and now they are slowly taking after us, says Zakalia.

But most women in Buthale still live a different reality. They alone are responsible for the children, the home and the farm. Not infrequently, they must also deal with domestic violence.

The family: Margret Biira, age 36, Zakalia Muhindo, 42, Benon, 15, Boaz, 13, Babra, 10, Bernard, 7 and Brifin, 4.

Margret Biira and Zakalia Muhindo are members of Buthale Cooperative Society, which in turn is one of 63 member cooperatives in SCC's partner organisation, the Nyakatonzi Growers' Cooperative Union. Nyakatonzi is a farmer-owned cooperative that educates its member cooperatives in areas such as improved farming techniques and marketing. The union also offers storage facilities and leases farm machinery. Margret and Zakalia are one of 60 families who have attended the gender equality training, where participant families spent two days discussing typical male and female roles. They also shared their hopes and dreams. After the training, major changes have occurred in the division of daily chores in most of the families. The families now serve as good examples for neighbours and other villagers.



Changing the situation requires that the entire family is involved in the change process. In most cases, however, the few available resources are directed only to men.

– The government needs to invest more in women. When resources are made available, it's always the men who get them. We need more initiatives that target women, says Margret.

Through the cooperative, Margret has had the opportunity to join a savings and loan group. Her savings and the fact that they now prepare the budget together have enabled the family to invest in new projects.

– We take small loans and buy coffee beans from our neighbours, coffee beans that we then sell to the cooperative. The extra income allows us to pay all the children's school fees. We are also able to eat meat twice a week, something that used to be only a dream, adds Margret.

>> Extra income from the coffee beans allows them to pay the school fees for Boaz, age 13, and his four brothers and sisters.
> After the cooperative's gender equality training, Margret Biira and Zakalia Muhindo make all of the decisions that affect the family, their finances and the future, together.

Text: Cecilia Abrahamsson Photo: Edward Echwalu

Sustainable agriculture

SCC's policy for environmental sustainability implies that all support to rural development should strive for sustainable agriculture.

Examples of initiatives aimed at promoting sustainability and the environment are teaching farmers and schoolchildren in Malawi how to grow crops on the shores of Lake Malawi so that the soil is not washed away when it rains, and how to diversify their crops so that nutrients are added to the soil in a natural way. An organisation for organic growers in Zambia received support to improve the quality of farmers' products and increase the incomes of its members. Many partner organisations such as Zambia National Farmers' Union, practise so-called till-free farming to increase productivity and reduce negative environmental effects.

The introduction of crops that are more drought-resistant and easier to grow but that still provide high nutrition such as sweet potatoes and cassava, is one way of adapting to climate change with more erratic rainfall. But, as shown by a partner organisation in Zimbabwe, crops of this kind also make it easier for families affected by HIV and AIDS to continue to make a living from farming. Several partner organisations, especially national farming unions, are also involved in lobbying toward

the countries' governments in areas such as agricultural policy, rights to land and tenure, how the interests of small farmers can be protected when actors such as capital-rich investors want to use the land for planting forests, etc.

At least half of development aid to women

An important step to enable women to make their voices heard, to improve their farming and living conditions, is to ensure that a greater proportion of the budget for development aid reaches women.

Since 2008, more than half of SCC's development cooperation is directed to women in Latin America. As of 2013, 50 per cent or more of the budget will go to women – in all the countries where SCC operates.

However, SCC also wants the Swedish Government, non-profit organisations and other actors to make the decision to distribute aid fairly to help poor women gain more influence and opportunities to improve their own situation and that of their families. SCC considers this to be essential if poverty and injustice are to be eradicated.

Good if training in gender equality is led by a man

In order to avoid making gender equality a women's issue, it can be advantageous to have a man as facilitator in the gender equality training sessions.

This is one of the conclusions from a study on gender equality work in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda commissioned by the SCC.

For six years now, SCC and Vi Agroforestry have been working together to increase equality between men and women, and to empower women in the activities in East Africa. The program is being implemented in Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda and Rwanda. The study points out a number of positive findings in the partner organisations: the development of equality programs, the establishment of gender equality committees, and the appointment of equality managers. Among the experiences highlighted by the partner organisations, however, is the importance of continuing to allocate funds for training – even once it is considered that integration of gender equality has been achieved. There is otherwise a risk that the issue will be lost, in part due to staff turnover. Another key issue is that the management of organisations is involved in the equality work, that there are gender equality committees that pursue the issue, and that someone has the formal responsibility for the

equality work. If not, there is a risk that no-one feels responsibility. Gender equality also needs to be included in the organisations' program goals.

Experience from the household level shows that new approaches and tools, like biogas stoves, are important since they reduce women's workload and give them the opportunity to devote more time to farming or other work.

Another lesson is that when women's incomes increase they are also treated with greater respect by men and broader possibilities to participate in meetings and other activities. Economic problems can also make men abandon their opposition to women's involvement in business and other activities.

Even if training and other activities target mainly women, it is important that the men are not excluded. Traditional leaders and other influential people such as church representatives, should also be included in the work. Training "model households" is a good method because they become concrete role models for neighbours and other members of the organisations. The study also concludes that cooperatives and other organisations should make it possible for both women and men to become members – and encourage them to.



– The most important thing we learned is that women have the same rights as men, and that we can also contribute in many ways to the families' survival, says Nambori Nabak, a member in a farmers' network in Kimokouwa, Tanzania.

Colourful jewellery puts food on the table

Nambori Nabak, age 39, is Maasai and lives in Kimokouwa, Tanzania. For centuries, her family has lived as semi-nomadic pastoralists, following their livestock.

Things are different today. Authorities and companies are taking over the pastureland, and the extreme drought caused by climate change means that many must go long distances to find water for their animals. Nambori's family therefore chose to settle and take up a less nomadic lifestyle. Through the farmers' network she belongs to, she has learned about gender equality, animal husbandry and

cooperation. Earlier, women could not own livestock but many now own goats and sheep. Both women and men take part in the meetings, and Nambori is even on the board of her group.

The Maasai also make beautiful jewellery that they, with the help of SCC, have found markets for. This means that the families are able to have food on the table and can send their children to school.

Text: Cecilia Abrahamsson Photo: Anders Johannesson



”As a woman, you pull the heaviest load. We women are responsible for the children, the home as well as the farm. Through the cooperative, we gain new knowledge that makes our work easier. The new knowledge also enables us to inspire other women.”

Angela Mukababirwa, age 38, a member of the local Buthale cooperative, Kateleba, Uganda.

The Swedish Cooperative Centre in Africa

The Swedish Cooperative Centre (SCC) has been present in Africa since its inception in 1958.

In the 1960's and 1970's, educational field assistance dominated with a focus on organising international seminars on leadership training. The Swedish Cooperative Centre also supported the establishment of the International Cooperative Alliance's (ICA) Regional Office in Africa in 1968. To this day, ICA continues to be a partner of the Swedish Cooperative Centre.

The support to Farmers' Unions, which started in 1979 with the Kenya National Farmers' Union, was the first movement-to-movement project and the Federation of Swedish Farmers (LRF) was deeply involved from the start. During the 1980's, major agriculture programs supporting national cooperative organisations were set up in Zambia and Uganda. As a result, The Swedish Cooperative Centre's presence in Africa grew considerably. During the 1990's, SCC increased the focus on member based farmers' organisations, cooperatives and cooperative-like organisations.

The Swedish Cooperative Centre seeks to work with cooperatives and other democratic, business-oriented organisations aiming at improving the living standards of the economically disadvantaged, particularly women and youth. SCC supports small-scale farmers and their organisations so that their influence and empowerment in policy and institution building processes increases as well as their access to technology, inputs and remunerative markets improve.

In Eastern and Southern Africa, SCC is present in Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania and Rwanda, and in Zimbabwe, Zambia, Malawi and Mozambique.

Currently, SCC's work in Africa focuses on:

- Strengthening the ability of small-scale farmers to adopt sustainable farming methods, to provide food for their families and the ability to live off their own production.
- Giving poor people the chance to construct adequate housing and strengthen their voice towards the government and local authorities.
- Offering poor people access to financial services to give them the chance to set up businesses while reducing the risk to their household economy.
- Empowering women in society and within the organisations we work with.
- Reducing and limiting the effects, and the spread of HIV and AIDS.

The survey in Africa

In the spring of 2011, the Swedish Cooperative Centre commissioned an interview survey of women in rural areas in Africa. A total of 345 women in eight African nations were interviewed. SCC's partner organisations in the respective countries conducted the interviews, except in Zimbabwe and Kenya where they were conducted by SCC staff.

The following partner organisations conducted the interviews for the survey:

Tanzania

- *Mtandao wa Vikundi vya Wakulima wa Wilaya ya Monduli (MVTWAMO)*
Network of Farmers' Groups in Monduli.
monduli@mviwata.org
- *Tanzania Association of Foresters (TAF)*
www.taftz.org
info@taftz.org

Uganda

- *UCCCU – Uganda Crane Creameries' Cooperative Union*
www.ucccu.or.ug
info@ucccu.or.ug

Rwanda

- *Impuyaki - Impuzamashyirahamwe Ya Kijyambere*
Cooperative of Agriculture Intensification.
impuyakinord@yahoo.fr

Zambia

- *Zambia National Farmers' Union (ZNFU)*
www.znfu.org.zm
znfu@zamnet.zm
- *Cotton Association of Zambia (CAZ)*
www.cotton.org.zm
caz@zamtel.zm

Malawi

- *Farmers' Union of Malawi (FUM)*
www.farmersunion.mw
info@farmersunion.mw

Mozambique

- *UNAC - União Nacional de Camponeses*
National Farmers' Union
www.unac.org.mz
unac.adv@gmail.com

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Kimanzu, Ngolia, SCC
Krantz, Lasse, formerly of Sida
Lukschandl, Linn, SCC
Nhampossa, Diamantino, SCC
Okore, Maggie, SCC
Rahm, Anna, Sida
Stridsman, Maria, Sida
Sundell, Melinda, SIANI
Tibblin, Anna, SCC
Törnqvist, Annika, Sida
Uustalu, Ann, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Sweden
Åberg, Mats, Sida

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Abbreviations

SCC = Swedish Cooperative Centre

Sida = Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency

SIANI = Swedish International Agricultural Network Initiative

CAADP = Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme

FAO = Food and Agriculture Organisation

IFAD = International Fund for Agricultural Development

IMF = International Monetary Fund

OECD = Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

UNCTAD = United Nations Conference on Trade and Development

WFP = World Food Programme

WTO = World Trade Organisation

DFID = Department for International Development (UK)

IFPRI = International Food Policy Research Institute

AGRA = Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa

SLU = Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences

IRIN = Integrated Regional Information Networks

Nearly one billion women in the world live in extreme poverty, close to 700 million of them live in rural areas. Agriculture is vital for them in order to put food on the table and earn an income from the harvest.

In order to make the voices of women heard, we have interviewed close to 350 women in Southern and Eastern Africa. The results are presented in this report. The women express that they want more knowledge, better health care and the opportunity to sell their produce on a market. That would give them the opportunity to improve their farming and their living conditions.

The Swedish Cooperative Centre (SCC) has been supporting poor people's own efforts for more than 50 years. Gender equality has long been an integral part of every project – an important agent of change in a world where women often have the main responsibility for the work in agriculture as well as for the household, whilst men continue to take the decisions, negotiate the prices and pocket the income.

If female farmers had the same opportunities as men, harvests would increase enough to keep 100 million people from going hungry, according to estimates by the UN's Food and Agriculture organisation (FAO).

It is now time for the Swedish government, civil society and other development actors to start walking the talk. We want equality in practice, not only on paper. That is a precondition if we are going to eradicate poverty and injustice, once and for all.

The Swedish Cooperative Centre (SCC) was created by the Swedish Cooperative Movement in 1958. Through long-term development work and help to self-help we equip poor people with the tools needed to fight poverty themselves. Through advocacy work we strive to convince more people to take a stand for a world free from poverty and injustice.



SWEDISH COOPERATIVE CENTRE