

REAL PEOPLE REAL STORIES

THE PNG WOMEN FARMERS BUSINESS PROJECT



Jennifer's Story

The strengths of village women leaders - stories from the local leaders in the PNG Women Farmers Business Project

Jennifer went as far as Grade six but could go no further as there was no high school in her area. She became a Sunday school teacher at an early age — her father a pastor and mother a church leader. She wanted to be just like her mother but at the time there weren't opportunities to lead other women. Jennifer then married and had four children.

Jennifer's life changed in 1980 when Sister Kay, a local midwife, invited her to train as a Village Birth Attendant (VBA). This marked the beginning of her leadership journey.

Initially Jennifer delivered the babies in her own house, using her new skills to change lives. Sister Kay has since donated roofing to help build a 'lik lik' birthing house, creating a place in the community where Jennifer and others can assist the local mothers with the birth of their babies. 'I use a torch at night to deliver babies. No babies have died since I started doing this job. I have delivered 103 babies in this house'. Jennifer said

Jennifer is well respected because she supports all pregnant women. She works as a volunteer with no pay and is called to assist at any time with the delivery process, she doesn't mind at all. 'I do not care whether it is day or night time, I am there to support the pregnant mothers and their new born babies. I never complain and happily assist the mothers. Some of the mothers come back and thank me by giving me food, while others don't return at all but I don't mind as I know this is my job and I love helping them.'

Upon reflection Jennifer realised that she has three main roles in her community - to be a VBA, to be a spiritual leader through her work in the women's fellowship and now to lead women to improve their family relationships and their farms. She says the [ACIAR](#) project leadership training has assisted her to recognise these roles and she's noticed changes both in herself and in her community. 'The training has helped me to realise that I am also a leader amongst the farmers. I advise women on how we can work together and have noticed a lot of changes happening within the community.' She added her leadership skills have improved and that before the training she didn't really know the qualities of good leaders, but now feels more equipped with new leadership skills and knowledge.

Jennifer would like to learn more about budgeting money with the goal of sharing this knowledge with local women. In the future, she'd like to build a modern house and have a water tank to help her family have enough for drinking and cooking. And like most mothers in her community, wants to improve her family's standard of living and for her children to have access to a good education. Jennifer is grateful for the support of her husband and whole family who are proud of her work. This is Jennifer's leadership story.

Jennifer is one of several VCEs in PNG involved in this ACIAR funded project. We share her story with her consent. Go to <http://pngwomen.estem-uc.edu.au/> to find out more about the project.