

REAL PEOPLE REAL STORIES

THE PNG WOMEN FARMERS BUSINESS PROJECT

Meet Lessie - Village Community Educator and local leader from Kumbareta, Papua New Guinea

Lessie is a facilitator of learning, not just in her role as a Village Community Educator (VCE) for the PNG Women Farmers Business Project, but as a schoolteacher and valued community leader. She sees herself as a role model, learning facilitator and teacher of adult farmers.



Lessie works closely with the University of Canberra (UC) project team to share local knowledge, observations and practices of farmers, and in turn learns new ideas around the principles of adult learning. Lessie and the team continue to work together valuing local knowledge, and creating training content relevant to the local community to empower local women farmers and their families.

Despite major challenges including: very low literacy of both VCEs and farmers, some people losing interest over time, family violence, and women being excluded from decision making roles, progress has been made, and a great difference in the responsibilities between men and women can be observed. 'Now ladies are coming back and telling me that they can see some changes in their family. Like behaviours - men's behaviours, and women are slowly trying to talk to them [their men].'

Lessie emphasises how people learn more from one on one training, and the importance of going out into the community, as well as translating the training into local language. 'Well instead of doing it [by] writing on the blackboard, I saw that it was good that we could go out and really do it [the training] in the community. If we go out, they learn more. In here [the classroom] they will learn, but less than when out in the community.'

Lessie estimates the project has reached the whole village of around 200 people, and can see how behaviour is slowly changing. 'People are now planting new crops, starting to build new houses and there are more food stalls. Most people in the community can see other people, the other women, the other men... and they are following now.'

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Lessie 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.