

REAL PEOPLE REAL STORIES

THE PNG WOMEN FARMERS BUSINESS PROJECT

Mevis's Story

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

Mevis says she never really had a leadership role when she was younger, describing herself as a 'follower' and her parents as 'simple villagers'. Then she got married and left her village for some years. When her marriage broke up she returned to Lumusa and began to work with the women in her community, knowing as soon as she became a community leader particular skills would be required. Leadership skills she says that she use to pray for—to support her in being a good leader and to help her with decision making.



Mevis says the project leadership position has been tough at times requiring her to confront gossip and sometimes being challenged by people not following through on commitments. She's also faced with people not listening to advice or instructions and sometimes not arriving on time for meetings or not turning up at all. Occasionally people also talk to one another whilst Mevis is talking in meetings. Yet Mevis says the process whilst difficult, helps her develop patience and understanding.

Overall Mevis says the role and leadership training has been helpful and has even changed her. 'The training has really helped to build me up as a leader. The leadership qualities and skills I've learned have made me a different person'. She spoke highly of the model farm training in particular, encouraging the Village Community Educators (VCEs) to also attend. She said it's helped her to improve her own personal and family life and assisted her in sharing what she's learned with others.

Mevis wants to learn more about leadership and some areas of farming, especially how to look after the commercial onions and how to run a poultry farm. She dreams of having a big farm and building a house where she can invite her parents to live with her so she can support them. She plans to invite her extended family and others to support this dream. 'I am planning these things because I want to be a role model and I must live and lead by example. I am determined to use the skills gained from the project team as well as from the model farm training [to help] fulfil my dream'. Mevis wants to live and lead by example, not just for the project but for her and her family's future. This is her leadership story.

Mevis 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.