

REAL PEOPLE REAL STORIES

THE PNG WOMEN FARMERS BUSINESS PROJECT

Nuni's Story

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

Nuni is one of six children. Nuni only had a couple of years of school, but she faithfully attended Sunday school. She married young and started a family of her own. She never used to think of herself as a leader describing herself as a 'simple wife and mother'. Even growing up she said she never had a role that involved leading others, but this changed with the project. 'I did not take on any leadership role when I was young and I did not know that I had leadership potential in me all these years - until the [ACIAR] project came to Lumusa...'



Initially Nuni felt stressed when she was asked to take on a project team leader role. In the beginning she remembers finding it difficult to appoint Village Community Educators (VCEs) and to then support the VCEs in choosing farmers to work with them. Nuni recalls feeling relief when everyone turned up to attend training for the first time. A year on, the team are still working together and Nuni feels her community respects her. She's gained confidence and is able to get everyone's attention at community meetings. She can now conduct workshops at church as well as speak in front of a lot of people. But leadership doesn't come without challenges as Nuni finds it difficult at times to always be a good example to the VCEs. And some of the traditional obligations of leadership can also be hard. 'The challenges of being a leader - the traditional obligation, it can be a burden at times. As a leader in my community I have to contribute towards paying money or giving a pig towards any compensation. I had to do that because my husband is a community leader.'

Despite the challenges Nuni is very happy as a project leader in her community. She said her husband has supported her with everything she's been doing. She said he's interested in the new ideas they are learning and this is important to Nuni and good for their family. Nuni works hard and is motivated by her children—investing in their education and future drives what she does. 'I am working hard because I want my family to have poultry so we can sell chickens and pay for my children's education. My family has four pigs and I when I sell them I will use the money to pay for my children's education. I want my children to do well at school so they have a job.'

One day Nuni wants to become a recognised women church leader or a community Councillor. And whilst she receives some payment for her role she would do the work regardless. 'Even if [there was] no payment for the work I do, I will still tell others about the training I received. I am so happy to be a leader.' Her aim is to help and mentor others in what she has learned. She wants to continue developing her understanding of some of the training and support her family and others. This is her leadership story.

Nuni 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.