

REAL PEOPLE REAL STORIES

THE PNG WOMEN FARMERS BUSINESS PROJECT

Meet Pastor Ningi - community leader from Vunapalading, Papua New Guinea



Pastor Ningi is a respected leader and cocoa farmer from Vunapalading, Papua New Guinea. Here he talks of his involvement with the PNG Women Farmers Business Project. He reflects on positive changes in his community, and the benefits of sharing what he has learned through training.

Pastor Ningi initially had no interest in this project, observing that many outside organisations and projects come into Papua New Guinea offering similar training and information. He was, however, open to hearing more having previously worked closely with Kiteni Kurika, a long term staff member of the National Agricultural Research Institute and a leader of the project who he respected. 'To some maybe they would say "ahh this is just some white lady coming up and talking to us about their way of life"... but I trusted Kiteni.'

Looking back, Pastor Ningi is pleased that his involvement has evolved from observer to training participant to Village Community Educator (VCE). The VCE training and mentoring role particularly appealing and meaningful to Pastor Ningi as it values local skills and knowledge, and supports local leaders to develop their adult education skills. He felt he could do the role explaining that as a community leader and local farmer, he was used to talking with his neighbours and people in the church.

For Pastor Ningi, the training content was relevant and flexible, especially the [Family Teams](#) training tools that enable farming families to plan for their future. 'The family farm plan - that's one of the things that's very important that you taught us. You know like most PNG families, we don't plan ahead... now I have really come to know how to plan'. He shared that prior to the project, the main source of income came from cocoa farming, and other ideas like planting food crops and budgeting weren't priorities. 'You know in our culture we don't plant food and we don't budget, and whatever money you make today, if anybody comes to borrow, or you just go somewhere and you see something and you just buy... but with this project I have really come to know how to plan for budgets.'

Continued next page

Above all, Pastor Ningi is keen to see the success of his neighbours and community. He praised the farmers working with the project for their openness to learning, and noticed significant changes in family farming practices that are making a difference to relationships as well as generating income. 'I want [the] person next to me to be successful, to help him as much [as I can], so he can be okay. Yes most of our farmers, the team that you are working with, are really, really changing a lot. Most of them are now making money... They've opened bank accounts and are now saving.'

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Pastor Ningi will continue with his role as a local VCE. He is keen to continue learning and happy he's involved in a project that is changing lives and increasing family incomes.

The PNG Women Small Business Project adopts the principles of assets based community development (ABCD), (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993; Green & Haines, 2012), meaning project activities including the development of training content, is continuously directed and informed by local people within the local context. The practice also acknowledges Pastor Ningi and local farmers as experts in their community who know more about local culture and farming practices than outsiders, reflecting the significance of a collaborative approach to teaching and learning.

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

Green, G.P., and Haines, A.L. (2012). Asset Building and Community Development - Third Edition. Thousand Oaks, California: Sage.

Kretzmann, J., and McKnight, J. (1993). Building communities from the inside out: A path toward finding and mobilizing a community's assets. Chicago, IL:ACTA