

# REAL PEOPLE REAL STORIES

## THE PNG WOMEN FARMERS BUSINESS PROJECT



### Meet Susan - Local leader and mentor from Kwinkya, Papua New Guinea

Susan is a well-respected local farmer and role model interested and passionate about the future of her community of Kwinkya, in the Western Highlands of Papua New Guinea (PNG). As a Village Community Educator (VCE) trainer and mentor, for the PNG Women Farmers Business Project, Susan reflects on her own experiences and development, as well as her perceptions of change in others.

Susan describes the VCE training as adaptable and relevant, enabling her to share what she has learned in a flexible informal learning environment. She sees herself as a facilitator of learning that supports families to move toward business-focussed agriculture: learning new ways to garden, planning farming activities, and managing resources. 'Being a role model is very important. The best way for farmers to learn from VCEs is in an informal setting from one another, in their gardens, practising what they have learned.' Susan observes that people are starting to think differently and implement what they have learned. 'Those who have done the training have started to *think big*.'

Susan recognises she has developed her leadership, facilitation and communication skills. She is proud that she has overcome challenges such as public speaking and managing risks and resources. Susan is keen for more training and to continue developing her communication skills, to help her deal with community and family problems. She also gave praise to the 'Maria's family' books - a series of place-based children's books developed for PNG families - finding them very useful for people with little literacy.

*"I have a big picture now in my mind... My future will be different... It [the training] changed my life"*

Susan is positive about the future and about working together to build a bright future for her family and community. 'I have a big picture now in my mind. My future will be different than the last 34 years. It [the training] changed my life... I am starting my savings... my aim is I want to run a piggery... I've started... it's a big picture in my mind but I'll try....'

**Susan 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 training, Maria Books and project.**