

# Two-way learning: key gender lessons from participatory community workshops with smallholders in the Baiyer Valley and Kerevat areas of Papua New Guinea

Barbara Pamphilon<sup>1,\*</sup>, Katja Mikhailovich<sup>1</sup>,  
Lalen Simeon<sup>2</sup> and Barbara Chambers<sup>1</sup>

## *Abstract*

The development literature suggests that women continue to face inequality in the agriculture sectors of most developing countries. In this paper, gender implications arising from four community workshops in two regions of PNG are presented and discussed. The workshops formed part of a baseline study to investigate ways to improve the business knowledge and practices of women food crop smallholders within a larger project. In the baseline study, a rapid participatory learning and action research approach was underpinned by asset-based community development and appreciative inquiry. The paper outlines the two-way learning methodology from community workshops that explored the gender dynamics within an agricultural context. Two specific activities from the workshops and the findings as they relate to gender differences and the gendered division of labour within the communities are described.

The activities provided an opportunity for local community members and leaders to reconsider and re-evaluate existing social relations that had mostly been taken for granted. The community workshops have demonstrated that communities are willing to reorientate their thinking to seek more effective ways of family collaboration.

## **Introduction**

Women smallholders are keys to PNG family livelihoods—they produce essential subsistence crops and they market or exchange the surplus while undertaking valued social roles, such as family care. Yet, the benefits of their family and agricultural labour do not necessarily translate to improved family livelihood

and family security. In this paper, a project aiming to provide locally relevant training to support improved business acumen for women is described. A two-way learning methodology is outlined in an attempt to reveal the gendered divisions of labour and resources.

Knowledge is culture-dependent. Two-way inquiry learning encourages people from different cultures to identify their shared and differing knowledge levels and perspectives. Through such a process there is the potential for the generation of new understandings that can better inform action (Hooley 2002). Aslin and Brown (2004, p. 8) place such a process within the broader project of utilising ‘local knowledge, specialised knowledge, strategic knowledge and integrative knowledge for sustainable change’.

---

<sup>1</sup> Australian Institute for Sustainable Communities, University of Canberra, Australian Capital Territory, Australia

<sup>2</sup> Pacific Adventist University, Port Moresby, PNG

\* Corresponding author:

barbara.pamphilon@canberra.edu.au

## The background: PNG, women smallholders and the project

PNG can be thought of as a two countries in one. One ‘country’ relates to PNG’s rich mineral resources that have enabled significant development of the mining industry and engagement with a range of transnational companies. Although this part of PNG provides significant income to the country, very few people are directly involved—estimated to be 30,000 (full-time) and 80,000 (casual) (Papua New Guinea Chamber of Mining and Petroleum 2012)—out of a total population of around 6.7 million (DFAT 2013). In stark contrast, the other ‘country’ within PNG is where the majority of the population is found and where the majority of the daily labour is occupied—that is, the rural agriculture sector. Hence, the PNG economy is highly dualistic, with a formal sector (largely, but not exclusively, mining) focused on export and an informal sector dominated by subsistence and semi-subsistence activities. Rural poverty is a significant issue for PNG, with over 90% of the nation’s poor living in rural areas and over 80% being rural-based subsistence farmers (ADB 2012). As a result, rural livelihoods, including agriculture, support the majority of the PNG population.

In PNG, it is largely (85%) the women who produce food (Peter 2012, p. 44). Food crops are important to PNG households, and women are the primary growers and sellers. Like most developing countries, at the smallholder level in PNG, women are key players as they produce subsistence crops as well as taking an increasing role in cash cropping, which pays for education, health and family obligations. Much of this cash activity is in the informal sector (Cahn and Liu 2008). Hence ‘women’s access to financial services, agricultural extension, education, health care and human rights are, therefore, key to assuring food security for all’ (Camara et al. 2011, p. 141).

Given this context, PNG women smallholders and their families are the focus of a new ACIAR project ASEM/2010/052 (*Examining women’s business acumen in Papua New Guinea: working with women smallholders in horticulture*). The project is being conducted in the Baiyer Valley of the Western Highlands province (partnering with the Baptist Union of PNG), Kerevat in East New Britain province (partnering with the National Agricultural Research Institute—NARI) and Central Province

(partnering with the Pacific Adventist University, the Fresh Produce Development Agency and NARI). This project derives from an earlier exploratory ACIAR exercise that investigated ways of ‘improving women’s business acumen’ by identifying what were impediments and what were enablers to participation in food production and marketing (Chambers et al. 2011).

### Project objectives

The overall aim of the project is ‘to improve the uptake and impact of training and small business development of women smallholder food crop producers in Central Province, East New Britain and the Western Highlands of PNG’. The project explores the question, ‘In the light of the cultural and contextual issues of each region, what are better ways to improve the business knowledge and practices of women food crop producer smallholders?’ In each of the three regions, 60 women from two communities in each region are being recruited—a total of six communities, providing data from a minimum of 180 families over 3 years.

This study aims to: identify the impact of gender and cultural dynamics through rapid collaborative ethnographies with each village; trial and evaluate a range of ways to improve women’s food-crop business knowledge and skills; and identify and develop financial skills and opportunities through the provision of training by local and national agricultural and financial literacy providers. The project provides data on improved local strategies that enhance women’s food-crop production and security.

There are two objectives, each with a related key research question. The first objective is to understand women food-crop producers’ context, business knowledge and practice in each region in order to develop and facilitate ways to improve their overall skills (research question—to determine what are the cultural, gender and regional factors that impact on the development of food-crop business skills of women smallholders). The second objective is to understand the financial practices and issues for families in order to develop ways to improve the business finance practices of women food-crop producers (research question—to determine what are the family, gender, regional and cultural factors that impact on the improvement of financial practices of women food-crop producers).

## **Gender and gender dynamics as a contested space**

The Constitution of PNG embodies the government's commitment to equality for both women and men within family, community and society, and the government has recognised the centrality of gender equality for sustainable development and poverty reduction (Government of Papua New Guinea 2012). Despite this, gender roles and the gendered division of labour are strongly entrenched in PNG social and family relations and gender inequality can be seen in access to education and employment and in high levels of violence against women (Lewis et al 2008; McCalman et al. 2012; World Bank 2012).

The argument that women remain marginalised in PNG links to cultural beliefs that see women as inferior to men. Colonisation, missionary and church influences add complexity to culturally based gender inequalities. Despite some regions of PNG being under a matrilineal system of land inheritance, PNG society is generally patrilineal and overwhelmingly patriarchal. Deep-rooted social beliefs position women as subordinate to men, underpinned by the view that women are the property of men and are expected to obey (Cahn and Liu 2008).

However, a contradictory view proposed by Gustafsson (2002) argues that the work performed by men and women is complementary, in that men and women control different skills, although what they do in their own sphere of activity has consequences for the other gender, the household and ultimately for the community. Thus, in Gustafsson's view, the big difference between Papua New Guinean and European gender concepts is not whether men and women have equal access to resources, to public performances and to the same kind of work, but that the parts they play are equally important for the system to function (Gustafsson 1999, pp. 118–119). Kinship structures and gender complementarities are features of gender relations for many indigenous peoples, but in PNG there are complex factors that lead to the subordination of and discrimination against women (Stern 1999; Cahn and Liu 2008; United Nations Secretariat of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues 2010).

One significant and objective indicator of gender inequity in PNG is the level of gender-based violence against women (Lewis et al. 2008; World Bank 2012). Violence undermines women's confidence, affects women's health and is a significant barrier to women's full participation in society (Cahn and Liu

2008, p. 134; World Bank 2012). A recent assessment of PNG gender issues (World Bank 2012, p. 12) reports that:

FSV [family and sexual violence] is widespread and pervasive, and has a devastating impact on the lives of individuals, families and communities. The high prevalence of such violence in PNG is a cross cutting issue, with very serious implications for public health and social policy, economic development, and justice and law enforcement.

Women do not gain equal access to profits from agricultural production and this reduces household welfare. As developing-country household-income studies show (Macintyre 2000; Mason and King 2001; Garap 2004), up to 75% of income earned by women typically goes to support the family, while the contribution of men's income to the family can be as low as 25%. In PNG, men typically control the income earned from women's labour in commodity production. Women's labour input alone may not give them rights to the income generated from their labour, which can result in gendered conflicts over women's labour as well as remuneration from commodity production (Koczberski 2007). Gendered patterns of control over income do vary across the country, depending on the region as well as the type of crop, and will vary at the individual family level. In some cases, cash income belongs to, and is in the control of, whoever produces the goods for sale, while in other cases, women produce goods and men market them and/or control the resulting income (Cahn and Liu 2008). Koczberski (2007) suggested that finding economic incentives to encourage women and other individual family members to participate in commodity production and developing ways to redistribute income within the household have great potential to improve rural household incomes as well as the gendered distribution of income within households.

Starting with this body of knowledge produced by previous researchers, our first step and the focus of this paper was to open up the topic of gender roles with smallholder families themselves.

### **Creating a two-way learning space: the community workshop methodology**

The data presented in this paper are drawn from four community workshops that were held as part of the ACIAR project baseline study. These community

workshops were complemented by a community leaders' focus group and an administered baseline survey conducted with women smallholders. We took a rapid participatory learning and action research approach which, as is explained below, was underpinned by asset-based community development and appreciative inquiry.

Although participatory learning and action has gained in popularity over the past two decades, there are differing ways in which it is understood and enacted. One rationale for its use is that increased participation leads to greater efficiency as people take ownership of any agreed action through their involvement in the learning process. The other rationale sees participation as a right, and a way to mobilise collective action and local community building (Pretty 1995). In our case, we wanted to encourage engagement by the community and provide an approach that would build community capacity and enable us to hear and understand the priority issues.

Asset-based community development (ABCD) and appreciative inquiry reflect an 'empowerment' philosophy that understands local communities as resilient and resourceful and that provides forums for community members to identify and build on the assets in a community as a key resource (Green and Haines 2012). Communities in developing countries are often presented with projects that identify their deficits as the first step, which immediately creates a power divide between the project and its participants. Appreciative inquiry (Cooperrider et al. 2003) provides processes that turn attention to what works in communities and why.

We are conscious that the processes used in appreciative inquiry and ABCD may result in false or simplistic consensus, and sensitive dynamics, such as those between genders, may be masked. Further, collective group processes on their own rarely reveal structural power and hegemonic worldviews. Despite these limitations, we believed that it was crucial to provide a workshop environment where people could surface their own issues and elucidate their own knowledge and in this way leave the workshop with new perspectives, enhanced perspectives or having confirmed existing perspectives. Using Aslin and Brown's (2004, p. 8) 'local knowledge, specialised knowledge, strategic knowledge and integrative knowledge', the community workshops in this study indeed provided local knowledge, and some specialised knowledge, which we plan to harness

with strategic knowledge (from literature and key informants) to identify integrative knowledge—that is, knowledge that is built up from the complementary aspects of the other three forms of knowledge. In this way, any action decided upon will be informed by a co-construction of meaning across different knowledge types.

## **The workshop and activities methods**

The workshops were held in two communities in Kerevat and two in Baiyer Valley and, since this paper, two more have been held in Central Province. Each day-long workshop was held in an accessible local community facility. The local project leaders were asked to invite a cross-section of the community: 15 men, 15 women and 10 young people. Morning tea, lunch and afternoon tea were provided. The aim of the day was to explore local food-crop practices, seasonal impact, gender roles, community assets, income sources and financial practices, and hopes for the future.

The two activities that generated the data used for this paper were designed to document and begin discussion on gender differences and the gendered division of labour. Raising gender issues must be done in a culturally sensitive way. Therefore, the large group was divided into four smaller groups for these gender-sensitive activities—younger men, younger women, older men and older women. The activity and reporting back was led by an experienced trilingual PNG ethnographer, who facilitated the discussion in a culturally sensitive and effective manner.

The following section describes the activities and presents some of the initial findings, which will become the basis for further in-depth examination in future community activities and ethnographic research. It is important to note that as far as possible the participants' words have not been changed.

### *Activity 1: a day in the life of a smallholder*

The aim of this activity was to enable community members to explore and share information on the daily activities of a typical village member. It aimed to raise awareness of the work done by men and women in the community and bring to the fore any differences in perceptions about the work of the opposite gender. This enabled the research team to gain an understanding of gender roles and potential disparities as well as begin raising the awareness of gender roles at the local level.

The full group was divided into its subgroups of young women, older women, young men and older men. Each group was given a large sheet of paper with the hours of the day (from 5 am to 10 pm) written down the side. The group then entered their activities on a typical day. Each group was then given a new piece of paper with the hours of the day and was asked to record what they see as the typical day of the opposite gender, e.g. young women record a typical day of a young man. Figure 1 shows a group of young women from the Kerevat region completing the ‘day in the life’ activity. The two sheets of one age group were then displayed to the large group—for example, the typical day of young women as seen by young women themselves, alongside the typical day of young women as seen by young men.

The facilitator then asked each group to comment on the others’ perspective and share what they thought. The questioning included ‘Is this true?’ ‘When might this happen?’ ‘When does it not happen?’ This approach surfaced the gender disparities. The facilitator monitored the reactions and, with the strategic use of humour, enabled people to laugh at the differences as they began to think about them. For example, one senior male group member said they sit down in the evening and plan the family’s activities for the next day; the women strongly disagreed, saying that rarely happens. The facilitator defused the situation by pointing out that the group had written the words ‘family planning’ which could have been interpreted as contraception planning. Everyone laughed at the word play with great hilarity but at the same time the point was clearly made about different perceptions of daily life.

In concluding this type of introductory analysis, it was important that the facilitator explained that this was a first look at different roles and that we would work together on the issues across the life of the project, deepening our shared understanding as we go. People were invited to think about any new insights they had with a focus on how family members can share skills, time and workload.

### *Activity 2: talking tables*

‘Talking tables’, based on the original idea known as the World Café, is a discussion process that draws on individual and collective learning through ‘conversations that matter’ (Brown and Isaacs 2005). The idea is to create spaces that are more informal and that encourage friendly but in-depth discussions on selected topics. The process can be used with people

from diverse educational backgrounds and ability, with paid staff, government and non-government representatives as well as with local village community members. We have found the process encourages (but, of course, does not guarantee) meaningful conversation (narratives) and in-depth exploration of key issues, stimulates innovative thinking, deepens relationships and ownership of outcomes and encourages more meaningful interactions between participants.

According to the amount of time available, four or five tables can be planned. Each table has a different question. On each table, there is a large piece of butcher’s paper and a number of pens to enable all participants to record their ideas on the paper. Ideally, participants should have a pen each and record their ideas as they go, but in settings where there is low literacy, participants often prefer to have one person act as the scribe.

The process used in this study was to have four large sheets of paper, each with a separate question, and the group was divided into the same four subgroups as earlier, so that people felt comfortable in a like group. The questions were:

- What do women spend money on?
- What do men spend money on?
- What are the positives and negatives of ‘*wantok* giving’?<sup>3</sup>
- Why don’t people use banks?

On the first table, or rotation, the group wrote down all their ideas regarding the question on that table/paper. After 10–15 minutes, people moved as a group on to their next table/paper where they added to, challenged or extended what had already been written on the sheet. After a further 10–15 minutes, people again moved and continued to add, challenge or extend comments. On the third and fourth table, people were encouraged to look for patterns, insights and emerging perspectives; that is, *they* began the data analysis. On the last table, each group was asked to nominate one person to report back to the large group, which then enabled the whole group

<sup>3</sup> The question on ‘*wantok* giving’ is particularly important in PNG where the *wantok* practices oblige people to give money and resources to any person within their *wantok* group. ‘The *wantok* system can be loosely defined as the system of relationships (or set of obligations) between individuals characterized by some or all of the following: (1) common language, (2) common kinship group, (3) common geographical area of origin, and (4) common social associations or religious groups’ (ADB 2012, p. 90).





**Figure 1.** Young women from Kerevat completing the 'day in the life' activity (Photo: Katja Mikhailovich)



**Figure 2.** Older women's group from the Baiyer Valley region (Photo: Katja Mikhailovich)

to hear and discuss the cumulative findings and emerging themes.

## **Gender lessons revealed by the activities**

The activities provided an opportunity for local community members and leaders to begin to consider social relations that for many, to that point, had been primarily taken for granted. The following sections outline aspects of the gendered division of labour and resources as well as highlighting how gender dynamics are in transition.

The community workshops were carefully designed to enable individuals to initially consider the gendered division of labour and resources, as a precursor to exploring the sensitive next step of gender inequality. PNG is a patriarchal society; however, in the two regions of the study, one is patrilineal (Baiyer Valley) and the other is matrilineal (Kerevat). In the Kerevat communities, the impact of a matrilineal distribution of resources and land inheritance was raised as an issue of concern by both men and women. By contrast, in the Baiyer Valley, in the highlands, although land pressure was a concern, the patrilineal inheritance system was not raised as a problem. This indicates how male inheritance rights are a taken-for-granted part of PNG culture. We suggest that is an issue for discussion in East New Britain province because it stands apart from the majority of traditional land-inheritance practices of PNG.

### **Gender and the division of labour: insights from the ‘day in a life’ activity**

The ‘day in a life’ activity was revealing to members of each of the community groups and often there was consensus between genders about the daily roles of men and women. As can be seen in Tables 1 and 2, selected from one of the Baiyer Valley workshops, it was men who noted the disparity between men and women in relation to how hard some women work. In every location, men were highly engaged in the analysis of daily activities.

The different domestic workloads between genders became apparent via this activity. However, at the same time, the range of contributions to the family beyond direct labour in the home and in the garden also became clear. For example, in the Baiyer Valley, the male role relating to tribal conflict was evident.

The men who participated in the workshop noted how part of daily life is negotiating with other men regarding civil issues. It is interesting to note that the public role of peacemaking, negotiation, and dispute resolution was recorded as a routine activity for men, and ‘paying compensation’ was a budget item in a number of the discussions about family spending patterns. In Kerevat, the women cited an additional range of daily activities of men that included ‘commitment for family need, school commitment, church commitment’. Such public activities were not recorded as women’s work in any of the regions.

The importance of the ‘day in a life’ activity in awareness raising, as well as a research activity, was reflected in the comments of community leaders. While it is important not to generalise from an individual’s comments, given the role and status of the community leaders (local-level government councillor, magistrate, minister, minister’s wife, village recorder) and the assignment of the comment in a formal response to the research team, such comments do reflect an important public position.

Baiyer Valley community leader:

To be honest, women work more than men in those activities they listed down. They do more than men.

Women in our community work harder than men.

Through the ‘day in a life’ activity discussions, the importance of social interaction across a day for both men and women became apparent. While women spent a considerable part of the day on domestic chores, gardening and selling produce, they clearly acknowledged the place of social interaction, especially with other women. Table 3 shows one example of how talking with other women (gossip, telling stories, catching up) were activities that were integrated across the whole day.

Although productive work was the dominant feature of most groups’ reports, the young men self-reported the lowest level of activity in gardening and family work and, in most of the discussions, young men’s recreational activities were seen as problematic. In the Baiyer Valley region, community members reported the growing use of drugs (marijuana) and alcohol, which they estimated affected 10% of young men. In Kerevat, where there was greater access to recreational activities, there was a wide range of non-productive activities recorded (Table 4), although, interestingly, this was not highlighted or discussed in any of the summary discussion sessions.

**Table 1.** Typical day of an older man (Baiyer Valley, Western Highlands province)

Older men's activities as seen by older women	Time	Older men's activities as seen by older men
Wake up; pray, if they are Christians	5 am	Wake up and pray
Fetch water for drinking water	6 am	Help prepare the children and prepare to do my daily chores
Gardening	7 am	
Cut grass		
Dig ditches/drains, wrap green bananas, weeding, dig cassava for pigs, cut firewood		
Gather food for family and return home and have lunch	8 am	Gardening, but if there is a worship program, attend it or go elsewhere. Some are employed so they go to work
	9 am	
	10 am	
	11 am	
Go to the market, meet with friends	12 noon	Lunch, rest or chew betel nut
	1 pm	Wash, watch sports on the field, go to the market or visit the court grounds (where peace is negotiated or issues are sorted out in small groups or as a community)
2 pm	Gather firewood or go fishing	
Fetch water for cooking. Go to the bush to feed pigs (those with many pigs have the pig houses in the bush, far from the house so food for pigs will be easily accessible and also to keep them away for hygiene purposes)	3 pm	Feed pigs or sometimes go for fellowship
	4 pm	
		5 pm
Dinner and pray	6 pm	Those who went to walk around in the market return home around this time
Family time	7 pm	Dinner time, some men return home around 8 pm
	8 pm	
Sleep	9 pm	Family time and sleep

**Table 2.** Typical day of an older woman (Baiyer Valley)

Older women's activities as seen by older men	Time	Older women's activities as seen by older women
Wake up and pray	5 am	Devotion
Breakfast and feeding pigs	6 am	Breakfast
Go to garden, weeding, planting	7 am	Children's breakfast, get children ready for school
Gardening, women with babies have extra work to do all day	8 am	Gardening, planting, weeding, digging and harvesting
	9 am	
	10 am	
	11 am	
	12 noon	Lunch or break, washing, resting and eating
Looking for food for family and animals	1 pm	Continue gardening
	2 pm	
	3 pm	
Feeding pigs	4 pm	
Return home and prepare dinner	5 pm	Fetching water
Family dinner time	6 pm	Preparing evening meal
	7 pm	Eating dinner
Making billum [traditional string bags] and others sleep because they work hard during the day	8 pm	Devotion time
	9 pm	Sleep
Sleep time and prayer (some ladies stay up until 11 pm, or even 1 am)	10 pm	



**Table 3.** Typical day of an older woman (Kerevat, East New Britain province)

Older women's activities as seen by older men	Time	Older women's activities as seen by older women
Normal wake up time	5 am	Devotion, prepare breakfast for school children and family
Preparation of breakfast and school children's food	6 am	Do the washing up and cleaning around the house
	7 am	Tell stories, chewing betel nuts, smoking
Family work	8 am	Find friends to gossip/'find lies'
Garden	9 am	Prepare tools to go to the garden
Clean around the house Laundry Feed animals, fetch water Care for young children (if relevant)	10 am	Start walking to the garden. On the way to the garden, meet somebody on the road and start telling stories and chewing betel nut again
Other women's activities (church or community)	11 am	Start working and continue working till around 3 pm
	12 noon	
	1 pm	
	2 pm	
	3 pm	
Go to market	4 pm	Collect food for dinner and return home
Prepare for meal around 6 pm	5 pm	Prepare dinner for family
Have dinner	6 pm	Dinner time
Do the washing of the plates	7 pm	Do the washing of the plates and clean the house
Leisure time Church fellowship Family discussion Visitation After hours, sustainable activities Program setting for next day	8 pm	Bathing time. Story time and catching up with other ladies while bathing at the well

**Table 4.** Typical day of a young man (Kerevat)

Young men's activities as seen by young women	Time	Young men's activities as seen by young men
Chewing betel nut and smoking on the road[side]	5 am	Wake up
	6 am	Breakfast
Cleaning garden	7 am	Feed pigs
Gambling	8 am	Gardening and house chores
	9 am	
	10 am	
	11 am	
Fishing and swimming	12 noon	Rest and lunch
	1 pm	
Sports activities	2 pm	Wash and relax
	3 pm	Sports, selling food (betel nut and cigarettes), gambling (playing cards) fishing
Resting	4 pm	
	5 pm	
Drug bodies hanging on the streets [people affected by drugs loitering]	6 pm	Dinner
	7 pm	Family time
Dinner and rest with family	8 pm	Go watch movies
	9 pm	Sleep

## Gender and the distribution of resources: insights from the ‘talking tables’ activity

The ‘talking tables’ process triggered considerable discussion and community analysis on the differences between how men and women spend money. As the final sheet was an accumulative record of the views of each subgroup (older men, older women, younger men, younger women), the summary presentation and discussion enabled the whole group to consider the analysis. In some cases, the group challenged the summary, while in other cases there was agreement, but in both scenarios, community dialogue and clarification took place (see Box 1).

Across this group, there was agreement by both men and women, as reported in the summary provided by the group below:

Alcohol, cigarette, drugs—these are what men spend money on, such activities are destroying their families. Men who spend money on these things end up forgetting their families and children. Cigarette and alcohol destroys their lives and many times when they die we always conclude that a witch killed them but it is these activities that ruin their lives. We always say someone is living in poverty, but we forget that this person created this themselves as they spend money on other unnecessary things and when their real need arises they have nothing left. Most times we use money unwisely and we do not realise that we are inviting poverty to come into our lives. ... It is hard to find money but it is easier to spend it.

The discussions in Kerevat about men’s spending followed similar lines:

There are some important things that men spend money on: school fees, clothes, food, mobile phones. Others are not important at all—alcohol (not helping the family), womanising (flick<sup>4</sup>) and family does not benefit at the end of the day, gambling (the family becomes poor because the father of the house spends the money).

In one Kerevat community, there was open disagreement between the men and women about the rationale behind women’s spending, as shown in Box 2.

The women made the following comments:

Not all women buy all the things that are listed, women do not wear new clothes every Sunday. If they

do not spend money on things listed, then the family will not have enough things. It is true that women buy food, soap and all household needs and some women who have enough money can afford electric appliances (sewing machine, chain saw etc.).

In general, women’s spending across the four communities did focus on family needs. One exception was a Kerevat comment concerning witchcraft: ‘Mothers buy witchcraft to attract their husbands or to stop them from marrying many ladies’. Another

### Box 1. What do men spend money on? (Baiyer Valley)

- Negative—buying *buai* [betel nut] and beer, men spend money on unnecessary things that do not benefit the family. Men spend money on gambling or horse race or pokies—that money should be used to buy a chicken for the family.
- Compensation—wastes money for the family—law-and-order problems cause this and something should be done.
- Giving money to *wantok*—too much.
- Giving money to new ladies—government law must be tightened to stop this.
- School fees are expensive—government should be subsidise.

### Box 2. What do women spend money on? (Kerevat)

- Dressing—hair food [products], shorts (six-pocket [fashion]), perfume, earrings, new clothes every Sunday
- Kitchen utensils—spoons, plates, pots, cups etc.
- Food—rice, sugar, salt, tea, buns
- Washing detergent—soap, powdered soap, brush, bleach etc.
- Household needs—kerosene, sewing machine, lawn mower, chain saw, garden tools, grass cutter, generator, petrol, washing machine

<sup>4</sup> Flick is a Tok Ples (local language) term that refers to paid sex

comment regarding women's spending was made by one of the young men's groups in Kerevat commenting on young women's 'grooming' (which came up in the 'day in the life' activity as well as in the 'talking tables'):

(In our community), we have traditional law that governs us, so when you dress up and do hair etc., think about your action and what you do, so the men can respect you. Rape can occur and people will gossip about you, so grooming is good but think about your body and do well.

Although these comments were not taken up further in the workshop, they reflect widely prevalent attitudes across the world about sexual violence and women, in which blame is attributed to women for violence perpetrated against them. The United Nations (UNFPA et al. 2005) noted that poor women are more vulnerable to all forms of violence because they live in uncertain and dangerous environments. For example, in this project, PNG women smallholders often have to travel to markets, which can pose a risk to their physical safety. If smallholder families are to improve and sustain their livelihoods, the unequal gender division of farm and family labour must be considered, but it cannot be considered in isolation from other gender factors, such as attitudes to women. This is clearly pertinent to the contexts in which this research is taking place in PNG.

### **Gender roles in transition: insights from the community leaders**

The communities that contributed to the baseline study illustrated how gender relations are dynamic and changing. In the Baiyer Valley, this was demonstrated in the closing speech of one community leader, as he recognised the growing leadership roles taken up by women.

In PNG culture at a mumu [communal feast] it is the man who is asked to carve the pig; he then gives the leg of the pig to a valued man to cut up and serve. Today, it is now women who are bringing in development to the community and it is now women who should receive the honour of receiving the leg of the pig. The process that [the research team] have used is like this process. They have respected the role of the leader and I am pleased to see this ... This project can change the mindset and I welcome the project.

In the debrief meeting, two of the Baiyer Valley women project leaders supported those comments as follows:

[In the past] Men were the bosses and leaders in the community. Things have changed and ladies are now leading [us] to almost everything in the community and men in [this community] have realised their leadership roles.

Similarly in Kerevat, the extensive organisation of the East New Britain Women and Youth in Agriculture Cooperatives Society<sup>5</sup> reflects a level of community and male support for women and youth initiatives. Although these groups are based on family units, women are taking leadership roles with the support and agreement of men. As one woman leader said, 'It is time for men to step back and support the women from behind—it is [the women's] turn for training'.

It was clear that gender relations are in a state of change, as evident in the position taken by one Kerevat male leader:

Kuanua<sup>6</sup> is a matrilineal society. The man works and sweats for the land but the land and possession will be owned by his children. Today, in our society women and men work equally, I believe that women are good managers and accountants. I do not believe in children's right and women's right, instead we are all equal, we are a collective society.

## **Conclusion**

Despite the rhetoric of gender equality, the development literature suggests that women continue to face inequality in the agriculture sector and our preliminary work to date supports this. World Bank et al. (2009) have argued that gender issues must continue to be tackled in agricultural development where gender inequalities in access to, and control over, resources are persistent and where gender differences, arising from the socially constructed relationship between men and women, affect the distribution of resources between them.

<sup>5</sup> This organisation comprises 25 registered cooperatives with 15 affiliated and waiting for registration (registration is with the Department of Commerce, Innovation Promotion Authority); average group size is 20–25, with the aim to move from subsistence agriculture to an agribusiness model.

<sup>6</sup> This community leader stressed that the people of the Kerevat area should be referred to as Kuanua: 'We would like to ask people to refrain from calling this community Tolai, meaning Mr Liar; we would like to be called the Kuanua Society'.

Previous research has indicated that the establishment of commodity crops for export and contract farming of horticultural crops have fuelled gendered household tensions and, as a result, there are struggles over access to, and control of, household labour, resources and income (Koczberski 2007; Bourke and Harwood 2009). The changing nature of agriculture is having an impact on functional traditional gender roles in PNG; however, the community workshops in this study have demonstrated that communities are willing to consider how to reorientate to more-effective ways for families to work towards improved livelihoods through improved collaboration.

Having begun a gender-awareness process, the project now aims to use a community education approach to support families to develop shared family goals. Through two-way participatory learning and action, we hope to understand what discourses and ways of understanding will promote a positive outcome. We are aware that there will be questions that need to be explored in separate gender groups, but we believe that these results are best fed back to the communities to consider together. Vallance (2007, 2008) has argued that, in PNG, the depth of research knowledge depends on collaborative development approaches that reflect and maximise the Melanesian ways of knowing and sharing.

The place of two-way learning is paramount. As can be seen in the following closing speech by a Kerevat woman leader, collaborative research can provide mutually beneficial learning as well as deeper understanding of the data that are generated:

Many organisations come and go and they write up the report that we never see. We thank you for saying that you will write up the report on what we said and you will document it and we will see the results ... We believe we will benefit because the activities were really good and we learnt a lot from them. Other research organisations have come and gone and have said things that are not true about us. They called us uncivilised ... On behalf of the mothers once again we say thank you very much.

We share the goal of each of these communities to improve and sustain family livelihoods through enhanced agriculture. As we further develop relationships with the communities, we hope that trust will enable the complex gender and cultural questions to be mutually considered.

## Acknowledgments

We would like to acknowledge the contribution to the baseline study of Fredah Wantum (Baptist Union of PNG) and Kiteni Kurika (NARI Kerevat) as project leaders for the two regions featured in this paper (Baiyer Valley and Kerevat, respectively) and Deborah Kakis, researcher from Pacific Adventist University.

## References

- ADB (Asian Development Bank) 2012. Papua New Guinea critical development constraints. Country Diagnostic Studies Series. ADB: Manila, Philippines.
- Aslin H.J. and Brown V.A. 2004. Towards whole of community engagement: a practical toolkit. Murray–Darling Basin Commission: Canberra.
- Bourke M. and Harwood T. (eds) 2009. Food and agriculture in Papua New Guinea. Australian National University (ANU) E-Press: Canberra.
- Brown J. and Isaacs D. 2005. The World Café: shaping our futures through conversations that matter. Berrett-Koehler: San Francisco.
- Cahn M. and Liu M. 2008. Women and rural livelihood training: a case study from Papua New Guinea. *Gender and Development* 16(1), 133–146.
- Camara M., Wen Y., Hongmei W., Diakite M., Gerson K. and Wang H. 2011. Impact assessment of women farmer activity on poverty reduction and food security: a case of Kindia region/Guinea. *Journal of Agricultural Science* 3(4), 141–150.
- Chambers B., Omot N., Pamphilon B., Tomi B., Linibi M. and McGowan C. 2011. Improving women's business acumen in PNG: working with women smallholders in horticulture. Final Report 2012-23 for Project ASEM/2009/042. Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research: Canberra. Accessible at <<http://aci-ar.gov.au/publication/fr2012-23>>.
- Cooperrider D.L., Whitney D. and Stavros J.M. 2003. Appreciative inquiry handbook. Lakeshore Publishers: Bedford Heights, OH.
- DFAT (Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade) 2013. Papua New Guinea country brief. At <[http://www.dfat.gov.au/geo/png/png\\_brief.html](http://www.dfat.gov.au/geo/png/png_brief.html)>, accessed 5 October 2013.
- Garap S. 2004. Roles of existing structures, organisations and marketing. Pp. 38–42 in 'Women's voices in the food chain: shouts and whispers from PNG women in the natural resource sectors', ed. by S. Philpott, I. Powaesu and J. Laraki. Proceedings No. 5, volume 2: workshop papers, May 2004. National Agricultural Research Institute: Lae, Papua New Guinea.

- Government of Papua New Guinea 2012. Law and Justice Sector gender strategy. At <<http://www.lawandjustice.gov.pg/www/html/47-sector-gender-strategy.asp>>, accessed 1 May 2013.
- Green G.P. and Haines A. 2012. Asset building and community development. Sage Publications: Thousand Oaks, CA.
- Gustafsson B. 1999. Traditions and modernities in gender roles: transformations in kinship and marriage among the M'buke from Manus province. Monograph No. 35. National Research Institute of PNG: Port Moresby.
- Gustafsson B. 2002. Rural households and resource management in Papua New Guinea. Resource Management in Asia-Pacific: Working Paper No. 32. Paper presented in the Resource Management in Asia-Pacific Program Seminar Series, Australian National University. At <[https://crawford.anu.edu.au/rmap/pdf/Wpapers/rmap\\_wp32.pdf](https://crawford.anu.edu.au/rmap/pdf/Wpapers/rmap_wp32.pdf)>, accessed 6 October 2013.
- Hooley N. 2002. Two-way enquiry learning: exploring the interface between Indigenous and non-Indigenous knowing. Discussion Paper. Victoria University: Melbourne.
- Koczberski G. 2007. Loose fruit mamas: creating incentives for smallholder women in oil palm production in Papua New Guinea. *World Development* 35(7), 1172–1185.
- Lewis I., Maruia B. and Walker S. 2008. Violence against women in Papua New Guinea. *Journal of Family Studies* 14(2), 183–197.
- McCalman J., Tsey K., Kitau R. and McGinty S. 2012. 'Bringing us back to our origin': adapting and transferring an Indigenous Australian values-based leadership capacity-building course for community development in Papua New Guinea. *Community Development* 43(3), 393–408.
- Macintyre M. 2000. Hear us, women of Papua New Guinea!: Melanesian women and human rights. Pp. 147–171 in 'Human rights and gender politics: Asia-Pacific perspectives', ed. by A. Hildson, M. Macintyre, V. Mackie and M. Stivens. Routledge: London.
- Mason A.D. and King E.M. 2001. Engendering development through gender equality in rights, resources, and voice. World Bank Policy Research Report No. 21776. World Bank: Washington, DC. Accessible at <<http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/2001/01/891686/engendering-development-through-gender-equality-rights-resources-voice>>.
- Peter R. 2012. Women farmers and market access. Pp. 44–48 in 'The supermarket revolution in food: good, bad or ugly for the world's farmers, consumers and retailers?', ed. by A. Milligan and A.G. Brown. Proceedings of the Crawford Fund 17th Annual Parliamentary Conference, Canberra, 14–16 August 2011. The Crawford Fund: Canberra.
- Papua New Guinea Chamber of Mines and Petroleum 2012. Mining and petroleum industry's contribution to national building. At <<http://pngchamberminpet.com.pg/industry-contribution/>>, accessed 5 October 2013>.
- Pretty J. 1995. Participatory learning for sustainable agriculture. *World Development* 23(8), 1247–1263.
- Stern S.J. 1999. The changing face of gender complementarity: new research on Indian women in colonial Mexico. *Ethnohistory* 46(3), 607–621.
- UNFPA, UNIFEM and OSAGI (United Nations Population Fund, United Nations Development Fund for Women, and Office of the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women) 2005. Combating gender-based violence: a key to achieving the MDGS. UNFPA: New York. Accessible at <<http://www.unfpa.org/public/site/global/pid/1290>>.
- United Nations Secretariat of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues 2010. Gender and indigenous issues: overview. Briefing Note No. 1. United Nations: New York. Accessible at <[http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfi/documents/BriefingNote1\\_GREY.pdf](http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfi/documents/BriefingNote1_GREY.pdf)>.
- Vallance R. 2007. Is there a Melanesian research methodology? *Contemporary PNG Studies* 7(Nov), 1–15.
- Vallance R. 2008. Research ethics. *Contemporary PNG Studies* 8(May), 1–14.
- World Bank 2012. Papua New Guinea: country gender assessment for the period 2011–2012. World Bank Working Paper No. 75580. World Bank: Washington, DC. Accessible at <<http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/2012/12/17431121/papua-new-guinea-country-gender-assessment-period-2011-2012>>.
- World Bank, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) 2009. Gender in agriculture sourcebook. International Bank for Reconstruction and Development/World Bank: Washington, DC. Accessible at <<http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTGENAGRLIVSOUBOOK/Resources/CompleteBook.pdf>>.