

# REAL PEOPLE REAL STORIES

## THE PNG WOMEN FARMERS BUSINESS PROJECT

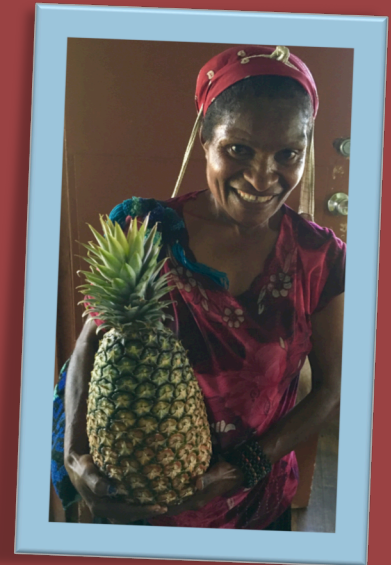
### Patricia's Story

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

Patricia was born in the Southern Highlands of Papua New Guinea. Her parents were Catholic missionaries. She had to leave school at Grade 10 as the family could not afford to keep her at school. She later married and got a job as a supervisor, drawing on the skills she had learned from her parents and on her experiences in her role within her church and community. Patricia knew then she had skills to lead, especially as she'd had great role models in both her parents and in church leaders.

Patricia and her husband came to live in his village in Lumusa. Here her husband had told her to be aware that leadership roles in the community could be competitive. She did not want to compete but knew she had the necessary skills and was really happy when she was asked to become a project leader. But it didn't come without its challenges. 'I came and faithfully attended all the training. I had a hard time because the Village Community Educators (VCEs) were getting cross [with] me every time. The VCEs never listen to me, they gossip about me because I became their leader.'

Patricia considered returning to live in her own village but choose to stay in Lumusa and live with the family. She plans to continue with her work and gives credit to her husband for his support. 'I will not give up but will carry on my leadership role because my husband supports me very well. My husband has seen the change in my life and responded well when I shared what I learned from the training with him.' Patricia feels she's gained strength as the training has helped her with her leadership role and personal life. 'What I learned in this project has changed my life as well as my family. The training has strengthened me to be strong and I am thankful to the bishops, fathers and my parents for the advice to be nice to people who hurt you.' She encourages women whose husbands have more than one wife to be patient and pray about their problems, and to do their best to keep their family together.



*Continued next page*

## **THE PNG WOMEN FARMERS BUSINESS PROJECT**

Patricia's challenges include people not being conscious of time and turning up late or leaving early for work on the bulb onion farm. She feels respected by some but not by all. 'I feel bad when ladies do not turn up on time for training or at the model farm. There are some in the community who respect me as a leader, but others dislike me and stir up trouble.'

Patricia is now interested in learning more about some of the training topics in detail. She really wants to apply some of the things she's learned but doesn't have enough resources, for example materials to build a fence around her garden that would enable her to grow food. She said this would protect the garden from the pigs that always destroy her gardens.

In the future Patricia plans to sell her pigs and use the money to build a modern house closer to the main village—to be closer to the other women and to work, support and be with them. Patricia wants her son to become a great leader one day and tries to demonstrate the values her parents taught her, always trying to be patient and live by example. She draws inspiration from her parents who she respected and admired—describing her mother as a great role model and prayer warrior and her father as a humble and inspiring man. For Patricia being a leader in her community is hard and she wishes that people could see that she doesn't want to take over the roles of others, she ultimately just wants to support her family and community. This is her leadership story.

*Patricia 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 tools and project.*