



## EU-STREIT PROGRAMME IN PAPUA NEW GUINEA

### Success Story

#### East Sepik Province: Supporting women to come together into a cohesive female-led group to play an active role in and benefit equally from an increased cocoa production

Leading the European Union-funded Programme for Support to Rural Entrepreneurship, Investment and Trade in Papua New Guinea (EU-STREIT PNG), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) focuses on promoting fair participation of women in all nodes along three targeted value chains of Cocoa, Vanilla and Fisheries under the Programme. In this respect, FAO supports the creation and enhancement of a gender-sensitive enabling environment and works on empowering women to play an active role and benefit equally from agribusiness activities whilst preventing an increase of the burden of women compared to men in the Sepik Region.



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We often hear of women starting a group for equal gender participation, but this is a story from a community in East Sepik Province, Papua New Guinea, of some men taking the lead to encourage and assist their women to form a group to benefit equally from opportunities within the agriculture sector.

This initiative started with three male farmers named Samuel Sikawa and his brother Johnna and Julius Wako with the support of one female farmer Nancy Wangi upon participating in a cocoa bud grafting propagation and block management training session held in 2020.

This training workshop was facilitated by the FAO in collaboration with the Cocoa Board and Provincial Department of Agriculture and Livestock (DAL) at Hawain cocoa nursery set-up in Wewak District.

Budding of cocoa seedlings is the latest innovation in the cocoa value chain to produce cocoa pod borer (CPB)-tolerant varieties, replacing old cocoa trees infested and destroyed by the CPB pest.

#### COUPLING TECHNICAL SUPPORT WITH REAWAKENING MESSAGES

After a weeklong training, the four returned to their hamlet located at the back of Yawasoro State Land and with the new knowledge and skills, they didn't waste time to form and register the 'Penjikowi Commercial Cocoa Nursery'. The registered business group with 12 farmers, including three youth, started a small nursery of about 15 meters by 20 meters on the banks of a river.

One problem for the men led by the Sikawa brothers, was that, they didn't have the labour force needed to increase their cocoa production from the small operation. However, based on the reawakening messages they had received

from the FAO-led EU-STREIT PNG Programme' staff, they learned that women were indispensable partners in sustainable agricultural development.

They, therefore, saw the need and urgency to include women and youth for any meaningful and sustainable cocoa value chain development. "I felt that by involving our women, we would have the manpower and together, we can increase our production and income for our families. At the same time, the EU-STREIT PNG Programme financed by the European Union will be here for five years, and we decided to follow their advice and the shared knowledge to include women and youth in all the nodes of the cocoa value chain we are engaged in," said Samuel Sikawa.

#### MOBILISING WOMEN TO ESTABLISH A FEMALE-LED GROUP

Female farmer Nancy Wangi was approached to mobilise mothers in the area, and 'Penjikowi Women in Agriculture Association' was formed.

"I'm delighted because this is the first of its kind in our community. What we are doing now will be emulated by our children, and it will equally empower us, the women, financially. The extra income women will make can support their husbands to pay the children's school fees," said Nancy.

The women's cocoa group was registered the same year in 2020 and now has 25 members, including youths .

Esseneth Sikawa, 17, is one of the group's female youth members who is still learning and participating in cocoa propagation within the group. "I help my father with cocoa bud grafting because the money from this work will help to pay for my school fees to become a Doctor in Medicine," said Esseneth, who is in Grade 10 at Yarapos Mercy Secondary.



## WORKED TO

empower rural women and secure their fair participation and benefit from agri-business activities.

## WORKED FOR

female-included cocoa cultivation farmers cluster groups across East Sepik Province.

## WORKED WITH

East Sepik Provincial Cocoa Board and Department of Agriculture and Livestock.

## WORKED THANKS TO

European Union Delegation in Papua New Guinea.

## PROGRAMME'S IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS

International Labour Organization (ILO), International Telecommunication Union (ITU), United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Government of Papua New Guinea.

## CONTACT INFORMATION

FAO UN Programme Office  
Department of Agriculture and Livestock Compound,  
Wewak, East Sepik Province, Papua New Guinea

Email: [streit-feedback@fao.org](mailto:streit-feedback@fao.org) | Phone: +675 436 0121  
Website: [www.fao.org/papuanewguinea/streit-png/en](http://www.fao.org/papuanewguinea/streit-png/en)

Through this group, women meet occasionally and discuss their affairs, something they never used to do before the group was formed.

## PROVIDING WOMEN GROUP WITH SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE

Recently in April 2021, the FAO-led EU-STREIT PNG cocoa value chain officers supported the Penjikowi Women in Agriculture Association with a bud graft and block management training and distributed 180 CPB tolerant seedlings (10 seedlings from each of the 18 clone cocoa varieties) to set-up their budwood gardens.

## SECURING COLLECTIVE PARTICIPATION, BENEFITTING ALL EQUALLY

The community, led by the Sikawa brothers, Julius Wako and Nancy Wangi, have taken the cocoa training sessions offered by EU-STREIT PNG seriously and are leading a combined labour force of 37 men and women, including youths who are now well imbued with the knowledge and skills of cocoa propagation and block management routines.

"After the FAO, Cocoa Board and DAL trainings in 2020, we were able to bud 4000 CPB tolerant seedlings from our nursery and have distributed evenly to others in the community," said Johnna Sikawa, the handyman and trainer for the Penjikowi Cocoa Nursery and the Penjikowi Women in Agriculture Association.

With the clone seedlings supplied to their nursery and with combined labour, they can expand and rehabilitate their CPB devastated blocks through bud grafting and good block management practices in the future.

## MAINSTREAMING GENDER PERSPECTIVES IN AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT

Gender and youth inclusion is an integral part of this rural agriculture development programme, with women playing a pivotal role in the targeted value chains of Cocoa, Vanilla and Fisheries under FAO-led EU-STREIT PNG.

"We cannot leave our women and the youth behind because FAO and the EU advocate and support the inclusion of everyone in the households, women and men and the youth, to participate and to benefit. The Penjikowi story is an example of what we promote, and it works in other areas of the Sepik Region," said Dr. Rabi Rasaily, the FAO Senior Agricultural Officer.

"This is the kind of attitude and mode of development that the EU-STREIT PNG encourages and fosters. After you participate in the training, you bring knowledge, skills and techniques back, and train your family and neighbours, and together you grow your cocoa, vanilla and fisheries business with your community, province and country as a whole," said the Programme Coordinator, Dr. Xuebing Sun.

"I commend the Sikawa brothers for recognising the important role women play in the cocoa value chain and in agriculture as a whole, to build sustainable communities. It will be good to see household incomes and spending being discussed by husband and wife as well, so that everything evolves around the family, e.g. agribusiness planning and management," Dr Sun added.

The FAO-led EU-STREIT PNG Programme supports the establishment and organising of the female- and youth-inclusive cocoa cultivation farmers cluster groups across East Sepik Province and works on empowering them with the provision of refresher training sessions, knowledge-sharing workshops, hands-on skills trainings and inputs supply.



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