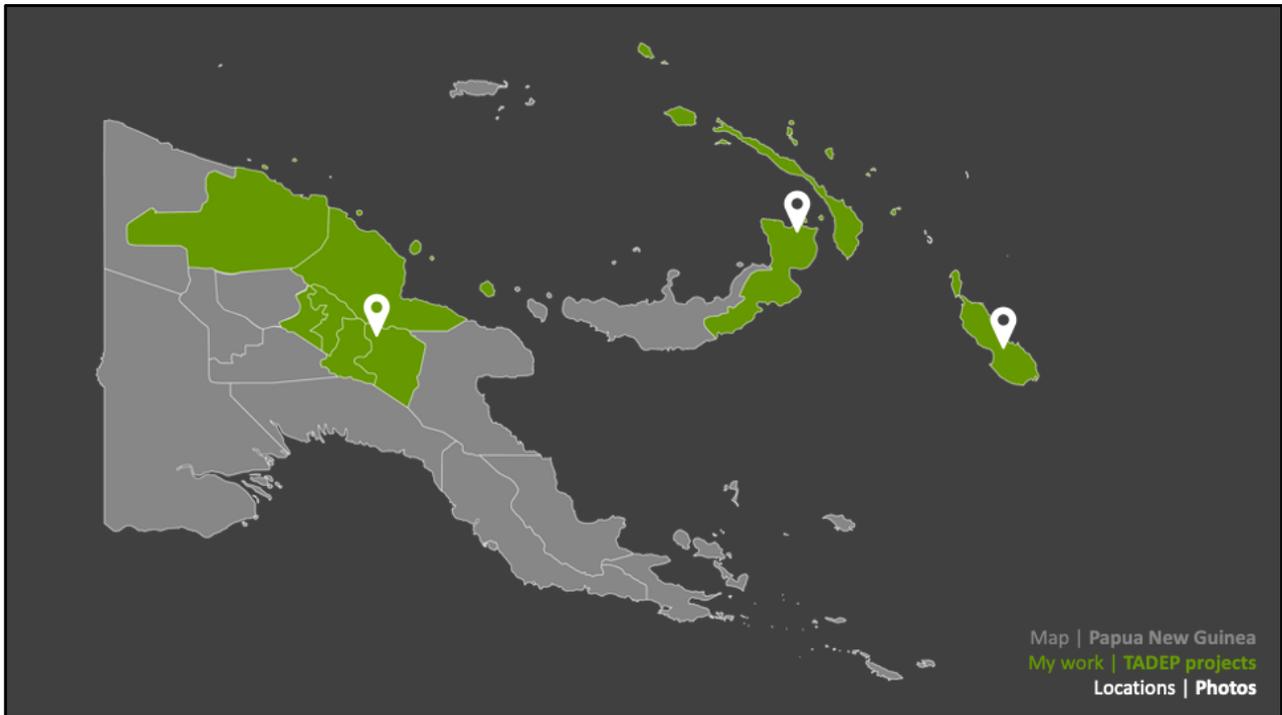


RAID Network | Women in agriculture and climate change
A perspective from Papua New Guinea

Me | Elizabeth Brennan
Tweet me | @amoeaba



Your background and what your work involves – 2 minutes

Am tuning in from Wongan Hills in WA Wheatbelt

Acknowledge Ballardong country – family also farm on Yued country

Also like to acknowledge that whilst I have had a connection with PNG for over a decade, I am not Papua New Guinean and offer one perspective

As such, my reflections will be of an Australian in PNG

First travelled to PNG in 2009 after my friend and I got over-confident after a few of those hideous vodka premixes and dared each other to walk the Kokoda Track

We did so 6 months later and I fell in love with PNG

I moved back for two years, fell in love even more and having been back and forward ever since

[PHOTO] My current role is coordinating a multidisciplinary ag R4D program on behalf of DFAT and ACIAR



Set the scene for discussion **[PHOTO]** living in PNG and at the Kokopo Markets one Saturday morning, there was a bloke who was not a happy chappy that morning and decided to take it out on me

Was the only non-PNGean there and he marching toward me, instantly this wall of PNG mama's formed in front of me in protection, the bloke yelped and scuttled in the other direction

From then on, I had a deep admiration for PNG women – their stealthy way to get things done, their knowing smiles, their resilience and their magic



Challenges climate change presents women farmers – 4 minutes

Three main challenges:

Food security

PNG is diverse - there are 840 languages in PNG

Roles between women and men are different – the roles are contextual and depend many factors, including on leadership (matriarchal or patriarchal) or land tenure (matrilineal or patrilineal)

Similarly, different in food production

Women work the gardens (we'd call them farms) for food crops and men farm the cash crops like cocoa or copra (coconut)

As climates change, food production reliability changes and the unpredictability can cause food shortages, which is the domain of women
Changing weather patterns are now posing a threat to maternal health as “[gardens] are not producing as much and women have to work twice as hard to grow their sweet potato. They work extra hard and they're pregnant – it's one reason why they result in premature births”

Livelihoods impact

80% of the nation's population being rural-based subsistence smallholder

farmers

Aside from subsistence food crops, PNG livelihoods are highly linked to weather-dependent such as fishing and small-scale cash cropping. These communities are exposed to climate-related hazards, including cyclones, droughts, floods and landslides.

When there is limited capacity for economic gains, there can be additional tension within family of which women bear the domestic violence brunt, less capacity for health investment which women are then tasked to be care givers, less investment in education which reinforces the poverty cycle of which women are often the most drastically affected and generally the work load for women is increased.

Tension of economic development while preventing further environmental damage
PNG is blessed and arguably cursed with abundant natural resources
40% of the population living below the national poverty line and opportunities to pursue economic development and supporting infrastructure are highly sought-after

A major challenge facing Papua New Guinea is how to generate economic development while preventing further environmental damage.

The PNG Government's support for large scale development projects (e.g. mining and gas), could be perceived as being at odds with its recent commitments to facilitating regional dialogue on climate change.

Many communities across Papua New Guinea have already experienced the negative social and environmental costs of large development projects.

[PHOTO] Before it closed, Panguna was the largest open-cut mine in the world. Some 2.5km wide and half a kilometre deep, it is marred by copper bleaching – a blue-green oxidization caused by rain hitting exposed copper ore. On the far side of the pit, a wall of untreated tailings hundreds of metres high marches slowly down a ravine. Millions of litres of opal-blue water rush from pit water drains, forming waterfalls of the damned that lay waste to all life in the valley below.

Women are often tasked with water collection and with a contaminated water source, they often have to walk further. Health implications are rife, again increasing the care giving burden and in the case of Panguna, which erupted into a bloody conflict which lasted a decade, had a huge impact on women – direct violence, the void in community that was created when men left to fight or died, state of civil unrest.

Location | Goroka, Papua New Guinea



Solutions: The role women play in agricultural adaptation and mitigation strategies – 4 minutes

Three potential solutions:

[VIDEO] Following farmers out to their Sweetpotato farm in the Highlands, which is part of the program I coordinate, and I marvelled at everyone managing to walk through the mud so adeptly, unlike me, I noticed that a woman up ahead was also carrying a child on her head – PNG women are amazing!

Women as decision makers and in leadership

When women are seen as equal within family unit, decisions about to best mitigate climate change impacts are more considered and effective
Different factors affecting food security, health, economic generation, etc are addressed

For eg, one of the TADEP projects, Family Farm Teams, has been examining, developing and facilitating ways to build the business acumen, skills and knowledge of women farmers in Papua New Guinea. The project has found that when the differing roles within families are recognised and acknowledged, men, women and youth are able to contribute their skills in an effective way and build strong, peaceful whole of family farming teams.

Women are also needed in decision making and leadership roles beyond the

family too. In community, church, industry, political spheres. More considered decisions can be made.

Equal access to resources and services

If the important role women play in agriculture is recognised, and they are provided with equal access to resources and services, climate change can also offer significant opportunities for women to become agents of change.

Given the gendered implications of climate change, addressing gendered barriers is critical so that the most appropriate climate-smart agriculture practices and technologies for a given area can be identified.

Asset-based climate change strategies

The wantok system is the social system or relational network in PNG

From an outsider or Western-centric eye, it can be seen a system that enables corruption

Yet, it is a wonderful safety net that ensures no one gets left behind

There was a significant drought in the PNG Highlands in 2015-16, resulting crop failures and water shortage, and in remote communities the death rate was 7 in 100

Aid responsiveness can be slow, if at all, and so it was the wantok system that carried so many through

By working with assets like the wantok system, where women's roles in the social fabric are critical, climate change adaptation and mitigation strategies can be much more effective

Tok Pisin | Tenkyu tumas
Kuanua | Boina tuna
English (in case you hadn't figured that out) | Thank you

Conclusion

The impact of climate change can be the most devastating for women.

Including women can also generate the most considered and effective climate change adaptation and mitigation strategies.

So, the future is female. Our mother earth depends on it.