



## SUCCESS STORY

# Women’s Work

***For women on Manus Island, food security is personal***



One of the goals of the Women in Conservation committees in Manus is to increase clam production by improving the health of the mangrove stands.

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***“My vision is that in five years, we have enough food to feed all our families.”***

– Roselyn Posing, Chairman, Powat WIC committee

It’s no surprise that women play a vital conservation role in communities around Manus Island, Papua New Guinea. They’re the first to know if there’s not enough food to feed their families. Recently, inshore fisheries and village gardens have not been producing enough for women to keep food on the table, so they’re expanding their

traditional roles to help their families and their villages cope with the effects of growing populations and sea-level rise on food production. “We are doing this work to benefit our communities,” said Elizabeth Naron of Lopahan village. “We do not have enough food, so we must learn to produce more.” Elizabeth is the driving force for the Women in Conservation (WIC) group in her community on the northern coast of Manus. The Nature Conservancy (TNC), a partner in USAID’s Coral Triangle Support Partnership (CTSP), supports the group’s work. Papua New Guinea is a country member of the Coral Triangle Initiative on Coral Reefs, Fisheries and Food Security (CTI-CFF).

In neighboring Powat, WIC Coordinator Jenny Songan said the women’s committee she organized there six months ago is “piloting women’s empowerment in Manus.” Twelve women—four officers plus one representing each Powat clan—meet once a month to discuss ideas, report on projects and discuss each clan’s needs. Together, the women make plans to overcome the

challenges of overharvesting their dietary staple sago, the decrease in cultivable land, and declining fish and shellfish takes.

The women of Lopahan, Powat, and other villages are busy with climate change adaptation activities they have learned about from TNC and from other villages via the Manus learning and training network (called MECCN), created with support from CTSP and the national Learning and Training Network (LTN), a project under PNG’s CTI-CFF National Plan of Action. Rising sea levels have increased flooding, filling formerly protected lagoons behind the villages with brackish water. The women are using a mix of household waste, shells, and coconut husks topped with soil and compost to create new gardening space near their homes. “When the northwest winds blow, the sea is rough, and we can’t reach our sago and taro gardens by the river,” said Clara Sak, secretary of Powat’s WIC committee. “We need more garden land close to the village.”

Sea water is also adding salt to village soils and groundwater, so the women are “atoll farming,” building rings around food-producing plants and trees and filling them with organic materials to create raised beds. To enhance fish nurseries and improve yields of mangrove crab, mussels, and clams, they clean existing mangrove stands, using the waste gathered as landfill in the reclamation project. And instead of burning leaves, the women are composting them with previously unused sea grass and waste from sago processing to turn trash into valuable compost. Many of the women also help the men raise and plant new mangrove seedlings to protect the shore and the boundary area between the lagoon and the village. “My vision is that in five years, we have enough food to feed all our families,” said Roselyn Posing, the Chairman of the Powat WIC committee. *TNC is the leading implementing partner of CTSP and USCTI Support Program in Manus.*