



Australia Awards

Australia Awards Papua New Guinea Women Alumni Mentoring Initiative



Women taking part in the Alumni Mentoring Initiative are role models and positive change-makers for communities right across Papua New Guinea (PNG).

Inaugural participants include Betty Eria, a Senior Administration and Payroll Officer with the Department of Personnel Management.

"I am appreciating the opportunities to connect with each other not only during our meetings but keeping in touch outside of our scheduled meetings, such as through the Community of Practice (CoP)," Betty says.

"I am developing networking and collaboration skills through the other activities in the initiative - CoP meetings, training workshop, webinars. They have been very helpful. I am enjoying learning from the others, being part of a community".

Welcome to the Australia Awards PNG Women Alumni Mentoring Initiative's update.

We are delighted to feature some of the inspiring women alumni working together as mentors and mentees in this exciting initiative. The initiative is just one example of how women alumni are working together to support PNG's development and drive positive change.

The Women Alumni Mentoring Initiative is a collaboration between Australia Awards PNG and the PNG Australia Alumni Association (PNGAAA). Launched in August 2020, it supports women alumni to build their confidence and leadership capabilities and helps them increase their contributions to development across PNG.

Under the initiative's first phase, 44 women mentors and mentees from PNG's public, private, and civil society sectors have been paired based on their backgrounds and strengths. The women alumni are sharing skills and knowledge to support capacity building and PNG's development.

The initiative includes professional development workshops, networking, CoP meetings, webinars and knowledge sharing, transfer and exchange. All participants are members of PNGAAA from different provinces across PNG and have been chosen for their diverse professional experience and motivation to work with other PNG women to drive positive change. In recognition of the first cohort's success, a second phase is underway.



Initiative implementation

Electronic Data Interchange

44 mentor and mentee participants

Mentor and mentee training workshops

Launch (August 2020)

Initiative launched by former Australian Deputy High Commissioner



Former Australian Deputy High Commissioner Caitlin Wilson speaking at the launch

Community of Practice

The online mentor and mentee Community of Practice (CoP) meetings are bi-monthly events that provide a great opportunity for the mentors and mentees to come together and share their knowledge, ideas, and experiences.

The CoP meetings are also a forum for the mentors and mentees to:

- learn from each other
- make connections with people who share common goals
- develop their professional practice and networks.

An early benefit of the CoPs has been the development of peer mentoring relationships outside the group, creating additional support opportunities for the mentees and skills development for the mentors.

“This initiative is helping me a lot to build my confidence. I see my mentor as someone who is experienced and supported me with valuable ideas that I can apply in my job” said Sarah Ande.

Ongoing professional development



CoP facilitator training

The mentors and mentees have been invited to co-facilitate a CoP meeting with mentoring specialist Lesley Petersen as an opportunity to build confidence in group facilitation skills.

A training workshop was developed which covered what a CoP is and the essential skills of a CoP facilitator. For example, managing group dynamics, listening and questioning, skills and developing trust.

Mentor and mentee training workshops

Following the initiative launch, two training workshops were held for the mentors and mentees prior to their mentoring partnerships commencing.

The workshops provided them with the opportunity to understand their role as a mentor or mentee and explore the skills of mentoring.

Key topics covered in the workshops included:



your identity as a mentor/mentee



the benefits of mentoring



active listening



asking good questions



providing strengths-based feedback.

A resource repository for ongoing professional development

A resource repository has been created on 360alumni PNGAAA's website, providing a central portal for the collection and dissemination of mentoring resources and articles, programme templates and forms, and a bibliography of references relevant to mentoring.

The repository provides an additional support tool for the mentors and mentees.

Examples of resources that are available from the repository include:

- power balance in the mentoring relationship webinar
- mentor self-review checklist
- mentee evaluation of the mentor
- CoP facilitators' training workshop
- goal planner template
- mentoring template pack.

Webinar series

Monthly webinars are being facilitated for the mentors and mentees as another opportunity to come together and learn from each other. Participants are asked to suggest a topic for each webinar to ensure the focus is relevant and of interest to everyone involved in the initiative.

Power balance in the mentoring relationship

The first webinar in the series was held in October 2020 and looked at how the mentor's and the mentee's cultural lens, cultural awareness, and the establishment of cultural safety in the mentoring partnership influence the relationship. A key message in the webinar was:

“Both the mentee and the mentor should feel safe, supported, and free to share their cultural learning journeys.”

Having powerful and purposeful conversations (having the hard-to-have conversations)

The second webinar on 18 November was on how to have powerful and purposeful conversations. Although the context for this was the mentoring partnership, the learning could be transferred into the participants' work environments too. The webinar gave the mentors and mentees a chance to discuss:

- what is a 'difficult' conversation?
- how difficult conversations often stem from some sort of conflict
- why conflict arises

As well as exploring the meaning and causes of difficult conversations, there was plenty of opportunity for participants to consider various strategies for managing these. For example:

- identifying emotional triggers, analysing the effectiveness of these, and choosing a different response
- applying a four-step framework that starts with preparation and ends with putting an action plan in place.



Meet the team

Lesley Petersen



Lesley has over 30 years' experience in the learning and development field, building her expertise in the areas of mentoring, evaluation, and research.

Her PhD explored how mentoring provides a support mechanism for professional practice and resulted in the development of an evidenced-based mentoring model.

Lesley is working with Australia Awards PNG to implement the women alumni mentoring initiative, working closely with the initiative team and the mentors and mentees.

Samson Vartovo



Samson has 15 years' experience in international development working on different Australian Government funded programs supporting public sector reforms at the national and sub-national levels of governments.

He joined Australia Awards PNG in July 2016 as the Alumni Engagement Manager supporting active engagement with alumni across PNG including providing secretariat support to the PNGAAA.

He currently provides support to the team to ensure the Women Alumni Mentoring Initiative is meeting its objectives and ensure participants in the mentoring initiative are building the next generation of women leaders in PNG and globally.

Marlene Delis



Marlene has six years experience in secondary teaching and six years experience working in the NGO sector.

Marlene is working with Australia Awards PNG as the Senior Coordinator for Alumni Engagement, providing secretariat support to PNGAAA.

She was an awardee and mentee in the 2018 cohort of the Australia Awards Women Leadership Initiative. Marlene supports the Women Alumni Mentoring Initiative working closely with Dr Lesley Petersen, Samson Vartovo and all the mentors and mentees.

For more information

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