

My education journey ... from a village in West Sepik

by Shirleyanne Hyukai

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Summer School students meeting the PNG Treasurer in Canberra.

I was raised and grew-up in a village in the West Sepik province on Papua New Guinea, in a coastal area, near the border with Indonesia. I have four siblings, and my parents are farmers. It may be hard to believe, but I completed all my school education living in the village.

It was growing up and living in a rural background that has made me who I am. For some people a rural or village setting may be viewed as undesirable due to a lack of advancement opportunities. But it is where I grew up and where my memories are from. It certainly wasn't easy. Our village had some basic government services such as education, health and road access, but no electricity, even though it is only 10-15 minutes drive from the town of Vanimo. I had to do homework and my assignments at nighttime with no proper lighting. The only way around it was to use battery-powered lamps and candles. It was also difficult or impossible to access the internet. This is another factor that seems to drag down those living in rural areas. Many give up along their educational pathways not realising on what they are missing out on. Many young people stay behind in the village seemingly unbothered about what the future will hold for them. For me, as an individual coming from a patrilineal society, coming this far has been the greatest opportunity to experience and be exposed to the outside world.

I faced many challenges along the way trying to complete my school education. I completed my grade ten in 2010, but was not able to do Years 11 and 12 until 2013 and 2014 because of limited places and difficulties in paying school fees. After completing my grade twelve in 2014 I was selected to study at the Institute of Business Studies. However, I could only complete the first semester as I couldn't afford the fees. I then applied to UPNG, and got accepted into the School of Business and Public Policy.

In 2016, I did my first year under the Business Management Foundation Year. In 2017, I was again faced with school fee problems, and had to spend the whole year

back at home. I came back in 2018 and completed 2019 as well. This year is my final year.

There are a few family members who have stood by me and had my back when I needed help. In particular, my mother did her best to provide my educational needs ranging from the school fees to my daily bus fares as a day student for the last three years at UPNG. Though my experience of being a student may not have been perfect at all times, I have learnt that nothing comes easily. You have to work hard in order to gain it. If you are determined then you will achieve your reward. For me, patience and perseverance are required to achieve an academic opportunity as a female.

This post is the fourth in a six-part series of personal reflections written by ANU-UPNG Summer School scholarship students. You can find the full series [here](#).

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Link: <https://devpolicy.org/my-education-journey-from-a-village-in-west-sepik-20200501-2/>