

Interview by Jonathan Ritchie and Musawe Sinebare with Sergie Bang, Lae, 9 September 2014

PhD, Agriculture, UWA, 1988-93



[00:00:00]	Sergie is the director general of the National Agricultural Research Institute (NARI). In the mid-1980s he worked with the Department of Agriculture and Livestock in the horticulture section and applied for an AIDAB scholarship. Went to University of Western Australia (UWA) in 1988 to do a master's. He wanted to work on sweet potato, an important crop in Papua New Guinea (PNG). He had tried to go to the University of Queensland (UQ) but couldn't find a supervisor there. David Turner supervised him at UWA. He fitted in well because there were Thai students at UWA on a similar program. His study was on the effect of temperature and day length on sweet potato tubers. He was there for five years because his studies were extended to a PhD. In 1993 he went home to work at Tambul Potato Research Station.	Career; Leadership; Studying in Australia
[00:03:27]	He got married in 1987, his wife went to Australia and his two sons were born there, at the King Edward Memorial hospital. Felt people in WA had a bond with people from PNG. His scholarship covered the whole five years. He feels the scholarships then were better than they are now. There was an allowance for his wife and children and the stipend was quite comfortable to live on. Still has contact with David Turner.	Family; Living in Australia; Child born in Australia; Friendships; Scholarships experience; Connections with Australia
[00:07:34]	He enjoyed going on field trips to Albany, Manjimup and Pinjarra and meeting farmers and learning about marketing chain systems. He could apply what he learned back in PNG and helped a lot of growers in Tambul. [Discussion about how this interest in the agribusiness perspective developed.]	Travel in Australia; Returning to PNG
[00:11:48]	[Comments about improved funding, through the Australian Government, for agricultural development and NARI's role in that.]	Connections with Australia; Research collaboration with



		Australia
[00:13:36]	As a student, in 1986, was involved in the Christian Fellowship and went to Australia, visiting Melbourne, Brisbane and Sydney. Melbourne was cold, people were friendly and knowledgeable about PNG. At UWA he got a good understanding of research methodology and process. He enjoyed interacting with people from different departments and mulling over problems together was helpful.	Previous connection with Australia; Studying in Australia
[00:17:37]	[Discussion comparing Australia and PNG in terms of punctuality, efficiency, quality and service orientation and how he tried to adopt what he'd seen in Australia in his work at the department.] When he went back to PNG he worked as a research and development officer for the department, a more senior and more scientific position than he had before he left.	Studying in Australia; Returning to PNG; Leadership; Post-scholarship career
[00:20:42]	He was a bit disappointed when he got back but also pleased to have a positive influence at Tambul. Believes he can be part of the change process. [Comments about funding difficulties and involvement with the Produce Development Company that was looking at marketing fresh produce grown in the highlands.]	Returning to PNG; Community service
[00:23:40]	From 1996 to 2001 he was manager of technical services at the Fresh Produce Development Agency. He was the first Papua New Guinean to have a doctorate in agriculture. He joined NARI in 2001 as principle scientist and led the Drought Response Project. In 2003, after the project was finished, he moved back to Tambul as team leader. In July 2004 he became director of research at NARI.	Post-scholarship career
[00:27:10]	NARI encourages their researchers to get postgraduate training in Australia to develop academic and scientific rigour.	Connections with Australia
[00:29:52]	In Perth the family had support from their church group and an association of Papua New Guinean students and other Papua New Guineans. They made friends with an Australian family and spent time with them on weekends and holidays. His family went to stay with them while he was away on field trips too. The PNG community celebrated Independence Day and weddings together.	Living in Australia; Community groups in Australia; PNG community in Perth; Friends with Australians
[00:33:38]	[Story about, when he first went to Perth, going to a fish and chip shop and being approached by a local man who welcomed him and told him about his father being saved by the fuzzy wuzzy angels.] His first son is in Brisbane now. [Discussion about Western Australians with PNG connections: Paul Hasluck and Dame Rachel Cleland.]	Living in Australia; Connections with Australia

[00:37:45]	Australian scholarships are appreciated because the standard is reliable and there are more on offer than in other countries but people in PNG also take up scholarships in New Zealand and some go to China and Japan but the quality is less consistent. [Discussion about good relationship between NARI, which was funded partly by AusAID, and Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR) and opportunity for scholarships.]	Scholarships experience; Research collaboration with Australia
[00:42:38]	Agriculture is a priority for the Australia–PNG development partnership for the next year and most of the work will be through NARI. The focus is primarily on internal transport of produce and secondarily on export.	Australia-PNG relations; Research collaboration with Australia
[00:46:26]	END	