



Jonathan Ritchie and Musawe Sinebare interview with Samson Akunaii, PNG Institute of Medical Research (IMR), 9 July 2014

MBA, James Cook University, 1980 cohort



[00:00:31]	Received AusAid scholarship 1987-89, MBA at James Cook University, Townsville. Scholarship came through employer PNG Institute of Medical Research. Took family. Good opportunity for them to get view of life in a developed country. Three daughters. Returned to Goroka due to ageing parents, continued work at the Institute and take time off from his studies.	Scholarship experience; Family; Living in Australia
[00:02:39]	Many challenges in Australia. Lectures took place all day. Lots of interaction with government and students from the private sector. Level of support on campus was excellent, AusAid liaison officer, supervisors. Orientation and settling in was very good.	Studying in Australia; Networks; Arrival
[00:03:56]	Chose Townsville due to its proximity to PNG to attend to his ageing parents. Previous connections and to and fro between PNG and Townsville and Brisbane.	Selection of course



[00:04:43]	PNG student community in Queensland and excursions between the universities for social activities. Student activities on Independence day, cultural events; hired a bus to travel around. Made a lot of friends from the Pacific	PNG community in Australia
[00:06:50]	Confidence boost for interacting with all sorts of people from industry and so on. Opportunity to carry our research and work with industry was great. Learning from industry-government partnerships in Australia.	Study experience
[00:09:02]	Current work includes a lot of interaction with international visitors and people from various backgrounds. Learnt self-confidence and matured through his studies in Australia. On his return used managerial and organisational skills to good use to bring about changes at the Institute.	Current work; international networks
[00:11:47] [00:13:30]	Another impact is in international collaborations between the Institute and partners from around the world - initially Australia and NZ, but now, Europe, South America etc. Travels to these places. Big plus that he has international experience in his role as in Corporate Affairs.	International networks
	Alumni links with JCU held in Goroka and Lae. Only really events based. Should do more in between those events to connect and work together. His is a positive story but many, many PNG students in Australia are failing and not applying themselves to their study and taking advantage of	Alumni networks

	<p>this opportunity. This is a challenge now and this is something senior alumni need to think about. Need to measure the impact of all these scholarships. PNG is not changing, we haven't moved forward and we are moving back." Where are all these people who have been trained in Australia?</p>	
[00:16:02]	<p>Alumni events are simply about meeting and greeting. Would be good to hear more about what individual alumni are doing and how they are contributing to their workplace and PNG more broadly. If we have this information then can be better informed about what areas to target for future scholarships, ie. what is needed and in what fields people are likely to contribute. Would like to see a more active alumni.</p>	Alumni network
[00:19:09]	<p>Network with JCU alumni; Joins Australian educational institutions events, roadshows.</p>	Alumni network; Australian connections
[00:20:36]	<p>Mentoring role in his Institute for scholarships applicants to JCU and elsewhere in Australia. Staff completing Phds at UWA, UNSW, Uni Melb etc. Collaborations with NZ University etc. Cultivating and harnessing relationships at home and overseas.</p>	Mentoring; Australian connections; international networks
[00:23:55]	<p>Awareness that he needed to upgrade his knowledge. Mentoring.</p>	Motivation to study overseas

[00:26:38]	Family in Australia. Sad to leave Australia because the children were very well educated and socialised. They were reluctant to leave. Wife worked in part-time jobs and stayed on when he had to return to PNG for family reasons.	Living in Australia; family; friendships
[00:28:47]	Skills enhancement. Previously was stuck in accounts office. When he returned from Australia he was given new responsibilities and was open to them. Suggested ways to do things better, more efficient, more transparent and make changes. Management saw his potential.	Post-scholarship work experience
[00:32:10]	Today he has the confidence of the senior management at the Institute and importantly, its international partners. Would not have stayed at the Institute without the study experience he had in Australia. It is an exciting place to work now because of constant international contact and collaboration.	Current work; international network
[00:35:18]	Reflections on the development of the IMR over the past 2 decades; collaboration with AusAid and other international agencies. The presence of Australian alumni in senior positions in the IMR holds some weight in negotiations with AusAid and very good communication with them. "It is all about sharing and caring....There may be a lot of things that I don't know that you have."	Connection with Australia

[00:37:43]	Role for alumni in sharing stories of contributions. Suggests grouping by area of expertise/training. eg. accounting, education etc.	Alumni and scholarships program
[00:41:35]	Discussion of future of scholarships program. Call for commitment to serving PNG. Reflection on the state of development in PNG.	Scholarships program
	[00:44:14] END	