

Interview by Jonathan Ritchie and Musawe Sinebare with Abner Yalu, Lae, 8 September 2014

MA, Agriculture, University of Queensland, (Endeavour), 2006-2007



[00:00:21]	Abner did a Bachelor of Science at University of Papua New Guinea (UPNG) and then became a cadet plant breeder and biometrician at National Agricultural Research Institute (NARI). At that time, AusAID was funding technical assistance to NARI and they provided mentors for junior researchers. Bob Mayer, from Queensland Department of Primary Industry (QDPI), was Abner's mentor and taught him a lot about research and training as well as taking him to Australia for workshops.	Scholarship experience; Career; Existing connections with Australia; Mentoring; Professional networks
[00:00:00]	While he was a cadet he had supervisors and mentors from Australia and that made it an easy transition when he went to study in Australia. Abner got a place at the University of Queensland (UQ), through a former student of Dr Mayer's, and applied for a scholarship. He wasn't successful with AusAID but got one with Endeavour, in 2006. He did a Master of Agricultural Studies (biometrics and qualitative genetics) at the St Lucia campus over eighteen months. His biometrics supervisor arranged a tutoring job for him at both UQ campuses and Bob Mayer also arranged part time biometrics work for him with QDPI. Being able to work as well as study made the experience even better. Initially he stayed in Bob Mayer's flat in Brisbane then rented a unit of his own. He went on his own for the first year and his partner and two children came for the last six months.	Mentoring; Existing connections with Australia; Professional networks; Application process; Studying in Australia; Work experience in Australia; Living in Australia; Family
[00:04:50]	Bob helped him settle in and then he was on his own and it took a little while to work everything out, e.g. being on time to catch the bus. The	Supervisor-student relationship; Living in Australia; Scholarship



	<p>Endeavour scholarship paid for his tuition and a living allowance. He found it challenging, at first, to find time to cook and wash his clothes. Medicare was good but it was strange not being able to buy antibiotics over the counter. He suffered from the lack of fibre foods like taro – it was difficult finding that kind of food. There were a couple of Papua New Guineans, from NARI, who had come a couple of years earlier and they gave him support and advice.</p>	<p>experience; Challenges; Alumni network</p>
[00:09:32]	<p>He's still in touch with supervisors and colleagues from Australia. They introduced him to the Australasia Biometrics Society, which is affiliated with the international body, and he benefits from the workshops and training that the society offers. Many of the things he does at NARI now he learnt from those networks. He spent three years in Germany with his father when he was a child and had been to Australia for holidays with his aunt so he knew a bit about western and Australian culture and expectations before he went there to study.</p>	<p>Ongoing connections with Australia; Professional networks; International mobility</p>
[00:12:33]	<p>He has co-authored conference papers, journal articles and a book with his mentors and supervisors and that has taught him a lot that he didn't learn during the course. He also benefitted a lot from the books that his supervisors and mentors made available to him and made sure to bring back a lot of books from Australia. Now colleagues overseas give NARI books they no longer need when they get new editions.</p>	<p>Post-scholarship career; Ongoing connections with Australia; Mentoring; Research collaboration</p>
[00:14:55]	<p>In Australia, his son went to school and his daughter to childcare. They both speak English very well. He paid for the school and childcare because the scholarship didn't cover family expenses. His partner has an economics degree and found work. He also still has contact with friends that he made in Australia, some from other countries but living in Australia. He found his own place to live, at first in Taringa and then in Toowong. Rent was expensive.</p>	<p>Family; Living in Australia; Work experience in Australia; Friendships; Connections with Australia</p>
[00:18:03]	<p>He played rugby, for fun, on Saturdays. He didn't have time to join the university team. He went to a church social group on Tuesdays and to service on Sundays. Advice for other Papua New Guineans about studying in Australia? To manage their time and not get distracted with social activities. The university chose and trained him to be a mentor for young Polynesians, in Years 11 and 12 and university,</p>	<p>Leisure activities in Australia; Religious practice in Australia; Mentoring; Leadership; Community service; Work experience in Australia; Polynesian community in Brisbane</p>



	and he found that there were similar problems with lack of education and opportunities as in PNG. In that voluntary role he learnt a lot about training and competency-based career paths and is designing programs at NARI based on what he learnt.	
[00:22:00]	Impact of the scholarship on leadership roles? He volunteered for a lot of things before he studied in Australia but the volunteer work he did in Australia was very enriching and opened his eyes to other things. He has a strong leadership role at NARI now. [Comments about the lack of motivation to develop expertise where it is lacking and how he teaches himself what he needs to know e.g. he has learnt to program software and is building a management information system for NARI.] Australian mentorship of PNG is important.	Community service; Leadership; Connections with Australia; Alumni network; Professional network
	[00:25:44] END	

