

## MOTHER TONGUE FIRST

Apep Banale knows that once children are able to read and write in their mother tongue, it is much easier to bridge into the national language. Her vision is to see all Ramoaaina children in the Duke of York Islands literate in their vernacular. Since 1995, most children in Papua New Guinea have first been instructed in their own languages in vernacular schools, which include the first three grades. Then, in the next three grades of primary school, students gradually move from the vernacular to English, the national language of instruction.

Starting out as a schoolteacher when the language of instruction for all grades was English, Mrs. Banale left teaching in order to raise her three children. But when her husband died, she moved back to her home village and became the assistant to the vernacular school coordinator.

Later, in order to become an administrator for the vernacular schools, Mrs. Banale received further training at the SIL Center in Ukarumpa by attending the Supervisors Tokples Education Program (STEP). This course provides training and opportunities necessary to initiate and sustain mother-tongue education and literacy programs.

Mrs. Banale is a natural teacher and leader. As the first woman graduate of STEP, she returned to the Duke of York Islands, and has been working with vernacular schools since then. Even though she is often the only woman in attendance, she takes an active part in school board meetings and village committees.

She trains vernacular school-teachers, produces literacy materials, oversees schools and advises teachers. Employed by the local government to work in the vernacular schools, she also works with SIL, producing and promoting vernacular materials.

Mrs. Banale's success as a teacher and promoter of literacy in her mother tongue is due to her dedicated hard work. Her vision to see all Ramoaaina children reading in their mother tongue keeps her persevering and creatively meeting the challenges she faces.



**“I know the importance of education. I want to see learning and literature available to village people,” says Apep Banale.**

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