

supporting & advancing women in developing countries



Staying strong, supporting each other

Project Profile: Sharing Indigenous Women's Leadership to Address Violence, Australia

Kirsty Allen, Manager – Special Projects

"Strong women mentored us and we take up the work they started."

Neita Scott is a Wiradjuri woman from Narromine. A member of the influential NSW Premier's Women's Council and many other Indigenous and community groups, Neita acknowledges the debt she owes to the strong women who came before her. In turn, Neita knows she and other community elders have an important role to play in building the self-esteem of the next generation of Indigenous women leaders.

Dorinda Cox, a young Noongyar woman, is someone who seeks such support. Dorinda works in the sexual assault service in Perth, but being the only Indigenous woman in her workplace affects Dorinda's confidence.

Neita and Dorinda were amongst 20 Indigenous women who came together at the recent IWDA 'Sharing Women's Leadership to Address Violence' workshop.



Workshop participants Deanna Roberts (on left) from Darwin and Janine Bailey of the Mungullah Community, outside Carnarvon in north west Western Australia. Deanna works with women and families in Gove, Nhulunbuy and on the Tiwi Islands, through her role at the Top End Women's Legal Service; while Janine runs programs for women and children as a member of the local community council.

The workshop, held over three days at Commonground in Victoria, engaged Indigenous women from New South Wales, Northern Territory, Western Australia and Victoria. Sonya Pearce, a Murri woman from Sydney's University of Technology, provided excellent facilitation.

The workshop aimed to celebrate the leadership of women in Australia's Indigenous community and to provide a space for sharing and support – particularly in the area of family violence. It also aimed to encourage the participation of young Indigenous women in community leadership.

In Indigenous Australia, women – as health workers, volunteers, workers in local government and in community councils – need to be strong to take on issues of family violence. Their strength is called upon when working in isolation, when challenging the attitudes of both non-Indigenous Australia and their own communities, and when struggling to be heard within bureaucracies. And women's strength is increased and revived when strong women come together, to share their experiences of leadership and struggle.

"The best thing I got out of this workshop was meeting strong women who are doing some fantastic projects – also the decision to create a national voice for our women."
Workshop participant

A major theme arising from the workshop was the need for a united, national voice for Indigenous women in Australia – one that is independent of mainstream Indigenous bodies. While not every single woman can be on this forum, their voices need to be represented. Discussions should begin with local women and gradually work upwards.

The strongest sentiment from this incredible and inspiring group of women, elders and young leaders alike, was the undying need for Indigenous women to stay strong and to support each other.

IWDA is honoured to be working with Australian Indigenous women again, and hopes to become part of the growing solidarity of the network.

This workshop was made possible by the financial support of the Federal Government's Office for Women and the Reichstein Foundation.

All we are saying... Women give peace a chance

Suzette Mitchell, Executive Director

Peace is more than the absence of war. Peace is about justice; it is about human security. To find peace we have to address cultural integrity, poverty, personal safety, civil and political rights as well as violence by the state and within the family.

Peace is not an individual act; it is made possible through thousands of actions and decisions. Our achievements have been made possible through the support and work of those around us – our families and our communities.

These are the guiding beliefs behind a global initiative that seeks to recognise millions of women worldwide working for peace, through jointly nominating 1000 women for the Noble Peace Prize.

IWDA is proud to announce that representatives from a number of our current and former project partners are part of the 1000-women strong nomination:

- Charm Tong, Shan Women's Action Network, Thai/Burma border
- Ha Thi Khiat, Vietnam Women's Union, Viet Nam
- Helen Hakena, Leitana Nehan Women's Development Agency, PNG
- Sharon Bhagwan-Rolls, femLINK pacific, Fiji

- Tran Thi Lanh, Towards Ethnic Women, Viet Nam
- Zipporah Sein, Karen Women's Organisation, Thai/Burma border

A special congratulations, also, to the Australian nominees: Faith Bandler, Stella Cornelius, Alexandra Gater, Zohl de Ishtar, Kupa Piti Kungka Tjuta and Jo Vallentine.

The full nomination list, including biographies on each of the 1000 women, is now available in full at:

www.1000peacewomen.org

Congratulations to all of these amazing women, and to all people working for peace and justice worldwide.

Coming IWDA Events...

IWDA Open Day

Thursday 1st September, drop in between 3 and 7 pm, Free. IWDA office, Level 3, Ross House, 247 Flinders Lane, Melbourne

Discussion Forum: Gender as a focus on Millennium Development Goals

Friday 2nd September, 1 – 4 pm, \$10 full / \$5 conc. The Hon Bruce Billson MP, Parliamentary Secretary (Foreign Affairs), will open the forum. Queen Victoria Women's Centre, 210 Lonsdale St, Melbourne

Evening Presentation by Amena, Afghani Women's Activist, hosted by Sydney IWDA Supporter Group

Tuesday 11th October. Venue and time to be confirmed; contact Dianne Montague, Tel: 02 9420 0401, dimonte@bigpond.com

IWDA World Food Day Feast – Fundraising Dinner & Silent Auction

Sunday 16th October, 7 pm, \$150 per head. Royal Melbourne Yacht Squadron, St Kilda.

Presentation by Joanna Kerr: Where to for the women's movement?

Friday 4th November, 10:30am – 12:30 pm, Free. Level 4, Ross House, 247 Flinders Lane, Melbourne

BOOKING ESSENTIAL

For further information and bookings contact Kathy Proctor, Tel: 03 9650 5574, kproctor@iwda.org.au or visit www.iwda.org.au

The Sunshine Coast is Alive ... with the Sound of Music



The event included five nuns, three Marias, one Captain Von Trapp and a brown paper package tied up with string.

Jan Hilda, IWDA Supporter, Queensland

A wild time was had by all at the recent fundraising dinner at Burnett Café in Buderim, with a 'Sound of Music' theme.

Thirty-three women ate, laughed and sang their way through a most entertaining evening. Me, a name I call myself – aka Group Convenor, Jan Hilda – kicked off the event and handed over to another member to talk about IWDA and its wonderful work before dinner got underway.

Through ticket sales and donations on the evening, we raised a total of over \$500. One of our group members also made a personal donation of \$1000 – an incredibly generous gesture.

We are looking forward to our next fundraiser, which will involve participants in an absorbing game of Junk Roulette!

If you want to know more about this event, or the Sunshine Coast Supporter Group, call Jan Hilda on 0409 217 257.

About International Women's Development Agency (IWDA)

IWDA is an Australian non-profit organisation that creates positive change for women. Our practical and rights-based projects directly address poverty and oppression in developing countries.

Our projects focus on five key areas of well-being: economic empowerment, freedom from violence, participation in

decision-making, reproductive health, and environmental management.

We work in the Asia-Pacific region, in direct partnership with women who work and live in the communities themselves.

When women benefit, the entire community benefits

iwda

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All together now

IWDA's 2005 Project Partner Workshop, Chiang Mai

"It is a very **special opportunity** to be at this project partner workshop – to come together and **share our experiences**, and at the same time learn from each other and **build our networks**."

Paw Hset Hser, Karen Women's Organisation, Thai-Burma border

Paw Hset was one of 17 women from seven countries to take part in IWDA's 2005 Project Partner Workshop, held in Chiang Mai, Thailand. Here, **Tricia Peters, IWDA President** reflects on the experience of spending three days with these inspiring women.

What really struck me was their strength. Sitting here in Australia, you can often feel overwhelmed by the challenges faced by women in the developing world. But when you meet the women who are actually tackling these issues on a daily basis – and doing so with such strength and determination – it gives you great resolve.

Over three days, I saw for myself the incredible value of bringing women together to share experiences and approaches. This was a chance for Zipporah Sein from the Karen State in Burma to find out how the refugees she works with could benefit from Rosa Xavier's approach to literacy training in East Timor. Rosa, meanwhile, found herself inspired to replicate the Women's Exchange program that MAP Foundation runs on the Thai-Burma border; and Ros Sopheap learnt how Vietnam Women's Union's micro-finance program could be applied to her work with poor rural women in Cambodia.

As IWDA President, this was also a wonderful chance to get input for our strategic directions. Hearing first-hand from women working at the grassroots level gives me a good grounding for future decision-making. I look forward to IWDA helping to achieve the vision of these women for a just and equitable world.

This workshop was made possible with support from AusAID. Tricia Peters, IWDA President and Coleen Clare, Vice-President, financed their own participation.

PHOTO: SUZETTE MITCHELL



Representatives from Cambodia, Thai-Burma border and Sri Lanka at IWDA's Workshop in Chiang Mai, sharing their experiences of working to empower poor and oppressed women.

"The organisations funded by IWDA represent a **powerful force of women in the region**. The UNIFEM CEDAW* South East Asia programme looks forward to involving IWDA's NGO partners in our skills training and advocacy programmes on women's human rights over the next three years of the programme."

Sabina Lauber, UNIFEM CEDAW South East Asia Programme

Sabina's presentation at IWDA's Workshop in Chiang Mai provided valuable training in the ways in which international human rights conventions, such as CEDAW, can be applied to the daily realities of life for women at the grassroots level.

* UNIFEM – United Nations Development Fund for Women
CEDAW – Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women



PHOTO: SUZETTE MITCHELL

IWDA Project Partner representatives chat with IWDA Vice-President in Chiang Mai: (from left) Jayline Malverius of Vanuatu, Jennifer Tugunau of Solomon Islands, Coleen Clare of Australia and Rosa Xavier of East Timor.

Each day you:
stir the fire,
fan the flame,
cook the meal,
drive the truck,
write the
stories,
weave the thread.
So now tonight:
dance with joy
thank yourself
You do your best
and it counts.

This is one of a collection of poems written by Coleen Clare, IWDA Vice-President, during the 2005 Project Partner Workshop.

Making a speech and dance about it

Trudy Hairs, IWDA Volunteer

Many friends ask why I chose to pay my own way to Thailand and volunteer time to help organise IWDA's Project Partner Workshop. My response is simple: coming together with such a passionate group of women was worth every cent. One participant stands out in particular – Srima, Field Worker with Kantha Shakthi in Sri Lanka.

Srima was very quiet at first, content to simply observe. This was her first time out of Sri Lanka; it had been a drama-filled journey, and she missed her husband and children.

By the end of day two, however, Srima was leading the group in a traditional Sri Lankan dance. She told us that back in Sri Lanka, incorporating music and dancing into her savings and livelihood group meetings provides hard-working women with a rare opportunity to relax and have fun, building confidence and a feeling of togetherness.

For me, the workshop's defining moment was an unprompted speech by Srima in her native tongue, Sinhala, translated by her colleague Rohini Weerasinghe. Srima said that despite the language barrier, she never once felt excluded; and she was amazed to see how easily a group of women without a common tongue could build solidarity.



PHOTO: SUZETTE MITCHELL

"Without being citizens of one country or without even a common language we can build solidarity, and I saw it here."

Srima, Social Mobiliser, Kantha Shakthi, Sri Lanka (pictured above)

herstory

IWDA's Founding Women Part 3: Wendy Poussard

Clare Mendes, IWDA Volunteer

"When IWDA started in 1985," reflects Wendy Poussard, one of IWDA's three founders and its first Executive Director, "women were virtually invisible as planners and managers of development programs. But that has changed."

It is a change due, in no small part, to Wendy's own efforts.



PHOTO: SANDRA BLAMEY

Wendy Poussard (left) and fellow IWDA founder, Wendy Rose, on one of their occasional 'bush days'.

Wendy established IWDA after a period spent as National Coordinator of WADNA, the Women And Development Network of Australia. She announced the birth of IWDA at the 1985 United Nations 3rd World Conference on Women Forum in Nairobi.

"It was a very exciting time for me," she recalls. "For the first few months my role as Executive Director was voluntary – later in the year, the agency could afford to pay me a salary."

The support and friendship of co-founders Ruth Pfanner and Wendy Rose, and encouragement from a wide range of NGOs, ensured that IWDA soon gained recognition as a significant development agency.

"It was fast," notes Wendy. "We were riding a wave. Our inaugural meeting was on 30th May 1985; in September we opened a very small, very cheap office; in November we were granted eligibility to apply for funds from AusAID's Project Subsidy Scheme. Then, in 1986, the YWCA offered us space in their National Headquarters ... by June 1986, we had funded ten overseas projects."

The climate was ripe for the establishment of an aid agency managed by women for women, she notes. "Development was a hot issue for feminists at the time. Women in traditional cultures, as well as development scholars, were saying that the only really successful projects for women were those in which women were the initiators and managers of the development process rather than simply being the 'targets' and 'beneficiaries' of aid." Despite the strong support for the organisation, however, Wendy remembers well the early challenges of developing the 'idea' of IWDA, raising funds, and building good relationships with international partners.

In a 1986 radio interview, Wendy said of her fledgling organisation: "Our aim is not just to be different. We are really working to help the whole of the aid program to be more sensitive, more responsive, more useful to women ... we want to extend the imagination of people who work in aid." She is gratified that in 2005, IWDA continues to maintain this original vision.

And Wendy Poussard's vision for herself? "To continue thinking as wildly as possible about development."

Wendy Poussard was Executive Director of IWDA from 1985 – 1991. She went on to work as the Pacific Regional Director for CUSO in Fiji, and later for the Ministry of Health in Viet Nam. Currently she is the Director of Learning & Action, a Melbourne-based consultancy.

How students can shut up... to give women a voice

Lisa Keem and Ginny Chapman, IWDA Schools Committee Volunteers

"Learning in itself is not enough... practical experience is what really counts and this is what the school provides us with..."

Naw Thaw Kler Lay

Naw is a student at the Karen Young Women's Leadership School (KYWLS) in the Mae Ra Moo refugee camp on the Thai-Burma border. Supported by IWDA, the school provides young women with the skills and practical experience necessary to make a positive difference within their communities.

IWDA is calling upon Australian students to support KYWLS by holding silent-a-thons. A silent-a-thon involves students being sponsored to remain silent for a whole day, afternoon or even just a lunch. A silent-a-thon asks for only a few hours of silence – a small sacrifice in recognition

of the countless women who are denied a voice simply for being female.

Another exciting way for students to get involved is to join the IWDA Schools Committee, a forum held twice each term in Melbourne. Through the Committee, students can form valuable networks, exchange ideas and work on awareness-raising projects for IWDA.

For more information on holding a silent-a-thon or joining the IWDA Schools Committee, please contact **Anna Demant, External Relations Manager at IWDA, on Tel: 03 9650 5574 or anna@iwda.org.au**

act up
shut up



IWDA Schools Committee members: (from left) Lisa Keem, Nicki Lees, Reiko Okubo, Hayley Franklin and Ginny Chapman, with External Relations Manager, Anna Demant (standing).



" Humanitarian mine clearance doesn't start with taking a mine out of the ground. It starts with asking what are the problems here? And in most countries they're not even going to talk about the land mine. What they'll say is, 'Oh, I have to walk five kilometres to get water' because somebody has placed land mines on the path to the nearest water point. So Humanitarian Mine Action in fact facilitates development work."

– an excerpt from the speech given by Leonie Barnes (United Nations Mine Action Service, Sri Lanka) at the Alfred Deakin Innovation Lecture Series. Leonie is pictured at left with Jonathon Mills, Lecture Director; Graham Edwards, MP and land mine survivor; and Suzette Mitchell, IWDA

Executive Director. IWDA helped to arrange Leonie's appearance at the Lectures. IWDA's commitment to bringing gender considerations into mine action work will continue through a new collaboration with World Vision Australia in a multi-year AusAID-funded program.



International Women's Development Agency is a signatory to the Australian Council for International Development (ACFID) Code of Conduct which defines minimum standards of governance, management and accountability for non-government development organisations. Adherence to the Code is monitored by an independent Code of Conduct Committee elected from the NGO community. Our voluntary adherence to the Code of Conduct demonstrates our commitment to ethical practice and public accountability. More information about the ACFID Code of Conduct can be accessed at www.acfid.asn.au

Yes! I want to give women the strength to create positive change...

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\$25 \$35 \$50 \$ per month

I would like my monthly donations to be via **Direct Debit** (an authorisation form will be sent to you)

I would like information on leaving a bequest to IWDA

All donations of \$2 or more are tax-deductible. Please note that all donors who give \$240 or more in one financial year will be acknowledged as Associate supporters in IWDA publications, unless otherwise requested.

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