

# iwda news

international  
women's development  
agency inc.

*When women benefit, the whole community benefits.*

## INCLUSIVE AND SUSTAINABLE NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Live & Learn Environment Education  
and IWDA, Solomon Islands

Gabrielle Halcrow, Overseas Program Manager

In the Solomon Islands, environmental systems are under immense stress from logging, pollution, population demands, changes in fishing practices and marine harvesting. With the increasing influences of larger cash-driven industries such as logging, and the individual returns this offers, there is pressure on traditional collective decision-making and leadership. In a context of rapid change, communities are finding it difficult to reach agreement on sustainable use of resources. This is negatively affecting the quality of life of Solomon Islanders, putting further pressure on women's lives.

Land in the Solomon Islands is highly valued and is at the centre of identity and culture. In significant parts of the country, land ownership is matrilineal, with women traditionally respected as landowners and consulted on land decision-making. However, this is changing with changes to land tenure associated with rapid moves towards a market economy and the presence of large-scale logging and extractive industries. Women's status is being negatively affected, as is their involvement in decisions about the management and use of natural resources that are central to well-being and livelihoods.

IWDA has just embarked on an exciting new initiative with Live & Learn Environment Education in the Solomon Islands as part of the AusAID-funded five-year Solomon Islands NGO Partnership Agreement (SINPA). *Building Community Resilience: Inclusive and Sustainable Natural Resource Management* builds on the learnings and relationships from the last five years working on the Community Learning and Action Network project (CLAN). The new project will integrate gender in community-based natural resource management in four provinces in the Solomon Islands particularly impacted by logging. *The aim is not only to achieve direct outcomes for communities but to work closely with a mainstream environmental NGO to demonstrate how consistently thinking about and addressing the concerns, needs and priorities of both women and men helps to achieve better development outcomes.*



Photo: Gabrielle Halcrow  
Village of Hundo, Western Province: women's voices in the design process.

Pairs of male and female facilitators based in each province, working together, will play a key role in building support for more inclusive processes and finding strength in traditional decision-making.

A detailed design and consultation process is currently underway, informed by participatory research involving a gendered analysis of the main factors and potential strengths in community and partners' perceptions about inclusive and sustainable natural management opportunities. As women in Western Province told us, *"Before logging, women were strong with the land. While men have always spoken on behalf of the women, we were consulted and our collective needs respected. Now, with money and developments the men make the decisions without us and there is less respect for the chiefs. There are now many land disputes, there is violence and our environment is being destroyed"*. The men have also reflected on this change and the need to take women with them on decisions.

Women have major responsibilities for food collection and production as "Mothers blo ground". They have knowledge about forest product use and growing patterns, and collect forest products for domestic and medicinal uses and ecologically-based livelihoods. But rapid change has increased the demands on women and undermined traditional processes that may have provided strength and respect. *Increasing women's voices in decision-making about the environment is an end itself and a key strategy in developing more inclusive and sustainable natural resource management that meets the needs of the whole community – for the long term.*

## MID-YEAR TAX APPEAL

There is still time to donate to our mid-year tax appeal to assist women in developing countries to have their voices heard in decisions affecting their lives.

To continue our education programs on the Thai-Burma Border, IWDA needs to raise \$100,000 by 30th June.

Thanks to your support women from the refugee camps on the Thai-Burma Border have the opportunity to study community development and leadership skills. This is making a real difference in their lives.

The short-term goal is to empower the young women participating in the program. In the long-term, this will create a group of capable and confident young women to represent their people. These young women are already agents of change.

To ensure you are eligible for a tax deduction this year, please make your donation before 30 June 2009. Your support will help IWDA work with local women in developing countries to make a positive change in their lives.



Photo: Renae Davies  
Naw Thi Thi Han, a student at Emerging Leaders School on the Thai-Burma Border.

## ABOUT INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DEVELOPMENT AGENCY (IWDA)

IWDA is an Australian non-profit organisation that for over 20 years has been creating positive change for women and their communities. Our practical and rights-based projects directly address poverty and oppression in developing countries.

We work in partnership with women from local communities, supporting their innovative responses to the issues they identify as most critical in improving their lives.

**In the period 2008–13, IWDA will pursue the following goals in six key areas:**

- ☀ livelihood and economic empowerment
- ☀ safety and security
- ☀ social, physical and mental health
- ☀ education
- ☀ environmental sustainability
- ☀ civil and political participation.

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## LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

All over the world, on International Women's Day on March 8, communities celebrated women and their contributions to their families and communities. For our partners, this was also an opportunity to raise awareness about women's rights. In addition, our annual fundraising event Feast was a great success, thanks to the fantastic participation of female chefs, winemakers and entertainers ... and thanks to our guests. Thank you for your commitment. Even if times are difficult because of economic uncertainty, it was heartening to feel the supportive and generous mood focussed on empowering women in the Asia-Pacific.

Women in developing countries are already amongst the most vulnerable, with the global economic crisis, they will suffer greater negative impacts. As many work in unskilled labour they are often the first to lose their jobs. In the Asia-Pacific region, the ILO (International Labour Organisation) estimates that 22 million women have already lost their jobs in the manufacturing sector alone. The burden on women will get worse. In addition, economic downturns can bring rising crime rates including abuse and violence against women. In this climate it is more critical than ever that our programs continue and build the skills of women to tackle these new challenges.

Unfortunately, while I am writing this letter, Fiji and Thailand are in the middle of a political and social turmoil. In Fiji, IWDA is particularly concerned at the lack of media freedom, and the safety and security of broadcast volunteers and rural correspondents working with our partner agencies.

The government's abrogation of the nation's constitution effectively removes the Bill of Rights, raising serious concerns about the safety and security of citizens and the government's commitment to meeting international human rights commitments.

During times like this, it is important that we continue to provide women support and solidarity in order to prevent abuse and violence. Our thoughts are with all women, their families and communities suffering from these situations.

Women are vital agents of change and in conjunction with our partners our programs continue to make a difference in their lives. Thank you for your ongoing support, it is deeply appreciated.

**Jane Sloane,**  
Executive Director



Photo: Courtesy of Tulele Peisa  
Caterets women dancing a traditional dance



Photo: Courtesy of Tulele Peisa  
Judith, Tinputz woman participant

## THE CATERETS ISLANDERS: CLIMATE CHANGE IMPACTING OUR NEIGHBOURS

The Caterets Islands are islands off the coast of Papua New Guinea. Their population is one of the first to be impacted by rising sea levels caused by global warming. Food crops are no longer able to be harvested, and Huene, one of the islands, has been cut in two. In 10 to 15 years, the islands will be mostly un-inhabitable and, as a consequence, over 3 300 islanders will have to relocate to Bougainville. The Tinputz communities on the mainland will have to share their land with the islanders.

This situation is particularly challenging for Caterets women as they are not only the providers of food crops but also the traditional custodians of the land. This increases the pressure they experience with these changes as they are highly dependent on local natural resources for their livelihood. So, when the fresh water is too salty to be drunk or crops have been destroyed, the only thing they can offer to their families is young coconut.

Our partner, Ursula Rakova, Head of Tulele Peisa, knows that Caterets Islanders need to move to survive. *"If at least I had some money to carry stone from Bougainville and build up sea walls around the Caterets Islands, I will do that. But I know it is impossible because even if I do that, the sea will still rise."* Tulele Peisa coordinates the relocation of the islanders and is a link between Caterets and Tinputz communities to facilitate the integration of climate change refugees. With IWDA, Tulele Peisa runs a project that aims to provide space for young women's and men's voices to be heard on environmental, social and natural resources issues and promotes cross cultural understanding in preparation for the relocation process.

At the end of 2008, 30 young women and men from Caterets and Tinputz travelled to 15 locations in Bougainville to share their stories, experiences and to raise awareness on the effects of climate change on the Caterets. Through training sessions, these young women and men improved their speaking skills and became ambassadors for their communities. The 'speaking tour' built their confidence, skills and knowledge.

In addition, through advocacy, traditional songs and dances, this project acknowledged different cultural backgrounds. This will be crucial to enable the two communities to live harmoniously.



Photo: Courtesy of Tulele Peisa  
Regina and Jackie, Caterets women

As a result of three weeks of intense travelling together, the young speakers built strong relationships and spoke very positively about how they have connected and made friends amongst the group. After the tour, two representatives from Tinputz asked to visit the Caterets Islands and experience the life of islanders first hand. Through this, they will truly understand the situation and feelings of the young Caterets.

This speaking tour has made a real and positive change in the minds of the Tinputz community. For instance, during the tour, the Tinputz communities donated live chickens, clothes and food for the young people to take home. In addition, a traditional chief and landholder of Teopasino, a plantation on the coast of Tinputz, asked Tulele Peisa to arrange to have two families relocated to Teopasino. Finally, a stronger alliance has been built between the Carterets and Tinputz. A woman chief from Teobun said: *"I did hear about the situation on Carterets but was not willing to give land (...). When I saw these young people all connected in mind and spirit and speaking out in union with each other, I retract from my thoughts and will welcome our Carterets people when they come to Tinputz."*

IWDA is proud to work in partnership with Tulele Peisa, working to address the impact of climate change.

# YES! I WANT TO PROMOTE WOMEN'S VOICES...

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## HERSTORY

### Elisabeth Tongne Kaupun, Wide Bay Conservation Association (WBCA), Papua New Guinea (PNG)

WBCA is running a series of forums that aims to increase women's voices and decision-making in land use and sustainable development at the community, ward and local government level of Pomio District, PNG. We had the chance to interview a dynamic and inspiring woman.

Elisabeth Tongne Kaupun graduated as a community school teacher and then decided to work in the field in Pomio district. In 1997, she joined the Wide Bay Conservation Program when it was under East New Britain Sosesl Eksen Komiti. In 2004, she became the leader of Wide Bay Conservation when it was registered as an Association.

#### Why did you decide to become the leader of WBCA?

The program came from the community, I thought it was my obligation to try and to continue to facilitate what people wanted and then find ways how I can get people interested in what we are doing.

#### In traditional society, how were women linked to the land? And what is happening nowadays?

In traditional society, women were seen as having the power in relation to the land and resources and having the power to sustain life within the clan.

With the modern culture women are losing their power over the land. Women do not have access to information about their rights and they don't know how to speak out. There is no space for women to talk about all these things because they feel that men are more powerful and that men have the power to make decisions.

#### What kind of changes do you expect these forums would have on women?

I think one the main things is for women to have more confidence to ask, to question the processes of development and find their own way to get men to understand that women

are also needed in making-decision. It is also learning from other women and having more information of what is happening around them, so they are able to make informed decisions.

#### During these forums, what has been your biggest achievement?

My biggest achievement is that we were able to get the men elders to come and speak to the women about what were women's places in traditional society and how they were treated equal as men.

#### What advice would you give to other women?

My advice to all women that we are all human and the feelings we face are faced by all humans, women and men. We need to find ways of how we can work together as a team.

My advice is to understand our strengths and our weaknesses and to find out how we can work better to improve the weaknesses and to share the successes with others. And finally, how we can link together to build a stronger group of women able to work with men.



Photo: Deb Chapman  
Elisabeth Tongne Kaupun