



Let's celebrate International Women's Day ....see page 6 for details

## If the shoe fits

Vietnam's rural women find their feet in business

Leonie Duncan, Communications Coordinator

This year is the United Nations' International Year of Microcredit – a chance to celebrate the life-changing opportunities that access to even small amounts of financial support can give to impoverished communities. And the need is real: of the four billion people who live on less than \$1400 a year, very few have access to basic financial services. By breaking down this barrier, IWDA is tapping into the powerful potential of women's entrepreneurial spirit.

At 43 years of age, Do Thi Theu is the proud owner of the only shoe-making business in the Thang Quan commune of northern Vietnam. She is meeting a local need: saving people a trip to the central market, and providing a friendly service within the immediate community. This flourishing business is not only helping locals, it is also significantly improving the skills and confidence of Do Thi Theu and living standards of her family.

**"I have become more self-confident and my family's poverty is reduced."**

Do Thi Theu (pictured above), IWDA loan recipient

Do Thi Theu is one of 800 women from four communes in the Tuyen Quang province taking part in IWDA's latest microfinance project, run in partnership with Vietnam Women's Union (VWU). The project helps rural women form local entrepreneur groups. In monthly group meetings, the women receive business training and support each other in savings and business schemes. These women are then eligible for grants, loans and further skills training to start their own enterprises.

"After each training session I feel at ease as my mind has been broadened," says Do Thi Theu.

VWU and IWDA have been working together to reduce poverty in rural Vietnam for over fifteen years now. The current project builds on



PHOTO: NORA FERNANDES

this experience and aims to establish 100 new businesses, which are both innovative and have a good capacity to grow. The fund, however, will go on in perpetuity: as women's businesses grow, they are able to pay back their loan and give other women the opportunity to receive support. The production of 'how to' manuals, now underway, is another example of how this project will have an impact into the future.

"We feel so happy and fortunate to cooperate with IWDA in trying this kind of project with a new approach," says Tran Thi Hoa of Vietnam Women's Union.

"Sincerity, frankness, good will, commitment and sharing always help us to accomplish the work."

IWDA thanks AusAID for their support of this project.

# letter from the executive director

## Dear Friends,

Welcome to the first IWDA news for 2005 – our 20th year! Supporter Tessa Letcher from Hawthorn, Victoria, is one of many who have already sent in a birthday message:

“I am amazed, in awe of and **so inspired** by the work IWDA does all over the world. I hope 2005 is an even **bigger and better** year as more people learn of this vital work.”

It has been a big year already, but not for the reasons we would have liked. In the wake of the tsunami, IWDA is building a five-year reconstruction fund with our Sri Lankan project partner Kantha Shakthi, and the compassion shown by the Australian community has been tremendous. Supporters have sent in donations from as far as the USA, UK and France for this appeal, and fundraising events were held in Hanoi, Vietnam. Many thanks to Deborah Gauci and Paula Blaze

for dedicating their time, energy and contacts to fundraising efforts for the Sri Lankan appeal.

We are also working very close to home supporting Aboriginal women leaders working against violence against women. This is part of our new ‘Sharing Women’s Leadership to Address Violence’ project, funded through the Office for Women, that is creating a national forum for indigenous women to access support from other women leaders. We hope to link this to a wider conference later in the year to bring together Aboriginal women and Pacific Islander women for a forum on leadership against violence.

Several projects are currently being designed and researched, and the opportunities for us in the future are expanding. We invite you to be a part of this process. We hope to have an opportunity to celebrate our 20th birthday with all of you this year at one of our many events – from small scale, to large fundraiser evenings, to an IWDA office ‘open day’ to commemorate the day we

officially opened. Please keep an eye on our website for forthcoming events; we would love to see you there or to have you volunteer to run one!

This is a special time for US, and we ask you to join us in celebration of our strength and the strength of women.

Suzette Mitchell

## Want to keep up-to-date with the latest news and views on women, gender and development?

Subscribe to our free monthly ‘E Gender’ email bulletin. Simply send an email to [egender@iwda.org.au](mailto:egender@iwda.org.au) with ‘subscribe’ in the subject line.



## What does peace look like to you?

When IWDA posed this question we received hundreds of amazing photographs from women across the globe. Thank you to everyone who took part.

‘Women’s Eye on Peace’ was launched at Queen Victoria Women’s Centre last September, and is now a travelling exhibition. Over \$10,000 has been raised from the sale of these photographs, which will fund training in peace education for a group of Afghan women.

One visitor left the following message for these women on the exhibition’s ‘peace tree’:  
“Have courage. People in Australia do care and we are working in myriad ways for peace.”

## A NEW BEGINNING

East Timor, May 2004

*“Nothing symbolises peace more to me than the smiling and carefree faces of the children of a new generation who have no memory of the atrocities of war their country has endured. With the new-found independence of East Timor, these children now have a chance to grow up and lead the country through future decades of peace. This photo fills me with optimism.”* Julie Buxton

This entry was one of three to receive a special award from principal sponsors, AusAID

For the latest exhibition location or to buy one of these amazing photographs online see [www.iwda.org.au](http://www.iwda.org.au)

## Thinking global, acting local

**Empower supporters Jerome Fink and Jenny Brigg held a garage sale in Sardinia Place, the historic laneway where they live in Sydney, and in doing so helped raise awareness of IWDA in their neighbourhood.**

"Our six year-old daughter Georgia designed a flyer which we put up around our suburb and about 100 people came along," explained Jerome. "Our neighbours joined us, which meant that it was a very social occasion and lots of fun."

"The occasion provided an opportunity to talk to people about IWDA in an easy way without hard selling," added Jenny.

Jerome first came across IWDA when he was a volunteer in the Solomon Islands in the late eighties, when IWDA was sponsoring the national women's radio program. Jerome saw first-hand that the best development aid was that which was delivered through women.

"IWDA is our charity of choice because we see women as key to making a difference in communities across the world."

Now even their three year-old, Madeleine, knows about IWDA, which she calls 'The International Women'. "The International Women became the subject of many songs and stories in our house after the garage sale," said Jenny.

## Women rebuilding Sri Lanka

Anna Demant, External Relations Manager

Following last December's devastating tsunami, IWDA has committed to a five-year reconstruction program in Sri Lanka. Money raised is being used directly by local people, like IWDA's partner Kantha Shakthi, to rebuild their lives.

Rohini Weerasinghe, Executive Director of Kantha Shakthi, says the need for psychological assistance is great. In mid January IWDA's Nora Fernandes visited tsunami-affected regions with Rohini.

"The impact is devastating," says Nora, "Many people can't look at the sea as they are so traumatised. Everywhere there are reminders: trees have victims' clothes hanging in them – people were caught in branches and their clothes were ripped of them as they fell."

Five Kantha Shakthi staff have already received training in grief counselling; initially funds raised are paying for one year's wages and transport so these Sri Lankan counsellors can provide support in key areas.

The counsellors will create support networks and help people access available housing, health and education services which many are too traumatised to seek out.

"Some are staying away from makeshift camps because they are so shocked and numb," says Nora.

In 2006, IWDA will expand its assistance to include livelihood programs such as providing vulnerable communities with small loans to help them raise themselves out of poverty.

In the short term these people are relying on the aid community and need intensive counselling support, but in the long term they will need economic independence – with your help IWDA is building a fund to make this happen.

**New resource:**

**AUSTRALIAN  
DEVELOPMENT  
GATEWAY**



[www.developmentgateway.com.au](http://www.developmentgateway.com.au)

is a result of the Virtual Colombo Plan – an initiative of the World Bank and the Australian Government to bridge the 'digital divide' between rich and developing nations. Developed and funded by AusAID, this site provides access to more than 700 free resources including case studies, reports, toolkits and other publications. IWDA will be contributing information and materials to the website. Look out for IWDA in 'Ask the Expert' from mid 2005.

## Don't sweat it

They're here! The world's first non-sweatshop sneakers, directly from a fully unionised workplace in Indonesia. And what's more, when each pair of either the classic 'low-cut' or funky 'high-top' styles is bought using the special IWDA order form, \$20 is donated to IWDA. That means up to 30 per cent of your retail indulgence converts to support for women in developing countries!

To order your pair see the enclosed flyer or visit [www.nosweatstuff.com.au/iwda.html](http://www.nosweatstuff.com.au/iwda.html)





IWDA's founding women, L-R: Wendy Poussard, Ruth Pfanner and Wendy Rose on the day of IWDA's first committee meeting.

# herstory

## IWDA's Founding Women Part 1: Ruth Pfanner

What better way to celebrate IWDA's 20th year than by acknowledging where we come from? Ruth Pfanner, Wendy Poussard and Wendy Rose are the three founding members of IWDA who we are honouring throughout 2005 with a 'herstory' profile of each. Here, IWDA Volunteer Clare Mendes reports on her recent conversation with Ruth.

Twenty years after its inception, IWDA is still a dynamic NGO successfully administering a range of projects to women throughout the Asia-Pacific region. But Ruth Pfanner can remember a time when the organisation survived largely on the energy of volunteer staff and struggled to meet costs.

One of three women who founded IWDA in 1985, Pfanner is reluctant to acknowledge her contribution to the organisation in those early years. "Wendy Poussard took by far the heaviest load as Wendy Rose and I continued with our existing careers," she points out. "Wendy Poussard worked as a volunteer for a considerable time with help from dedicated friends and relations. She was largely responsible for the development of IWDA into an organisation that had

salaried staff, a rented office that gradually grew in size, and recognition by government and NGO aid agencies."

Pfanner attributes IWDA's ultimate acceptance as a respected member of the overseas aid community to the "stature, reputation and hard work of the two Wendys"; she cites the most memorable aspect of her five years spent at IWDA as "working with the two Wendys". Yet it was the passion of all three women that led to the creation of IWDA, building upon the work of Women and Development Network Australia (WADNA) in the early eighties. "[WADNA] identified projects that would assist women, mainly in the Pacific, but also branched out into development education in Australia," she explains. "We wanted to establish an NGO which

concentrated on assisting women's projects overseas." For Pfanner, one of the significant early achievements of the organisation was its role in raising the profile of the WID (Women in Development) policy adopted by the Federal Government in the early eighties.

Since resigning from IWDA's committee, Pfanner has worked as a consultant for United Nations agencies such as FAO, UNDP and UNIFEM, and also for the governments of a number of developing countries.



## Book Review:

### *Not For Sale: Feminists Resisting Prostitution and Pornography*

Edited by Christine Stark & Rebecca Whisnant.  
Published by Spinifex Press, Melbourne, 2004

Trudy Hairs, IWDA Volunteer

*Not for Sale: Feminists Resisting Prostitution and Pornography* is a sobering account of the horrific exploitation of sex workers. Personal accounts dispel the claim that women choose to be sex

workers, and make it clear that pornography is much more than simply entertainment. It exposes the coercion, manipulation and abuse which these women endure, leaving the reader feeling numb at the thought that society, through apathy and denial, condones this exploitation.

The book explores the issues of racism, globalisation and colonialism which permeate the sex industry, including the exploitation of men and the exploitation of women by women. It also looks at how technology has contributed to the rapid growth of the industry and resulted in an increase in violence.

At times it is difficult to read, but you feel compelled to continue out of respect for the thousands of women whose lives have been shattered. This is a highly informative book which leaves you angry at the reality that people continue to exploit and destroy other people's lives, while the world hides behind claims that the sex industry represents freedom of expression.

Trudy Hairs is a development studies graduate and has recently done some volunteer research work for IWDA on the trafficking of women and girls.

“IWDA's locally based projects sit well with our philosophy and we are proud to support your excellent work in helping improve the lives of women and their communities.”

Anne O'Donnell, Chief Executive, Australian Ethical.

**Australian Ethical** is a funds manager that invests in companies that benefit society and the environment while providing a competitive financial return. Ten per cent of Australian Ethical's pre-tax profits are donated to various charity groups, including IWDA. We are thankful for their support.

### FREE LECTURE IN MELBOURNE

If you are in Melbourne from April 29 - May 13 be sure to watch out for the free **Alfred Deakin Innovation lecture series** in a variety of venues throughout Victoria. The lectures feature outstanding thinkers including a range of humanitarians. Speakers will be announced on April 6; for more information go to [www.deakinlectures.com](http://www.deakinlectures.com)



November 2004: Women in Sulufou village, northern Malaita, gathering to discuss ways in which women can take a greater role in building peaceful communities after the recent civil conflict.

## IWDA project profile: Solomon Islands

# Strengthening communities for lasting peace

Armed conflict in the Solomon Islands from 1999–2001 led to the displacement of around 50,000 people and the breakdown of essential services. Women played a key role in resolving this conflict, yet continue to receive little recognition for their contribution. Now IWDA is supporting women to take a lead in shaping the future of their country.

Gender inequality is deeply entrenched in the Solomon Islands. Traditionally, women have found it hard to get an education or participate in community life. This might explain the startling fact that not a single seat in the nation's Parliament is held by a woman. Since the recent civil tension, cases of domestic violence – already high – are believed to have increased as a result of weapons availability, alcohol abuse and disrupted livelihoods.



Stall holder, Honiara's main market

"Life for most here is still determined by the male members of the family," says Jennifer Tugunau, one of the local project coordinators. "There is a common saying: 'Women are to be seen, but not to be heard'."

Jennifer is already working closely with both national and provincial women's groups, so they can coordinate campaigns and be meaningfully involved in the development of their communities.

"Women can contribute to positive change here in this country," says Jennifer. "They have been recognised for bringing warring parties together during the ethnic unrest. Without them, peace would not have come so soon."

For women in Solomon Islands, greater involvement in community life means acting in ways that respect their local customs and build upon traditional methods of resolving conflict. In support of this, culturally appropriate 'learning circles' are being established. These self-directed discussion groups will encourage young men and women to talk about issues affecting their communities and take action for positive change.

### Margaret's Story...

On a recent field trip, local project coordinator Jennifer Tugunau met Margaret – a woman whose life was uprooted by the conflict. In 2000, Margaret was forced to flee her home on the main island of Guadalcanal to the neighbouring Malaita province. As a descendant of migrants from Malaita, her husband's life was at risk if they remained. Here, Jennifer tells us of her experience with Margaret...

*"From where we stand on a hilltop, we could see the sun setting across Central province and the shadow of Guadalcanal Island, Margaret's home. Clinging to her two month-old daughter she smiled and said, "You know, I came here when I had one child and now I have three. My family does not know this and I don't know where they are now."*

*I could not imagine how she felt. My heart goes out to her and the many in her situation. As we walked away, she had one last glance at her island and with determination in her voice said, "One day, child, I'll take you there."*

*Margaret to me is a strong woman who sacrifices a lot to keep her family together and happy. With IWDA, I will be working closely with women like Margaret to improve their life in the community. Together we can give hope for a brighter future for these women and their children."*

This project, supported by AusAID, is a unique collaboration between IWDA and two other Australian development agencies: Live and Learn Environmental Education and Union Aid Abroad – APHEDA.

March 8th is International Women's Day

# Join in our celebrations around Australia!

In this, our 20th year, we would love you to join us at one of the events we and others have planned around International Women's Day in March.

At a number of these occasions you will have the opportunity to meet Rosa Xavier, our fabulous partner from East Timor Young Women's Association. Rosa will be in Australia for a two-week 'Global Education' tour, thanks to support from La Trobe University, Victoria University and The Melbourne Community Foundation – Morawetz Social Justice Fund.

## Sydney

Two IWDA events at the Australian Institute of International Affairs (AIIA) Glover Cottages, 124 Kent St

### Brunch with Rosa Xavier and Stephanie Dowrick

Sunday 6 March, 11 for 11:30 am  
Bookings: Anna Demant on 03 9650 5574 or aiiansw@bigpond.com

### International Women's Day Talk with Kiri Hata

Tuesday 8 March  
Co-hosted by AIIA and IWDA.  
Bookings: Louisa Webb on 02 9247 2709 or aiiansw@bigpond.com

## Bega, NSW

### Bega Supporter Group event with link up to Rosa Xavier

Sunday 6 March, 2.00 for 2.30pm  
Bookings: Wilma Chinnock on 02 6493 8310 or wilmachinnock@bigpond.com

## Melbourne

### Women of Words

Thursday 3 March, Melbourne Town Hall Celebration kicks off at 5 pm with a community expo; speakers and performers from 7:30: Rosa Xavier, Margo Kingston, Lisa Bellea and Monique Brumby.  
Tickets \$20 full, \$10 concession, \$5 each for school groups.

Bookings: Ticketmaster7 on 136 100 or www.ticketmaster7.com

## Hobart

### Evening Salon with Rosa Xavier

Wednesday 9 March, 5.30–7.30pm  
WomenTas 140-142 Macquarie St  
Co-hosted with Amnesty.  
Drinks and nibbles provided.  
Bookings: WomenTas 03 6233 2208

## Canberra

### International Women's Day Breakfast

Monday 7 March, 6:30 for 7:00 am (finishes at 8:30)  
Lakeside Hotel Canberra, London Circuit  
Hosted by a coalition of women's groups. This year all funds raised go to IWDA's work with Women's Exchange program on the Thai-Burma border.  
Tickets \$25 per head, including continental breakfast.  
Bookings: Marilyn Newham on 02 6231 1344 or mrnewham@dodo.com.au

For details on all these events, please check [www.iwda.org.au](http://www.iwda.org.au) or call **03 9650 5574**. Also, let IWDA know if you are holding an event and would like us to contact people in your area.

## More Supporter Events

**Melbourne** Thursday 21 March: An IWDA supporter dinner to meet Rosa Xavier.

**Sunshine Coast** A great new supporter group has started on the coast; coming up are a film night and a 'trash roulette night'. Intrigued? Then call Jan on 07 5472 7717



East Timor project partner, Rosa Xavier, will be in Australia in March. PHOTO: COHRE

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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](http://www.acfid.asn.au)

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## Yes! I want to celebrate International Women's Day by giving to women...

I'd like to give a donation of \$

I would like to become an **Associate** and have enclosed  \$240 donation for 2004–2005 financial year **Total donations today \$**

**I would like to support Empower – the monthly pledge**  
(Please ignore if you are already an Empower supporter.)

I'd like to **join** Empower and give ongoing support. I will give:  
 \$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 will be acknowledged as Associate supporters in IWDA publications unless otherwise requested.



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