



Working for women's equality – meet IWDA's new Executive Director... see Herstory page 5

A Meaningful Exchange

Cath Rutten – Communications Coordinator

Since 2000 IWDA has supported a program in the north of Thailand that has produced fundamental and positive change for over 3000 women. We would like to take this opportunity to reflect on some of the wonderful achievements of the Women's Exchange program over the last seven years of IWDA's involvement. We know it will continue to grow and develop with new funding from the American Jewish World Service.

Migrant Action Program (MAP) Foundation, IWDA's project partner in Chiang Mai, have coordinated the Women's Exchange (WE) program since the project began. Many women who participate live in refugee camps while others are 'illegal' migrant workers.

For seven years now, Women's Exchange groups have met to hear from guest speakers, **share experiences and increase their skills** in advocating for themselves and other women in their communities.



Participants of the Women's Exchange program at Mae Ra Moe refugee camp

Monthly meetings are held in more than nine locations including MAP's Chiang Mai and Mae Sot offices and in several of the refugee camps on the Thai Burma border. That's around 350 women per month who are being mobilized to support one another and gain new skills!

The WE has strengthened the **response around violence against women in the migrant and refugee communities**. In the first two years, trainings on Thai law were held in all WE groups. From these trainings and from case studies of support provided to migrant and refugee survivors of rape and abuse,

a ten-step process called ARM (Automatic Response Mechanism) was developed with the contribution of over 600 women. ARM aims to facilitate the process by which **a victim of abuse can become a survivor**. It provides a framework to support survivors through professional counselling, general and emotional support, medical assistance, legal assistance and community support.

One of the many unique aspects of the Women's Exchange program is its inclusivity. For decades ethnic minorities have been driven from their homes inside Burma in the search for paid employment and physical security. Outside of the WE there are few opportunities for women from different ethnic groups to meet. They are geographically separated and isolated within their own limited networks.

Being open to any woman, the WE meetings are **breaking down discrimination** between ethnic groups from inside Burma, Burman nationals, Thai locals and other marginalized groups such as sex workers, and creating understanding and genuine support among the women who are part of the program. It also gives a voice to young women and helps them develop the confidence to discuss emerging issues.

The Women's Exchange has the capacity to adapt to the needs of a community as they emerge. This has resulted in the project extending into the south of Thailand to assist tsunami affected communities and even to the United Kingdom, where refugees are using the model to initiate meetings for the mutual support of women arriving in a new country.

We would like to extend our congratulations and appreciation to Jackie, Susu and all the staff at MAP Foundation – your work is inspiring!



One of IWDA's new projects works to eliminate violence against women in the highlands of Papua New Guinea

Letter from the Executive Director

These are busy and exciting times at IWDA. As this issue reaches you, we are delighted to welcome IWDA's new Executive Director, Jane Sloane, and our new Senior Overseas Program Manager, Carole Shaw. But many things are unchanged – notably IWDA's commitment to support innovative projects that are conceived and delivered by women in their local communities. **We remain the only Australian-based non-government development agency to focus on women in this way.**

Jane Sloane's appointment marks an exciting new phase for IWDA, as we embark on a journey to expand our work with women and their communities. Jane brings a wealth of energy, skill and commitment, and experience in the non-government, government and private sectors in Australia and internationally. Highly qualified, a Churchill fellow, a woman who places ethics at the heart of her approach to work and life, Jane has a thorough understanding of both development priorities and funding opportunities. We are confident that she will build on Suzette Mitchell's legacy and lead IWDA into a period of significant growth.

We're also delighted to welcome Carole Shaw to IWDA. Carole brings a wide range of experience in gender and women's issues, including post-conflict development, women and peace building, implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325, capacity building, training and gender mainstreaming.

Continuing this theme of beginnings, we are pleased to fund three new projects this financial year, working with new and existing partners. The projects focus on peace building and violence against women in the Pacific; environmental sustainability, women and decision making in Vanuatu; and violence against women in the highlands of Papua New Guinea.

Finally, we are reminded by the overwhelming response of supporters new and old to our tax time appeal that without you, none of this would be possible. **Heartfelt thanks from IWDA, our project partners, and the women, families and communities that your generosity reaches.**

Jo Crawford
Acting Executive Director

Prepare your appetite for IWDA's Feast in March 2008

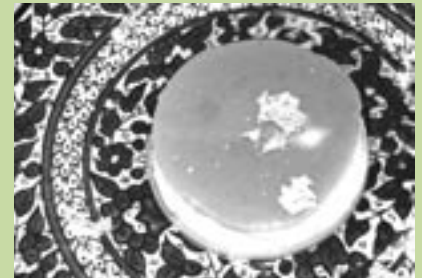
Those of you who were guests at IWDA's Feast in 2005 will remember the sumptuous banquet prepared by 22 leading women chefs!

Each chef donated her time, talents and ingredients to supply a table of 10 with a delicious three-course meal. The evening raised OVER \$50,000 to support women and their families across Asia and the Pacific.

IWDA is gearing up for an even bigger and better feast in March 2008 with 30 female chefs catering for 300 guests! The event will be part of the Melbourne Food and Wine Festival and will raise funds for one of our fantastic projects.

We need your support for this event – one of the keys to successful fundraising on the night is through donated Silent Auction items. If you or someone you know would like to donate an item (goods or services warmly welcomed!) please call our Special Events Coordinator Kathy Proctor on 03 9650 5574.

The Feast is set for Sunday 2 March – so keep the date free and watch www.iwda.org.au to book early – the last feast was a sell-out!



PHOTOS: BRENT PARKER-JONES



IWDA Feast 2005

About International Women's Development Agency (IWDA)

IWDA is an Australian non-profit organisation that supports positive change for women. Our practical and rights-based projects directly address poverty and inequality 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 whole community benefits*

iwda

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Getting help to where it's most needed: Changing the lives of rural women in East Timor

Erin McKinnon, Overseas Program Manager

Since 2000, many local and International NGO's have worked hard to alleviate poverty and improve the lives of East Timor's population. In the eastern districts of the country it is clear, however, that there are many people living in remote and isolated villages who have yet to see any of this assistance and for whom life remains as difficult as ever. This is particularly true for women.

It is the women in these remote rural villages that IWDA's partner GFFTL (East Timorese Young Women's Association) is reaching out to through a program of literacy and income generation. Twice a month the committed GFFTL staff make the long and arduous journey by public bus to Baucau and Los Palos districts then walk long distances to villages that are often only accessible by foot. Here they meet with the women's groups under a tree, a verandah or in any other available space. The local women are learning to read and write and will soon start income-generation activities.

For the past three years, 60 women from four rural villages have participated in basic literacy and numeracy classes through the IWDA-funded Women's Civic Literacy for Empowerment project. As well as increasing the confidence of women, my question - 'How would you like your daughter's lives to be different to yours?' - revealed the positive outcome that women are sending their daughters to school and encouraging them to finish, ensuring girls have access to opportunities their mothers did not.

IWDA news www.iwda.org.au

GFFTL are now able to give these women the opportunity to make and sell products to enhance their income through their expanded program Promoting Women's Participation and Leadership through Civic Literacy and Economic Empowerment,



PHOTO: ERIN MCKINNON

Junita, participant of GFFTL's literacy program in the highlands of East Timor

which is funded through IWDA supporters and the Office for Women. GFFTL will provide business skills and technical training and offer assistance and support to start up income-generation activities in each of the four villages. It is a constant struggle for these women to provide food, schooling and healthcare for their families, and even a very small increase in income will have a significant impact on their lives and their communities.

Sometimes silence speaks louder than words...

Cath Rutten – Communications Coordinator

IWDA'S Silent-a-thon is about to be launched nationwide for International Women's Day 2008!

I recently had the opportunity to travel to the Thai-Burma border to visit the Karen Young Women's Leadership School (see page 5 more information on the school), and the SWAN internship program, both of which IWDA has supported for seven years. These projects have far-reaching implications for the young women who participate.

Coming from refugee camps on the border or from their villages inside Burma these young women travel away from their families – often under dangerous circumstances – to arrive at these places of learning. For some of the girls this is their first experience of living free from the physical threat of the ongoing conflict in Burma.

They learn about human rights, women's rights and leadership. And they take their knowledge back to their communities, continuing to work for equality and democracy for their people and country. Education is the fundamental building block that enables these young women to create change for their communities - inside Burma, inside the refugee camps and in the global arena as they advocate for change.

It is vital that these projects continue and the Silent-a-thon (SAT) aims to raise funds to ensure their ongoing viability.

The SAT asks young women and men in schools throughout Australia to nominate a time to stay silent in the week of International Women's Day. It can be a few hours, a lunch-time, or a day. Their colleagues, parents or local businesses sponsor them for the nominated amount of time.

Several schools have successfully piloted the program and all students who have participated agree that it's an exciting and motivating experience; the knowledge

that their silence is giving a voice to young women on the other side of the world inspires them to... well...silence!

It's also fun – students create speaking cards and communication boards to assist them with their challenge.


Schools that participate will receive a speaker from IWDA to inform the students about the work that they are directly supporting and hopefully to energise them to silence greatness!

If you know of a school that would be interested in this fantastic and pro-active activity, please contact IWDA on 03 9650 5574 or email silent@iwda.org.au

Student at the Karen Young Women's Leadership School in Mae Ra Moe refugee camp



PHOTO: CATH RUITTEN



IWDA's Challenge for Change is in full gear!

Kathy Proctor – Special Events Coordinator

25 IWDA supporters have signed up for IWDA's Challenge for Change, committed to raise a minimum of \$5,000 on behalf of IWDA – and they are currently gearing up to reach their targets! In November they will cycle around Cambodia and meet some of the inspiring women we work with.

Here are some examples of the fantastic ways in which they are fundraising for IWDA!

☀️ **Girls Night In** - Michelle from Sydney invited her friends with the promise of a mystery event to ignite curiosity. Guests paid a small entry fee and Michelle utilised raffles as an extra way to raise funds. Each prize was donated by a local business. Michelle and her friends had a great night and raised \$1,200.

☀️ **Wine and Cheese Night** - Emma and Sue launched their fundraising efforts at a wine and cheese evening in Brisbane. They ordered cleanskin wine (labelled with beautiful IWDA stickers) and provided a delicious range of cheeses. Friends and family paid a small entry fee to sample this enticing spread. Guests purchased raffle tickets with prizes once again donated from local businesses. Emma and Sue raised over \$500 towards their fundraising tally.

☀️ **Movie Night** - Meg organised a screening of the movie "Romulus my Father" at Cinema Nova in Carlton, Melbourne. Over 50 guests enjoyed both the movie and the choc top with a hot debate over which was the best flavour. With the help of a raffle Meg raised over \$600.

Please support our fantastic fundraisers (and IWDA) by coming to some events! With Charity Challengers from QLD, NSW, Victoria and Tasmania there is sure to be an event in your state. Visit www.iwda.org.au and follow the links.

By the way, you don't need to be a Charity Challenger to raise funds for IWDA. If you would like to run a small event phone 03 9650 5574 or email iwda@iwda.org.au to register.



Pacific Women Taking Action!

Kate O'Rourke – IWDA Intern

Planning is underway for what will be a powerful and catalytic event for the women's movement in the Pacific.

Working in collaboration with a 15-member advisory committee, representing key women's organisations from throughout the Pacific region, IWDA will facilitate the planning and management of the Pacific Women's Forum.

Over five days in April 2008 in Nadi, Fiji, the Pacific Women's Forum will bring together more than 150 women's rights advocates, feminists, women leaders, policy makers and civil society actors from all 24 Pacific Island countries and territories.

The forum will provide a **unique opportunity for women**, including young women, working in community development, gender equality and social justice to come together to share resources and experiences, learn new skills, develop action plans and consolidate networks. We hope participants will leave the forum energised, inspired and equipped with valuable tools, resources, links and ideas to help them generate positive change in the communities in which they live and work.

The Pacific Women's Forum will affirm and celebrate the vital role that women and women's NGOs play in the Pacific Islands, as well as provide space for reflection and collective dialogue on the best way to advance the women's movement in the Pacific.

IWDA is excited to be able to support our local partners to ensure that Pacific women's voices are heard at the local, regional and international levels.



PHOTO: ANNA STONE

HERSTORY:

Jane Sloane – IWDA's new Executive Director

The International Women's Development Agency (IWDA) is delighted to announce the appointment of Jane Sloane as its new Executive Director.



Coleen Clare, President of the IWDA Board, said in welcoming Ms Sloane to her new role, "Jane has the personal qualities and professional skills needed to further the excellent work of IWDA in creating positive change for women and their communities." The IWDA Board was impressed with Ms Sloane's leadership experience and training skills, especially her awards in five national and Asia Pacific leadership programs over the past few years.

Jane is excited by the potential for reinforcing and expanding the quality work of IWDA and our project partners in developing countries.

"It's been said that to empower women, you build from the ground up and that's what IWDA does in forming local partnerships for the programs it operates in Asia and the Pacific," Ms Sloane said. "As a small international development organisation, we need to be smart about the strategic

partnerships we form while remaining true to our values and core work. This will require integrity, imagination and integration moving forward."

Ms Sloane said she wanted to work with IWDA to further its support for equity, sustainability and empowerment of women, "I've worked in the development field for a number of years now and I believe that IWDA models the type of sustainable development that delivers long-term benefits to local communities; when programs focus on women's empowerment and engagement, the whole community benefits."

Jane Sloane started in her new role on August 28th.

A Place for Learning - Karen refugees on the Thai - Burma border

Renaë Davies – 2006 Australian Youth Ambassador for Development

I had thought Burma was just another South East Asian country full of pagodas, smiling people and the spirit of Buddhism, until I had my first encounter with some Shan refugees running a restaurant in Northern Thailand. I listened with bewilderment as they informed naïve travellers like me about the military regime and how their tourist dollars might be spent if we decided to cross the border. I changed my plans and decided not to travel into Burma - to avoid feeding an economy that sustained the brutal oppression of innocent people - and thought I had done something worthwhile.

Months later back in Australia, I could not forget what I had heard, the stories that had stirred something in my heart and propelled me to take action. And with the freedom to do so, I returned to university to study International Community Development.

In 2006, after I had completed my degree I was nominated by IWDA to undertake an Australian Youth Ambassador for Development (AYAD) placement and subsequently went to work with the Karen Women's Organisation (KWO) on the Thai-Burma border.

Working closely with the local project coordinator I spent the next six months collating and developing training materials for the Karen Young Women's Leadership School, the project supported by IWDA, and using them with a group of 12 women selected by KWO.

The manuals on Women, Power and Leadership, Gender Awareness, and Women's Rights were designed to be as relevant as possible for women living in refugee camps or as internally displaced people in the jungles of Eastern Burma. They were

translated into local language to assist graduates in running trainings of their own when they returned to their communities.

The training was intended to be empowering – to build the capacity of women to take up positions of leadership and decision-making within their communities – but perhaps I was the most rewarded beneficiary of all. While students learned of leadership models and international human rights standards I was shown the humility and generosity of spirit embodied by women truly committed to the principles of peace, freedom and democracy.

Renaë is one of three placements supported by IWDA over the last twelve months. Early in 2007 we supported a volunteer to work with our project partner in PNG. Currently we support another on the Thai-Burma border. This is a great way to increase the skills of volunteer workers whilst contributing to the capacity of our partner organisations. It also generates a wider understanding of the issues affecting women in Asia and the Pacific.



Renaë with students from the Karen Young Women's Leadership School

PHOTO: KINYAW PAW

Kantha Shakthi - a shining light for women amid hostilities in Sri Lanka

Erin McKinnon – Overseas Program Manager

IWDA's partner in Sri Lanka, Kantha Shakthi, is transforming the lives of women in the south and centre of Sri Lanka through an approach to women's empowerment that is a beacon for the development sector.

In Balangoda in south-central Sri Lanka, Kantha Shakthi has gained such a reputation that they are inundated with requests to expand the project to more villages. Initially the mobilisers went door-to-door trying to convince women to participate, whereas now they are unable to meet the demand from women who've heard about the project and want to become involved!

Along the south coast of Sri Lanka in communities devastated by the tsunami, women who had all but given up on life are now enjoying opportunities they never had before the tsunami, such as earning their own income, learning about women's rights and performing at community forums. **The positive outlook and smiling faces of these women who've suffered so much is an inspiring and a powerful affirmation of Kantha Shakthi's work.**

Kantha Shakthi, like all NGOs in Sri Lanka, face the constant challenges of working in a country plagued by civil conflict. Violence has intensified over the past 18 months



A project participant with two social mobilisers from Kantha Shakthi

due to the break-down in December 2005 of the ceasefire agreement between the Government of Sri Lanka and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). UNICEF reports that there have been 4000 military and civilian deaths in the 18 months to May 2007, while a further three million people are affected by the conflict including 500,000 who have been forced to flee their homes.

Despite human rights abuses continuing unchecked on both sides of the conflict, growing calls from the international community to establish a United Nations' independent international human rights monitoring mission have so far been resisted.

Kantha Shakthi has been working steadily to enhance mutual understanding, respect and friendship among different communities since November 2006. Just before Posen full moon day in June, Kantha Shakthi assembled 350 women and men at the historic city of Anuradhapura to reflect on the link between the war and the economic, social and cultural deterioration, and discuss what women can do to build a society based on humanitarian values.

Women's Eye On Peace launch at Department of Human Services

IWDA's photographic exhibition *Women's Eye on Peace* is still going strong as it continues its tour. The exhibition was successfully launched at the Victorian Department of Human Service on 31 May. More than 70 images were exhibited throughout the building including the ground floor foyer. This has provided excellent exposure for the pictures (and IWDA!) with the thousands of people who work in the building and pass through each day.

The exhibition coincided with the launch of DHS' *Human Rights Charter* DVD. The launch was well attended and music was provided by the Stiletto Sisters, a trio performing gorgeous three-part harmonies.

Thank you to all the staff at DHS for supporting IWDA with this launch and the purchase of images.

Women's Eye on Peace images are still available for purchase (unframed). To view the full catalogue please visit www.iwda.org.au



WEOP II - Three Women Drinking Chicha



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

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