



What is a silent-a-thon?

silent-a-thon is a fundraising program run by the International Women's Development Agency in support of the women and their families in the Asia-Pacific.

To keep vital projects running, IWDA is calling on schools and individuals to run a **silent-a-thon** around the week of International Women's Day on 8 March.

Who does silent-a-thon support?

The program raises funds for IWDA projects, such as the Karen Young Women's Leadership School (KYWLS) on the Thai-Burma border.

Please visit www.iwda.org.au for more information about IWDA projects.

What does silent-a-thon involve?

silent-a-thon involves being sponsored or donating to remain silent for a day, an afternoon or even an hour. A breaking the silence event can also be held.

Why silent-a-thon?

silent-a-thon attempts to show what living without freedom of speech would be like; as some women endure their whole lives, simply for being female.

An event such as this may stimulate a discussion of gender attitudes in the community. The idea is that by staying silent, you can give women a voice!

IWDA Projects

We develop our projects in partnership with women who work and live in the communities. We know from experience that women's active participation and leadership is key to building a more sustainable future where the rights of women and men, girls and boys, are respected.

Although the funds from **silent-a-thon** may be pooled and donated to a number of different IWDA projects, below is a particular example of the kind of projects that IWDA is involved with.

Karen Young Women's Leadership School (KYWLS)

The Karen Young Women's Leadership School was established in 2001. The School teaches human rights and leadership, not maths and science. The students are young women from the ethnic Karen minority, who have fled internal strife and human rights abuses in Burma, and now live in refugee camps on the Thai-Burma border. The school aims to empower young women to have a voice, to realise their leadership ability and move towards women's participation, as equal partners with men, in decision-making processes at all levels.

Situation in Burma

The military junta ruling Burma continues to crackdown on public protests against its rule. The repression under the military regime has worsened.

Its exiled prime minister said in Dublin on Monday 26 January 2009 that the situation in Burma had become critical; the economic situation was at its worst following the global recession and cyclone Nargis, which caused devastation in the country last year.

The situation has the potential to bring a new wave of refugees, which would further increase the pressure on already overflowing refugee camps on the Thai-Burma border. The current and ongoing human rights abuses emphasise the need to educate young Karen and Shan women about their rights and strategies to help their communities.