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women's development
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When women benefit, the whole community benefits.



EMERGING LEADERS PROGRAM

Building the capacity, confidence and knowledge of young women on the Thai-Burma Border.

Renae Davies, Overseas Program Manager

"When I don't know about politics I can't participate. (...) If we don't have knowledge we don't know which decision is good or bad."

M*, a student at Women's League of Burma School.

The Emerging Leaders Program is jointly implemented by two local women's groups on the Thai-Burma border, the Women's League of Burma (WLB) and the Karen Women's Organisation (KWO). The program consists of running a course for 29 young women of various ethnic groups from Burma. It aims to enable them to actively participate in decision-making structures in their own communities.

According to WLB Course Coordinator Thin Thin Aung, when the course began, the teachers' style of participatory learning was unfamiliar to the students who had primarily experienced a strict, rote learning style of education. Following entrenched gender roles and common perceptions that women should be obedient and docile, students were initially shy, quiet, and scared of asking questions of their teachers during their classes.

However, through learning about several themes such as Burmese political history, democracy, economic systems, gender and policy making, their confidence has increased. This, combined, with a strengthening of analytical skills and critical thinking means that the teachers are now pleased to be facing the opposite situation to when the course began, as students cannot stop asking questions!

In addition, being in a safe, supportive environment has allowed these women to realise the changes they want to make in their lives. They have become more aware of the influences of living in a patriarchal culture and have developed stronger interests in gender equality. For instance, before attending the Emerging Leaders school H* did not think that



Photo: Courtesy of Thin Thin Aung
Students at WLB Emerging Leader School

women and men could be equal:

"I think it is our culture, women have to speak quietly, raise children and do cooking but now I learn about gender and equality and learn that just as the man can be leader, women can also be good leader".

Their relationship with others and attitudes within the class have also improved. Team-building sessions were held to overcome some of the traditional barriers to ethnic integration. They aimed to harness a spirit of unity, ethnic reconciliation and peace building. The course has been effective in promoting among the women a strong respect and solidarity for each other.

Finally, the knowledge and confidence gained through the course will enable them to participate in political and community meetings with men and advocate for women's rights. Most importantly, they will become part of the political decision-making process and hold positions of leadership in their communities.

S*, a student at KWO school, commented *"I believe if women know their rights and opportunities then we can change the stereotypes"*. All of this allows women to be more active and to strengthen their presence within civil and political organisations.

After completing the Emerging Leaders Program, graduates will return to their villages to hold short workshops and share their learning with other women. It is an effective and empowering approach to spreading a new way of being heard for these women.

* Names have been changed for security reasons.

THANK YOU FOR SUPPORTING OUR GIFTS OF CHANGE CATALOGUE!

We received a fantastic response to our Gifts of Change catalogue. Literacy gifts, such as pencils and notebooks or a local trainer conducting a class, have been the most popular.

They will strengthen the knowledge of women in East Timor in order to increase their self-confidence and enable them to participate in decision-making processes. Other gifts will implement strategies against violence against women, improve the status of women, and create processes for sustainable livelihoods and food security. **So, on behalf of all women we work with in the Asia-Pacific, thank you!**

And if you are interested in buying a Gift of Change for another special occasion, the website is online: <http://www.iwda.org.au/catalogue>



Photo: Dani Vern

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

With a New Year beginning, there is a feeling of renewal and the anticipation of the possibilities of the time ahead. This year however our optimism may be tempered by the challenges of economic uncertainty. While we may experience some changes in our circumstances, the impacts will be much greater on women in developing countries. So it is critical that now, more than ever, we keep in mind that 'united we stand, divided we fall'.

Fortunately, there are many examples to illustrate how we can work together for better outcomes for all women. For example the recent AWID (Association for Women's Rights In Development) forum in South Africa and our annual celebrations for International Women's Day.

AWID was held in November 2008 and was an impressive example of women's energy and commitment to improving the lives of women worldwide. IWDA participated in this important event, contributing to the discussions and building on the momentum of our work. This forum was both a conference and a call to action. Moreover, it was the largest AWID event to date, with over 2200 women registered.

The overwhelming picture presented at AWID was one of rising fundamentalism and extremism, growing economic injustice and poverty, increasing militarisation and totalitarianism, and an increasing backlash against women fighting for their human rights and against the spread of HIV/AIDS. In the face of this, the need for movements of women and women's organisations that provide strength, sustenance and sustainable support to those causes most in need of allies is critical. IWDA is proud to be part of this movement, seeking constructive ways to address these global challenges.

Another example, International Women's Day, is coming up on 8 March. It is the principal day where people can come together in recognition of the need for a collective approach and collaborative action to improve women's lives. To get involved, see page 6 for our Feast events.

In the space created by so much upheaval is the opportunity of new ways of working. As Einstein said "The significant problems we face cannot be solved at the same level of thinking we were at when we created them."

Jane Sloane,
Executive Director



Photo: Commonwealth Local Government Forum (CLGF) Sigatoka Women's Community Dialogue' July 2008, Fiji Islands.

Photo: Suzette Mitchell

INCREASING WOMEN'S VOICES AND PARTICIPATION IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Claire Rowland, Overseas Program Manager

Local government is where many of the decisions relating to the delivery of basic services and quality of life in cities and towns are made. These decisions impact on women and men differently – in way they live, work and recreate and their ability to share these places equally.

In Fiji, as in many other Pacific Island countries, Australia and overseas, the opportunity to use local government to change the situation of women as well as to use the diverse skills of women in building, sustaining and leading communities is significantly under-realised. The representation of women as elected members and managers in local government is far below the proportion of women in the population. In Fiji, as at November 2008, women are approximately 13% of elected councillors and 8% of mayors and/or deputy mayors. Women are only 16% of Town Clerks/Chief Executive Officers and few women actively participate as citizens in local government forums.

The barriers impacting on women's participation in local government are both complex and diverse – ranging from societal roles, cultural attitudes, education background, finances, and lack of support by political parties and local governments themselves among others. Substantial change within society, as well as within the sphere of local government, will need to occur before major gains are made in this area.

In recognition of the need to advance the role of municipal local governments in achieving gender equality in Fiji, IWDA has collaborated with the Commonwealth Local Government Forum Pacific Project (CLGF) to develop and implement a two-year program titled 'Strengthening Women's Participation in Municipal Governance' (SWPMG). CLGF is the local government arm of the Commonwealth and seeks to promote democratic values and good local governance through exchanging experiences, networking and strengthening local government capacity throughout the Commonwealth. The CLGF Pacific Project works with nine Pacific Island countries – Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, PNG, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu.

The program in Fiji promotes women's right to engage and participate in local governance activities as councillors, staff members and constituents of municipal councils in Fiji.



Funded by the United Nations Democracy Fund, the SWPMG supports women leaders and women considering leadership through training, mentoring and internet based networking opportunities. It will help councils undertake gender audits, develop gender sensitive policies and procedures, and create inclusive approaches to public participation. The program will also include a media campaign to explore and promote the participation of women in leadership at the local government level. To catalyse the program, CLGF will be profiling women councillors and community leaders, and further researching the potential barriers to women's participation in local governance.

COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

Carole Shaw, Senior Manager, Programs will be attending CSW 53rd Session.

The United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) is the key UN body for advancing the global policy agenda on gender equality and the empowerment of women. CSW meetings are held at the United Nations in New York for two weeks in February – March each year. The Commission focusses on one priority theme at each annual session. Government representatives from around the world come together to discuss the theme and to adopt policy recommendations in the form of agreed conclusions. The CSW 53rd Session will take place in New York from the 3rd to 13th March 2009. The priority theme to be discussed is 'the equal sharing of responsibilities between women and men, including the care-giving in the context of HIV/AIDS'.

IWDA works closely with the National Women's Secretariats and the Office for Women in the lead up to, during and post CSW, sharing information, discussing critical issues, inputting into NGO position papers and working on outcomes from the Commission. IWDA plays an important role in this by working within Australia on legislative and policy responses to advance gender equality and empowerment of women and by working in solidarity with Pacific and Asia networks and partners to strengthen their national gender policies and regional positions.

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

IWDA endorses the National Privacy Principles. For details please contact IWDA.

Please accept my tax deductible **donation today** of:

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HERSTORY

Renaë Davies, Overseas Program Manager

The Emerging Leaders Program on the Thai-Burma border provides the opportunity for young women who have shown leadership potential in their communities and have completed basic human rights and gender training to attend the Emerging Leaders school. **The aim is to further develop their skills, knowledge and confidence to participate equally in decision-making process and all aspects of civil and political life.** Students are selected from the 12 women's organisations that make up the WLB (Women's League of Burma), an umbrella group for women's organisations from Burma.

I recently met students at the WLB Emerging Leaders School. Here is an excerpt from interviews with two of them, C* from Kayan Women's Organisation and Yin Myo Haing from Burmese Women's Union.

C*

What were you doing before you came to the Emerging Leaders school? Before this school I worked with the Kayan Women's Organisation since 2006 and last year I went to the SSSNY school (School for Shan State Nationalities Youth) ¹ and then I went back inside Burma and then I came to this school.

Seeing as you have already participated in the SSSNY school, why did you want to participate in this school? This program is very good for women and active politics. In Kayan region **there is a lack of knowledge and living standards are very low, so I want to help and give back my knowledge to Kayan people.** That's why I want to go here and I am very happy because here there is no discrimination between ethnic groups. This program gives me a lot of knowledge to lead the way and give me a chance to be the leader.

Do you think this program helps you to be a good leader for the Kayan people? I hope and I believe this program gives me the skills to be a good leader. To be a good leader you need to know the process of policy making and you need to have knowledge to lead, and equality and no discrimination and to lead the way.

What is your personal goal for the future? I want to lead my organisation (Kayan Women's Organisation) and lobby for democracy and gender equality. **I want to show the truth of what is happening in our country.**



Photo: Renaë Davies. Yin Myo Haing and other students from WLB Students

YIN MYO HAING

What do you like about the Emerging Leaders school? I like the school because all the subjects are very useful for us and we can take this information to the community and distribute what we learn from here.

What things do you want to share with your community? Want to share about how our Burma government is abusing our citizen rights and about women's rights. These are the most important for our community because I work with migrant workers and I want to share with them their rights and how to protect them.

Do you have any favourite subjects? Democracy and ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) ² unit and UN (United Nations) units because I like to study about it. Also women and gender issues. The most interesting thing is lobbying unit and it will help me when I give trainings.

What is your goal for the future? For me I want to see stability and democracy and federalism in our community and **I would like to see women participate in decision-making level and I want to try to lead the community as much as I can.**

* Name has been changed for security reasons

1 In 2001, a group of youth from Shan State established a training program for displaced Shan State youth to provide them with the basic skills and education.

2 The aims and purposes of the Association are to accelerate economic growth, social progress and cultural development in the region and to promote regional peace and stability.

BRING THIS NEWSLETTER
TO YOUR WORK AND
SHARE THESE STORIES!



Photo: Suzette Mitchell



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

ONE JUST WORLD

Jo Crawford, IWDA Advisor

One Just World – a new national series of free discussion forums on development issues facing Australia and our region – has successfully concluded its first season of forums. Some 2000 people attended the first seven forums. Over a third of whom completed detailed evaluation forms, giving us a good picture of what attendees enjoyed, issues they want to see covered in future, and what could be improved.

When asked 'How would you rate today's forum from 1–10 (one being not good, 10 being very good)', nine out of ten respondents rated the forum they attended as 7 or better and six out of ten rated it as 8 or better. This is a great outcome for a new series that organised seven forums in 3½ months while also building partnerships and a website. You can catch up on the discussions (audio or video) via the website www.onejustworld.com.au.

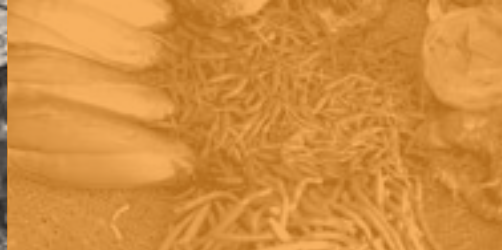
Season Two will commence in early March 2009 with two forums in Geelong on 3 March 2009 on global food issues – an afternoon forum for later year school students and an after-work public forum. Next is a very special One Just World event at Womadelaide, the renowned world music festival in Adelaide. On International Women's Day, Sunday 8 March 2009, One Just World @ Womadelaide will celebrate the world's women and their role in sustaining communities.

You can find more information about these and other 2009 forums at www.onejustworld.com.au

A FEW WORDS FROM OUR PRESIDENT

I'm delighted to be able to let supporters know about an exciting initiative, **the Asia Pacific Breakthrough: The Women, Faith and Development Summit to End Global Poverty** will take place in Melbourne at Federation Square on 2–3 December 2009. This ambitious global Summit is an initiative spearheaded in the Asia-Pacific region by IWDA, in collaboration with key faith, women's and development organisations from both the government and non-government sectors. The synergy that will be achieved by these three usually distinct sectors is itself unprecedented. Yet the challenges facing women and girls globally remain extreme. More than one billion people worldwide are living on less than \$1 a day, with a life expectancy half that of the average Australian. The majority are women and girls. IWDA is proud to be a founding partner of this new and ambitious initiative which we trust will mark a new era in women working more strongly together to maintain and grow investment in women and girls and in increasing understanding of how much women and girls have to contribute to a new and inspiring future world.

Coleen Clare,
President



SUNDAY 8 MARCH: INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY 2009

Once again we will celebrate the International Women's Day and in just two years we will see the centenary of this event. This day is an important reminder for all of us of the hard work undertaken and the commitment of so many to help improve women's lives.

However, a serious amount of work still needs to be done. For example we need more women representatives in our parliaments, real equality within the workforce, and paid maternity leave. It is also important to remember that, apart from indigenous women, western women are relatively privileged. We do not have to worry about our daughter getting married at 12 years old and we can speak freely in our country. So, let's celebrate International Women's Day and let's reflect on what it is to be a woman today. Most importantly, let's act for other women in developing countries to empower them and create a better future for themselves and generations to come.

NATIONAL

For International Women's Day, we are inviting you to help highlight the vital role that women play in access to safe, affordable and sufficient food. According to the Food Agricultural Organisation, "Women produce between 60 and 80 per cent of the food in most developing countries. Women rarely own the land they cultivate."

To help us to support women in developing countries, you can hold a fundraising event, feast@home or a feast@work, during March or April. All you need to do is get together with your friends or co-workers, share a meal and donate to IWDA the money that you would have spent on eating out.

In addition, you could sell some very cute Kachin pins at your event, made by women from Burma who have fled violence, poverty and trafficking. They are just \$5 each. What a great way to support women!

As a fundraising event, feast@home or feast@work provides vital funds to support the work of IWDA; we recognise that food security depends on the empowerment of women.

If you would like to register your feast@home – feast@work or to get more information, visit: www.iwda.org.au and follow the links or call us at 1300 661 812.

HOBART

IWD Soiree - Combined fundraiser for IWDA and Amnesty International

Date Thursday 5 March
Time 5.30 - 7.00 pm
Where Women Tasmania, 140-142 Macquarie St, Hobart, Tasmania
Speaker Renae Davies, Program Manager, IWDA, Thai-Burma Border
Costs \$5 or gold coin for concession
 A raffle will be run on the night
RSVP Friday 27 Feb to 1800 001 377 or 03 6233 2208.

IWD Breakfast

Host: Yabbo Thompson

Date Sunday 8 March
Time 9 am - 12 noon
Where 11 Union St, West Hobart, Tasmania
Costs Bring a donation for IWDA
 Raffle will be run on the morning.
RSVP Yabbo Thompson on 03 6234 9857

Do you have an International Women's Day event you would like to share with us? Email us at: iwda@iwda.org.au



IWDA 2009 FEAST: WITHOUT WOMEN, WE ALL GO HUNGRY

Taking place at the Grand Hyatt, Melbourne, the IWDA 2009 Feast on **Sunday 22nd March** promises to be a night of delicious food, local wines and exciting entertainment, with all proceeds supporting IWDA's work.

Twenty prominent female chefs from around Melbourne have generously donated their time and expertise and will come together on the night to cook for 400 guests. Guests will also enjoy local wine produced by twelve female winemakers from Victorian vineyards.

Today, nearly 1 in 7 people do not get enough food to be healthy and lead an active life, making hunger and malnutrition the number one risk to health worldwide – greater than AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis combined. **Of the most chronically hungry, over 60% are women.**

Date Sunday 22nd March 2009
Time 6.45pm for 7.00pm start
Where Savoy Ballroom, The Grand Hyatt, 123 Collins St, Melbourne
Dress Code Cocktail
Price \$185 per ticket plus booking fee (tables of 10 available)

Part of the Melbourne Food and Wine Festival.

For tickets and more information visit: <http://www.iwda.org.au/feast> or call us on 1300 661 812.