



Published on Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (<http://www.ramsi.org>)

New Zealand Governor-General joins RAMSI contingent for village visit

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Created 04/10/2009 - 2:35pm

The Governor-General of New Zealand, His Excellency, Hon Sir Anand Satyanand, and Lady Satyanand, visited the north-west of Solomon Islands' Guadalcanal Province on Saturday to take part in a village visit as part of their official visit to Solomon Islands.

Sir Anand and Lady Satyanand visited the village of Veravaulu on Saturday to observe a RAMSI Community Outreach activity. They were welcomed by local chief Morris Taovia, who presented the Vice-Regal couple with gifts, before members of the community sang the Solomon Islands national anthem.

In his remarks to the people of Veravaulu village, the Governor-General greeted his audience in the official languages of the Realm of New Zealand: English, Maori, Cook Islands Maori, Niuean, Tokelauan, and New Zealand sign language. He also introduced himself in both Solomon Islands pijin and in Gari, the language spoken in the area surrounding Veravaulu village.

The RAMSI Community Outreach program is important in a country where the majority of people only have access to information through word of mouth. The program is used by RAMSI to visit communities in different parts of Solomon Islands and to explain its work to ordinary Solomon Islanders.

Taking part in Saturday's visit were representatives of the approximately 100 New Zealand police, military and civilian representatives currently serving in Solomon Islands, including RAMSI's Deputy Special Coordinator, Justin Fepulea'i. Sir Anand met earlier in the day with RAMSI Special Coordinator Graeme Wilson, who updated the Governor-General on RAMSI's progress, and its partnership with the Solomon Islands Government.

"By engaging with people working with RAMSI, my awareness of the mission's activities has increased, and I have learned about the impact of RAMSI on grassroots Solomon Islanders. I wish to congratulate members of the mission for their commitment and hard work," said Sir Anand. "As a result of the work of many men and women from across the Pacific, the quality of life for the people of Solomon Islands has been greatly improved."

Sir Anand also asked those in attendance to pause to remember those who had lost their lives in the recent tsunami in Tonga, Samoa and American Samoa. Both Tonga and Samoa contribute personnel to RAMSI, with a number being given compassionate leave to enable them to head

home and support loved ones.

Sir Anand and Lady Satyanand then visited the Visale Catholic Mission, where they had lunch with the local community and toured the Young Women's Vocational Training Centre which is run by the Sisters of the Order of the Daughters of Mary Immaculate.

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