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Mercy School Principal wins Special Coordinator's Award for Women

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A kindergarten teacher who for the past four years has voluntarily run a school for the children living around Ranadi rubbish dump on the outskirts of Honiara was today presented with the inaugural Special Coordinator's Award for Women.

RAMSI Special Coordinator, Graeme Wilson, presented the award to Mrs Beverly Komasi, the principal of Mercy School at Burns Creek, at a special breakfast for 200 women to mark International Women's Day in Solomon Islands.

Mr Wilson said RAMSI wanted to acknowledge the great contribution that all Solomon Islands women make to their nation.

"RAMSI has always recognised how important the contribution of women is to the success of our partnership in Solomons Islands but we thought it would be a good idea to acknowledge more widely women's contribution to rebuilding their nation.

"From the first day RAMSI deployed in July 2003, women have demonstrated their strength and resilience, and the enormous difference they can make to the development of their community," he said.

"From the time women stood up and demanded their sons and husbands lay down their weapons, the door for development was reopened."

The Special Coordinator's award is for a Solomon Islands organisation where the efforts of a woman or women have made a marked difference to the lives of Solomon Islanders.

Mrs Komasi said she felt honoured to receive the award.

"It is our job to prove ourselves as women every day but I am really grateful that the Special Coordinator doesn't just look upward into the government levels but also can look across to the grass roots of Solomon Islands."

The award is a modest cash prize of SBD 2000 designed to provide practical assistance to the efforts of women who are trying to improve the lives of ordinary Solomon Islanders or of those

facing particular hardship.

A teacher by profession, Mrs Komasi said she was struck by the plight of the children who spent their days not at school but picking their way through the rubbish at the Ranadi Dump.

Soon after RAMSI arrived in July 2003, she decided, with the help of other women in the Burns Creek community and the support of her husband Pastor David Komasi, to establish a modest school for the youngest of these children.

Today, Mercy School has 320 students in classes from Kindergarten to Grade Four and, as Principal, Mrs Komasi is training the 14 other women who volunteered to work with her to teach these children.

Mrs Komasi can be contacted for interviews on +677 25512.

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