



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

Special Coordinator Meets New Western Province Premier

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Created 26/10/2009 - 10:51am

Monday 26 October 2009

RAMSI's Special Coordinator, Graeme Wilson, continued his successful provincial consultations this week, holding talks in Gizo with the recently elected Premier of Western Province, George Solingi Lilo.

Mr Wilson briefed Premier Lilo on the Partnership Framework between RAMSI and the Solomon Islands Government, highlighting the areas that directly affect the provinces, including in the law and justice sector, the Women in Government program and financial management assistance provided through the Provincial Government Strengthening Program (PGSP).

Mr Wilson noted that Western Province had used the funding provided under PGSP to support small-scale infrastructure projects in education, notably at the Gizo Primary School, and to assist women and young people through the establishment of a Western Province Women's Resource Centre and a Netball Stadium in Gizo.

"Western Province has used the funding provided under PGSP to good effect so far and further projects are planned for 2009-10, especially in the education sector," Mr Wilson said.

Premier Lilo said RAMSI had brought many benefits to Solomon Islands, including to Western Province, and it was important for RAMSI to continue its good work.

"RAMSI has brought back law and order, and contributed to better economic and financial management," Mr Lilo said.

The Premier and Special Coordinator discussed the proposed Correctional Centre in Gizo which is a priority for the national and provincial government, and for RAMSI.

They also discussed the important role played by the Participating Police Force (PPF) in developing the capacity of the Royal Solomon Islands Police Force (RSIPF) and the need for improved police housing and transportation. Mr Wilson indicated that a PPF Tier II police vessel should be available in the coming weeks to assist with police work in the province.

"This should greatly increase the mobility of both the RSIPF and the PPF," Mr Wilson said.

Premier Lilo said he hoped that RAMSI's Machinery of Government program could increase

support for women in the provinces and provide parliamentary strengthening at the provincial level. Mr Wilson noted that RAMSI had organized a successful offshore workshop for Women's Development Division and Provincial Council of Women representatives earlier in the year where both strategic planning and operational skills were developed. Further initiatives to involve women at the provincial level had been undertaken or were under consideration.

The Premier and Special Coordinator said they looked forward to continuing the useful dialogue they had begun during their initial meeting and to further strengthening the links between RAMSI and the Western Province.

Mr Wilson visited Gizo on 19-20 October. He also met with local dignitaries and members of the RSIPF and the PPF based there. It was his third trip to Western Province.

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