



***The media's role in combating corruption:***  
**Remarks at 2011 RAMSI Media Lunch**

**RAMSI Special Coordinator, Nicholas Coppel**  
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It was at this time last year that the Solomon Islands media was in the midst of preparing for one of the biggest challenges that can face a country's media, that of covering national elections.

Elections are events that always focus a nation's attention, as candidates from across the country put their case to constituents, hoping for their chance to lead the nation.

But beyond the politics of the event, the 2010 election also represented a milestone for the media in Solomon Islands.

Although I personally wasn't an eye witness, many of my colleagues were. They have all spoken highly of the outstanding work done in providing up to date and on the spot coverage from the country's 50 constituencies.

Print journalists were positioned around the country, SIBC were doing live crosses to polling stations to update the nation on the progress in both casting and counting of votes and the One-TV team was standing on the steps of Parliament, broadcasting live to the nation. This represented the culmination of many months of hard work and planning.

And while I wouldn't go so far as to describe Koroi Hawkins as a fortune teller, his 'counting the numbers', live on air as the Philip and Abana camps arrived to cast their vote at Parliament House – and making the call that the Philip camp did indeed have the numbers – showed the increasing responsibility of the media.

So I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the media for your commitment and tenacity during the election period last year, and also extend congratulations to Corallie, David, Wendy and the team at SOLMAS – RAMSI's Solomon Islands Media Assistance Scheme, for the hard work they put in behind the scenes in providing opportunities for many of you to enhance your skills.

It was over those election months that many had the opportunity to ask the tough questions which help set the agenda of the nation's debate.

This is a power that I urge you never to take lightly.

Solomon Islanders get their news through your images and through your words. People get their news through the decisions you make about what and how to report.

This requires reporting with balance, fairness and the ability to see a story from all sides.

And there are countless stories to be told.

It has been a pleasure to read the features written by the *Solomon Star's* Charles Kadamana, the winner of the first RAMSI Media Encouragement Award and a now relative veteran of the Solomon Islands media.

Charles' recent story on Polynesians in Solomon Islands is a wonderful story, and I urge you to look within this country, as Charles had done, to see the unique stories that are waiting to be told.

However positive stories are not the only ones that need to be told.

It is certainly no secret that corruption and malpractice have done, and continue to do, enormous damage to this country and its people.

There is no doubt that many people in this room have first-hand experience, or at the very least, have heard first-hand accounts of corruption, such as a job or a scholarship going to a friend or a family member ahead of a more worthy candidate, or of government money and resources being used for personal use.

We see daily reports on crimes such as thefts, assaults and alcohol or drug possession.

So why do we not see the same level of coverage of corruption and malpractice? After all, corruption's reach is far greater and its impact often far more long-lasting.

The Solomon Islands media has an enormous opportunity to help drive this country's fight against corruption.

You can help expose those who are driving these practices, and you can help Solomon Islanders see that just because something has happened for years, that does not make it legitimate or acceptable.

And with the support of One-Television and local production company Studio Graphica, I'm proud to introduce a new cartoon which has been developed in consultation with the country's anti-corruption agencies and NGOs, funded by RAMSI and aimed at encouraging everyone to play their role in fighting corruption.

However it is now time for the part of today's lunch that I know many of you have been waiting for.

When this event was first held in 2009, a key part of the event was the presentation of an award to a member of the Solomon Islands media.

The **RAMSI Media Encouragement Award** was established to recognise the key role the media plays in all aspects of national life.

The goal of the award is to provide recognition and encouragement to an individual or a media organisation that has demonstrated consistent effort, imagination and commitment to improving and excelling professionally.

The idea was not intended to necessarily go to the highest achievers or the biggest names, but to someone that has shown enormous commitment to their work in the Solomon Islands media.

In 2009, the award went to the *Solomon Star's* Charles Kadamana for his work as the *Star's* lead photographer. He used his camera to create striking images that did not need words to tell inspiring stories.

And last year the award was presented to the team from OneTV's *Footprints*, who worked tirelessly to create a current affairs program that delved deeply into issues affecting Solomon Islanders.

This year, I am proud to be presenting the 2010 **RAMSI Media Encouragement Award** to **ROZALEE NONGEBATU** from SIBC.

Rozalee's career started in 2000 at S.I.B.C. in the midst of the tensions.

Over the course of the past 11 years, Rozalee has risen from junior cadet to become one of the country's strongest young journalists.

A mother of one who is famously organised and full of energy, Rozalee is now chasing stories, putting leaders on the spot and has made great strides in her professionalism over the past 18 months.

She has become a champion for environmental issues, such as climate change. Last year's election provided the opportunity for Rozalee to step up and become one of the nations' most impressive young voices.

Working as SIBC's correspondent in Choiseul on election day, Rozalee provided one of the key voices reporting from the provinces.

In the days following the election, her interview with former Deputy Prime Minister, Fred Fono, who had just lost his seat, proved to be one of the most compelling moments of the election coverage.

To hear a young woman putting the tough questions to one of Solomon Islands most senior leaders is a testament to the growing strength and confidence of the media in Solomon Islands.

And so, it is with great pleasure that I invite **Rozalee Nongebatu** to come forward and accept the 2011 **RAMSI Media Encouragement Award**.