



ADRA Office, Honiara, Solomon Islands

Photo courtesy of Stephen Tasker.

ADRA Solomon Islands

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The Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) office of the Solomon Islands began its work during the late 1980s.¹ Originally the ADRA department was being overseen by the Western Pacific Union president, Colin

Winch, and operated by the compound maintenance manager, Ian Bostock, as a satellite office of the union. During the 1990s ADRA was involved in an airstrip upgrade at Atoifi and began to establish itself in the region as a nongovernment organization (NGO). Michael Dixon, the union maintenance manager, followed Ian Bostock as head of the program, and by early 2001, it had grown sufficiently to become a country office. With the removal of the union headquarters to Fiji in 2000, the office of ADRA was now located at the headquarters of the Solomon Islands Mission on the mission compound in Honiara. Initially, the goal of ADRA Solomon Islands was to provide relief support to the people of the Solomon Islands, many of whom faced continuing climate crises and natural disasters. This mission expanded to include health education, peace initiatives, and small business support as the office gained local credibility and experience.²

History and Operation

The ethnic violence of 1999–2001 caused a difficult and dangerous time in the Solomon Islands.³ With a reduction in the fighting, a peace agreement between ethnic groups from Guadalcanal and Malaita was signed. However, carjackings, gunfire, and random attacks continued for some time. The fledgling ADRA office received some disaster funds from ADRA Australia and used these funds to provide relief to villages on the western side of Guadalcanal.⁴

David Cram became the ADRA country director in 2001. Apart from recognizing the need to reestablish civil society among the people, he became aware of the rapidly emerging problem of HIV-AIDS. The number of reported cases being registered was growing exponentially. He was able to use a fund-matching program from the Australian government to start an HIV awareness program throughout the country.⁵

ADRA also connected with several other NGOs as well as with the National Disaster Management Office of the government (NDMO). This proved timely in 2002 when Cyclone Zoe hit the country, and the informal connections between the NGOs became formal. David Cram assisted with the operations center for the NDMO, coordinating donations and their disbursement. This cemented ADRA's connection with the NDMO. The overseas assistance arm of the Australian government helped assess the damage and deliver supplies to areas where no one else could reach, and ADRA worked closely with that organization. This began a pattern of cooperation and close working relationships between ADRA, the Solomon Islands government, and the Australian government on relief projects in the region.⁶

A small enterprise development project around the Marovo Lagoon area, managed by Julie Poa, was also put in place. It was a small business project that helped handicraft and fishing businesses bring their goods to Honiara for sale in order to increase local income. In 2003, talks began with the objective of obtaining funding for micro projects from the European Union, and ADRA signed a memorandum of understanding for water and sanitation projects. Toilets, water tanks, and sanitation systems for villages around Honiara were constructed.⁷

Several Peace projects and a Community Strengthening and Reconciliation Project began in 2004. These projects involved health education, small business training, agricultural training, literacy, peace, and youth empowerment programs, which were funded by Australia's aid program and were conducted between 2004 and 2007. These projects were run jointly by ADRA and the Trans Pacific Union Mission of the South Pacific Division and were overseen by Darin Roberts as project manager and Cherry Galo as country director. ADRA's YELP (Youth Empowerment and Livelihood Programs) continued in the community, focusing on youth and employing the help of many local youth volunteers.⁸ Other projects included The Resilient School Vital Project, Soul Cocoa, Turn on the Tap, and Water for Women.⁹

The ADRA Solomon Islands office in 2018 had 12 staff members and used the services of 20 volunteers. The board comprised 10 members—8 males and 2 females—and of those positions, 5 are elected, and 5 are appointed by the Trans Pacific Union Mission. The budget for 2018 was a little over SI\$1.66 million (approximately US\$222,000).¹⁰

Role and Place in the Country

The ADRA Solomon Islands office responds to emergencies across the Solomon Islands archipelago as they happen. It works with other NGOs to prepare communities for disasters and to be resilient in the aftermath. During extreme disasters and large-scale emergencies, the government relies on NGOs such as ADRA for assistance. The people of the Solomon Islands, particularly those in remote islands and locations, rely heavily on NGOs such as ADRA during disasters. ADRA has a track record from the late 1990s of responding to disasters, health crises, and civil unrest and of putting into place programs that have proven to be successful. ADRA is known and respected in the Solomon Islands community.¹¹

Directors of ADRA Solomon Islands

David Cram (2001–2003); Cherry Galo (2004–2005); Sam Chalmers (2006–2007); Matt Brown (2007); David Cram (2008); Barry Chapman (2009–2012); Angele Nkou-Deemi (2012–2015); Richard Reye (2015–2016); Stephen Tasker (2016–).¹²

Source

ADRA Solomon Islands Report, *ADRA International Report Questions*, 2017. ADRA Solomon Islands Archives, Honiara, Solomon Islands.

NOTES

1. Much of this article is written from verbal interviews and email messages. There is little extant written documentation.
2. David Cram, interview by author, Wahroonga, New South Wales, January 30, 2018.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid.
7. Darin Roberts, interview by author, Wahroonga, New South Wales, January 30, 2018.
8. Cram, interview.
9. Greg Young, ADRA Director, South Pacific Division, email message to author, July 9, 2018.
10. ADRA Solomon Islands Report, *ADRA International Report Questions*, 2017, ADRA Solomon Islands Archives, Honiara, Solomon Islands.
11. Roberts, interview.
12. Greg Young, email message to author, February 26, 2018.

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