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US Loloma Medics bring specialist health care to rural Vanuatu

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From February 10th to 17th, 18 American specialist doctors and nurses conducted clinics at Lenakel Hospital, villages located close to Port Resolution in Tanna and the main village located at the river mouth at Dillon's Bay Erramango.

The Loloma foundation is a non profit making organisation from the USA and have at present done most of their work in Fiji.

This was their first foray to Vanuatu. The doctors brought a wealth of experience with specialists in ear, nose and throat, skin, radiography and infectious disease to mention a few.

After initial discussions with Myriam Abel at the Health Department in Port Vila, a plan was put together in conjunction with Allison Batlin, Linda Kwasny and Lance Hendricks from the Loloma foundation and Meyric Slimming from Silentworld Expeditions.

The expedition base MV Silent One departed Port Vila with over 30 boxes of medical supplies on the evening of the February 10th to be distributed in Tanna and Erramango.

After 12 hours at sea the doctors arrived at Lenakel bay. The medical supplies were then unloaded and distributed to the Pharmacy located at Lenakel hospital.

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"It feels like Christmas, with all these supplies arriving" said Colin and Sophie from Lenakel hospital.

The weekend was spent in Port Resolution area, administering clinics in a couple of villages located in the area.

Monday and Tuesday were spent at the hospital in Lenakel running specialised clinics. Hundreds of pairs of care was also administered by all the other doctors in their given areas. Wednesday was spent at Dillon's Bay running a clinic at the main village.

"The response has been awesome and we have met so many wonderful people along the way. It has been great to assist where we can," said Doctor Phil Higginbottom (Infectious disease specialist)

At all locations the doctors were warmly welcomed with many people queuing for hours or walking miles to get specialist care.

"It was enormously rewarding to be part of this expeditions as so much good was achieved and appreciated by all" Said Meyric Slimming Silentworld Expeditions.

The Doctors were transported by Silentworld Expeditions boat MV Silent One. This allowed them to visit some of the more remote locations.

It also gave the docs a base to work from and relax and discuss cases in the evening.

It has been proposed that the Docs will return in 2006 to visit another remote location of Vanuatu.

"We will be back and look forward to co-ordinating our next expedition with Myriam Abel who has been extremely helpful in guiding us in the right direction to maximise our assistance," said Lance Hendricks.

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