

## Guardians of the Pacific: community fishers promote sustainable practices

*The Pacific Community (SPC) has launched a series of 17 videos featuring a range of community champions from eight countries and territories across the Pacific region. The entertaining and educational “Guardians of the Pacific” series is now available via local television stations, social media platforms, and outreach events to raise awareness of sustainable fisheries practices.*

### Raising the voices of Pacific fishers

2022 has been declared the International Year for Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations in recognition of the work and rights of small-scale fishers, women, fish farmers and fish workers who feed entire families and communities. To mark the occasion in the Pacific, SPC produced the “Guardians of the Pacific” series as an information and education toolkit, to highlight the vital role that fishers play in protecting local marine resources. This resource was produced under the governance of the Effective Coastal Fisheries Management Project,<sup>1</sup> the Pacific-European Union Marine Partnership (PEUMP) programme,<sup>2</sup> and the Pacific Territories Regional Project for Sustainable Ecosystem Management (PROTEGE)<sup>3</sup> in collaboration with FAO.

Across the Pacific region, communities depend on marine resources for their livelihoods, cultural heritage and wellbeing. However, coastal resources are under increasing threat from overfishing, climate change and additional pressures such as increasing population. Fishers from the Cook Islands, French Polynesia, Kiribati, New Caledonia, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Tonga, and Wallis and Futuna

were approached to share the solutions and initiatives they have put in place to sustain the marine resources they rely on. Through their testimonies, these community champions prove that they are the real supporters and role models of the balanced management of marine resources. The actions they initiate or implement together with government agencies are a key part of the solution.

### Promoting sustainable fishing practices

Beyond raising fishers’ voices, this series of three-minute videos and photo essays showcase best fishing practices and highlight fishers as custodians of their marine resources. Each episode looks at the lives of a different fisher talking about the challenges they face and the practices that are working in their village, including the implementation of seasonal fishing closures during spawning periods, the restoration of corals, the establishment of locally managed marine areas, and the importance of respecting fish size limits to allow time for them to reproduce.

### Sharing messages of hope and authenticity

Filming each of the 17 portraits across eight countries during the COVID crisis and travel restrictions was a real chal-



“The village banned fishing of goatfish every spawning season to regain the health of its marine resources.”

Orea Terieta | Kiribati

Videographer and photographer: James Karinkao

<sup>1</sup> The Effective Coastal Fisheries Management Project is funded by the New Zealand Aid Programme.

<sup>2</sup> The PEUMP programme is funded by the European Union and the Government of Sweden.

<sup>3</sup> PROTEGE is funded by the European Union.





Jane  
Papua New Guinea

Iguar  
Papua New Guinea

William  
Papua New Guinea



Marie Renée  
New Caledonia

Marthe  
Papua New Guinea

Kirimaua  
Kiribati



Falakiko  
Futuna Island

Djelma Arutai  
French Polynesia



Malia  
Tonga

Billy  
Papua New Guinea



Tabwena  
Kiribati

Berny  
Cook Islands



Orea  
Kiribati

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"By only taking regular-sized mantis shrimp without taking the undersized one's this will help to maintain its numbers."

Kirimaua Tekaribwa | Kiribati



Videographer and photographer: James Karinkao



"(We set up) a taboo or no-take area to allow the crabs to breed and repopulate the other mangrove areas with mud crabs."

Billy Jonah and Martha | Papua New Guinea



Videographer and photographer: Kalolaine Fainu



"We leave the small ones (sea cucumbers) so they can grow; later on, we'll collect them."

William Vokais | Papua New Guinea



Videographer and photographer: Kalolaine Fainu





"For me, sustainable fishing means only taking what you need."

Bermy Ariihee | Cook Islands



Videographer and photographer: Johnny Beasley



"You can't come and fish without permission because that's all our futures to look after... For the next generation."

Anzac Day Aliielua | Samoa



Videographer and photographer: Tarx Morrison



"Our elders have always taught us to respect the sea. You have to do this job of fishing with your heart."

Marie-Renée Pabouty | New Caledonia



Videographer and photographer: Judith Rostain





lenge. The coordination of the series was made possible by a talented network of local Pacific Island-based videographers, supported by the team from Flinch Marketing based in Wellington, New Zealand.

So far, several episodes have been released online with over 500,000 views. Many of the online comments show just how much these stories resonate with viewers who share many of the same challenges in supporting the sustainable management of their local marine resources. In a post-COVID-19 world, the series' messages of hope and authenticity, paired with beautiful imagery, help people connect with those in the Pacific, understand the value of traditional fishing practices and build greater awareness of the importance of sustainable fisheries management and protection of the Pacific Ocean.

To capture truly authentic and engaging stories it was crucial that each of the fishers' stories was brought to life by local filmmakers and photographers who share an understanding of the connections between the local communities and their coastal environment. Each of the fishers was selected after consultation with government agencies, local networks and development partners. The videographers then went into the field to interview the selected champions and film their fishing activities.

From Papua New Guinea, Kalolaine Fainu, captured five profiles with an array of beautiful camera shots including mangroves, market days and mud crabs. In Kiribati, Kari-nako James travelled to the village of Buariki to film and interview four fishers who set up a seasonal ban during the spawning season of goatfish. Among them, we discovered how fishing for sea worms provides livelihoods for Tabwena and her family. In Tonga, Sia Angilau and Joshua Saviet profiled volunteer Malia Peata Sioko Noa. A leader in her community, Malia is the only woman in her village of Kolonga to sit on the fisheries management committee and loves helping older fishers. And these are just nine of the 17 stories told in the "Guardians of the Pacific" series.

The success of the series was based on the desire to tell genuine and personal stories that were driven by the voice of each fisher. The idea behind this was to give the audience a sense of the fishers' world and highlight their connection to the

ocean and environment as a source of sustenance and livelihood. We looked at each episode as a short film – each with a clear structure – and ensured that the trajectory of each story was led by the fisher's own words. The series highlights the unique, efficient systems of Pacific communities, where there is strong reliance on one another for their livelihoods, and a mutual alliance with the ocean. At a visual level, our main goal was to help the audience feel as if they were there with each fisher, walking through the water and the mangroves, experiencing the magnificent beauty, isolation and intimate connection between each fisher and the marine environment on which they and their communities rely.

## A multi-channel dissemination

The series of videos is now available for fisheries authorities and local networks to air on local television stations, or during community workshops and will be soon adapted into photo exhibitions as an awareness raising tool.

## Link for Guardians of the Pacific:

 [YouTube playlist](#)

Do you want to have the videos files for your workshops or awareness activities? Please send an email to SPC.

The contents of the videos are the sole responsibility of the Pacific Community and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Government of New Zealand, the European Union or the Government of Sweden.

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