

## Beyond the reef: A journey towards sustainable coastal fisheries

*The Pacific Community has developed a training toolkit on nearshore fishing practices focusing on the more resilient pelagic species beyond the reef edge. The toolkit includes a written manual, a series of training videos entitled “Fish and Tips” and a photo exhibition to promote alternative livelihood options to Pacific Island fishing communities.*



Watisoni and Stefani celebrating their first catch during the filming of Fish and Tips season 1. ©SPC

### A pressing need to fish beyond the reef

In the past, Pacific Island populations were much smaller than they stand today. Recent population growth throughout the Pacific has led to the overfishing of fish and invertebrates on many islands. As a result, sustainable ways to harvest our *kai moana* (food) are needed. While doing so, we need to consider that those fisheries closest to shore, focused on reef fish, have always been easier to target and are therefore more likely to see their stock threatened. In this context, *Beyond the reef* invites us all to embark on a journey towards a sustainable future, through a careful blend of traditional knowledge and modern technology, to discover the many secrets to catching tuna, mahi mahi and other fish outside the reef.

### Nearshore fishing

Nearshore fishing refers to catching fish beyond the edge of the reef and targeting the more resilient pelagic species that live there. It includes a wide range of fishing techniques, such as trolling, mid-water line fishing, vertical longlining and deep-water fishing. When done safely and smartly, using the benefits of fish aggregating devices (FADs), these techniques can help move fishing efforts away from coastal habitats and therefore reduce pressure on inshore fish species. For our generation and those to come, nearshore fishing methods not only provide a chance to diversify our catches and selling opportunities, but also the hope to restore balance in our inshore marine resources.







Gaffing a mahi mahi. @SPC



## Traditional techniques with some very modern tricks

The art of fishing, along with the necessity of catching seafood, are key themes in our culture, traditions and conversations. With the help of Pacific master fishers, the Pacific Community (SPC) is re-introducing some fishing practices that have been used for centuries, modified only in terms of the materials used, and other traditional methods that have evolved based on experiences from elsewhere.

Drop-stone fishing is a good example of a fishing technique passed down through the generations. This method involves dropping bait and chum to a predetermined depth with the help of a simple stone. The stone serves as a temporary sinker before it is released so the bait hangs naturally in the water. Many people consider this method to be sustainable not only because it targets resilient species, but also because it uses readily available materials, such as leaves, stones or old clam shells.

# Nearshore fishing

Nearshore fishing is when fish are caught beyond the edge of the reef. It includes using techniques such as drop-stone fishing, palu-ahi and many more!

Moving fishing efforts from coastal habitats to offshore may reduce pressure on inshore fish species and potentially allow their numbers to increase.



The nearshore zone starts from outside the reef or lagoon, and goes out to about 12 nm.

Fish aggregation devices improve fishing performance and sea safety.

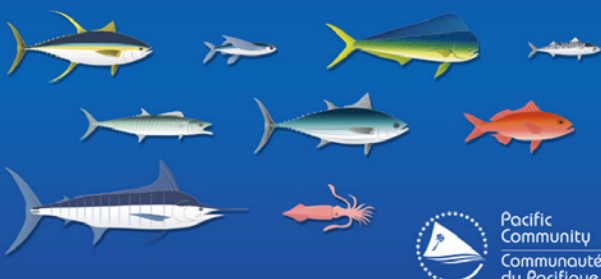


By fishing beyond the reef edge, you target the more resilient pelagic species, such as tuna, and leave the lagoon fish alone.



## Which fish species?

Using these techniques, you can catch pelagic fish species, such as tuna, mahi mahi, wahoo, rainbow runner and mackerel.



Pacific Community  
Communauté du Pacifique

# Drop-stone fishing

Use a stone to drop the bait at your desired fishing depth and then let it sink so your bait hangs naturally in the water.



Place the baited hook on the leaf.



Place pieces of chum over the bait.



Fold the leaf over the bait and chum.



Place the package in a clam shell or on a stone.



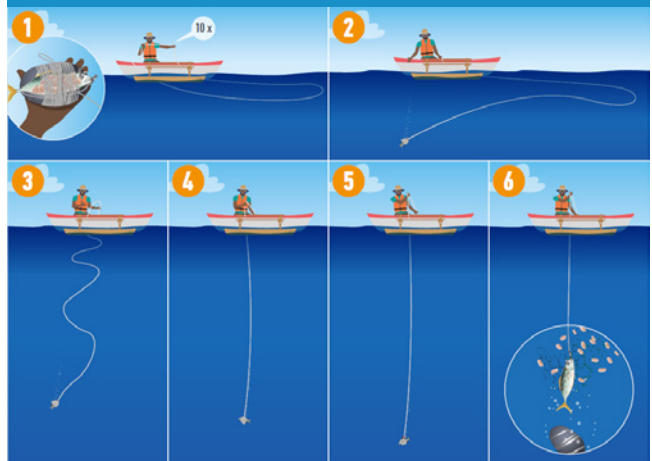
Take several steps of the leader line around the shell or stone to hold the package in place, and make the 3 last wraps over your thumb.



Form a loop and pass it twice around the 3 wraps. Pull on the end of the loop to tighten the whole package.



## How to release the package?



A glimpse of "Beyond the reef", SPC's brand new exhibition on nearshore fishing techniques.



## A multi-channel dissemination

The training toolkit on nearshore fishing methods was initially developed as a written manual, detailing nearly 20 fishing techniques, before being progressively adapted into a series of training videos and a photo exhibition. This multi-media learning adventure was captured regionally with the passion and talent of William Sokimi, Ian Bertram, Soni Lalavanua, Stephanie Sefeti and Kura Happ, showcasing the transmission of traditional knowledge from master fishers to eager learners. The resources will regularly accompany William Sokimi (SPC master fisher) on his trips to Pacific Island countries and territories to deliver local fishing training to coastal communities.

The training toolkit on nearshore fishing was produced under the governance of the Pacific-European Union Marine Partnership (PEUMP) programme,<sup>1</sup> the Sustainable Coastal Fisheries and Aquaculture for Pacific Livelihoods, Food and Economic Security (SCoFA)<sup>2</sup> and the Pacific Coastal Fisheries Management and Compliance (PaFMaC)<sup>3</sup>. It was produced with the financial support of the European Union, the Government of Sweden, the New Zealand Aid Programme, the Australian Government and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

## Links for Fish and Tips:

Nearshore fishing techniques: A manual for community fishers in the Pacific Islands:

<https://www.spc.int/DigitalLibrary/Get/z3dwf>

Fish and Tips - YouTube playlist:

[https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLCq-WnF3Hdrg8ioa5uTQSIDRJ\\_LWZs6pt](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLCq-WnF3Hdrg8ioa5uTQSIDRJ_LWZs6pt)

The contents of this toolkit are the sole responsibility of SPC and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Government of the European Union, the Government of Sweden, the Government of New Zealand, the Government of Australia, or the Government of the United States.

### For more information:

**Hugo Nguyen**

Information and Outreach Assistant Officer, SPC  
[hugon@spc.int](mailto:hugon@spc.int)



Ian and Kura preparing the gear for palu-ahi fishing. @SPC



William and Soni preparing a cannonball. @SPC

<sup>1</sup> <https://fame.spc.int/about/our-projects/peump>

<sup>2</sup> <https://fame.spc.int/about/our-projects/SCoFA>

<sup>3</sup> <https://fame.spc.int/about/our-projects/PaFMaC>