

Traditional fishing must be controlled: Fisheries Officer

By Anita Roberts

THE CUSTOM PRACTICE OF FISHING in Torba where locals catch fish by using coconut leaves tied together with bush rope contributes to the rapid decline of reef fish thus, needs to be controlled.

The Fisheries Officer for Torba Province based at Sola on Vanua Lava, Jimmy Willie, told Daily Post that the Department of Fisheries (DoF) will be tightening the regulation and communities caught will be penalized with a Vt200,000 fine.

According to Willie, people on Mota Lava have already been made aware of the importance of stopping or controlling custom fishing through awareness.

This type of fishing in the northern province has been kept and passed to the younger generation.

Today, it is commonly used during festivals as a way of showing custom in the modern life and during



Custom fishing, where locals on Torba use coconut leaves tight with bush robes to catch fish contributes to the reduction of reef fish. Seen in photo, locals performing the custom fishing recently on the island of Gaua. The 'kastom net' is nearly a kilometer long and is thrown into the sea hours before low tide when they can use spears and bows and arrows to catch fish in a pool. There are rules relating to custom for using the 'kastom net'.

community special occasions.

"The decline of reef fish stock is a result of over-harvesting," officer Willie stressed.

"In order to manage fisheries, the DoF encourages

locals to move into deeper waters."

He explained that deep sea fishing takes place at great depths; miles out and about 400 meters deep.

It is a sustainable practice

not to diminish nearshore habits or reef fish where locals can access. By doing so is also a way of overcoming unstable harvest and maintaining security over fish shortage, said Willie.

To ensure that their fisheries is protected and managed, the DoF in Torba province in collaboration with fishermen have established fisheries association in nearly all islands in Torba Province.

While making sure that their fisheries resources are used in a sustainable way, being part of the association will enable local fishermen to benefit from trainings that are scheduled to be rolled out soon between the DoF and the Australian government-funded TVET Centre in Torba.

These trainings will be delivered on deep sea techniques, developing fishermen's skills such as how to use Fish Aggregating Devices (FADs) with model canoes and how to preserve fish using solar.

Following deep water fishing, other trainings to be followed includes how to conserve an area, book keeping or how to manage finance and marketing, as well as fish processing.

To ensure that fishermen turn to deep water fishing, Willie said the DoF must also supply fishing gears, FADs as well as solar systems for preserving fish to these rural communities in Torba.