



**SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE
NINETEENTH REGULAR SESSION**

Koror, Palau
16 – 24 August 2023

REPORT OF THE JAPAN TRUST FUND STEERING COMMITTEE 2023

WCPFC-SC19-2023/ RP-JTF-02
22 August 2023

SECRETARIAT

**JAPAN TRUST FUND
2023
REPORT OF THE STEERING COMMITTEE**

1. OPENING OF THE MEETING

1. The Japan Trust Fund (JTF) Steering Committee Meeting took place in Ngarachamayong Cultural Center, Koror, Palau on 17 August 2023. The meeting started at 5:42 PM and was attended by Cook Islands, Japan, Kiribati, Nauru, Palau, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA), and WCPFC Secretariat. The list of meeting participants is in **Attachment A**.

1.1 Selection of Chair and Rapporteur

2. The WCPFC Executive Director, Rhea Moss-Christian was appointed as Chair and the secretariat Assistant Science Manager, Elaine Garvilles acted as rapporteur.

1.2 Adoption of agenda

3. The provisional agenda was adopted without modification (**Attachment B**).

1.3 Introduction of Participants

4. Country representatives from beneficiary countries (Cook Islands, Kiribati, Palau, Solomon Islands, Tonga and Tuvalu) and donor country (Japan) introduced themselves.

2. REVIEW OF PROJECT PERFORMANCE

2.1 Progress of the JTF Project

5. Secretariat briefly introduced the status of 2022 approved projects, carried-over projects and 2023 approved projects (**Attachment C**).

2.2 Country Reports

6. Cook Islands thanked Japan for their support and gave updates on the two 2019 approved projects:

- i. Development of National Competent Authority [HACCP strategy] for Cook Islands Offshore Fisheries

Cook Islands informed the Steering Committee that the project activities were delayed due to the continuing COVID-19 pandemic and the majority of this work is still ongoing. Cook Islands informed activities for this project are expected to be completed in January 2024 and FFA has also offered their assistance for Cook Islands related to this project.

- ii. Improving participation and engagement in international fisheries forums
Cook Islands sought to utilize the remaining funds from the original project to continue to enhance the training materials and then position the modules where they will be accessible via internet for new/other Cook Islands participants. The work of this project is still ongoing noting the extension of the project activities until December 2023.

7. Japan thanked Cook Islands for making efforts for making progress on the two projects. **Japan approved the continuation of this project (i) and an extension of 1-month until January 2024 but requested for a clear timeline for finishing this project outside the meeting.**

8. Kiribati thank Japan for their support and gave updates on the 2020 approved project on Capacity Building for Harvest Strategy. The report for this project is attached in SC19-RP-JTF-01. The activities were delayed due to COVID-19 but completed in May 2023. The harvest strategy course was conducted for 2 days in Kiribati. Kiribati looked forward to considering JTF for other future activities.

9. Japan thanked Kiribati for the update. Japan shared that internally when securing funds for JTF, they had emphasized that harvest strategy is a new area that we are facing challenges and it is encouraging that Kiribati was able to request JTF support for their capacity building in this area.

10. Palau thanked Japan for the support to develop their electronic reporting and electronic monitoring (ER/EM) program. Palau acknowledged that the funds for this project were transferred in late March 2023. They also informed the committee that they are scheduled to have a training/workshop related to this project in mid-September 2023. Palau reiterated that activities for this project are ongoing.

11. Japan thanked Palau for the update provided for this project and stated that ER/EM is another emerging challenge we are facing.

12. Solomon Islands reported on the status of the carried-over project that was approved in 2022 to support their national electronic monitoring (EM) policy consultations, drafting and launching. The consultations have been conducted but the EM policy, needs endorsement before finalization. Solomon Islands clarified that the project is still ongoing.

13. For the 2023 approved projects, both projects are still ongoing.

- Training of Solomon Islands Fisheries Compliance Officers in Honiara and Noro on the use of Fisheries Information Management System (FIMS) Compliance Module to create, record and manage non-compliance cases and incidences electronically and the training of the Industries Officers and the Fishing Vessels Captains on the use of iFIMS new eForms (Transshipment and Unloading) to record, send and manage catch data electronically.
- Training of the Longline Fishing Companies Technical people on the basic Electronic Monitoring (EM) Systems troubleshooting processes and support to the Ministry's technical officers to travel down to Noro port to fix failed EM systems.

14. **Japan approved the extension of the carried-over project but needs follow-up on some details outside the meeting.**

15. Tonga reported on the status of their 2023 approved projects:

- Support and maintain high level data collection and to improve management of tuna fisheries in Tonga, as well as providing timely feedback through monitoring programs on conservation of tuna Species (Port Sampling)
- Capacity building and strengthening of Tonga National Observer Program (*Observer Program*)
- Capacity building and strengthening of Tonga's Fisheries Legal Section

16. The assistance provided by the Japanese Trust fund has been instrumental in helping Tonga in various aspects of its port sampling activities.

- Unloading and Port Sampling Data: The JTF assistance has facilitated the collection and analysis of unloading and port sampling data from both national and foreign vessels licensed to fish in Tonga's Exclusive Zone (EEZ).
- Employment of Daily paid port samplers: The JTF support has allowed Tonga to continue employing dedicated port samplers who conduct port sampling activities, ensuring accurate data collection and monitoring.
- Recruitment of TAILS Data Monitors: Thanks to the JTF projects, Tonga has been able to continue to recruit and employ TAILS data monitors at the outer island centers. This helps in monitoring and managing the fishing activities in those areas.
- Continuation of ER Training: The JTF assistance has enabled Tonga to continue its training programs related to the use of electronic reporting (ER) systems. This ensures that fishermen and vessels are equipped with the necessary skills to utilize ER technology effectively.
- Professional Growth and Recognition: Two port samplers have recently been promoted to higher positions within the Ministry, which demonstrates professional growth and recognition within the field.
- Replacement of Port Samplers: As a part of maintaining continuity in port sampling activities, Tonga is in the process of recruiting replacements for the promoted port samplers.
- Artisanal Data Collection: Through the support of the JTF projects, Tonga has successfully implemented artisanal data collection in all island groups, allowing for comprehensive monitoring of fishing activities across the country.
- Enhanced ER Coverage for Domestic and Foreign Fishing Vessels: The ER coverage for domestic Tuna vessels remains 100% coverage whereas the foreign fishing vessels has increased from 50% in previous years to 86% as reported to date. This indicates improved monitoring and reporting of foreign fishing activities in Tonga's waters.
- Stakeholder Consultations: Tonga has conducted two quarterly feedback consultation sessions with stakeholders, providing an opportunity for collaboration, feedback, and addressing concerns related to fishing activities and management.
- Overall, the assistance provided by the Japanese Trust Fund has had a positive impact on Tonga's port sampling activities, data collection, training programs, and stakeholder engagement, contributing to effective fisheries management in the country. Implementation of project activities is ongoing.

17. For the observer program, JTF has been used accordingly and is still ongoing. Data Entry for Observers and Debriefers and also encouraging and promoting observers to collect quality data and award with a bonus when necessary.

18. Tonga's Legal section is currently using the project's funds to reach its purpose and summary outcome. The Administrative Assistant's salary is still funded by the Japan Trust Fund. The New Legal Officer is new to the fisheries field and is still learning and processing as much as she can. She is involved in enhancing and reviewing the Tuna and Snapper Management Plan. Implementation of project activities is ongoing.

19. Japan thanked for the detailed explanation of the progress of the three projects. It seems that the JTF contributed to many aspects including the improvement of the staff. Japan noted that employment costs be maintained in the long term. Japan viewed that the use of the fund for employment costs is not ideal in the long term, so, it is encouraged that alternative funding to cover employment costs be considered in designing the project in the future.

20. Tuvalu conducted its 1st capacity-building training for Fisheries and Maritime Police officers to conduct High Seas Boarding Inspections (HSBI) in 2018. Noting the remaining funds, the 2nd training was conducted on 24 – 28 April 2023 in Suva, Fiji. There were delays in the implementation of the 2nd training due to COVID-19 impacts. It should be noted the training was in collaboration with NZ-MPI, Pacific Island Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA), and Australia Fisheries Management Authority (AFMA).

21. Japan thanked Tuvalu for the comprehensive update and noted the interruption of project activities due to COVID-19. Japan also thanked AU, NZ, and FFA for providing assistance for this project which creates synergy for the benefit of the recipient country.

22. Japan requested Tuvalu to manage the JTF separately from the fund provided by other donors. Japan noted that Tuvalu is requesting the use of remaining funds in this regard and accepts the requests as long as it is in line with the original project and the utilization of the remaining funds are reported in the annual report.

2.3 Donor's Assessment

23. Japan appreciated the Secretariats' assistance in administering the JTF projects. Japan also thanked the countries for updates on each of their JTF projects.

3. ADOPTION OF THE JTF STEERING COMMITTEE REPORT

24. The JTF Steering Committee report was reviewed and adopted intersessionally.

4. OTHER MATTERS

25. Japan recognizes the special requirements of developing states particularly the small islands developing states (SIDS). Japan encourages countries to take the opportunity to approach them in the margins of the SC19 if there are concerns related to JTF.

26. Japan further conveyed that the JTF budget for 2023 is USD 232,821 but for 2024 this will be reduced by 28% largely due to depreciation in the currency exchange rate of Japanese Yen which resulted in budget reduction in terms of USD. This means that the available JTF for 2024 is USD 168,474 minus the 7% administrative fee which would leave around USD 156, 680 for the projects.

27. In this regard, Japan emphasized that next year Japan will have to be selective in approving projects for funding under the JTF. Japan further noted that projects should be in line with the JTF project objectives as noted in [SC19-RP-JTF-01](#).

28. The Chair also echoed taking the opportunity on having face to face discussion here at SC for any concerns related to the JTF.

5. CLOSE OF MEETING

29. The meeting was brought to a close at 6:32 PM on 17 August 2023.

**JAPAN TRUST FUND (JTF)
STEERING COMMITTEE**

Koror, Palau
17:30-18:30, Thursday, 17 August 2023

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

CHAIR

Rhea Moss-Christian

Western and Central Pacific Fisheries
Commission (WCPFC)
Executive Director
rhea.moss-christian@wcpfc.int

COOK ISLANDS

Tiare-Renee Nicholas

Ministry of Marine Resources Cook Islands
Data Manager
t.nicholas@mmr.gov.ck

JAPAN

Shinji Hiruma

Fisheries Agency of Japan
International Affairs Division
shinji_hiruma150@maff.go.jp

KIRIBATI

Kobure Norman

Ministry of Fisheries and marine Resources
Development
Senior Licensing Officer
koburen@mfmr.gov.ki

NAURU

Kaleki Deiy

Nauru Fisheries and Marine Resources
Authority
Flag State Officer
kddeiy@gmail.com

PALAU

Everson Sengebau

Division of Oceanic Fisheries, Bureau of
Fisheries, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and
the Environment
EM Officer Observer
ebs6ya@gmail.com

Zilah D. Oiterong-Chin

Division of Oceanic Fisheries, Bureau of
Fisheries
Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and the
Environment
Licensing and Revenue Officer
dirremeang@gmail.com

TONGA

Lavinia Vaipuna

Ministry of Fisheries
Fisheries Officer
nia.vaipuna@gmail.com

Makeleta Malimali

Ministry of Fisheries
Fisheries Officer
eneiomalimali@gmail.com

TUVALU

Siouala Malua

Tuvalu Fisheries Department
Ministry of Fisheries and Trade
Senior Fisheries Officer -Licensing & Data
sioualam@tuvalufisheries.tv

Niukita Taape

Tuvalu Fisheries Department
Ministry of Fisheries and Trade
FO Licensing Officer
niukitat@tuvalufisheries.tv

**PACIFIC ISLANDS FORUM FISHERIES
AGENCY (FFA)**

Joyce Samuelu-Ah Leong
Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA)
Fisheries Management Adviser
joyce.samuelu-ahleong@ffa.int

Ludwig Kumoru
Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA)
Director Fisheries Management Division
ludwig.kumoru@ffa.int

Ueta Junior Faasili
FFA
Fisheries Management Advisor
uetajunior.faasili@ffa.int

WCPFC SECRETARIAT

Aaron Nighswander
Western and Central Pacific Fisheries
Commission (WCPFC)
Finance and Administration Manager
aaron.nighswander@wcpfc.int

Elaine G. Garvilles
Western and Central Pacific Fisheries
Commission (WCPFC)
Assistant Science Manager
Elaine.Garvilles@wcpfc.int

Josie M Tamate
Ministry of Natural Resources, Government of
Niue
Director-General
josie.tamate@mail.gov.nu

Lara Manarangi-Trott
Western and Central Pacific Fisheries
Commission (WCPFC)
Compliance Manager
Lara.Manarangi-Trott@wcpfc.int

Samuel T. Rikin
Western and Central Pacific Fisheries
Commission (WCPFC)
IT Officer
samuel.rikin@wcpfc.int

SungKwon Soh

Western and Central Pacific Fisheries
Commission (WCPFC)
Science Manager
sungkwon.soh@wcpfc.int

Tim Adams
Western and Central Pacific Fisheries
Commission (WCPFC)
Meeting Rapporteur
tim.adams@gonedau.com

Tim Jones
Western and Central Pacific Fisheries
Commission (WCPFC)
IT Manager
tim.jones@wcpfc.int



**JAPAN TRUST FUND (JTF)
STEERING COMMITTEE**

Koror, Palau
17:30-18:30, Thursday, 17 August 2023

AGENDA

WCPFC-SC19-2023/10

1. OPENING OF THE MEETING

- 1.1 Selection of Chair and Rapporteur
- 1.2 Adoption of agenda
- 1.3 Introduction of Participants

2. REVIEW OF PROJECTS PERFORMANCE

- 2.1 Progress of the JTF Project

The Steering Committee (SC) will review the performance of year 2022 projects, and those projects carried over from previous years. JTF 2023 funded projects and those from previous years are detailed in WCPFC-SC19-2023/ RP-JTF-01 (Japan Trust Fund Status Report).

- 2.2 Country reports

All countries and agencies that received JTF support for their projects will report the status of their project implementation, including the outcomes, effectiveness and any issues/risks to be addressed. Final reports should include a financial statement of how the funds have been spent.

Key discussion points under this agenda will be recorded for future improvements.

- 2.3 Donor's assessment

The Project Donor, Japan will provide any assessments, evaluations, or requests as needed for productive outputs from the project implementation.

3. ADOPTION OF THE JTF STEERING COMMITTEE REPORT

The Steering Committee (SC) report will be adopted intersessionally after the meeting.

4. OTHER MATTERS

5. CLOSE OF MEETING

ATTACHMENT C

STATUS OF 2022 APPROVED PROJECTS, CARRIED-OVER PROJECTS AND 2023 APPROVED PROJECTS

2022 Approved Projects

#	Beneficiary Member(s)	Title	Status
1	Solomon Islands	Training and supporting Solomon Islands Electronic Monitoring (EM) Analysts to continue analyzing EM records from EM systems installed in Longline fishing vessels	Completed in 2022
2	Solomon Islands	Support to Solomon Islands National Electronic Monitoring (EM) Policy Consultations, Drafting and Launching	Carried-over in 2023
3	Tonga	Support and maintain high level data collection and to improve management of tuna fisheries in Tonga, as well as providing timely feedback through monitoring programs on conservation of tuna species (<i>Port Sampling</i>)	Completed in 2022
4	Tonga	Capacity building and strengthening of Tonga National Observer Program	Completed in 2022
5	Tonga	Capacity building and strengthening of Tonga's Fisheries Legal Section	Completed in 2022
6	Tuvalu	Development of Tuvalu Observer Programme Debriefers to debrief observer data collected electronically	Completed in 2022

Note: Refer to [JTF Annual Report for 2023 \(Covering 2022 activities\)](#)

2023 Carried-over Projects

#	Beneficiary Member(s)	Title	Status
1	Solomon Islands (2022)	Support to Solomon Islands National Electronic Monitoring (EM) Policy Consultations, Drafting and Launching	Completed in June 2023?
2	Kiribati (2020)	Capacity Building for Harvest Strategy	Completed in May 2023
3	Cook Islands (2019)	Development of National Competent Authority [HACCP strategy] for Cook Islands Offshore Fisheries	Ongoing
4	Cook Islands (2019)	Improving participation and engagement in international fisheries forums	Ongoing
5	Tuvalu (2018)	Capacity Building Training for Tuvalu Fisheries and Maritime Police officers to conduct High Seas Boarding Inspections (HSBI)	Completed in April 2023

2023 Approved Projects

#	Beneficiary Member(s)	Title	Status
1	Palau	Development of Electronic Reporting and Electronic Monitoring (ER/EM) Program for the Division of Oceanic Fisheries of the Bureau of Fisheries, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and the Environment	Ongoing
2	Solomon Islands	Training of Solomon Islands Fisheries Compliance Officers in Honiara and Noro on the use of Fisheries Information Management System (FIMS) Compliance Module to create, record and manage non-compliance cases and incidences electronically and the training of the Industries Officers and the Fishing Vessels Captains on the use of iFIMs new eForms (Transshipment and Unloading) to record, send and manage catch data electronically	Ongoing
3	Solomon Islands	Training of the Longline Fishing Companies Technical people on the basic Electronic Monitoring (EM) Systems troubleshooting processes and support to the Ministry's technical officers to travel down to Noro port to fix failed EM systems	Ongoing
4	Tonga	Support and maintain high-level data collection and improve management of tuna fisheries in Tonga, as well as providing timely feedback through monitoring programs on conservation of tuna Species (<i>Port Sampling</i>)	Ongoing
5	Tonga	Capacity building and strengthening of Tonga National Observer Program (<i>Observer Program</i>)	Ongoing
6	Tonga	Capacity building and strengthening of Tonga's Fisheries Legal Section	Ongoing