



**SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE
TWENTIETH REGULAR SESSION**

Manila, Philippines
14 – 21 August 2024

REPORT OF THE JAPAN TRUST FUND STEERING COMMITTEE 2024

**WCPFC-SC20-2024/ RP-JTF-02
19 August 2024**

**JAPAN TRUST FUND
2024
REPORT OF THE STEERING COMMITTEE**

1. OPENING OF THE MEETING

1. The Japan Trust Fund (JTF) Steering Committee Meeting took place at Luxent Hotel, Quezon City, Philippines on 15 August 2024. The meeting started at 6:45 PM and was attended by Cook Islands, Japan, Palau, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA), South Pacific Group¹ (SPG) 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 chaired the meeting and the Secretariat served as rapporteur.

1.2 Adoption of agenda

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

1.3 Introduction of Participants

4. Representatives from project beneficiaries (Cook Islands, Palau, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, and South Pacific Group), donor country (Japan), Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA), and the WCPFC Secretariat introduced themselves.

2. REVIEW OF PROJECT PERFORMANCE

2.1 Progress of the JTF Project

5. The Secretariat briefly introduced the status of the four (4) approved projects in 2024 and the six (6) carried-over 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 in August 2023 that the project activities were delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic and most 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.

¹ Cook Islands, Fiji, Niue, Samoa, Tonga, and Vanuatu

The project lead retired in late 2023, with recruitment challenges to fill this role. Access to assistance for this work has also been delayed due to the high demand for these services in the region. As such, consultants out of New Zealand are assisting with the completion of this work, which is now scheduled for completion in February 2025.

ii. Improving participation and engagement in international fisheries forums

In December 2022, Cook Islands informed that the project activities have been completed such as course material development (9 modules, study guide plus quiz/test materials), in-country delivery of courses to two cohorts (with 1 expert only) during a single visit to Rarotonga. Some of the activities have been undertaken in a reduced capacity given travel, expert availability, and other factors. In this case, their total received budget of NZD 92,406 has some savings of about NZD 22,515. The Cook Islands requested that the remaining funds be used to update the training materials and digitize the said materials (e.g. videos) to provide for self-learning. The Cook Islands prepared a proposal related to this request which was approved by Japan. That request has now been formally approved by the Committee. Negotiations with the service provider have commenced regarding a timeline and schedule of activities, Contracting is expected to be completed by the end of July 2023. During the August 2023 Steering Committee, Cook Islands informed that the work for this project is still ongoing, noting the extension of the project activities until December 2023.

The project lead retired in late 2023, with recruitment challenges to fill this role, and delayed completion of this work. Since then, some of the training materials have had to be updated, and the production of training videos is planned to commence in the next month. There are nine modules to be incorporated into video and completion of the work is expected in December this year.

7. Japan understood the challenges faced by the Cook Islands. Japan reiterated that they need to be informed of the progress on the project implementation particularly if there are changes in the timeframe for completing this work.

8. Palau thanked Japan for its support in developing their electronic reporting and electronic monitoring (ER/EM) program. The funds for the 2024 approved project were received in April 2024 and activities are ongoing. Recently in mid-July this year, Palau's Bureau of Fisheries obtained six tablets to be used for this project. Palau is now in preparation for its App installations and working internally and with companies setting in-country workshops to gain understanding and knowledge of its utilization and making progress for implementation. Palau reiterated that activities for this project are ongoing. Palau informed that they have conducted two in-country workshops since the inception of the 2023 Project, engaging fishery stakeholders in consultations regarding the design, development, and implementation of ER/EM Program. Palau further informed that efforts have been made in collaboration with their legal counsel and the PNAO to harmonize various agreements, rules, and regulations to ensure consistency across national, regional, and international levels.

9. Japan thanked Palau for the update provided for this project and clarified that there were two different projects related to ER/EM program one from 2023 and the recently approved one this 2024. Japan further reiterated that there is a need to notify Japan of the progress on the project implementation particularly if there are changes in the timeframe for completing the project activities or

request for extension. **It was also agreed that Palau would provide additional information on the two separate projects as soon as possible.**

10. 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 and finalization. The Solomon Islands clarified that the project is still ongoing but expected to be completed in September 2024.

11. For the 2023 approved projects, both projects were still ongoing and were expected to be completed before the end of this year (2024).

- Training of Solomon Islands Fisheries Compliance Officers in Honiara and Noro on the use of the 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.

12. Japan thanked the Solomon Islands for these updates and was pleased to know that these projects will be completed before the end of this year 2024.

13. Tonga reported on the status of their 2024 approved project on "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)". The port sampling activities are in progress and Tonga successfully maintained 100% data collection coverage despite challenges from remote areas. Tonga's e-reporting training was also ongoing. Tonga further informed the steering committee that the JTF funds are also used to support additional participants to attend the SPC annual tuna data review workshop in Noumea. Tonga reiterated that the JTF project activities are on track with sustainable progress and are expected to be completed by the end of December 2024.

14. Japan thanked Tonga for the explanation of the progress of the project. It seems that the JTF contributed to many aspects including the improvement of the staff capacity and satisfied to know that the project activities are on track and will be completed within this calendar year 2024.

15. Samoa reported on the status of their 2024 approved project on "Enhancing Capacity and Strengthening Samoa National Observer Program". Samoa shared the objectives of its proposal, one of which is for Samoa to become a member of the Regional Observer Program (ROP), as they are currently not. This support is crucial for developing their fisheries management capacities and aligns with regional standards. Samoa shared that there is a delay in the implementation of this project due to their internal issues and processes. The Secretariat requested Samoa's bank details, but Samoa is holding to provide them until a resolution of the internal issue is addressed before funds can be transferred to their Government Finance account.

16. Japan clarified if Samoa can still finish the activities within the agreed timeframe within this year noting the delays due to internal issues. Japan requested that they need to be informed of the progress on the project implementation especially if there are changes in the timeframe for completing this work.

17. In this regard, Samoa may request for an extension until June 2025 if the allocated funds are not utilized this year due to internal issues.

18. The representative from the SPG, Mr Lars Olsen provided a brief update on the JTF-funded project “Development of a Register of Fishing Rights and a Catch Estimation and Visualization Tool (CEVT) to enable zone-based management of South Pacific albacore by the South Pacific Group”. The funding was received in April 2024 and working with SPC on the development of an algorithm for the CEVT which is the first phase of this project. There were delays in the project implementation due to the crisis in Noumea. Once the algorithm is developed by SPC, SPG will work with a consultant to deliver the interface of this system. SPG expressed its optimism that the project could still be completed this year.

19. Japan stated that it was looking forward to seeing the outcomes of the project.

2.3 Donor’s Assessment

20. Japan appreciated the Secretariat’s assistance in administering the JTF projects. Japan also thanked the countries for updates on each of their JTF projects.

21. Japan reiterated that the projects are expected to be completed by the end of the calendar year and Japan needs to be informed if there are changes in the timeframe and activities as originally agreed. Any balance remaining after completing the project activities should be returned to the JTF. If there was an intention to use the remaining funds after completion of the project, permission from Japan would be required.

3. ADOPTION OF THE JTF STEERING COMMITTEE REPORT

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

4. OTHER MATTERS

23. Japan recognized the special requirements of developing states particularly the small islands developing states (SIDS). Japan further conveyed that the JTF budget for 2025 is USD 156,566, which is lower than the previous years. In this regard, Japan emphasized that next year Japan will have to be selective in approving projects for funding under the JTF.

24. The Chair thanked everyone for their engagement in the Steering Committee meeting and highlighted the valuable opportunity to have in-person discussions on the JTF while everyone was together at SC20.

25. It was noted that Japan expects to have all projects completed by the end of the calendar year. In this regard, **it was agreed to task the Secretariat in collaboration with beneficiary countries to notify Japan in early December of each year if there are changes in the agreed activities and timeframe of approved and ongoing projects.**

5. CLOSE OF MEETING

26. The meeting finished at 7: 47 PM on 15 August 2024.

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

Manila, Philippines 18:30-19:30, Thursday, 15 August 2024

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

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

Manila, Philippines
17:30-18:30, Thursday, 15 August 2024

PROVISIONAL AGENDA

WCPFC-SC20-2024-10

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 2023 projects, and those projects carried over from previous years. JTF 2024 funded projects and those from previous years are detailed in WCPFC-SC20-2024/ 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

STATUS OF 2024 APPROVED PROJECTS AND CARRIED-OVER PROJECTS

2024 Approved Projects

#	Beneficiary Member(s)	Title	Status
1	South Pacific Group (SPG) ²	Development of a Register of Fishing Rights and a Catch Estimation and Visualisation Tool to enable zone-based management of south Pacific albacore by the South Pacific Group	Ongoing
2	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>)	Ongoing
3	Samoa	Enhancing Capacity and Strengthening Samoa National Observer Program	On hold (internal issues)
4	Palau	Supplementing the continued 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

Note: Refer to [JTF Annual Report for 2024 \(Covering 2023 activities\)](#)

Carried-over Projects

#	Beneficiary Member(s)	Title	Status
1	Cook Islands	Development of National Competent Authority [HACCP strategy] for Cook Islands Offshore Fisheries	Ongoing
2	Cook Islands	Improving participation and engagement in international fisheries forums	Ongoing
3	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
4	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

² Cook Islands, Fiji, Niue, Samoa, Tonga, and Vanuatu

5	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
6	Solomon Islands	Support to Solomon Islands National Electronic Monitoring (EM) Policy Consultations, Drafting and Launching	Ongoing