



**SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE
TWENTY-FIRST REGULAR SESSION**

Nuku'alofa, Tonga
13 – 21 August 2025

REPORT OF THE JAPAN TRUST FUND STEERING COMMITTEE 2025

**WCPFC-SC21-2025/ RP-JTF-02
18 August 2025**

**JAPAN TRUST FUND
2025
REPORT OF THE STEERING COMMITTEE**

1. OPENING OF THE MEETING

1. The Japan Trust Fund (JTF) Steering Committee Meeting took place at Tonga High School Indoor Stadium, Nuku'alofa, Tonga on 14 August 2025. The meeting started at 5:40 PM and was attended by Cook Islands, Fiji, Japan, Palau, Philippines, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Vanuatu, Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA), Parties to the Nauru Agreement (PNA), South Pacific Group¹ (SPG) and WCPFC Secretariat. The list of 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, Fiji, Palau, Philippines, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Vanuatu and South Pacific Group), donor country (Japan), and the WCPFC Secretariat introduced themselves.

2. REVIEW OF PROJECT PERFORMANCE

2.1 Progress of the JTF Projects

5. The Chair briefly outlined the status of JTF-funded projects, referring to [WCPFC-SC21-2025/ RP-JTF-01](#) (Japan Trust Fund Status Report). This included four (4) approved projects for 2025, eight (8) carried-over projects, and two (2) recently completed projects (Attachment C). Beneficiary countries then provided detailed updates on each project, which are summarized in the following sections.

2.2 Country Reports

2025 Approved Projects

6. Philippines thanked the Japan Trust Fund for funding their BioFAD project and reported that their recent consultations with local fisherfolk leaders showed strong support and cooperation. Though Philippines also noted that they have some internal administrative concerns which is delaying implementation of the project activities, but they are hopeful that they could start the project this August, run into next year, and aims to finish before SC22 in 2026.

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

7. Japan asked how serious the administrative issues are and whether the project will finish this year. Japan encouraged the Philippines to inform them of any further problems and expressed hope the project stays on schedule.
8. The Philippines clarified the timeline and committed to give updates to Japan on their project implementation by the end of October 2025.
9. Tonga thanked the Japan Trust Fund for its ongoing support, which has strengthened their data collection. Since receiving 2025 funding in May, activities such as port sampling, e-reporting, and hiring additional data collectors are underway; refresher training was delayed due to SC21 hosting. A challenge arose when funds for a tuna data workshop arrived after the April event.
10. The second approved project supports the observer program: refresher training for observers was held in June 2025, and new observer recruit training is scheduled for 25 August–12 September 2025.
11. Overall, the projects are on track, improving data collection, capacity building, and monitoring, while creating local employment and enabling reporting to WCPFC and other regional bodies.
12. Japan thanked Tonga for hosting the meeting and expressed hope for the project's successful completion.
13. Fiji thanked Japan and WCPFC for the funding under the Capacity Building and Fishery Statistics Regulation Enforcement for Small Island Developing States Project. The Fiji's project will assist address national challenges through training, consultations, and operational/compliance improvements. Planning and scheduling of activities for this project are being finalized to ensure timely implementation within the WCPFC–Japan Trust Fund (JTF) timeline.
14. Japan noted prior discussions during proposal development and expressed hope for the project's success.
15. Chair confirmed that, similar to discussions held at the JTF Steering Committee in 2024, project recipients committed to provide progress updates to Japan by the end of October 2025.
16. Tonga raised an issue that they received the JTF funds in May 2025, after one of their proposed activities— participation to the Tuna Data Review Workshop—had already been conducted in April 2025. Since the funds intended for the April workshop arrived too late to be used, Tonga requested Japan's approval to either carry them over to next year or redirect them to related activities. Japan proposed discussing Tonga's request in detail in the margins of the SC21 meeting.

Carried-Over Projects

17. Palau thanked Japan for continued support for its electronic reporting (ER) and electronic monitoring (EM) projects. For their 2023 project: Two stakeholder workshops were held; ongoing collaboration with the National Legal Council to harmonize agreements with regulations. Remaining tasks include legal/procedural frameworks, technical system setup, and operational rollout. For their 2024 project, funds were received in April 2024; six tablets were purchased in July; online SPC training held to configure tablets for EM use, with follow-up sessions planned. Workshops with vessel captains are being

organized. Palau apologized for the delays in the implementation of project activities. Palau further requested extensions for both projects, aiming to finish by the end of the year.

18. Japan sought clarification on whether the 2024 project could be completed independently of finalizing the EM procedures. Palau confirmed both projects would proceed concurrently and aims to complete both by the end of 2025. Palau committed to providing Japan with a progress update by the end of October 2025. Palau also informed Japan that should they need extension for both project implementation, they will inform with formal request through the Commission by the end of 2025.

19. Solomon Islands thanked Japan and WCPFC for support and apologized for delays in completing three carried-over projects. Extensions have been formally requested for these projects due to a busy schedule.

- 2023 Project: 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 --- *Extension was requested and additional training is scheduled for August 2025.*
- 2023 Project: 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 --- *Several trainings were completed; final technical support trip is planned for August or September 2025.*
- 2022 Project: Support to Solomon Islands National Electronic Monitoring (EM) Policy Consultations, Drafting and Launching --- *Draft reviewed by SPC, revised, and presented to the MFMR Executive; further revised with MFMR Executive comments and returned to the executive for approval. Final industry consultation is planned before printing and launch in September/October 2025.*

20. Solomon Islands stated that it aims to finish all activities in 2025 but requested an option to extend into 2026 if necessary.

21. Japan acknowledged progress, requested updates by end of October 2025, and encouraged early reporting if the third project finishes in September 2025 to which Solomon Islands agreed.

22. Samoa also thanked Japan for funding through the Japan Trust Fund to support its national observer program. Implementation was delayed due to internal government procedures required for the establishment of accounts and the transfer of approved funding from the WCPFC. The Ministry of Finance has now cleared the project, and official bank details have been provided for WCPFC to enable the transfer of funds.

23. Planned activities include finalizing the Samoa Fisheries Observer Policy, observer SOPs, and emergency action plan, requesting a WCPFC audit of the observer program, training observers to become debriefers and objectives outlined in the approved proposal. Samoa requested an extension in order to fully utilize funds and ensure that all activities are completed to a high standard, aiming for long-term benefits for national and regional fisheries management.

24. Japan welcomed the resolution of internal issues, urged timely implementation of project activities, and noted that repeating the exact project in multiple years would be difficult, though different capacity-building proposals could be discussed.

25. Samoa committed to providing a progress report to Japan by the end of October 2025.

26. Cook Islands thanked Japan for JTF support for two 2019 projects and apologized for delays in providing updates due to the project manager's health issues. It was confirmed at the meeting that both projects will submit final reports on 15 August 2025, with all funds fully utilized.

27. Cook Islands requested a meeting with Japan in the margins of SC21 to discuss the reports.

28. Japan agreed to meet with Cook Islands once the updates are ready.

Recently Completed Projects

29. South Pacific Group (SPG) representative (Mr Lars Olsen) noted that a final report of the project has been submitted in March 2025 and that some unspent funds were in the process of being returned to the WCPFC-JTF account via the FFA.

30. Tonga also shared that a final project report was submitted in early 2025 and noted that through the JTF support, Tonga was able to maintain 100% port sampling coverage and strong data collection.

2.3 Donor's Assessment

31. Japan appreciated the Secretariat's assistance in administering the JTF projects. Japan also thanked the project beneficiaries for updates on each of their JTF projects. Japan reaffirmed the JTF's primary goal of capacity building for developing countries, particularly in areas of data collection and fisheries management, with projects tailored to each country's priorities. It was further shared that Japan's Bureau of Audit has requested careful management of JTF implementation and urged JTF recipient countries to promptly inform the Secretariat and Japan if a project cannot be completed on schedule, so solutions can be discussed.

3. ADOPTION OF THE JTF STEERING COMMITTEE REPORT

32. The Chair recalled Japan's earlier guidance on timely communication and acknowledged members' commitments to provide updates to Japan by the end of October 2025. The Chair also noted that Cook Islands will meet separately with Japan after finalizing its project report in the margins of SC21.

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

4. OTHER MATTERS

34. There were no other matters discussed.

5. CLOSE OF MEETING

35. The Chair thanked Japan and participants for their active engagement. The meeting adjourned at 6: 30 PM on Thursday, 14 August 2025.

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

Nuku'alofa, Tonga 18:30-19:30, Thursday, 14 August 2025

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

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

Nuku'alofa, Tonga
Thursday, 14 August 2025 from 17:30 to 18:30

PROVISIONAL AGENDA

WCPFC-SC21-2025-11

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 Projects

The Steering Committee (SC) will review the performance of year 2024 projects, and those projects carried over from previous years. JTF 2025 funded projects and those from previous years are detailed in [WCPFC-SC21-2025/ 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 2025 APPROVED, CARRIED-OVER AND COMPLETED PROJECTS

2025 Approved Projects

#	Beneficiary Member(s)	Title	Status
1	Philippines	Introduction of Biodegradable Fish Aggregating Devices (BioFADs) Using Bamboo Raft and Abaca Ropes in the Philippines	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	Tonga	Capacity building in, and strengthening of, Tonga national observer programme & to conduct Basic Observer Longline Training for Tonga Observer Programme 2025	Ongoing
4	Fiji	Enhancing Fiji's Fisheries Data Collection and Compliance with WCPFC Conservation and Management Measures	Ongoing

Note: Refer to [JTF Annual Report for 2025 \(Covering 2024 activities\)](#)

Carried-over Projects

#	Beneficiary Member(s)	Title	Status
1	Palau (2023)	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	Palau (2024)	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
3	Solomon Islands (2023)	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

4	Solomon Islands (2023)	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
5	Solomon Islands (2022)	Support to Solomon Islands National Electronic Monitoring (EM) Policy Consultations, Drafting and Launching	Ongoing
6	Samoa (2024)	Enhancing Capacity and Strengthening Samoa National Observer Program	Ongoing
7	Cook Islands (2019)	Development of National Competent Authority [HACCP strategy] for Cook Islands Offshore Fisheries	Ongoing
8	Cook Islands (2019)	Improving participation and engagement in international fisheries forums	Ongoing

Recently Completed Projects

#	Beneficiary Member(s)	Title	Status
1	South Pacific Group (Cook Islands, Fiji, Niue, Samoa, Tonga, and Vanuatu)	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	Completed
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>)	Completed