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Central Pacific
Fisheries
Commission**

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JAPAN TRUST FUND STATUS REPORT 2026

**WCPFC-SC22-2026-RP-JTF01
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**Submitted by
Fiji, FSM, Palau, Philippines, Samoa, South Pacific Group (SPG¹), Tonga, and Secretariat**

Introduction

The majority of the WCPFC Members are developing states including Small Island Developing States (SIDS), whose capacities to implement conservation and management measures are limited and would benefit from strengthened capacity. The WCPFC Project on Capacity Building in Fisheries Statistics, Regulations and Enforcement for SIDS originated from a Japanese funding proposal to the WCPFC made in December 2005, also known as the Japan Trust Fund (JTF). The primary objective of this project is to support capacity building of the developing countries of the WCPFC members, especially SIDS. The initial phase of the project was for 5 years starting from 2006 to 2011 with a total available funding of approximately USD 2 million.

Given the success of and general support for the project in its first 5-year phase, the Fisheries Agency of Japan sought and successfully secured a budget of around USD 2 million in total, for the second 5-year phase. The objectives and terms of reference for the second phase were similar to the previous phase, with an emphasis on enforcement and compliance. In 2016 the Japanese government granted an extension of one year to the second phase, supporting projects in 2017, which was further extended to include another year, 2018.

In 2019, the Japanese Fisheries Agency approved a third phase for the JTF retaining the same objectives and terms of reference for another 5 years. This third phase program is the same as the previous phases in principle with an emphasis on a new fisheries management procedure including harvest strategy and a new monitoring technology-related project.

In 2026, the total JTF was USD 145,082. The 2026 JTF was slightly reduced compared to 2025 due to depreciation in the currency exchange rate of Japanese Yen which resulted in budget reduction in terms of US dollars. A summary of 2026 approved projects and their status are found in **Annex 1** of this report.

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

All JTF-funded project summaries since 2012 are compiled in one document [Japan Trust Fund Summary of Projects 2012 to Date](#) posted on the WCPFC website (under Special Requirements of Developing States) with summary of carried over project in **Annex 2**. Brief reports of completed JTF projects in 2025 can be viewed in [Japan Trust Fund Annual Report 2025-2026](#).

In general, the new and carried over approved projects funded by the JTF are mainly for SIDS seeking assistance in building their capacities related to data collection, especially in these new emerging technologies such as electronic reporting and electronic monitoring (ER and EM) which will eventually assist in the harvest strategy work being developed by WCPFC.

Japan Trust Fund – Objectives and Expected Activities

The objectives and expected activities for the JTF are contained in the Consolidated Project Document, which provides guidelines for the Steering Committee to select project proposals. They may be conveniently summarized as follows:

“The basic objectives of this project are, within the purview of WCPFC, to assist SIDS Members, and other developing States Members as appropriate, in improving their capacities in:

- a. *Data collection and reporting of their fisheries and associated activities, in particular, those required by WCPFC, and*
- b. *Establishment of fisheries regulation and its effective enforcement, in particular, the conservation and management measures adopted by WCPFC*

In order to pursue these objectives, following activities may be implemented under the Project:

- a. *Data collection and reporting of their fisheries and associated activities, in particular, those required by WCPFC:*
 - *identify and examine the source of uncertainty in data collection and reporting;*
 - *develop and implement capacity-building programs to improve fisheries data collection and reporting;*
 - *assist if necessary WCPFC to facilitate appropriate opportunities (e.g., meetings, workshops) to consider improved data collection and reporting of their fisheries by developing States and their participation in the Commission.*
- b. *Establishment of fisheries regulation and its effective monitoring, control and enforcement, in particular, the requirements by WCPFC*
 - *review enforcement and monitoring mechanisms in developing states Members in terms of legal, institutional and technical aspects and identify opportunities for strengthening these areas;*
 - *develop and implement capacity-building programs to improve fisheries monitoring regulation and enforcement by developing states members;*
 - *assist if necessary WCPFC to hold appropriate opportunities to consider improved enforcement by developing States under their jurisdiction and through their participation in the Commission.”*

Annex 1. Status of Approved Projects for 2026 (*Year 3, Phase 4 Program*)

#		Beneficiary Member(s)	Contacts	Project Title	Objectives	Budget (USD)
1		FSM	Mr. Tosuo Jr. Irons, FSM National Observer Coordinator, NORMA Email: tosuojr.iron@norma.fm Phone:+6919205166	Transitioning FSM Longline Observer Program from Paper-based to Electronic Reporting: National Training on OLLO Application	1. To train 10 FSM longline observers in the use of the OLLO application for electronic reporting. 2. To improve the quality, timeliness, and availability of FSM longline observer data. 3. To strengthen FSM's compliance with WCPFC and FFA commitments to implement ER across observer programs. 4. To enhance the technical skills of FSM's National Observer Program staff in electronic data collection and transmission.	10,000.00
Status: The funds for this project have been transferred to NORMA. While FSM's internal processes (e.g., Congressional approval requirements) may affect the timing of implementation, the project activities are expected to be conducted and completed before the end of 2026. As of 15 July 2026, FSM-NORMA received approval to utilize the JTF funds for the proposed OLLO training. The training has been scheduled for the week of 10 – 14 August 2026 and preparations are being finalized.						
2		Tonga	Dr. Sione Vailala Matoto, <i>CEO for Fisheries</i> Email: ceo@tongafish.gov.to ; vailalam@yahoo.com Mr. Martin Finau, <i>Head of Fisheries Science Division</i> Email: martin.finau@tongafish.gov.to Ms. Lavinia Vaipuna, <i>Head of Offshore Section</i>	Reinforce robust data collection and evidence-based management of Tonga's tuna and tuna artisanal fisheries, enabling timely monitoring and feedback that contribute to sustainable conservation practices, food security, and economic resilience.	To ensure Tonga continues to collect, process, and utilize high-quality tuna data from longline fleets while also strengthening artisanal tuna data collection through improved monitoring systems, broader adoption of e-Reporting, and enhanced capacity development for fisheries staff, vessel operators and data monitors across the all-Tonga's island groups.	44,725.00

			Email: lavinia.vaipuna@tongafish.gov.to ; nia.vaipuna@gmail.com			
Status: The funds for this project were transferred and received in Tonga in May 2026. Consequently, implementation of project activities commenced later than originally planned. Project activities are currently ongoing, which includes: • Training on Electronic Reporting Applications: The training programme on the Electronic Reporting (ER) applications is scheduled to be conducted later in the year to further strengthen national capacity in fisheries data collection and management. • Port Sampling and CKMR Data Collection: The hiring of port samplers to support port sampling activities and the collection of biological samples for the Close-Kin Mark-Recapture (CKMR) programme is ongoing. • Tuna Artisanal Data Collection: The project successfully recruited five Daily Paid Tuna Artisanal Data Monitors from Tongatapu and Vava'u to undertake artisanal tuna fisheries data collection. The monitors are supporting the collection of catch and effort data, contributing to improved monitoring and understanding of Tonga's artisanal tuna fisheries sector. Overall, despite the delayed receipt of funds, project implementation is progressing satisfactorily, and the remaining activities are expected to be completed within the project's implementation period (end of December 2026).						
3		SPG ²	Mr Siola'a Malimali (s.malimali@tongafish.gov.to) and Mr Lars Olsen (olsenpacific@gmail.com)	Implementation of Electronic Reporting in SPG's longline fishery to facilitate implementing the South Pacific Albacore Management Procedure adopted at WCFPC22.	1. To purchase rugged tablets to be configured with the SPC OnBoard application for electronic reporting of longline log sheets. 2. To conduct a train the trainer refresher of the OnBoard system in each SPG country, focusing on key fisheries staff and industry stakeholders (i.e. vessel captains). 3. To ensure all tablets are included in national asset registers to be managed under existing government procurement, ICT, and asset-management frameworks.	54,898.93
Status: The funds for this project were transferred and received by FFA. Procurement of the tablets is complete. Due to delays between when prices were originally quoted and pricing at time of purchase, the number of tablets procured for Fiji was adjusted from 58 to 43 to stay within budget.						

² South Pacific Group (Cook Islands, Fiji, Niue, Samoa, Tonga)

Funding from another source has been secured to purchase the remaining 15 tablets needed by Fiji. Work is currently underway to schedule the refresher training for the OnBoard system and registration of the tablets. This is expected to occur in the second half of 2026.

4		Tonga	Dr Sione Vailala Matoto Head, Ministry of Fisheries Email: vailalam@yahoo.com Mele Átuekaho Head, Compliance Division Email: meletoaatuekaho@gmail.com Losaline Otukolo Head of Enforcement Email: losilini@gmail.com	Strengthening and Modernizing Port State Measures Implementation in Tonga through Electronic Systems, Enhanced Information Exchange, and Inter-Agency Capacity Building	1. Strengthen national capacity for PSMA implementation and port inspection coverage through officer incentives and the recruitment of one support staff member. 2. Improve information exchange and reporting through effective use of GIES and standardized national inspection tools. 3. Enhance inter-agency coordination and institutional procedures through SOP development and awareness activities. 4. Build technical capacity and regional engagement through officer training and participation in TWG and WCPFC forums.	20,895.00
Status: Project activities are scheduled to begin in July 2026. Recruitment of the project staff is currently underway, and the successful candidate is expected to start within the month. The project remains on track, with all planned activities expected to be completed within the 2026 calendar year. A detailed progress report will be provided once project activities are underway and the allocated funds have been utilized.						
5		Tonga	Dr Sione Vailala Matoto, CEO for Fisheries Email: vailalam@yahoo.com Mele To'a Átuekaho, Deputy CEO, Compliance Division Email: meletoaatuekaho@gmail.com Kalo Manuopangai Observer Coordinator	Capacity building in, and strengthening of, Tonga national observer programme & to conduct Purse Seine Training for Tonga Observer Programme 2026	This project seeks to strengthen Tonga's national observer programme by: 1. Conducting 3-week (15 working days) Purse Seine Training for 15 existing observers. 2. Providing essential materials such as calipers for observers to conduct their duties.	25,975.00

			Email: kmanuopangai@gmail.com			
Status: Tonga together with SPC conducted 3 weeks PS observer Training started Thursday 23rd April 2026 – 12th May 2026. The remaining funds of USD\$7,600.00 is to purchase 10 calipers from NZ on the first week of August 2026.						
Sub-total					Sum of project budget requested	156,493.93
WCPFC Administrative fee		Aaron Nighswander aaron.nighswander@wcpfc.int	7.5% administrative fee	Overhead	10,881.15	
JTF 2026						145,082.00
Balance/Deficit (2026 JTF - ALL Proposals - Admin Fee)					Total JTF for 2026	(22,293.08)³
Sub-total					Sum of project budget requested	156,493.93

Annex 2. Status of Carried-over Projects

Year ⁴	Beneficiary Member(s)	Contacts	Project Title	Objectives	Budget (USD)
2023	Palau	Ms. Persis Omelau, Acting Director Bureau of Fisheries Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, and Environment P.O. Box 117, Koror, Palau, 96940	Development of Electronic Reporting and Electronic Monitoring (ER/EM) Program for the Division of Oceanic Fisheries of the Bureau of Fisheries, Ministry of Agriculture,	1. To assess and develop a fisheries electronic reporting and electronic monitoring program for information gathering and sharing. 2. To address known gaps in data collection in the longline fishery and enhance the	45,500.00

³ [FAC19-2025-03: Report on the Status of Other Funds for 2025](#) indicates an estimated remaining balance of approximately USD 26,389 in the 2025 Japan Trust Fund, which was considered to address the 2026 budget shortfall.

⁴ Year when the Project was approved

		Email: omelaupersis@gmail.com Keith Mesebeluu, Policy Specialist/Acting Chief Email: keithmesebeluu@gmail.com Mr. Everson Sengebau, EM Officer Observer Email: ebs6ya@gmail.com Ms. Zilah Oiterong, Fisheries Licensing and Revenue Officer Email: dirremeang@gmail.com	Fisheries and the Environment	capacity of fisheries personnel on proper methods of data collection through ER/EM. 3. To work in line with the newly amended and adopted WCPFC CMM 2013-05 on Catch and Effort Reporting, CMM 2014-03 on Standards, Specifications and Procedures for the WCPFC Record of Fishing Vessels, FFA's Regional LL EM objectives, and Palau's Blue Prosperity Plan to improve the availability and Accessibility of quality-assured information for scientific and compliance purposes and contribute to improving economic viability of longline fisheries.	
Status: This project supports Palau's development of a national Electronic Reporting (ER) and Electronic Monitoring (EM) program for its longline fishery, aligned with WCPFC conservation and management measures, FFA regional objectives, and Palau's Blue Prosperity Plan. Progress has been made through stakeholder engagement and capacity building activities, including an in-country ER/EM training workshop conducted in September 2023 with support from PNAO, and a multi-agency consultation workshop held in December 2023 involving local fishing companies and relevant national partners. Information gathered from these engagements is being used to draft ER/EM operational procedures, though completion remains ongoing due to limited staffing and the availability of only one legal counsel within the Ministry. Implementation remains underway, and Palau has reported continued progress.. Palau indicated that ER training for captains on the use of tablet-based onboard reporting applications would be conducted once vessels returned from overseas docking. An EM Memorandum of Understanding was also being drafted for negotiation with the local fleet. In addition, a request for proposals (RFP) for EM equipment procurement was planned, while national EM regulations continued to be developed. Palau subsequently requested an extension for both the 2023 and 2024 JTF projects to accommodate the revised implementation timeline. Financially, Palau received USD 45,500 and utilized USD 20,000, leaving a remaining balance intended to support continued development of ER/EM operational procedures and future ER/EM initiatives. Key challenges include the high cost of EM equipment and installation, and limited implementation capacity within the Oceanic Division, which has fewer than five staff members managing all offshore fisheries work. The Secretariat continues to engage with Palau on project implementation and will report further progress as additional information becomes available.					

2024	Palau	Ms. Persis Omelau, Acting Director Bureau of Fisheries Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, and Environment P.O. Box 117, Koror, Palau, 96940 Email: omelaupersis@gmail.com Keith Mesebeluu, Policy Specialist/Acting Chief Email: keithmesebeluu@gmail.com Mr. Everson Sengebau, EM Officer Observer Email: ebs6ya@gmail.com Ms. Zilah Oiterong, Fisheries Licensing and Revenue Officer Email: dirremeang@gmail.com	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	1. Palau's local fishing company will be compliant with national regulations, WCPFC CMM 2013-05 on Catch and Effort Reporting, CMM 2014-03 on Standards, Specifications and Procedures for WCPFC Record of Fishing Vessels, and FFA's Regional LL EM objectives. 2. Identify types of Electronic Monitoring System that are suitable and cost-effective for Palau's local fishing industry. 3. Palau's local fishing industries have a fully functioning ER/EM system in place.	53,500.00
Status: This project builds upon Palau's earlier 2023 JTF-supported project on Electronic Reporting (ER) and Electronic Monitoring (EM), supporting the implementation of a national ER/EM program for Palau's longline fishery. The project aims to support compliance with national regulations, WCPFC CMM 2013-05 and CMM 2014-03, and FFA regional longline EM objectives by identifying cost-effective EM systems suitable for Palau's local fishing industry and advancing the establishment of a fully operational ER/EM system. Funds amounting to USD 53,500 were transferred in April 2024, and six tablets were procured by the Bureau of Fisheries in July 2024 to support ER application installation and related capacity-building activities with industry partners. Palau has requested an extension of the project to accommodate the revised implementation timeline. Progress under the project includes preparations for ER training for longline captains on tablet-based reporting systems, development of an MoU framework for EM implementation with					

the local fleet, and preparations for EM equipment procurement. In parallel, Palau continues to develop national EM regulations to support the implementation of the ER/EM program. While progress has been made, limited staffing capacity within the Oceanic Division remains a key constraint. Further updates will be provided as additional information becomes available.

2024	Samoa	Moli Amosa Iakopo Samoa Principal Fisheries Officer- Offshore and Compliance Units Email: moli.iakopo@maf.gov.ws Roseti Imo Samoa Fisheries ACEO-MAF Email: roseti.imo@maf.gov.ws	Enhancing Capacity and Strengthening Samoa National Observer Program	1. Expand the observer program to include certified observers from the public. 2. To Identify and train an individual for the role of a debriefer and Develop and implement standardized debriefing procedures. 3. Create SOPs for various aspects of observer tasks, ensuring consistency and compliance. 4. Formulate a comprehensive emergency action plan to guide observers in crisis situations. 5. Develop a Fisheries Observer Policy tailored to Samoa's context and in line with ROP requirements.	33,000.00
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Status: This project which was approved in 2024 which aims to enhance the capacity of the Samoa National Observer Program by expanding the program to include certified public observers, training and appointing debriefers, developing standardized debriefing procedures and SOPs, formulating an Emergency Action Plan, and establishing a Fisheries Observer Policy aligned with Regional Observer Program (ROP) requirements. While Samoa is not yet a member of the Regional Observer Program (ROP), the primary objective remains to support Samoa's accession and ensure that the Samoa Observer Program is enhanced to meet ROP standards.

Project implementation was delayed due to internal administrative processes within Samoa, which also postponed the initial release of project funds. Once these internal issues were addressed, Samoa requested the transfer of the approved JTF funding, which was subsequently transferred and released to the Samoa's Government account in August 2025. Since then, Samoa has completed three observer-related activities, with the Awareness Program ongoing through December 2025 and January 2026. Remaining activities are planned but require additional time due to delays in implementation, national procurement requirements, and the need to align observer activities with fishing seasons and weather conditions.

Following the approved extension granted during the FAC19 Meeting in Manila, Philippines, on 30 November 2025, Samoa continued implementation throughout the first half of 2026. Activities focused on completing observer capacity-building initiatives, strengthening institutional arrangements, finalising the Observer Policy, Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), Emergency Action Plan (EAP), awareness programmes, and other key deliverables required to support Samoa's readiness for ROP membership.

A significant milestone was achieved in June 2026, when the WCPFC Regional Observer Programme (ROP) Audit was successfully conducted in Samoa. The audit provided valuable technical guidance and recommendations that further strengthened the Samoa National Observer Program and confirmed the substantial progress made under the project towards meeting regional observer standards.

The project has now been successfully completed, with all major activities and deliverables finalised. Through this project, Samoa has significantly strengthened its Observer Programme by enhancing institutional policies and procedures, building national observer and debriefer capacity, improving operational systems, and advancing the country's preparedness for future accession to the WCPFC Regional Observer Programme (ROP). The project has established a strong foundation for the continued development and sustainability of the Samoa National Observer Program.

2025	Philippines	Suzette Barcoma Email: suzettebarcoma@gmail.com	Introduction of Biodegradable Fish Aggregating Devices (BioFADs) Using Bamboo Raft and Abaca Ropes in the Philippines	The primary objective of this study is to evaluate the feasibility and effectiveness of utilizing natural abaca rope and bamboo raft as biodegradable alternatives for drifting Fish Aggregating Devices (dFADs) in tuna fisheries.	50,000.00
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Status: The project on the Introduction of Biodegradable Fish Aggregating Devices (BioFADs) Using Bamboo Raft and Abaca Ropes in the Philippines aims to assess the feasibility and effectiveness of natural abaca rope and bamboo raft as biodegradable alternatives to conventional drifting FADs in tuna fisheries. Project funds were transferred on 28 April 2025, with implementation commencing in July 2025.

Initial activities included continuous coordination with fisherfolk beneficiaries, consultations on deployment areas, procurement of supplies and materials, project documentation, and the engagement of laborers, divers, and project staff. While typhoon-related weather disturbances caused temporary delays during implementation, project activities progressed through the procurement and delivery of materials and the construction of the BioFADs in accordance with the approved design specifications.

Earlier in the implementation period, the Philippines requested a budget realignment, which was supported and approved by Japan. The realignment reallocated funds from Travel, Communication, and Professional Services to Supplies and Materials and Maintenance and Other Operating Expenses (MOOE) to address increased material costs and support the development of information, education, and communication (IEC) materials. The

adjustment did not require additional funding and maintained the total approved budget of USD 50,000 without affecting the project's objectives, scope, or intended outcomes.

The BioFADs launching and turnover ceremony was successfully conducted on 26 March 2026 with the fisherfolk beneficiaries from the Subic Commercial Fishing Association Inc. (SCOFAI). Following the ceremony, the BioFADs were deployed on 27 March 2026 at coordinates 14°57'27.36" N, 119°28'14.44" E, located off the west coast of the Philippines, approximately 96.64 kilometers (52.18 nautical miles) from Subic, Zambales. The nearest shoreline coordinates are 14°57'13.70" N, 120°03'32.74" E, with an estimated distance of 63.31 kilometers (34.18 nautical miles) from shore. Monthly monitoring activities were planned following deployment to assess the performance and durability of the BioFADs.

Subsequently, the implementing agency reported that the deployed BioFADs were lost during a typhoon event. Efforts were made to locate and recover the structures; however, these attempts were unsuccessful. In response, the Philippines is assessing the feasibility of utilizing the remaining project funds to construct and deploy replacement BioFADs, subject to the availability of sufficient funds and approval by the donor. Discussions on the proposed reallocation of the remaining budget are currently ongoing.

Given these unforeseen circumstances, the original project completion target of June 2026 may be delayed accommodating the possible construction, deployment, and monitoring of replacement BioFADs, should the proposed budget adjustment be approved. A revised implementation schedule and completion date will be determined following consultations with the donor and confirmation of the project's way forward. Further updates will be provided as they become available.

2025	Fiji	Meli Raicebe Email: raicebe.meli@gmail.com	Enhancing Fiji's Fisheries Data Collection and Compliance with WCPFC Conservation and Management Measures	1. To Train and build the technical capacities of Observers and Enforcement officers to effectively monitor and report fishing activities. 2. To enhance collaboration between line agencies and the industry to address operational and regulatory challenges.	24,919.55 ⁵
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Status: The project "Enhancing Fiji's Fisheries Data Collection and Compliance with WCPFC Conservation and Management Measures" aims to strengthen Fiji's fisheries monitoring and compliance capacity by building the technical skills of Observers and Enforcement Officers to effectively

⁵ The total requested budget was USD 39,850.00; due to the shortfall of the JTF budget JTF will finance JTF = USD 24,919.55 and the remaining balance to the SRF= USD 14,930.45

monitor and report fishing activities. It also seeks to enhance collaboration between relevant line agencies and the fishing industry to address operational and regulatory challenges and support effective implementation of WCPFC Conservation and Management Measures (CMMs).

Following Fiji's earlier update on the utilization of Funds and noting the end of Fiji's 2024-2025 fiscal year, the funds were transferred back to the initial Commission Account. Fiji has then worked with the Secretariat to have the funds re-sent to back to the initial Government Account and had finally been able to receive the amount in December of 2025.

Noting that the initial timeline for the execution of the project was affected due to the reversal of funds, Fiji have submitted a new projective timeline to reflect the activities that will be undertaken under the project. The funds are currently being held within the Government's initial consolidated account and are awaiting release following the re-assessment of the new timeline.

All planned activities are envisaged to commence in April 2026 and to be fully implemented by 31 July 2026.

Following the planned commencement of activities in April 2026, Fiji continued progressing the implementation of the project in accordance with the revised project timeline. Efforts during the implementation period focused on preparing and delivering activities to strengthen the technical capacity of fisheries observers and enforcement officers, improve inter-agency collaboration, and support compliance with WCPFC Conservation and Management Measures. The project is expected to contribute to enhanced fisheries monitoring, data collection, and enforcement capabilities, with completion of the remaining activities and deliverables subject to confirmation by Fiji at the steering committee meeting in August 2026.