



**SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE
TWENTY-SECOND REGULAR SESSION**
11-19 August 2026
Apia, Samoa (Hybrid)

JAPAN TRUST FUND STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING REPORT (2026)

**WCPFC-SC22-2026-RP-JTF02
15 August 2026**

Submitted by JTF Steering Committee

**JAPAN TRUST FUND
2026
REPORT OF THE STEERING COMMITTEE**

1. OPENING OF THE MEETING

1. The Japan Trust Fund (JTF) Steering Committee Meeting took place at EFKS Youth Hall Mulinu'u, Apia, Samoa on 12 August 2026. The meeting started at 5:45 PM and was attended, Fiji, Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), Japan, Niue, Palau, Philippines, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, South Pacific Group¹ (SPG), Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency Secretariat (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 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 (Fiji, FSM, Niue, Palau, Philippines, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, and South Pacific Group, the 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 Chair invited each recipient country to provide a brief report on the status and progress of its respective JTF-funded projects, as listed in **Attachment C**.

2.2 Country Reports

6. FSM reported on its JTF-supported project to transition its Longline Observer Program from paper-based to electronic reporting using the OLLO² application developed by SPC. The project aims to train at least 10 observers, with FSM working closely with SPC to support implementation. FSM noted some delays in accessing and utilizing the JTF funds due to internal appropriation and approval processes. These issues have since been resolved, allowing project activities to proceed.

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

² Offline Longline Observer (also referred to as *Observer Longline Online/Offline* application)

7. FSM confirmed that observer training on the OLLO application was being conducted from 10–14 August 2026 with support from SPC. Further updates will be provided following completion of the training and deployment of trained observers, including their experience and performance in using the electronic reporting system.
8. Japan thanked FSM for the update and welcomed the progress made despite delays arising from internal processes. Japan noted that the observer training was underway as planned and expressed its hope for the successful completion of the project.
9. The meeting discussed the timing for further progress updates from JTF project recipients. Considering the different implementation schedules of projects and Japan’s interest in receiving the latest information ahead of the Commission meeting, it was agreed that all project recipients would provide further updates to Japan no later than **30 November 2026**, with earlier submissions encouraged where possible.
10. Tonga requested to report on its three JTF-approved projects for 2026. Tonga expressed its sincere appreciation to the Government of Japan for its continued financial and technical support through the Japan Trust Fund (JTF), noting that the assistance has contributed significantly to strengthening Tonga’s fisheries management, monitoring, data collection, and compliance capacity.
11. The current JTF-supported project focuses on three key areas:
- a. Strengthening and sustaining tuna fisheries data collection activities;
 - b. Improving implementation of the Port State Measures Agreement (PSMA), including port inspection capacity and coverage; and
 - c. Enhancing Tonga’s National Observer Programme through training and the provision of essential equipment.
12. Project funds were received by Tonga in May 2026, and implementation of the approved activities has progressed well. Key activities are currently underway includes port sampling, electronic reporting (e-reporting), and the recruitment of artisanal fisheries data collectors. Refresher training is also being scheduled and is expected to be completed before the end of 2026.
13. Training under the National Observer Program has been successfully completed. Procurement of calipers to support observer duties is currently being arranged, with delivery expected later in 2026. Under the PSMA and port inspection component, a support officer has been successfully recruited, and other planned activities are progressing as scheduled.
14. Tonga noted that the budget allocated for the participation of a fisheries personnel in the Tuna Data Workshop could not be utilized, as the workshop was held in April 2026, prior to the receipt of JTF funds in May 2026. Tonga requested approval from the Government of Japan to reallocate the unused funds to support the participation of fisheries personnel at the upcoming WCPFC Commission meeting in Vanuatu later in 2026. The proposed adjustment would enable Tonga to fully utilize the approved project funds while remaining consistent with the broader objectives of the project, particularly strengthening Tonga’s participation in regional fisheries management processes and supporting its obligations to the WCPFC and other regional fisheries organizations.

15. Tonga also highlighted an administrative issue concerning the processing and utilization of JTF funds through its national financial procedures. Although JTF projects, activities, budgets, and associated funding have already been approved through established WCPFC/JTF processes, Tonga's internal financial procedures require additional confirmation or approval from the WCPFC or the Donor where funds may need reallocation between approved activities within the project. This may be necessary where the allocation for one activity or item is insufficient and requires supplementation from another activity within the same project. Such requirements under a previous project resulted in lengthy administrative processes and delays.

16. To support timely implementation of future JTF-funded activities, Tonga requested confirmation from the donor on record that, once a JTF proposal is approved, there is a flexibility to reallocate funds between approved activities within the project, recognizing that budgets are estimates prepared at the proposed stage, provided that all the activities in the approved project are successfully delivered. Additional approval from the Donor through WCPFC is required only where there are substantive and reasonable grounds for doing so.

17. Where the project, activities, budget, and disbursement have already been approved through established JTF/WCPFC processes, further approval requirements are not necessary. This would help reduce administrative delays and promote the smooth, timely, efficient, and effective implementation of JTF-supported activities.

18. Tonga noted that JTF support has strengthened its fisheries management and monitoring capacity, including port sampling, PSMA implementation, e-reporting, artisanal fisheries data collection, and the National Observer Program, while also providing valuable capacity-building opportunities. Tonga expressed its appreciation to the Government of Japan for its continued support and looked forward to continued cooperation to strengthen its fisheries sector.

19. Japan thanked Tonga for the detailed update and indicated its agreement with the proposed use of the unspent funds originally allocated for participation in the Tuna Data Workshop to support additional fisheries personnel participation at the WCPFC Commission (WCPFC23) meeting in Vanuatu. Japan requested Tonga to submit a revised project proposal and budget details to the WCPFC Secretariat to formalize the proposed reallocation.

20. Regarding Tonga's concern on the disbursement of JTF funds through its internal financial procedures, Tonga clarified that its Ministry of Finance requires donor confirmation before if there is a reallocation of funds between line activities of a project. Tonga requested that this issue be reflected in the meeting record to facilitate its internal processes and minimize potential delays in project implementation.

21. The Chair acknowledged Tonga's clarification and confirmed that the issue concerning its internal financial procedures and potential delays in transferring funds between ministries would be reflected in the meeting record. Japan confirmed that Tonga's clarification was understood and agreed with Tonga's suggestion and had no further comments.

22. The South Pacific Group (SPG) expressed its appreciation to the Government of Japan for supporting the project, which contributes to the SPG's goal of achieving 100% electronic reporting of fishing logsheet data. The project supports the procurement and use of tablets for electronic reporting

across SPG members. SPG reported that the JTF-funded tablets had been procured and delivered to participating countries and were in the process of being registered as national assets.

23. SPG reported that the next phase of implementation will include trainer's refresher training on the onboard electronic reporting system. This will be coordinated with the recruitment of electronic reporting technicians to be based in Apia and Suva, who will work with vessel captains and national authorities to support the effective use of the tablets and implementation of electronic reporting. SPG will continue to monitor implementation in coordination with the technicians and participating governments. SPG members Niue, Fiji, Tonga, and Samoa also provided comments on the project and expressed their appreciation to the Government of Japan for its support.

24. Japan thanked SPG members for the update and welcomed the implementation of the project, noting its importance in building the capacity of Pacific Island countries, particularly in the context of the development and implementation of management measures for South Pacific albacore.

25. Japan sought clarification regarding the number of tablets for Fiji, noting that the original requirement was for 58 tablets but that fewer tablets had been procured under the JTF funding due to increased costs. Fiji explained that the original request was based on its 43 active vessels and that additional funding would be sought to meet the remaining requirement. SPG further clarified that additional funding had subsequently been secured through an FFA project to procure the remaining 15 tablets, enabling implementation to proceed as originally planned. Japan welcomed the clarification and expressed satisfaction that the additional funding had been secured.

Carried-over JTF Project Progress Update

26. Fiji expressed its appreciation to the Government of Japan for its support and provided an update on its project entitled "Enhancing Fiji's Fisheries Data Collection and Compliance with WCPFC Conservation and Management Measures." The project aims to strengthen Fiji's fisheries monitoring, data collection, and compliance with WCPFC Conservation and Management Measures through enhanced technical capacity of fisheries observers and enforcement officers and improved collaboration among government agencies and the fishing industry. Following delays associated with the transfer and utilization of project funds during 2024 and 2025, including the return of funds to the Commission account, the WCPFC Secretariat facilitated their re-transfer to Fiji's national account, enabling project implementation to commence under a revised timeline in April 2026.

27. Fiji reported that, since implementation commenced, approximately 20 observers have been trained in the use of the OLLO electronic reporting system and are now using the system for observer reporting. Fiji has also conducted its first internal consultation under the project's inter-agency collaboration and regulatory improvement component, with further consultations planned with relevant agencies.

28. Japan thanked Fiji for the update and expressed its appreciation for the progress made in implementing the project. Japan acknowledged the earlier issues relating to the transfer and return of project funds but noted that these were administrative rather than substantive issues affecting the project. Japan understood that, with the fund transfer issue resolved, there were no further obstacles to Fiji proceeding with implementation and had no additional comments or questions.

29. Palau provided an update on its two JTF-funded projects, namely:

- a. "Development of Electronic Reporting and Electronic Monitoring (ER/EM) Program
- b. "Supplementing the continued Electronic Reporting and Electronic Monitoring (ER/EM) Program

30. Palau reported that the two ER/EM projects had been completed and that JTF support had enabled engagement with relevant local stakeholders to facilitate the introduction and transition to ER/EM practices as planned.

31. Palau noted that detailed information on project implementation was provided in the respective project reports and that the project closure and financial reports were being finalized. Palau indicated that these reports would be submitted by November 2026, or as soon as they were completed. Palau expressed its sincere appreciation to the Government of Japan for its support through the JTF, noting that the assistance had been instrumental in initiating and advancing its ER/EM program.

32. Japan thanked Palau for the update and welcomed the successful implementation and completion of the two projects, noting that there had previously been concerns regarding their progress. Japan requested Palau to submit the final project reports upon completion and looked forward to receiving the reports and reviewing the outcomes and achievements of the projects.

33. The Philippines expressed its sincere appreciation to the Government of Japan for its generous support and funding of the Biodegradable Fish Aggregating Devices (BioFADs) Project and acknowledged Japan's continued support for initiatives promoting sustainable and environmentally responsible fisheries practices.

34. The Philippines reported that, during monitoring and onboard activities conducted in June 2026, project personnel confirmed that one of the BioFAD units deployed under the project could no longer be located within its designated deployment area. Search and retrieval operations were subsequently undertaken in coordination with relevant stakeholders; however, despite these efforts, the unit and any recoverable components could not be located. The Philippines noted that the loss may have resulted from environmental and operational factors, including strong currents, adverse weather conditions, wave action, damage to mooring components, or drifting.

35. The Philippines further reported that the incident had been documented and that the project team had reviewed its deployment, anchoring, and monitoring procedures to identify measures to minimize the risk of similar incidents in future deployments. In light of this development, the Philippines requested an extension of the BioFADs Project until December 2026 to allow sufficient time to continue project activities and deploy replacement BioFAD units. The Philippines also requested approval to realign the existing project budget to support the procurement and deployment of replacement units, emphasizing that the proposed realignment would remain within the existing approved budget and that no additional JTF funding was being requested.

36. Japan thanked the Philippines for the update and noted the unfortunate loss of the deployed BioFAD unit. Regarding the requested budget realignment, Japan requested the Philippines to revise the original project proposal to reflect the proposed activities and revised budget and submit it to the WCPFC Secretariat for consideration. Japan indicated that the revised proposal would provide the basis for Japan and the Secretariat to consider the proposed project revision and budget realignment.

37. Japan also encouraged the Philippines to consider coordination and collaboration between its BioFADs Project and the related biodegradable FAD work being discussed through the Scientific Committee, noting that the Philippines' project experience and results could contribute to future discussions on biodegradable FADs and the development of relevant management measures.

38. The Philippines acknowledged Japan's comments and confirmed that it would take into account the request to revise the project proposal and budget realignment, as well as explore possible coordination with related biodegradable FAD work and the sharing of project outcomes.

39. Samoa expressed its appreciation to the Government of Japan for its support and provided an update on its 2024 JTF project on "Enhancing Capacity and Strengthening the Samoa National Observer Program." The project, approved in 2024 with funding of USD 33,000, aimed to strengthen Samoa's National Observer Program and support its preparations towards meeting the requirements of the WCPFC Regional Observer Program (ROP).

40. Samoa reported that project implementation was initially delayed due to internal administrative and procurement processes and acknowledged the flexibility provided through an extension of the project until June 2026. Samoa also highlighted an administrative issue relating to its national financial requirements, whereby the Ministry of Finance requires a formal project agreement or similar documentation between Samoa and Japan to support the receipt and administration of funds through government accounts. While Samoa was able to address the matter internally using the available correspondence and confirmation from the WCPFC Secretariat, it noted that this could be a practical consideration for the administration of future JTF projects.

41. Despite the initial delays, Samoa reported the successful completion of the project, including strengthening observer and debriefer capacity, finalizing Standard Operating Procedures and an Emergency Action Plan, progressing the draft Observer Policy, and undertaking debriefing and awareness activities. A key milestone was the conduct of the Samoa National Observer Program audit in June 2026. The final audit report has been completed and submitted to the WCPFC Secretariat, providing an important foundation for Samoa's continued efforts to meet ROP requirements and progress towards future accession to the programme.

42. Samoa thanked the Government of Japan for its continued support through the JTF and acknowledged the technical assistance and guidance provided by the WCPFC Secretariat. Building on the successful completion of the 2024 approved project, Samoa indicated its intention to consider submitting a future JTF proposal to further strengthen its national fisheries capacity.

43. Japan thanked Samoa for the update and congratulated Samoa on the successful progress of its National Observer Program audit process. Japan particularly welcomed the submission of the relevant documentation to the WCPFC Secretariat for the ROP audit process and recognized this as a significant milestone for Samoa's National Observer Program.

44. FSM further reiterated its appreciation to the Government of Japan for its support through the JTF, noting that the assistance has been valuable in strengthening its National Observer Program. FSM expressed its interest in building on the progress achieved to further strengthen observer program capacity and also acknowledged the support of the WCPFC Secretariat in guiding FSM through the relevant requirements and procedures for the submission and approval of its JTF funding request.

45. Solomon Islands expressed its sincere appreciation to the Government and people of Japan for its support provided through the JTF for three electronic monitoring (EM) projects covering EM policy development, training of fisheries and compliance officers and industry personnel, and capacity building on EM systems. Solomon Islands confirmed that all project activities were completed in 2025 and reported that the support had strengthened its fisheries monitoring framework, technical capacity, system reliability, and compliance monitoring. A key outcome was the successful development and launch of its National Electronic Monitoring Policy following consultations with industry and relevant stakeholders. Solomon Islands reaffirmed its commitment to continued collaboration and further strengthening its national fisheries capacity.

2.3 Donor's Assessment

46. Japan expressed its appreciation to the WCPFC Secretariat for its continued administration of the JTF and thanked recipient CCMs for implementing JTF-funded projects. Japan reiterated that the JTF aims to strengthen the capacity of developing country members, particularly in fisheries data collection and management, and noted the increasing number of projects supporting electronic monitoring (EM) and electronic reporting (ER). Japan welcomed the progress reported and expressed its hope that the projects would be successfully implemented and contribute to strengthening fisheries management capacity in recipient countries.

47. Japan requested project recipients to inform the WCPFC Secretariat as early as possible of any unforeseen circumstances that may affect project implementation or completion, so that Japan, the Secretariat, and the recipient concerned could consult on appropriate solutions. Japan emphasized that timely communication and effective implementation are important for achieving meaningful project outcomes and supporting the continued success of the JTF. Japan also indicated that such successful outcomes would provide a strong basis for Japan to secure sufficient budget for the JTF in future.

48. The Chair reiterated this request and reminded project recipients to provide further project updates no later than 30 November 2026.

3. ADOPTION OF THE JTF STEERING COMMITTEE REPORT

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

4. OTHER MATTERS

50. The Chair invited participants to raise any other matters. No additional matters were raised.

51. The Chair thanked Secretariat staff involved in the administration and coordination of the JTF, including their work with the Government of Japan and project recipients to facilitate project reporting, documentation, and implementation. The Chair also acknowledged the IT team and other Secretariat staff for their support in facilitating the meeting and thanked Japan for its participation.

52. The Chair thanked all participants for their contributions and, with no further matters raised.

5. CLOSE OF MEETING

53. The meeting was closed at 6:45 PM on 12 August 2026.

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

Apia, Samoa 17:30-18:30, Wednesday, 12 August 2026

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

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

Apia, Samoa

Wednesday, 12 August 2026 from 17:30 to 18:30

AGENDA

WCPFC-SC22-2026-12
12 August 2026

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 progress and performance of ongoing projects funded in previous years, together with newly approved JTF projects for 2026. Information on the status of ongoing JTF-funded projects for 2026 and earlier years will be provided in the [Japan Trust Fund Status Report](#), which will be made available prior to the meeting.

2.2 Country reports

Countries and agencies that receive JTF support will report on the status of project implementation, including project outcomes, effectiveness, any issues or risks requiring attention, and a financial statement on the use of JTF funds.

Key discussion points arising under this agenda item will be recorded to inform future improvements to the JTF program and its implementation.

2.3 Donor's assessment

The Project Donor, Japan, will provide assessments, evaluations, and any recommendations or requests, as appropriate, to support the effective implementation of projects and the achievement of intended outcomes.

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

LIST OF 2026 APPROVED PROJECTS AND CARRIED-OVER PROJECTS

List of 2026 Approved Projects

#	Beneficiary Member(s)	Title
1	FSM	Transitioning FSM Longline Observer Program from Paper-based to Electronic Reporting: National Training on OLLO Application
2	Tonga	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
3	South Pacific Group (Cook Islands, Fiji, Niue, Samoa, Tonga)	Implementation of Electronic Reporting in SPG's longline fishery to facilitate implementing the South Pacific Albacore Management Procedure adopted at WCFPC22
4	Tonga	Strengthening and Modernizing Port State Measures Implementation in Tonga through Electronic Systems, Enhanced Information Exchange, and Inter-Agency Capacity Building
5	Tonga	Capacity building in, and strengthening of, Tonga national observer programme & to conduct Purse Seine Training for Tonga Observer Programme 2026

Carried-over Projects

#	Beneficiary Member(s)	Title
1	Fiji (2025)	Enhancing Fiji's Fisheries Data Collection and Compliance with WCPFC Conservation and Management Measures
2	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
3	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
4	Philippines (2025)	Introduction of Biodegradable Fish Aggregating Devices (BioFADs) Using Bamboo Raft and Abaca Ropes in the Philippines
5	Samoa (2024)	Enhancing Capacity and Strengthening Samoa National Observer Program