



**SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE SEVENTEENTH
REGULAR SESSION**

ELECTRONIC MEETING

11 – 19 August 2021

REPORT OF THE JAPAN TRUST FUND STEERING COMMITTEE 2021

**WCPFC-SC17-2021/ RP-JTF-02
29 July 2021**

SECRETARIAT

**JAPAN TRUST FUND
2021
REPORT OF THE STEERING COMMITTEE**

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The Steering Committee (SC) meeting of the Japan Trust Fund (JTF) in 2021 was conducted electronically through email correspondence. This was due to the continuing impacts of COVID-19 pandemic that physical face-to-face meeting was not possible.
2. The Steering Committee's roles were i) to review the performance of projects; ii) to resolve any project implementation issues; iii) to share experiences in the implementation of projects; and iv) to learn from those experiences.
3. The 2021 Japan Trust Fund (JTF) Steering Committee meeting process was the same as last year (2021) which were as follows:
 - a) The Secretariat in consultation with JTF recipient countries prepared the 2021 JTF Status Report.
 - b) The 2021 JTF Status report was submitted to Japan for their review, queries and comments that was also posted in the WCPFC-SC17 website (<https://meetings.wcpfc.int/node/12612>).
 - c) The Secretariat in consultation with JTF recipient countries and Japan, prepared the 2021 JTF Steering Committee Report reflecting JTF recipient countries comments and their request for project extension (if any) in 2022, and corresponding responses and approval of Japan.
 - d) The Steering Committee report (SC17-RP-JTF-02) will be posted in the WCPFC-SC17 website.
4. The JTF contact list is in **Attachment A**.

II. REVIEW OF PROJECT PERFORMANCE

5. The Steering Committee received updates on the status of implementation of each of the ongoing projects supported by the JTF (<https://meetings.wcpfc.int/node/12612>). The highlights are described below.

2021 PROJECTS

A. Solomon Islands: Training and supporting of our Solomon Islands (SI) Electronic Monitoring (EM) Analysts to continue analyzing EM records from EM systems installed on Longline fishing vessels

6. This Project expected to support Solomon Islands EM Analysts to continue analyzing EM records after September 2021, to provide useful data and information to fisheries management for decision making and to other national and regional stakeholders as mandated by Solomon Islands membership agreements and efforts to ensure the sustainability of tuna resources for future generations.

7. Solomon Islands started its recruitment process for the five (5) EM analysts including shortlisting of applicants last June 2021. The EM analysts are currently supported by the World Bank PROP project that will close by September 30, 2021. The JTF funding requested by Solomon Islands will be used to support the EM analysts from October 2021 until March 2022.

B. Solomon Islands: Training of Solomon Islands Fisheries Observers on the Electronic Reporting Observer eObs App to collect data electronically on observer trips to strengthen MCS processes

8. This Project is expected to train observers on how to use iFIMS electronic reporting system that includes use of electronic reporting system to enter and send daily trip data to the ministry for monitoring, control and surveillance purposes and trial out the said system until such a time where observer trip reporting can be paperless.

9. The virtual observer training started on 28th June 2021 and should complete all trainings by the end of September or October 2021. This training is in collaboration with PNAO trainers that conducts the training via Zoom platform.

C. Tonga: Port sampling and data entry

10. This is a regular activity of Tonga Ministry of Fisheries to support and maintain high level data collection and to improve management of tuna fisheries in Tonga, as well as providing awareness on conservation of tuna species. This activity would like to continue funding tuna data collection through its port sampling activities for 2021 including training of all new vessel masters, port samplers and artisanal data officers on e-reporting. It is also expected that data collection will be expanded to outer islands of Tonga.

11. Currently, all domestic and foreign tuna vessels operating in Tonga are using ONBOARD/ ONSHORE / TAILS applications for their logsheets data entry and data submission.

12. Tonga (Ministry of Fisheries) recruited seven (7) daily paid laborers under the JTF project for Tuna Artisanal data collection. The new recruits are also expected to assist in port sampling and unloading data collection for domestic and foreign fishing vessels. Tonga is also planning to recruit additional daily paid staff to collect artisanal tuna data from the Ha'apai and the Niua island groups.

D. Tonga: Capacity building and strengthening of Tonga's National Observer Program

13. This Project seeks to strengthen Tonga's national observer program by: i) building capacity of senior observers, who are also certified debriefers and create a career path for them, by utilizing them whilst from on-shore to on-screen, as debriefer and data entry staff; and ii) building capacity of Tonga's national observers by encouraging to collect good quality observer data as well as creating a performance-based incentive to keep observers on the job.

14. The COVID-19 pandemic has greatly affected all observer program throughout the region. Tonga Ministry of Fisheries initiated this project to help minimize the high rate of observer turn over. Currently, observers in Tonga are paid by vessel operators for observer fees and the incentive for good quality data and data entry will be funded through JTF.

15. **Tonga is also requesting that any unused funds at the end of 2021 will be carried-over to finance observer data entry and incentive until the funds are fully utilized.**

E. Tonga: Capacity building and strengthening of Tonga's Fisheries Legal Section

16. The objective of the project is for continued capacity building and strengthening Tonga's Fisheries Legal Section through recruitment of a paralegal officer to assist in research and administrative matters to help progress the ongoing legislative review that includes inclusion of WCPFC CMMs in the legislative framework.

17. The newly recruited Administrative Assistant have been providing great assistance in progressing the work in the Legal Section both in the main island and in the outer islands of Tonga. This assistance has greatly contributed to the progressing of various tasks relating to ongoing review of the law including terms and conditions of fishing vessel licenses to ensure that they are in line with WCPFC-CMMs.

F. Vanuatu: Feasibility and Cost-Benefit Assessment of Electronic Monitoring on Vanuatu fishing vessels

18. The purpose of the present Project is to investigate appropriate logistical arrangements through which hard drives from e-monitoring equipment can be reliably transferred from the vessels concerned to the VFD and analyzed in a timely manner. As part of the Project, an assessment of the costs and benefits of e-monitoring arrangements will be made, and compared to the costs and benefits of the Vanuatu National Observer Programme. The results of the study is expected to guide Vanuatu's policy on e-monitoring implementation.

19. Vanuatu received the fund on 1st of June 2021. Vanuatu is in progress of setting-up the EMS office.

CARRIED-OVER PROJECTS FROM PREVIOUS YEARS

G. Kiribati: Kiribati Capacity Building for Harvest Strategy

20. This project seeks to build capacity of Kiribati fisheries officers on harvest strategy (HS) work to enable them to fully participate in decision making process for HS as a member of the WCPFC. Kiribati received the funds in March 2020 and seeking assistance from SPC and others to conduct a virtual workshop with Fisheries Officers and Managers on Harvest Strategy. The national workshop which will engaged SPC staff and the attachments of Kiribati's staff with SPC will be delayed until such time travel restrictions are lifted. **Kiribati was requesting approval to carry over the funds for another year (2022) to complete the implementation of project activities which were delayed/deferred due to the ongoing impacts of COVID-19 pandemic.**

21. **Japan approved the request for extension, after reviewing and taking into consideration the ongoing impacts of COVID-19 pandemic.**

H. Palau: Domestic Tuna Market Development Project

22. This proposal seeks to strengthen and improve data collection system in Palau in order to understand the catch landings by vessel and the market structure in order to inform and advise future

management decisions. The initial period of the Project was delayed due to COVID-19 and 1-year project extension was requested as a result.

23. Palau has established an enhanced data collection system to better understand Palau's fishery. Additional information was also collected to reflect the market system since the full implementation of Palau National Marine Sanctuary (PNMS,) which aimed at analyzing Belau Offshore Fishers Inc (BOFI) sales and market structure.

24. Palau currently does not have positive COVID-19 cases but still facing some challenges as precautions/restrictions are still in place. Such precautions have limited mass gatherings which have hindered their proposed work to conduct workshops and trainings on data sampling methods. However, other approaches (e.g. virtual training) were taken into consideration to carry on project activities as planned.

25. As of June 2021, this project was still ongoing. Data from both catch landings by vessels and market structure were still being collected and continued to populate the local database. Palau also expects to complete all activities within this year including submission of final project report.

I. Cook Islands: Development of National Competent Authority [HACCP strategy] for Cook Islands Offshore Fisheries

26. This project seeks to support a comprehensive review of Ministry of Marine Resources (MMR) Competent Authority programs to ensure that current systems respond to the needs of MMR's fisheries management framework.

27. Cook Islands project update indicated that activities were in progress. Though they are facing some challenges such as:

- i. Limited staffing capacity and competing priorities caused delays in progressing the work.
- ii. The Cook Islands Government's plan of action regarding the COVID-19 pandemic this year has seen the Health Ministry's focus taken up in preparing and activating plans regarding the pandemic.
- iii. Border closures internationally hampered inspections, including those for training purposes.

28. Some activities that have already commenced/planned includes i) development of memorandum of understanding between the Ministry of Health and Ministry of Marine Resources (MMR) to provide legal powers to MMR as Competent Authority (CA); ii) development of a national HACCP strategy; iii) creation of awareness and education information packs for stakeholders and the general public on CA requirements. In order to complete this work, and with two-way quarantine free travel in place, the Cook Islands will be seeking access to expertise available in New Zealand. **Cook Islands was requesting to carry over the funds for an additional year.**

29. **Japan approved the request for extension taking into account the challenges faced by Cook Islands.**

J. Cook Islands: Improving the participation and engagement in international fisheries forums

30. This project intends to assist the Ministry of Marine Resources (MMR) to implement a series of training sessions to engage and prepare staff to participate in regional fisheries meetings. This work supports professional development, including working with other Ministries training programs such as

diplomatic protocols and negotiations, to ensure staff are adequately trained before they venture into international meetings to represent the Cook Islands.

31. Cook Islands project update indicated that activities for this project were ongoing. Although they were facing some challenges that includes Cook Islands Government's plan of action regarding the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic that caused the Ministry of Marine Resources (MMR) to re-design the project to include possibilities for a mixed mode of delivery (i. Content Development and ii. Delivery of Training). As the border restrictions continue to remain in place, splitting the project into two (2) components became the best option for progressing the project. Content development for component one has been completed, with delivery of the training now the focus of the remaining work. **Cook Islands was requesting to carry over the funds for an additional year.**

32. After reviewing and taking into consideration the ongoing impacts of COVID-19 pandemic, **Japan also approved the request for extension of this project.**

K. Nauru: Capacity building and transfer of technology on at sea boarding and inspection procedures for Nauru Fisheries and Marine Resources Authority (NFMRA) vessel operators in Nauru's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ)

33. The Nauru Fisheries and Marine Resources Authority (NFMRA) was keen to build the capacity of NFMRA officers in-country to improve its ability in conducting at-sea boarding and inspection within its area of jurisdiction to contribute to the conservation and management measures of fisheries resources of the region. NFMRA proposed a project to: i) conduct training for NFMRA officers on best practice of at-sea boarding and inspection procedures; ii) develop Standard Operational Procedures (SOPs) for NFMRA on at-sea boarding and inspection; and iii) advise NFMRA on gears and equipment necessary for NFMRA officers in conducting at-sea boarding and inspection.

34. However, this Nauru project under the JTF experienced extended delays due to numerous logistical challenges and obstacles since it was first proposed.

35. Nauru regrets to inform that at this stage, it was still unable to commence this project due to difficulty of organizing travel for the consultant because of border closures and travel restrictions brought by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Nauru acknowledges that they will still have difficulty in utilizing the current JTF grant; so, **Nauru proposed that the JTF Committee and NFMRA discuss an alternative approach that is in-line with the current project.**

36. **Japan responded that they were willing to consider Nauru's proposal, as long as, it is in line with the original project. Japan was looking forward to receive Nauru's proposal and related information on this matter.**

37. **On 26 July, Nauru has advised that they have decided to discontinue this line of work and cancel this project due to ongoing challenges that is beyond Nauru's control and to fully reimburse the fund upon receiving an invoice.**

38. Nauru's advice was forwarded to other members of the Steering Committee [WCPFC Secretariat: Executive Director (Feleti Teo), Administration and Finance Manager (Aaron Nighswander), Science Manager (Sungkwon Soh) and JTF Focal Person (Hirohide Matsushima, Assistant Director, International Affairs Division, Fisheries Agency of Japan)], for their information and appropriate action/response. The invoice that was requested by Nauru was provided by WCPFC Secretariat Administration and Finance Manager on the same day.

39. The Steering Committee also hoped that Nauru would continue to consider applying for the JTF for its future projects that could assist in improving their capacity on data collection and reporting including effective implementation of WCPFC CMMs.

L. Tuvalu: Capacity Building training for Tuvalu Fisheries and Maritime Police officers to conduct High Seas Boarding Inspections (HSBI)

40. The project objectives were i) to enhance the capacity of fisheries and Police Maritime personnel to conduct High Seas Boarding Inspections in the High Seas in accordance with WCPFC Boarding and Inspection Procedures (CMM 2006-08); and ii) to prepare officers to fully understand the HSBI procedures and the application of the CMM 2006-08 in the WCPF Convention area.

41. Since 2020 Steering Committee, Tuvalu had made no further progress due to the ongoing impacts of COVID-19 pandemic that poses travel restrictions and other logistical challenges on the implementation of project activities. The funding balance for this project remains the same (AUD\$14,513.81) since the last update in 2020.

42. **Tuvalu Fisheries Department has decided to request for an extension of this project in 2022.**

43. **Japan approved the request for extension of this project after reviewing and taking into consideration the ongoing impacts of COVID-19 pandemic to conduct the needed training.**

III. OTHER ISSUES

44. JTF recipient countries thanked Japan for their understanding, continued support and assistance through the JTF.

45. There were no other issues raised.

IV. CLOSE OF STEERING COMMITTEE

46. The email correspondence for the JTF Steering Committee was closed after all issues have been addressed through email exchanges.

**SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE
SEVENTEENTH REGULAR SESSION
JAPAN TRUST FUND STEERING COMMITTEE**

EMAIL CORRESPONDENCE

9 June – 28 July 2021

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