



Project Information Document (PID)

Concept Stage | Date Prepared/Updated: 17-Nov-2025 | Report No: PIDDC01487



BASIC INFORMATION

A. Basic Project Data

Project Beneficiary(ies) Vanuatu	Operation ID P513248	Operation Name Vanuatu: Pacific Islands Regional Oceanscape Program - First Phase	
Region EAST ASIA AND PACIFIC	Estimated Appraisal Date 19-Jan-2026	Estimated Approval Date 26-Mar-2026	
Financing Instrument Investment Project Financing (IPF)	Borrower(s) Government of Vanuatu	Implementing Agency Ministry of Fisheries, Oceans, and Maritime Affairs (MFOMA)	

Proposed Development Objective(s)

The Development Objective of the Series of Projects (SoP) is to strengthen the shared management of selected Pacific Island oceanic and coastal fisheries, and the critical habitats upon which they depend.

The Development Objective of this project is to improve access to economic opportunities for fishers and fish workers, increase climate-resilient domestic supply of fish products, and strengthen national capacity and regional collaboration for fisheries management.

PROJECT FINANCING DATA (US\$, Millions)

Maximizing Finance for Development

Is this an MFD-Enabling Project (MFD-EP)?	Yes
Is this project Private Capital Enabling (PCE)?	No

SUMMARY

Total Operation Cost	45.00
Total Financing	45.00
of which IBRD/IDA	40.00
Financing Gap	0.00

DETAILS



World Bank Group Financing

International Development Association (IDA)	40.00
IDA Grant	40.00

Non-World Bank Group Financing

Trust Funds	5.00
PROBLUE MDTF	5.00

Environmental and Social Risk Classification

Substantial

Concept Review Decision

The review did authorize the preparation to continue

Other Decision (as needed)

B. Introduction and Context

Regional Context

- The Western and Central Pacific Ocean (WCPO) region includes 22 small island countries, dispersed over a large ocean space, with common development challenges related to small economies, limited resources, remoteness, dispersed population, and high exposure and vulnerability to external economic shocks, climate change and natural hazards.** Many Pacific Islanders live in poverty, and the region has many fragile states. Twelve Pacific Island Countries (PICs) are members of the World Bank (PIC-12), including Papua New Guinea (PNG), Fiji, Kiribati, the Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI), the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), Nauru, Palau, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu. Their combined exclusive economic zones (EEZ) add up to 17.8 million square kilometers – equivalent to the size of South America.
- The small island nation of Vanuatu consists of 83 islands and has been described as a large ocean State with 98 percent of its territory covered by ocean.** Vanuatu has experienced political instability and delays in delivery of public assets and services due to low public expenditure. Vanuatu's economy is driven by tourism, agriculture, fisheries, and subsistence activity outside the main urban centers of Port Vila and Luganville. The fisheries sector is pivotal to the nation's economy by contributing to 14 percent of the national Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 2021,¹ and supporting food security, especially for communities heavily dependent on coastal and oceanic fisheries.
- Vanuatu is one of the most climate-vulnerable countries in the world,** facing escalating threats from extreme weather events and changing climate,² with direct negative impacts on marine ecosystems, reducing the productivity of

¹ Gillett R. and Fong M. 2023. Fisheries in the economies of Pacific Island countries and territories (Benefish Study 4). Noumea, New Caledonia: Pacific Community. 704 p. <https://purl.org/spc/digilib/doc/ppizh>

² Climate Risk Country Profile: Vanuatu (2021): The World Bank Group.



coral reefs and fisheries.³ Coastal fish catches are expected to decrease by 20-50 percent by 2100 under high-emission scenarios (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change - IPCC, 2021). The country anticipates 2-3 cyclones each year, exacerbated by climate change. Climate adaptation measures are crucial, including improved inshore fisheries management, integrating climate risk considerations into fisheries policies and improving forecasting tools.

4. **Fisheries serve as a cornerstone of the economies of PICs, crucial for food security, nutrition, jobs, livelihoods, and public revenues. The WCPO is the only ocean without overfished tuna stocks and no overfishing** owing to robust conservation and management measures (CMMs). The PIC-12 are estimated to have accounted for 24 percent of global tuna catch in value (US\$2.8 billion), and around 27 percent in quantity (1.4 M tonnes (mt)) in 2023.

5. **Total government revenue generated by PICs from fishing access fees has grown significantly from around US\$70 million in 2009 to around US\$469 million in 2022**, constituting more than 30 percent of government revenue, when excluding PNG. The Parties of the Nauru Agreement (PNA) purse seine Vessel Day Scheme (VDS) significantly boosted revenues, with access fee revenue increased from around six percent of the ex-vessel value in 2011 to around 20 percent in 2021 for the catch taken in PNA members' waters.

6. **PICs now aim to increase their participation in the global tuna value chain beyond access fees, capturing part of its estimated value of US\$10-11 billion in 2023.** This effort will also contribute to continue expanding employment in the fisheries from the current 27,800 jobs across the region, and onshore processing volumes beyond current 17 percent of catch in the PIC-12.

7. **While investments in monitoring, control, and surveillance (MCS) capabilities resulted in a decline in illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing in the WCPO, continued efforts are needed at regional and national levels.** The financial impact of IUU remains a concern with FFA reporting that IUU fishing was valued at US\$333.5 million from 2017 to 2019. To combat this, PICs are adopting integrated MCS strategies, establishing authorities to meet international traceability requirements, and aiming to enhance overall MCS capabilities.

8. **The growth of economic returns from the fisheries sector that has been achieved to date is at risk due to climate change.** Factors such as water temperature and nutrient availability greatly influence future distribution and abundance of main tuna species, with skipjack and bigeye tuna likely moving further east, leading to an estimated average annual loss in regional tuna-fishing access fees of US\$90 million (13 percent in government revenue) by 2050.

Sectoral and Institutional Context

9. **While annual catch varies, in 2023, a total of almost 4,000 mt of tuna were caught by authorized vessels in Vanuatu waters.** With oceanic fishing carried out mostly by foreign licensed longlines vessels that land their catches elsewhere, Vanuatu is deprived of domiciliation benefits in the form of employment, diversified revenue and export earnings, and other economic multiplier effects from dockside offloading, transshipment, local market supply, domestic value adding including processing, vessel servicing, and other auxiliary and ancillary services.

10. **Vanuatu's EEZ tuna fishery has a sustainable productive capacity level of at least 17,000 mt of tuna per year, allowing for a double to four-fold⁴ increase in catch.** This provides an opportunity for upgrading the domestic small-scale fishing fleets and expanding their operation into offshore areas. Domesticating a fleet may substitute foreign fleets over time while creating strong ties with the local economy and labor force.

11. **Only 1.7 percent of catch (146 mt) caught in Vanuatu's waters in 2019 was processed in-country, significantly below the aggregated average of 12.1 percent across the PIC-12.** At the same time, Vanuatu imports around 4,000 mt of canned tuna a year, underscoring the opportunity for Vanuatu-caught fish to be processed in-country to create jobs, enhance food security, and eventually contribute to export earnings.

³ Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC). (2021). Coastal Fisheries Report Card. *SPC Fisheries Division*.

⁴ Large range is reflective of large annual variability of catch inside Vanuatu's waters.



12. **Vanuatu's fishing access revenues were estimated at around US\$2 million per year in the period 2019-2022, corresponding to only 6-9 percent of the ex-vessel value of the catch.** This is significantly below the PIC-12 aggregated average of 18.4 percent of ex-vessel value achieved between 2020-2022 and points to opportunities for Vanuatu to increase its revenue through restructuring of regulatory and licensing arrangements.

13. **In addition to the offshore tuna fisheries, Vanuatu also has coastal fisheries which are integral to food security, subsistence livelihoods, and local economies, with an estimated 40 percent of households⁵ participating in fishing activities, half of which fish for commercial purposes.⁶** Depletion of coastal fisheries coupled with limited data for management and intensifying effects of climate change are expected to reduce the contribution of coastal fisheries to protein supply in the future. A solution is to move fishing pressure from the small-scale fisheries to stocks that are not overfished (e.g. tuna), strengthen compliance with coastal fisheries management measures to maintain productivity, including through transition to digital technologies, and develop aquaculture as a climate-resilient solution particularly in remote land-locked areas.

Relationship to RPF

14. **The proposed project aligns with Vanuatu's *National Development Plan 2016-2030 (NSDP)*, the *Policy Directives for the Next 100 Days* issued in February 2025 by the new Government, and the *National Fisheries Sector Policy 2016-2031 (NFSP)*.** In addition, addressing climate change and disaster risks is a high priority for the Government of Vanuatu, as highlighted in the *Vanuatu Climate Change and Disaster Risk Reduction Policy 2016–2030*.

15. **The proposed project is also aligned with the Islands Regional Partnership Framework (RPF) FY17–21, report #100997-EAP.** The project will contribute to (i) Focus Area 1: Fully exploiting the available economic opportunities. The key focus will be on improved management of fisheries, increased incomes from agriculture, and expanded tourism opportunities; (ii) Focus Area 2: Enhancing access to employment opportunities. The key focus will be on broadening opportunities for labor mobility and addressing gender inequality and gender-based violence through entry points that offer economic opportunities for marginalized genders; and (iii) Focus Area 3: Protecting incomes and livelihoods. A key focus is on strengthened preparedness and resilience to natural disasters and climate change, through investments that offer climate-related co-benefits. The RPF was extended (report #145750-EAP).

C. Proposed Development Objective(s)

The Development Objective of the Series of Projects (SoP) is to strengthen the shared management of selected Pacific Island oceanic and coastal fisheries, and the critical habitats upon which they depend.

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Key Results (From PCN)

- I. Number of people supported with livelihoods/jobs opportunities (Corporate Scorecard Indicator – CSI, disaggregated by gender)
- II. Improved climate-resilient domestic supply of fish products to consumers (kg)
- III. Fisheries management is informed by timely access to data by national and regional stakeholders (Number)
 - a. Yearly public feedback on fisheries management measures
 - b. Data collection digitalized (Number of datasets fully digitalized)
 - c. Percentage of trips by domestic fleet monitored through Electronic Monitoring (EM)
 - d. Number of medium/small boats with a functioning tracking device

⁵ Participation in fisheries varies between provinces with fishing participation reaching as high as 84 percent of households in Tafea Province.

⁶ Based on census data. Word Bank. In press



D. Concept Description

Multiphase one World Bank Group (WBG) approach

16. **Considering the scale and complexity of investments needed to drive sector transformation, successive investments via multiple phases are envisaged.** This first phase project will focus on putting in place no-regret, public-sector financed enabling infrastructure, strengthening of institutions and policies, and preparing a pipeline of skilled workers needed for developing a fisheries hub that provides for dock-side inspections, offloading, transshipment and, in the medium term, value adding to tuna on the island of Espiritu Santo – a priority development location identified by the Government of Vanuatu, and value chain investments (e.g. cold chain systems) for development and scaling up of the domestic small- and medium scale fisheries will be delivered. Investments can be scaled up to other provinces of Vanuatu in successive phases or through Additional Financing

17. **The project design is grounded in analytics underpinning the challenges and opportunities for the national fisheries sector,^{7, 8} on-the-ground assessments and consultations, and informed by lessons drawn from a decade of regional and national investments under the Pacific Regional Oceanscape Program (PROP).**

Project Description

18. **Component 1. Tuna industry domestication.** This component will support the development of enabling public infrastructure in Luganville, Espiritu Santo, to increase domestic benefits and value capture from industrial tuna fishing fleets operating in Vanuatu's waters that are currently not calling into domestic ports and instead landing catch elsewhere.

19. **Subcomponent 1.1. Investing in enabling public infrastructure for tuna industry domestication.** The subcomponent will finance a proposed multipurpose jetty to accommodate tie-up for multiple fishing vessels designed to meet maritime security regulations for ships and port facilities involved in international trade as per International Ship and Port Facility Security Code (ISPS) necessary for transshipment activities. The jetty will be complemented with associated onshore facilities, including a boatyard pen and gantry for boat maintenance, an administrative office building that accommodates fisheries inspections, customs service, police and enforcement, seafood certification, and other administrative fishing port functions. The planned facilities will address a gap in existing fisheries port infrastructure in Vanuatu by offering a one-stop shop for efficient dockside inspections and administrative functions, facilities for dockside offloading, services to fleets (maintenance, catch sorting, supplies, cold storage, dock power, etc.), and facilitation of transshipment, ultimately serving as an attractive hub for future private and public-private partnership investments.

20. **Subcomponent 1.2. Developing a workforce for a national fisheries and seafood industry.** This sub-component will support an integrated approach to align curriculum development, workforce professionalization, and technology adoption. The National Maritime and Fisheries Training Institute⁹, located adjacent to the selected site for the multipurpose jetty and onshore facilities, offers an established facility for delivery of vocational training. The curriculum will be modernized and diversified through partnering with a leading foreign Seafood Technology Institute and other regional training institutes for specialist support. Potential training areas for creating a competent, job-ready workforce include aquaculture, boat building, safety at sea, captain certification, boat engine repair and maintenance, refrigeration repair and maintenance, food safety and hygiene, PIRFO¹⁰-level fisheries observers, EM and Electronic Reporting (ER).

21. In parallel, a fisheries technology and commercialization center will be established on site, providing hands-on

⁷ Vanuatu Fisheries Sector Review. Under Review.

⁸ Vanuatu National Roadmap for Coastal Fisheries: 2019–2030. 2019. Government of the Republic of Vanuatu. ISBN: 978-982-00-1206-6.

⁹ Formerly Vanuatu Maritime College

¹⁰ <https://www.pirfo.org/>



training, innovation support, and enterprise development services in seafood safety, cold chain logistics, value-added processing, including small-scale canning. The proposed preliminary design includes a demonstration lab, hybrid solar-powered ice maker, chill and freezer room, retort canner and can sealing equipment, test kitchen and small-scale processing lines, hygiene training station, and shared workspace or training room and business support tools.

22. **Component 2. Small- and medium-sized fisheries and aquaculture value chain development.** This component will develop small- and medium-sized domestic fisheries and aquaculture operations to increase domestic supply of fish for food security, nutritious protein supply, and moving fishers' livelihoods up the job ladder from low-quality, low-skill livelihoods targeting depleted nearshore stocks to higher-quality, higher-skill jobs targeting tuna and other pelagic species to create a more resilient sector.

23. **Subcomponent 2.1. Investing in domestic fisheries value chains.** Investments in strengthening value chain development will focus on developing a spoke-and-hub cold chain system ensuring improved freshness of fish supply to the Luganville Provincial Fish Market and for onwards distribution with reduced spoilage by supporting fishers' associations and the market and dispersed landing and handling points (i.e. "spokes"). In addition, it will support the design, construction, and demonstration of two medium-scale vessels as well as communications on results, building on work initiated by the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the Vanuatu Fisheries Department (VFD). Medium-scale vessel development is aimed to facilitate offshore movement of fishers and advance fisheries on anchored fish aggregating devices (FADs).

24. **Subcomponent 2.2. Informing domestic fisheries value chain management and development.** The project will support: (i) improved data collection (economic, social, biological) and analysis to inform management decisions and track sector performance, including the sector's economic contribution; (ii) increased use of data tools/apps/technology for efficiency, including upgrading and integration of existing regional tools such as IKASAVEA and TAILS apps for artificial intelligence (AI)-supported electronic data collection, and corresponding Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) equipment; (iii) capacity building support and technical assistance to VFD in data collection and analysis to inform enforcement and management decisions.

25. **Subcomponent 2.3. Aquaculture sector development.** The project will support upstream analytical work, capacity building, and enabling conditions for the future expansion and development of aquaculture. This may include supporting the development of hatcheries and hatchery operations in Espiritu Santo to meet the growing demand for quality seed stock for both small-scale household aquaculture and semi-commercial demonstration farms and strengthening extension services to aquaculture producers and organizations.

26. **Component 3. Fisheries governance and institutions' strengthening.** The component aims to enhance Vanuatu's fisheries sector by reinforcing fisheries governance, supporting policy and regulatory review and strengthening the institutional capacity of VFD, including the through design and construction of new VFD headquarters given the destruction of the previously rented office space in the recent earthquake. These efforts are expected to result in a more efficient and effective fisheries sector administration, resulting in increased management effectiveness and the government's ability to capture revenues from fisheries, and offering enhanced services to local fishers and stakeholders.

27. **Subcomponent 3.1. VFD Headquarter infrastructures and equipment.** A site in Port Vila under Government ownership has been identified for the construction of the new earthquake-resistant VFD building. The project will support: (i) design and construction a new climate-resilient, low-emission (energy efficient) and seismic-resistant headquarters building for VFD, including renewable energy power systems; (ii) furniture and fittings; (iii) two vehicles; (iv) equipment such as data recorders, computers, and personal safety gear; and (v) limited and agreed operational costs for stationery and internet access, among other necessities.

28. **Subcomponent 3.2. Strengthening MCS capacity.** The project will support procurement, installation, and operation of up to 30 EM systems (onboard cameras and equipment) to be implemented alongside ER to strengthen the



vessel monitoring program and support a gradual long-term transition to increased use of EM in lieu of observers, while supporting the observer placement program. The project will also support stakeholder outreach and public information campaigns to raise awareness on fisheries management and technical assistance services to support analyzing fisheries data and providing capacity building for VFD in data collection and analysis.

29. **Subcomponent 3.3. Supporting policy review and updating MCS capacity.** The project will support a series of policy and other reviews in support of increased transparency, accountability, and to inform improved regulatory dimensions, including a forensic audit of the Vanuatu open international shipping registry (VISR) functions to ensure that registration practices align with international standards and ensure responsible flag state performance, while others may be considered.

30. **Component 4. Project management.** This component covers the staffing of the Project Support Team (PST), procurement of necessary equipment and software, and operational costs. Additionally, it includes funding for financial audits, the implementation of Environmental and Social (E&S) instruments, and the preparation of mid-term and implementation completion reports. The PST is expected to include a Project Coordinator, Engineer (Advisor), Procurement Advisor, Procurement Officer, Financial Controller, E&S Officer(s), and Communications Officer.

Legal Operational Policies

Policies	Triggered?
Projects on International Waterways OP 7.50	No
Projects in Disputed Area OP 7.60	No

Summary of Screening of Environmental and Social Risks and Impacts

31. The project includes both technical assistance activities and physical investment activities, which have substantial environmental and social risks. The physical activities of the project mainly includes development of enabling public infrastructure in Luganville, Espritu Santo, to increase domestic benefits and value capture from industrial offshore tuna fishing fleets operating in Vanuatu's water. The infrastructure includes land reclamation and construction of multi-purpose piled 250 meters jetty. The jetty will be complemented with associated onshore facilities, including a boatyard pen and gantry for boat maintenance, an administrative office building. The office building is proposed to be built on reclaimed land. A fisheries technology and commercialization incubator will be established on site and built as a HACCP -compliant seafood product development facility. Investments in strengthening value chain development will focus on developing a spoke and hub cold chain system including upgrading the Luganville fish market facilities. Medium-scale vessel development is aimed to facilitate offshore movement of fishers and advance fisheries on anchored FADs. Upgrade works to the hatcheries and hatchery operations are also foreseen.

32. Environmental risks related to the Land reclamation include changes in coastal processes resulting in alterations to seabed and coastal geomorphology (erosion, sediment deposition, change in inundation profile) due to the effects on water currents, wave patterns, and localized water levels. Construction activities as well as jetty operations can result in increased turbidity via suspension of sediment in the water column and release of contaminants in the water column and sediments. In addition, the introduction of pollutants can have adverse impacts on aquatic flora and fauna (including



benthic communities), and human health. High underwater noise and vibration levels may be generated from several sources during construction and operational phases, including offshore pile driving, and vessel movement. Noise from these activities may adversely impact aquatic habitats. Construction of administrative staff building on reclaimed land can be prone to ground instability, settlement, and soil liquefaction. As the administrative building and new VFD headquarters are accessible to public, Life and Fire Safety (L&FS) risk requires careful consideration. National regulations require buildings to comply with all local building legislation requirements, as well as the safe building procedures of Australia and New Zealand. The construction of physical works (admin and VFD building, seaproduct incubators, hatcheries upgrades etc) have typical construction stage risks such as impact on ambient air, water, noise pollution, etc. Climate change impacts are expected to increase the vulnerability of the physical infrastructure components to storm surges, flash floods and fluvial flooding. Seafood product development facility is likely to be water resource intensive with the risk of further exacerbate due to the contextual risk of limited water resource availability. Significant amount of wastewater with high pollution load is also likely to be generated from seafood product development facility. Lack of adequate treatment will impact aquatic and marine environments. Risk associated with the unsustainable harvesting of fish stocks in the fisheries value chain supported through component 2 activities. A review of IBAT data identified IUCN CR and EN species, including nearshore marine biomes, present in the project area of influence and needs assessment for impacts on the biodiversity values.

33. Social risks include non-compliance with labor and working conditions, risks of elite capture, and barriers to access for vulnerable people including Indigenous Peoples, women and disabled people. Additionally, the project may pose health and safety risks to both workers and local communities, including those engaging in aquaculture, construction and operational of the jetty, seafood technology incubators and other physical infrastructure. The potential for SEA-SH is also a significant concern, particularly in remote areas with low levels of project monitoring. Land acquisition and involuntary resettlement may lead to physical and economic displacement, disrupting livelihoods and causing social tension. Effective stakeholder engagement is crucial to address these risks, ensuring that the project benefits are equitably distributed and that the rights and well-being of all affected groups, especially Indigenous Peoples, are respected and protected.

34. The preparation phase will be used to assess these risks and develop appropriate instruments including the Environmental and Social Commitment Plan (ESCP), E&S Scoping/Initial Assessment Study, Stakeholder Engagement Plan (SEP), Sexual Exploitation and Abuse / Sexual Harassment Action Plan (SEA/SH AP), and Labor Management Plan (LMP).

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