

**FFA**

FORUM FISHERIES COMMITTEE
ONE HUNDRED AND EIGHTEENTH MEETING

25-28 MAY 2021

Agenda Item:	15
Paper Number:	FFC118-WP12
Title:	Observer Livelihoods and Safety

Summary

This paper provides an update to Members on the three key work areas implemented by the Secretariat following the FFC114 decision in 2020. These work areas are:

- a. Observer Livelihoods & Safety Study Recommendation Implementation Plan;
- b. Observer Redeployment Plan; and
- c. Observer Insurance.

These three key areas were also identified as recommendations from the Observer Livelihoods and Safety Study report and implementation of the recommendations is ongoing. The Secretariat is collaborating with Members and key partners to continue progressing these work areas.

Recommendations

The Committee is invited to:

- (i) **Note** the ongoing work to ensure observer livelihoods are sustained and their safety is protected;
- (ii) **Seek** FFC's guidance and input on the draft observer redeployment plan;
- (iii) **Encouraged** NOPs to have specific observer placement safety protocols to mitigate COVID-19 prior to observer redeployment; and,
- (iv) **Endorse** the establishment of the Regional Observer Insurance Compensation Scheme.

Introduction

1. This paper provides an update on the three key work areas implemented by the Secretariat following the FFC114 decision in 2020. These work areas are:
 - a. Observer Livelihoods & Safety Study Recommendations Implementation Plan;
 - b. Observer Redeployment Plan; and
 - c. Observer Insurance.
2. The approach towards the proposed redeployment plan is guided by three main objectives: to keep observers safe; preventing the risk of contracting COVID, and stop transmission of COVID-19 into Pacific communities. The draft plan describes a staged approach and options to progressively redeploy observers, as well as outlining the different requirements covering observer pre-deployment, during deployment, and post-deployment phases, for discussion and consideration.
3. At the FFC114 meeting in June 2020, FFC stressed the importance of expediting work to ensure observer livelihoods are sustained, and their safety is protected in the performance of their duties and tasked the Secretariat to conduct a study on observer livelihoods and safety in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.
4. These three key areas were also identified in the observer livelihoods and study report. The implementation of the observer livelihoods & safety recommendations is ongoing. The Secretariat is collaborating with Members and key partners to continue progressing this work, with the aim to redeploy observers back to sea at the earliest time possible.
5. At the FFCMIN17 in July 2020, the Ministers welcomed the study undertaken by the Secretariat to look at ways to maintain observer livelihoods and ensure their safety is protected during this unprecedented time. While recognising achievements to date, Ministers called for greater attention to be given to the issue of observer safety given the ongoing risks faced by observers in their work that continue to result in injury and the unacceptable death of Pacific island observers in the line of duty.
6. FFA Members continued to highlight at the WCPFC level the need to recommence the deployment of observers on fishing vessels again. In this regard, the Secretariat has developed an observer redeployment plan which was discussed at ROCW21 and the 24th MCS working group meeting during 2021 for further consideration by FFC.
7. The ongoing difficulty to deploy observers due to the COVID-19 pandemic, still has an impact on the livelihoods of the observers. The Secretariat will continue its effort to provide the recommended training from the livelihood study report to keep the observers busy while they are not going to sea. Observers are paid a sitting allowance for attending these training sessions.

Key Issues

Covid-19 Protocols

8. Sustaining observer livelihoods and ensuring their safety is a key priority for the Secretariat and National Observer Programmes (NOPs). There is ongoing work to ensure NOPs have in place COVID-19 risk mitigation protocols prior to the redeployment of observers to sea.
9. The Secretariat, in collaboration with the PNA Office, SPC's Public Health Division, MRAG AP, and Australia-DFAT developed a generic COVID-19 safety protocol for the fishing sector in the Pacific

which has been presented to Members to be used as a guide to develop their national COVID-19 protocols. Some members are working on their national COVID-19 safety protocols and the Secretariat will continue to provide assistance where necessary.

10. The Secretariat organised a regional COVID19 awareness workshop that was facilitated virtually for the members in January 2021. Participants from the membership were on call including some industry representatives and NGO groups. The awareness workshop was focused on how COVID19 risk can be mitigated to minimize further risk of contracting or spreading the virus and enable fishing operations to continue in a safe manner.

11. FFA Commissioned MRAG Asia Pacific to conduct a study on observer livelihoods and safety. The study report provided some clear recommendations and options towards addressing the issue of observer livelihoods and safety.

Observer Livelihoods

10. COVID-19 has impacted the livelihoods of Pacific Islands observers and their families due to the WCPFC intersessional decision to continuously extend the temporary suspension of the 100% observer coverage on fishing vessels. The continuous extension of the suspension will likely result in high observer manpower turnover in the region, due to observers leaving the programme and finding alternate job opportunities. The recommendations in the observer livelihoods and safety study aim to address the observer livelihoods issue and the Secretariat is working with Members and partners to implement these recommendations. **Attachment A** outlines the status of the implementation of these recommendations.

11. The Secretariat, Members, and key partners are also collaborating to develop a practical plan that will ensure observers are deployed and repatriated back to their homeport safely without contracting or spreading COVID-19. The proposed redeployment plan is attached as **Attachment B**.

12. The proposed redeployment plan key requirements are consistent with the FFA Regional COVID19 Safety protocol for the Fishing Sector in the Pacific. It outlines possible redeployment options, and requirements covering pre-deployment, during actual deployment, and post-deployment stages (refer to tables 1-4).

13. The plan further provides suggested requirements to be considered as regional standards (refer to table 5). The plan also outlines suggested requirements with the expected objectives and possible timeframe for FFC's consideration (refer to table 6). **FFC is required to provide guidance and input into the draft redeployment plan.**

Specific Observer Placement Safety protocol

14. Another key issue relates to the need for NOPs to have specific observer placement safety protocols to mitigate COVID-19 prior to observer redeployment when the temporary suspension is lifted. The Secretariat will continue to support Members' NOPs in developing specific national COVID risk mitigation protocols. **Members are encouraged to advise the Secretariat on assistance required.**

Insurance coverage for observers

15. Adequate insurance coverage for observers is critical, given the risky nature of their role. In July 2016, the FFC strengthened the MTCs on observers' insurance by:

- (a) including insurance cover for observers when travelling to and from the vessel (in addition to cover onboard the vessel), and
- (b) requiring “full insurance coverage” including coverage:
 - in the event of injury or illness of the observer, full repatriation and medical costs, as applicable, where the observer is returned to port for medical reasons;
 - in the event of injury or death of the observer, to pay for the autopsy, funeral expenses, and adequate costs for medical, repatriation, loss of earnings, and other related expenses as applicable.

13. A 2nd Regional Observer Insurance workshop was held virtually on 19 March 2021. The workshop focused on minimum standards for observer insurance and the establishment of a centralised observer compensation scheme. The workshop agreed to the following outcomes:

- i. FFC consider injury, illness, death, loss of belonging, and damage or injury caused by the observer, as the best practice minimum standards for risks covered by an observer insurance policy for endorsement, as appropriate;
- ii. A definition of “full insurance coverage” is included as a proposed amendment to the HMTc this year 2021. “Full insurance coverage” means insurance that covers door to door protection (based on 5 years of average Observer wages for death and an appropriate proportion thereof for injury, illness, loss of belongings, damage or injury caused by the observer)
- iii. The Secretariat reports to the FFC on the mechanisms envisaged for the Observer Compensation Scheme.

Attachment A**Observer Livelihoods and Safety Study Recommendation and Implementation Plan**

	Recommendations – Observer livelihoods	FFA Secretariat Comments	Key Partners	Timeframe	Status Update
1	Consider developing practical plans to resume 100% observer coverage at the earliest time possible;	The Secretariat is working with key partners to: • Deliver regional training/awareness about the FFA <i>COVID-19 Operating Protocols</i>. This will be held in late January 2021 and will target fisheries staff/observers and relevant stakeholders. • Assist with the issuing of appropriate COVID-19 toolkits to NOPs to support placement. • Strengthen safety protocols for observer deployment. Integrating the <i>FFA COVID-19 operating protocol</i> for the Fishing sector with national COVID protocols will be explored. • Examine the potential for vessels to pick up observers from their home port and return them back to homeport after the trip.	PNA, SPC, Members,	3rd QTR 2021	• The COVID-19 Protocols awareness workshop was delivered 27-28 Jan 2021. • The Secretariat did purchase the COVID PPEs for a few NOPs that have provided a quotation. • Few Members are using the Regional FFA COVID19 protocol to develop national observer placement plans. • This will require policy decisions that need to be explored and discussed with members and the industry (<i>to be discussed at and FFC for Policy decision</i>).

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2	Consider potential use of observers in the design/delivery of the longer-term opportunities identified (e.g. on-shore MCS engagement, Fisheries awareness, rehabilitation programmes, e-monitoring, monitoring labour MTCs) and consider funding in the context of relevant national/regional cost recovery arrangements;	The Secretariat and key partners are working with members to identify opportunities for long term options for observer activities including; • On-shore MCS, • Boarding Inspections • Fisheries awareness, • Coastal Fisheries rehabilitation programmes, • E-monitoring, • Monitoring labour MTCs	SPC, Members	on-going	• Six Members (<i>PNG, Vanuatu, Samoa, Tonga, Tuvalu and Solomon</i>) have been engaging observers for onshore and coastal fisheries activities.
3	Examine opportunities to redirect any 'unspent funds from planned budgets and the training program into types of training initiatives detailed in the study report;	The Secretariat has identified the unspent funds and will be allocating the funds to the proposed training in the report including other relevant training; • Basic psychology • Sea safety recertification training • EM • Conflict resolution • Financial literacy • Asset management	SPC	2nd QTR 2021	• The Secretariat did reach out to NOPs to provide information on the possible institutions in the country that can deliver this training. • The Secretariat will continue to explore and identify other institutions that can also deliver these training online and make formal arrangement to facilitate regional training
4	Explore the creation of a 'jobs board' type online forum allowing potential 'employers' and observers to connect around short term engagements/contracts;	The Secretariat is exploring whether this can be done on the PIRFO website. Alternatively, another option might be to compile a website or page or "Job Board". The website might include the observer's credentials to support marketing observers for any contract employment opportunities.	SPC, PNA	2nd QTR 2021	• FFA and SPC are exploring this with the best option to link to the existing PIRFO website • The Secretariat will develop a clear TOR to progress this work

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5	Continue discussions with other regional organisations (e.g. SPC, WCPFC) as well as relevant regional funds (e.g. JTF, CTTF) for funding opportunities to contribute to the plan;	As discussed at pre-WCPFC17 and during WCPFC17, members are reminded of these possible funding sources; • WCPFC 2021 Budget “Regional Capacity Building Workshop” line item now includes a roll-over of 130K from 2020 budget which is intended to be used for the COVID19 Protocols and observer related training • The Special Requirement Fund (SRF) has a balance of USD344,934 (as at March 2021). Members are encouraged to submit proposals to the SRF • For further details on the above sources of fund, see the WCPFC website at Implementation of Article 30 of the Convention WCPFC	PNA, SPC	On-going	• The Secretariat provided Members necessary guidance to apply for these funds, and asked Members to seek assistance from FFA with the drafting of the proposal if needed. • Five Members (<i>FM, MH, SB, TO and VU</i>) have applied for funding through WCPFC JTF (6 proposals from 2 members funded for 2021) and SRF (2 proposals as at March 2021), • The Secretariat will apply for the funds from WCPFC budget (Regional Capacity Building workshop line item) to support the NOPs for their training needs
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	Recommendations – Observer Safety	FFA Secretariat Comments	Key Partners	Timeframe	
1	Encouraged members to develop national COVID operational safety measures for observer deployment;	The Secretariat is continuously liaising with key partners and working with Members to assist with national observer deployment safety protocols.	SPC, PNA	On-going	- Four Members (<i>Vanuatu, Solomon Islands, Samoa, Tuvalu</i>) have advised that they are implementing the FFA Regional COVID19 protocol, and incorporating the key requirement into their national observer placement protocol. - Some Members have advised they are operating under their respective national COVID protocols, at the same time referring to the FFA regional COVID19 protocol for the fisheries sector.
2	Task FFA/SPC to develop a standard (e.g. PIRFO) pre-deployment medical check-up form for observers and make medical check-ups compulsory prior to all new deployments;	The form has already been developed and accepted by ROCW21 and endorsed by MCSWG24. The Secretariat will communicate with members to identify recommended medical facilities in-country to conduct medical check-ups for observers.	SPC, PNA	2nd QTR 2021	- The NOPs were encouraged to start using the form as the regional minimum medical checkup requirement. - NOPs advised that they have their national medical checkup form and will incorporate the minimum medical requirements once

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					the regional form is endorsed by FFC
3	Consider the development of a regular safety at sea refresher course and certificate which expires after a reasonable period (say 3-5 years);	• The Secretariat is collaborating with NOPs to identify observers who have invalid sea safety certificates • The Secretariat will work with NOPs and relevant organisations to have these observers undergo an updated sea safety training so that they have valid safety certificates when they are to be deployed. • The Secretariat will be looking at possible sources of funds to support this training.	SPC, PNA, Maritime Schools	2nd & 3rd QTR 2021	• Some NOPs have provided the list of observers with invalid sea safety certificates and the Secretariat is in contact with the programmes to organise training. • This course is estimated at @US\$500 per person for 2 weeks training. • This training cannot be delivered online (<i>PG, VU, TV, MH, FI, KI, FM, WS have marine schools that can deliver this training</i>). The Secretariat is expecting feedback from NOPs to advise. • Recently the Secretariat supported Tuvalu on request with 50% of the total sea safety training cost for their observers. • The Secretariat will apply for funds from the WCPFC budget (Regional Capacity Building workshop line item) to assist NOPs for Sea Safety training.

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4	Consider the option to supply observers with a robust tracking device;	The Secretariat is; • Exploring other safety tracking devices that are durable, with an intention to procure and issue to NOPs to support placement. • Providing members with the list of durable devices that can be affordable by NOPs including training on how to use these devices. • Continuously encouraging members to take this seriously and budget for these essential items for observers.	SPC, PNA	2nd QTR 2021	• The Secretariat is investigating some potential suppliers of the recommended tracking devices and will acquire some for a trial to assess their durability before making further recommendations to NOPs on which models are durable, affordable, and fit for purpose.
5	Encourage members to move towards compulsory observer e-reporting at the earliest practical opportunity;	The Secretariat and key partners will continue to work with members to further progress the work on e-reporting and provide technical support and training where necessary.	PNA, SPC	On-going	• This is to be driven at the national level and there is ongoing work in this area. • 2 x ER training already delivered online in Feb and May respectively. • Similar training will continue to be delivered.
6	Encourage members to strengthen insurance arrangements for observers, including examining the implementation of a regional self-insurance scheme capable of covering all programs on an 'opt-in' 'opt out' basis;	The Secretariat and key partners are working with members to; • Review the observer insurance minimum standard • seek views and guidance for the proposed centralised observer compensation scheme.	PNA, Members	On-going	• The Secretariat facilitated the Second regional insurance workshop on 19 March 2021, with the outcomes as presented in this paper for consideration.
7	Encourage members to undertake national-level risk	The Secretariat will continue to liaise with NOP; • To provide technical support for members	SPC, PNA	On-going	• The potential risks are vessels arriving from a

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	assessments, taking into account their individual circumstances and implementation of risk mitigation arrangements and provide updates at the annual ROCW.	undertaking national-level risk assessments. • To address any implementing risk and discuss mitigation arrangements at the ROCW			COVID19 high risk country, contact with vessels at sea, transferring of crews and provisioning of vessels at sea. • Most Members are using their own national protocols administered by relevant local authorities. • Members have not requested the Secretariat for technical support to undertake national level risk assessments.
8	Consider arranging basic psychology (or similar) training for coordinators with a view to better enabling them to identify obvious signs of mental illness and support observers at sea experiencing mental health challenges;	The Secretariat will identify suitable service providers who will be able to deliver such training.	SPC, PNA, Members	On-going	• The Secretariat did reach out to NOPs to advise if they have any institutions or specialists who can deliver such training in the country. • The Secretariat is also exploring online facilitators who can deliver the training that will target observer Coordinators/Managers
9	Task FFA/SPC to develop and implement an asset management training course for observer programmes;	The Secretariat will liaise with key partners and members for service providers to deliver asset management training for NOP Coordinators and their relevant staff.	SPC, PNA	3rd QTR 2021	• The Secretariat is working with NOPs to identify institutions who can deliver this training in-country, and simultaneously exploring reliable institutions that can deliver online training.

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10	Consider the installation of surveillance cameras on all fishing vessels as a mandatory requirement by 2022;	Noting the linkages to the Regional Longline EM Policy, the Secretariat is encouraging members to: • review national laws to make EM compulsory for vessels fishing in their EEZ and in the adjacent high seas. • Take a regional approach to consider the installation of surveillance cameras on purse seine vessels for observer safety reasons, noting that longline vessels are covered under the Policy.	PNA, SPC, Members	4th QTR 2021	• This may require Policy decisions and has to be driven by members. • Interested members to communicate with POA and FFA for trial.
11	Consider the merits of coordinating some observer program management functions regionally (e.g. asset tracking; back-up emergency response coordination);	FFA will liaise with NOP Coordinators to discuss; • How assets can be managed and tracked regionally identifying service providers who are able to develop a regional framework for asset tracking. • Investigating further how observers can be tracked via the existing tracking tools.	PNA, SPC, Members	4th QTR 2021	• ROCW21 agreed to further explore this option and FFA will collaborate with key partners to progress this.
12	Consider developing a structured system to allow observers to report on safety incidents on vessels with a view to (a) better understanding the safety environment onboard host vessels and informing risk assessments/safety responses and, (b) identifying vessels with a poor safety track record	The Secretariat will work with key partners, and possibly providers; • To develop a system for observers to send and receive encrypted safety information and put in place on-board safety protocols specific to observers. • To consult widely with relevant agencies and stakeholders to identify best practice systems.	PNA, SPC	4th QTR 2021	• ROCW21 agreed to further explore this option and FFA is collaborating with key partners to progress this work. • The Secretariat is investigating how this can be built to the existing system within the RFSC and the different national systems.
13	Consider implementing a trial of fixed two-way	The Secretariat and key partners will work with an identified service provider to explore options;	PNA, SPC Members	4th QTR 2021	• This would require Policy decisions and has to be

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	satellite communication devices onboard vessels with a view to evaluating costs, practicalities, and safety benefits to observers;	• To trial installation of fixed two-way satellite communication devices onboard vessels. • To evaluate costs, practicalities, and safety benefits to observers of these devices.			driven by members. • Interested members to communicate with POA and FFA for trial.
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Attachment B**Draft Observer Redeployment Plan****TABLE 1 – Redeployment Options**

	Redeployment Options	Goal	Timeframe
1	Focusing redeployment of observers on domestic fleets only.	Immediate	Ongoing
2	Redeploying observers on licensed vessels based on COVID risk assessments.	Immediate	2 nd Qtr 2021
3	Redeploying observers on vessels that pick up and disembark observers at the homeport.	Intermediate	3 rd Qtr 2021
4	Redeploying observers on vessels based on the duration of a fishing trip.	Intermediate	3 rd Qtr 2021
5	Redeploying observers on certain gear type, i.e. carrier vessels only	Intermediate	4 th Qtr 2021

TABLE 2 - Pre-Deployment

Requirements	Must	Goal	Timeframe	National	Regional
Observer awareness of the FFA COVID19 Protocols <i>(Sourcing and training on PPEs and COVID-19 Testing and Vaccination Pre-deployment)</i>	✓	Immediate	Ongoing	✓	✓
COVID risk analysis on Vessels prior to redeployment. <i>(Conduct background checks, COVID-19 risk analysis on Vessels using the tools provided in Annex 1 pg 15 of Protocols)</i>	✓	Immediate	Ongoing	✓	✓
Implementation of the FFA COVID-19 Protocols <i>(Maintain Good personal hygiene, Practise physical distancing on board vessel, Maintaining, cleaning and disinfecting surfaces on the vessel, Regular health checks, Monitoring vessel contact) or equivalent and/or stringent protocols on fishing vessels by all personnel involved in fishing operations)</i>	✓	Immediate	Ongoing	✓	✓

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Issue observers with appropriate PPEs and training on how to use them;	✓	Immediate	Ongoing	✓	✓
Medical certificate from observers to ensure they are certified as medically fit for observer work, <i>(Need assurance of no underlying conditions that might make them particularly vulnerable to Covid-19 if infected)</i>	✓	Immediate	Ongoing	✓	
Observer to undergo refresher training prior to redeployment	✓	Immediate	Ongoing	✓	
Observer vaccination	✓	Intermediate	Ongoing	✓	
Observers to undergo sea safety re-certification training before redeployment	Not urgent	Intermediate	2 nd – 3 rd Qtr 2021	✓	
Vessels to pick up observers at home port	Based on agreement by the vessel, observer provider, and the relevant Port States.	Intermediate	3 rd Qtr 2021	✓	✓
Crew vaccination by vessel operators	✓	Intermediate	4th Qtr 2021	✓	✓

TABLE 3 - During Deployment

Requirements	Must	Goal	Timeframe	National	Regional
Implementation of the FFA COVID-19 Protocols (<i>Maintain Good personal hygiene, Practise physical distancing on board vessel, Maintaining, cleaning and disinfecting surfaces on the vessel, Regular health checks, Monitoring vessel contact</i>) or equivalent and/or stringent protocols on fishing vessels by all personnel involved in fishing operations	✓	Immediate	Ongoing	✓	✓
Require reporting on aspects of the FFA COVID-19 Protocols such as crew change at sea, submission of daily crew and observer temperature records, and records of interactions with other vessels at sea	✓	Immediate	Ongoing	✓	✓
Vessel to implement national, regional, and own COVID19 protocols	✓	Immediate	Ongoing	✓	✓
Mandatory Observer weekly reporting on welfare and wellbeing	✓	Immediate	Ongoing	✓	✓
Vessels to disembark observers at home	Based on agreement by the vessel, observer provider, and relevant Port State.	Intermediate	3 rd Qtr 2021	✓	✓

TABLE 4 - Post Deployment

Additional Requirements	Must	Goal	Timeframe	National	Regional
Implementation of the FFA COVID-19 Protocols or equivalent and/or stringent protocols on fishing vessels by all personnel involved in fishing operations when disembarking vessel;	✓	Immediate	Ongoing	✓	✓
An observer taking COVID19 test on disembarking the vessel	✓	Immediate	Ongoing	✓	
Quarantine of observers for 14 days (Who will meet the cost???)	✓	Immediate	Ongoing	✓	✓

TABLE 5 – Consideration of Regional Standards

Regional requirements	Must	Goal	Timeframe
Requirement for standard observer medical examination.	✓	Immediate	2 nd Qtr 2021
Aspects of the FFA COVID-19 Protocols such as regulating crew change at sea and requiring submission of daily crew temperature records and maintaining records of interactions with other vessels at sea.	✓	Immediate	2 nd Qtr 2021
Requirements for crew vaccination by vessel operators.	Administer by Flag State	Intermediate	2 nd Qtr 2021

TABLE 6 - Proposed Approach

Suggested Conditions/Requirements	Objectives	Timeframe
Implementation of the FFA COVID-19 Protocols or equivalent and/or stringent protocols on fishing vessels by all personnel involved in fishing operations;	Applying best practices to avoid the transmission of COVID-19 virus amongst fisheries sector workforce in the Pacific and its communities.	Ongoing
observer awareness of the FFA Protocols;	Observers understand the COVID-19 safety protocols to minimize the risk of contracting the virus	Ongoing
Requiring observers to undergo refresher training before redeployment	To refresh their knowledge prior to redeployment in accordance with the PIRFO standards for observers not taking trips over 12 months period	Ongoing
Requiring SOLAS certificate from observers to demonstrate they have acquired the necessary knowledge on sea safety	To ensure observers have the necessary SOLAS certification and be able to act appropriately during at sea and in port emergencies	Ongoing
Issue observers with appropriate PPEs and training on how to use them	To ensure observer are well equipped with appropriate PPEs and understand how to use them	Ongoing
Requiring a medical certificate from observers to ensure they are certified as medically fit for observer work	To ensure observers are physically and medically fit prior to engagement on trips	2 nd Qtr 2021
Consideration of observers and crew in vaccination roll out;	Observers are safe to be redeployed on vessels and minimize the risk of contracting C19	3 rd Qtr 2021
Requiring vessels to pick up and disembark observers at homeport	• To enable observers to embark and disembark from vessels at the home port to carry out their mandated duties. • To avoid travelling to a second country with travel restrictions and will not reach the port of embarkation on time, and vice versa. • To avoid the high risk of contracting the C19 virus whilst traveling to and from the vessel port of embarkation/disembarkation	3 rd Qtr 2021

