

COUNTRIES:

Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, Federated States of Micronesia, Nauru, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Republic of the Marshall Islands, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Timor-Leste, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu

CLIENT: European Union Delegation (EUD) for the Pacific Region

CONTRACT VALUE: 112 720,00 EUR

DURATION: 8 months

PROJECT MANAGER: Ana Gajicic (VAS)

**MID-TERM EVALUATION OF
PACWASTE PLUS****SDG: #6, #12, #13, #14, #15, #17**

This PacWaste [Plus] training showed simpler ways of checking compost by checking temperature with their hands. PacWaste [Plus] also trained us to check the smell of the compost for quality. If the compost smells like soil, then it's good, if it smells rotten then it's not good. The training is teaching us how to make compost with what we have, regardless of whether there is fish meal or not. Previously we would not make compost when we didn't have fish meal. Now we are learning to make compost with just brown (cardboard) and green (greenwaste) materials. We now should be able to operate more and continue making compost without copra and fish meal.

Laura Composting Facility Manager, Majuro, Marshall Islands



Assessing the current state of waste management interventions in Pacific Islands

NIRAS recently completed a mid-term evaluation of an EU-funded project in the Pacific region that is helping to tackle solid waste management challenges as urban development and population growth mean a higher influx of consumer goods to the region.

"I think it's good that we are recording this process of making compost. It's not necessarily new to the Marshall Islands, we've been growing our own foods for a long time. But of course, not all that knowledge has been/is being passed down and new forms of knowledge are here. But I see this project as beneficial for the community. New knowledge to the compost process helps us sustain the knowledge of fertilizing our own foods and support growing our own foods."

Majuro Waste Company on the Benefits of PWP, Republic of Marshall Islands

The problem of waste management is a pressing one for the small island countries of the Pacific. Solid waste tends to accumulate quickly, threatening delicate ecosystems and posing great risk to the health and sanitation of communities. Limited land space also means insufficient infrastructure for the management of different waste streams. Often, the only possible way of managing waste is exporting it to other countries that have the means to recycle and dispose of it, but the freight costs are unfeasible to most Pacific public authorities.

In response to these challenges, 15 countries in the Pacific region have banded together under the EU-funded PacWaste Plus programme. These countries are Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, Federated States of Micronesia, Nauru, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Republic of the Marshall Islands, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Timor-Leste, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu.

PacWaste Plus began in 2019 as a continuation and expansion of the preceding PACWaste programme that assisted in the management of hazardous waste, including asbestos, e-waste and healthcare waste. Under the new programme, five more waste streams have been added, including non-hazardous waste such as organics and recyclables.

The programme is implemented by the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) with a programme management unit based in Apia, Samoa.

Waste streams targeted:

- Asbestos
- E-waste
- Healthcare waste
- Disaster waste
- Recyclables
- Organics
- Bulky waste

Coordinated cooperation having an impact



Watch the PacWaste Plus [Mid-Term Evaluation video](#).

NIRAS conducted a mid-term evaluation of PacWaste Plus throughout the first half of 2023. The evaluation employed a mixed-methods approach assessing the programme's logic, comparing it with observed changes to evaluate its successes and failures. The intervention was assessed against 5 OECD/DAC evaluation criteria (relevance, coherence, efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability) and one EU-specific criterion, the EU-added value. Four consultants conducted remote interviews with focal points in the involved countries as well as project site visits and interviews in the Cook Islands, Marshall Islands, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands and Timor Leste. One of the key experts was NIRAS employee, Luciana Capuano Mascarenhas, who has extensive environmental and solid waste experience and growing interest and knowledge of project and programme evaluations. Besides collecting and analysing data, Luciana was also in charge of coordinating the communication and dissemination activities of the evaluation according to EU visibility guidelines.

Our mid-term evaluation concluded that the PacWaste Plus programme "could not tackle all solid waste challenges in the Pacific region, but its well-coordinated cooperation with other programmes allows for comprehensive coverage of countries, waste streams and thematic sectors."

Effecting systemic changes from import and onwards

One of PacWaste Plus's biggest achievements has been its work on advanced recovery fees and deposits (ARFD) for recyclable materials, such as plastic bottles and aluminum cans. Under the ARFD scheme, importers are charged a small fee that is generally embedded and passed on in the sales price of certain products. This fee is refunded to the consumer upon return of the recyclable containers for recycling, and any unredeemed deposits with retailers are used to fund recovery, recycling and off-shore shipping of such materials.

"The advance recovery disposal fee scheme is one of the sustainable financial mechanisms which Cook Islands is currently looking into, and is currently the best option for us," says Claytoncy Taurarii, acting Senior Manager for Waste Management in the Cook Islands. Through the ARFD, the island nation is able to fund the export of solid waste products to New Zealand and Australia for recycling.

The ARFD scheme has, in effect, created a shared responsibility for the management of waste from importer to consumer, providing a self-sustaining recycling incentive mechanism that is not dependent on external government funding.

Another major achievement has been the support for legislation banning imports of hazardous materials, such as asbestos. As of June 2023, 21 legislative and policy documents have been drafted under the programme, and many have already been presented to their respective countries' parliaments for consideration.





Lessons Learned from the Evaluation:

Solid waste management in the Pacific is too complex for single interventions to achieve sustainable, tangible changes.

The combination of a regional and a local approach allows for efficiency gains at regional level and concrete priorities and effects felt at the local level.

Extensive consultations ensure national priorities are addressed by the programme in its design and implementation, and including outer islands populations makes programmes more relevant, ambitious, and responsive to vulnerable populations' needs.

Reliance on digital tools as a response to the COVID-19 pandemic does not match local digital capacities and internet access.

Low-cost measures like policy and legislation making for sustainable financing or bans on importation of certain (hazardous) materials have potential to create change.

Cooperation between Pacific countries and overseas territories might be interesting to exchange best practices and explore synergies.

Towards better waste management in the Pacific region

PacWaste Plus is an ongoing programme. As such, adjustments can be made in accordance with the results of the mid-term evaluation, which include the incorporation of longer-term strengthening of its institutional vision and the search for sustainable financing of other waste streams. See our [online resources](#) for individual country evaluation briefs and a summary of the evaluation in English, French and Tetum.

