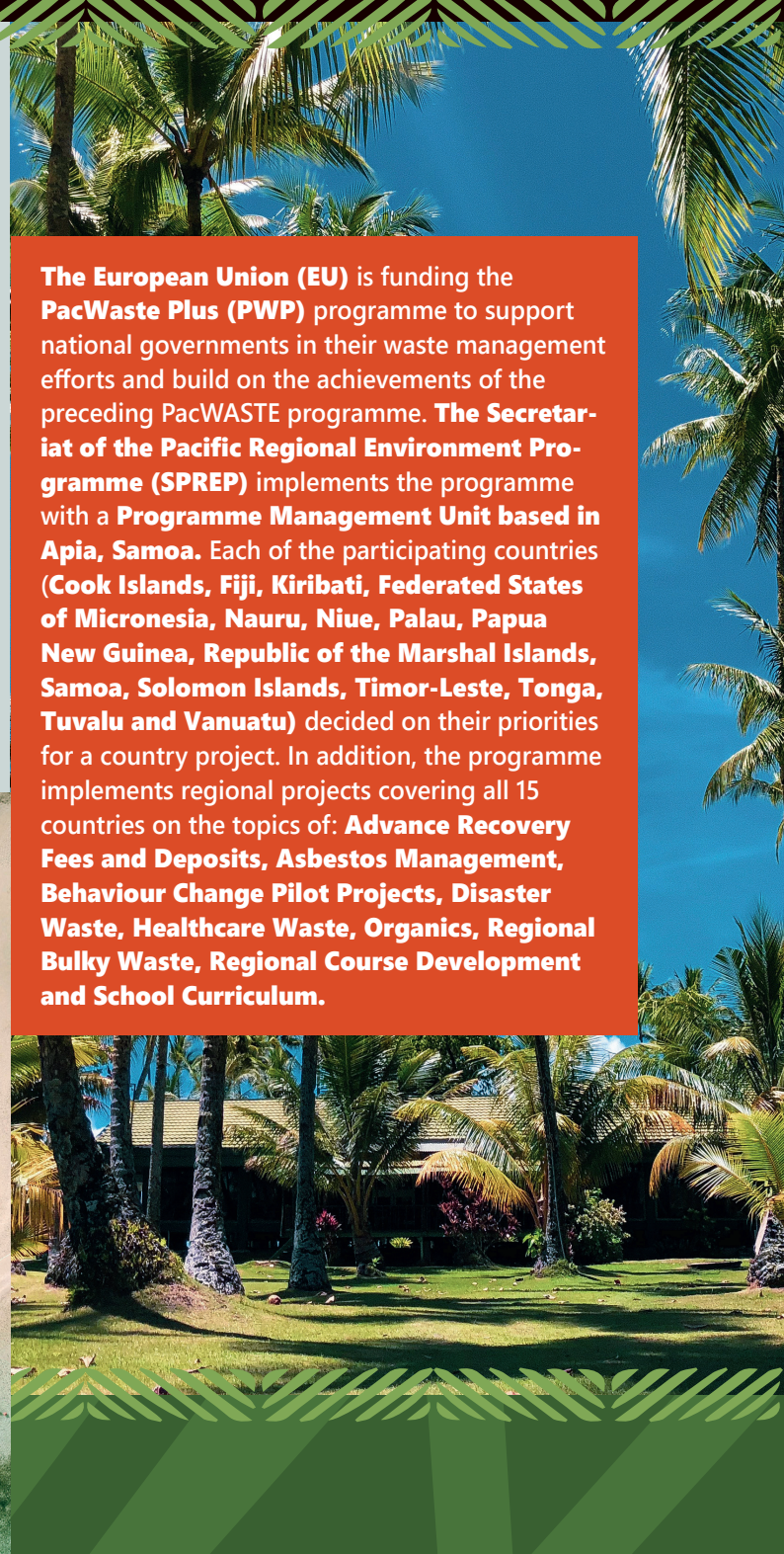


AS GLOBAL MARKETS EXPAND AND URBAN POPULATIONS INCREASE, A WIDE VARIETY OF CONSUMER GOODS ARE IMPORTED TO PACIFIC ISLAND COUNTRIES. WHILE THEY MAY MAKE LIFE MORE COMFORTABLE, THESE PRODUCTS BECOME WASTE AFTER BEING USED AND ARE STOCKPILED IN DUMPSITES AND EMPTY AREAS. SOLID WASTE POLLUTES THE LAND, THE OCEAN AND HARMS THE PACIFIC COMMUNITIES AND BIODIVERSITY. THE REMOTENESS OF MOST ISLANDS MAKES TRANSPORT BACK TO THE COUNTRY OF ORIGIN EXTREMELY EXPENSIVE, AND ISLANDS ARE OFTEN TOO SMALL TO ENABLE EFFICIENT RECYCLING ACTIVITIES. LOCAL AND NATIONAL GOVERNMENTS ARE FACED WITH THE CHALLENGE OF MANAGING THIS COMPLEX ISSUE, WITH LIMITED LOCAL RECYCLING OPTIONS, LAND, RESOURCES AND TECHNICAL CAPACITY.

The European Union (EU) is funding the **PacWaste Plus (PWP)** programme to support national governments in their waste management efforts and build on the achievements of the preceding PacWASTE programme. **The Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP)** implements the programme with a **Programme Management Unit based in Apia, Samoa**. Each of the participating 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 and Vanuatu**) decided on their priorities for a country project. In addition, the programme implements regional projects covering all 15 countries on the topics of: **Advance Recovery Fees and Deposits, Asbestos Management, Behaviour Change Pilot Projects, Disaster Waste, Healthcare Waste, Organics, Regional Bulky Waste, Regional Course Development and School Curriculum.**





Between January and August 2023, NIRAS conducted a mid-term evaluation of PacWaste Plus, as part of the EU's effort to generate better results in its international cooperation work. The evaluation assessed the programme's logic and compared it with observed changes to evaluate its successes and failures, following a mixed-methods approach. Oriented to be as useful to stakeholders as possible, the evaluation produced recommendations for this and future interventions.

The evaluation team consisted of four consultants, who evaluated the intervention as a whole. While remote interviews were conducted with most countries' focal points, the evaluators met with local actors and visited project sites in six PWP partner countries: the Cook Islands, Marshall Islands, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, and Timor Leste.

The evaluation concluded that, on its own, PacWaste Plus 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. PacWaste Plus' main strength is its work on advanced recovery fees and deposits (ARFD), and related legislation to establish the system and ban certain hazardous materials, such as asbestos. While the programme is still ongoing and adjustments can be made, the evaluation notes that future interventions should incorporate a longer-term institutional strengthening vision and sustainable financing of other waste streams, regardless of the financier.



MAIN FINDINGS

- PacWaste Plus is a very relevant programme, adapted to the Pacific context and well aligned with regional and country policies and priorities in waste management in the Pacific region.
- The programme is coherent with EU policies and other solid waste interventions in the region. While PacWaste Plus is more ambitious than its first phase (PacWASTE), not all lessons learned and recommendations from the previous programme were incorporated into the new one.
- Outer island populations are reported as the most marginalised group in the Pacific region. While PacWaste Plus implements some activities in the outer islands, a more systematic gender equality, disability and social inclusion approach could be adopted.
- SPREP is a recognised institution and well-positioned to implement PacWaste Plus. The regional programme set-up brings efficiency gains in centralising and streamlining certain activities, such as tendering services and materials.
- Targets achieved by mid-2023 relate to communication activities, data collection, drafting of legal instruments, and training delivery. The country projects have been delayed due to COVID-related restrictions but are expected to be completed with the programme's extension.
- SPREP has responded flexibly and adaptively to crises and disasters by prioritising the participating countries' evolving needs, such as disaster response to Tropical Cyclone Harold, in Vanuatu.

• **Conditions for the sustainability of some outcomes are doubtful: the model of providing infrastructure and training is not financially viable, but the focus on developing legislation and ARFD systems is a major contribution to long-term changes at the national level.**



Conditions for sustainability could improve by expanding sustainable finance to other waste streams (such as organics and healthcare waste), ensuring benefitting institutions have resources for operation & maintenance of infrastructure and improving technical capacities beyond training delivery.



7 KEY LESSONS TO BE LEARNED

- 1 Solid waste management in the Pacific is too complex for single interventions to achieve sustainable, tangible changes. Cooperation and coordination between donors in solid waste in the Pacific is particularly good and should be further developed. Implementing complementary activities and sharing resources are good practices, such as country waste audits funded by different programmes and national officers hired for more than one programme.
- 2 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. Both levels are important and should not be compromised.
- 3 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.
- 4 Reliance on digital tools as a response to the COVID-19 pandemic does not match local digital capacities and internet access. Mobilising locally based officers from the beginning ensures more frequent communication and smooth coordination between country officials and the implementation agency, and support work implemented on-the-ground.
- 5 Low-cost measures like policy and legislation making for sustainable financing or bans on importation of certain (hazardous) materials have potential to create change. Sustainable financing legislation contributes to the financial viability of existing waste management facilities, while bans on importation prevent waste from being generated in the first place.
- 6 Even though solid waste management is mainly a public sector responsibility, involving the private sector and civil society contributes to financial sustainability and behaviour change, both of which are key aspects of sustainable waste management.
- 7 Cooperation between Pacific countries and overseas territories might be interesting to exchange best practices and explore synergies.



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