



Factsheet

Reducing Solid Waste

What is 'waste'?

Waste occurs when materials are not or cannot be used again. As we all generate waste, we all have a responsibility to minimize waste in our communities.

People and organisms have always produced waste. While there are natural systems in place to recycle a lot of waste (such as decomposition), humans are the only species that do not have a proper system for managing their waste. The management of waste will continue to be a key challenge for generations ahead.

Waste facts

More than 50% of the waste we throw away in the Pacific is organic, meaning that it can decompose. We can compost our organic waste to make rich fertiliser to make plants and food. Composting has been a traditional method of waste management in the Pacific Islands for generations.

Ways to reduce waste in your home

1. Think before you throw – recycle where you can.
2. Take your own bags to the shop/supermarket.
3. Set up a compost heap – more than 50% of the waste we generate is organic. Return it to your garden to make rich fertiliser for plants and food.
4. Choose products with less packaging.
5. Choose longer lasting alternatives instead of buying foam cups and plates.
6. Sort your rubbish and recycle where possible.
7. Share your household tips with your neighbours.
8. Teach your children about waste minimisation.
9. Encourage community groups and schools to adopt waste minimisation principles.
10. Reuse as much as possible.



Solid waste disposal is a problem in most Pacific island countries

Most of the waste we produce is not really 'waste' at all, but can be reused or recycled. Waste can also mean 'wasted money'. Aluminium, metal, paper and some plastics can be recycled to create new items.

It is estimated that more each year throughout the world, more than 100,000 sea animals die as a result of swallowing plastic bags.

What happens to the waste after it is taken away?

Most of the rubbish is buried in landfills or placed in open dump sites. These areas are quickly filling up, and many Pacific Islands do not have the space or resources for others.

Why recycle?

Aluminium cans and tin cans are made from non-renewable resources which means that there is a limited supply. Accessing these resources impacts the environment. By recycling, you conserve these resources for future generations, and limit the effect you will have on the environment. It is estimated that when a factory makes a new drink can from an old drink can, it only takes about 5% of the energy that it takes to make it from the original materials.

Why reduce our rubbish?

Rubbish does not disappear into thin air - it has to go somewhere, where it stays for a long, long time. Rubbish dumps take up lots of space, and in some cases, are the precious

habitats of birds, plants and animals. If they are not managed carefully, they can be dangerous to our health and the environment.

In order to ensure that our children will enjoy the beautiful Pacific, we have to think about how our actions are affecting the world around us.

What is composting?

Composting is the method of breaking down organic material in a large container or heap. Composting can convert organic waste into a dark coloured soil that can be used to enrich our garden's growth and performance. Composting has been traditionally practiced throughout the Pacific for generations.

Why compost?

As population and consumption increase, so does the amount of waste, creating one of the Pacific's biggest environmental problems. In most Pacific islands, more than

Just say "no" to plastic bags



It seems as though every time we go to a shop we are given a plastic bag...

that we usually throw away! And when these bags end up in the ocean...



they can harm wildlife, like turtles, who think they are food.



The next time you go shopping, take a cloth bag or basket to the shops, and say "no" to plastic.

Ways to reduce waste at work

1. Think before you print.
2. Print on both sides.
3. Choose and buy recycled paper if possible.
4. Use scrap paper for taking notes or messages.
5. Measure the amount of paper being used in the office and try to cut down on use.
6. Encourage recycling where possible. Encourage your office to set up a recycling scheme.
7. Encourage people to bring their own cups and plates into work rather than using disposables.
8. Recognise office champions.
9. Consider establishing a 'Green Office' policy.
10. Promote your good work! Take action to help the environment and share your success with others.

50% of the waste thrown away is organic and can be returned to your gardens to make rich fertiliser.

Composting is a good idea as it:

- helps you save money on potting mixes and fertilisers
- cuts down on the amount of waste we throw away
- improves the conditions of soils
- reduces the need for new landfills or dumps

Why should we care about waste?

We are all responsible for conserving the Pacific Islands for future generations. By recycling materials, we decrease the need for new resources to create more items. By reducing the amount of waste that we throw away, we decrease the need for new landfills or dump sites, which take up precious space. By composting, we can grow food for our families.

About SPREP

The Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) is an intergovernmental organisation that works to protect and improve the Pacific islands' environment, and promote sustainable development and cooperation. SPREP is based in Apia, Samoa.



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