

# SPREP Waste Update

A waste alert to end our year from the Waste Management Team of SPREP  
Dec 2007



## SPREP calls on developed nations to help find a solution to landfilling on atolls and small pacific islands.

Landfilling, financing waste management and getting public and political support for improving the waste situation are the 3 main priorities for waste management in the Pacific. This was one of the outcomes of a Senior Waste Managers in the Pacific Meeting in November.

The meeting was an opportunity for Waste Managers to review the progress of the Regional Solid Waste Strategy and to set the 3 main priorities for the next 2 years. It was the second such meeting to be held by SPREP in collaboration with the Japanese International Cooperation Agency (JICA). The first was held 2 years ago that led to the first Action Plan of the Pacific Regional Solid Waste Management Strategy

**The senior waste managers meeting recognised the benefits of having the public and politicians as strong supporters of better waste management, as they will make sure adequate funding is designated to waste management if the general public believes it is important.**

"The issue of landfilling continues to challenge the Pacific," said SPREP's Solid Waste Officer, Mark Ricketts, "small islands and atolls have no space. Even the bigger islands have traditional ownership issues which make locating landfills very difficult"

"The landfill in Majuro is on the reef flat as there is no space ashore. A recent storm smashed the containment wall and allowed hundreds of thousands of tonnes of rubbish to escape into the ocean. The plastics float and impact on all the Pacific countries as well as affecting the local environment of the Marshall Islands. The developed countries must help the atolls find better solutions as this problem will only increase with the higher tides and stronger storms expected with climate change."

Paying for the improvement of waste management is another top priority for the Pacific senior waste managers. Consumption taxes like Goods and Services Tax are good for financing waste management because the more you buy, the more waste you make and the more tax you pay. Many countries are also looking at using "smart" taxes to reduce rubbish problems and also provide income to pay for improvements.

The French Overseas Aid Agency is planning to assist countries establish the integrated systems of public and private stakeholders. Ireland reduced their plastic bag usage by 90% through a levy on the thin bags. Kiribati is considering using deposits on imported vehicles to help pay for their recycling and export.

"Kiribati wants a sustainable system where businesses can make a profit from selling the used parts in country and assisting to pay for the expensive export of the remaining metals in the body and engine. There are jobs and economic development benefits as well as improved waste management." Mr Ricketts said.

The Senior Waste Managers meeting was held in November at the SPREP compound in Apia, Samoa, it was the first of 3 workshops on Waste issues during the month.



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## Working towards healthier communities

The use of chemicals permeates nearly all aspects of modern life and while they play an important role with respect to human development, they can simultaneously pose significant risks to human health and the environment in absence of good management practices. All chemicals affect man but some such as Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) and Persistent Toxic Substances (PTS) adversely affect human and ecological health when released into the air, water or soil. Even in small quantities, these chemicals can wreak havoc in human and animal tissue causing nervous system damage, immune system diseases, reproductive or developmental disorders, and cancers.

It is therefore important to note that proper management and disposal of chemical waste can not only save our environment but also help improve human health. Currently, increasing amounts and types of wastes are a regrettable outcome of our development throughout the Pacific. It is an enormous growing problem. **Our waste problem is worsened by the particular circumstances of the Pacific such as land scarcity on the Pacific islands and atolls for landfills together with the limited amount of technical expertise and technologies to deal with these substances in an environmentally sound manner. Sustainable waste management is thus a significant challenge to our island countries.**

Of 35 million health care workers worldwide, approximately 3 million are exposed to blood borne pathogens through the skin, on an annual basis. Hepatitis B Virus, Hepatitis C Virus and HIV are the 3 infections that are most commonly transmitted to health care workers. Health care waste has the potential to cause serious harm if not managed properly.

The Pollution Prevention and Waste Management Adviser of the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP), Dr Frank Griffin, believes that **chemical and health care waste is a serious issue in the region.**

“This needs immediate attention and action, but in general across the region there is a lack of appropriate resources, financial, technological and personnel to deal with this category of waste in a proper, safe and environmentally sound manner.”

In May this year the Pacific Islands participants to the Asia-Pacific sub-regional workshop on the Strategic Approach to International Chemical Management (SAICM) in Bangkok sought assistance from SPREP and the SAICM Secretariat to hold a Pacific regional meeting to assist them to engage better in the SAICM process and develop their understanding of SAICM. This culminated in 2 parallel workshops in November: the first was where Pacific Island country representatives were introduced to the SAICM framework while the second one, a collaboration between SPREP and the World Health Organisation (WHO) worked with the Pacific Island Nations in providing the participants with the knowledge and experience to develop, implement and maintain integrate health care waste management systems.

**“Among other things, this initiative has helped create awareness in the Pacific region of the danger of chemical waste”**

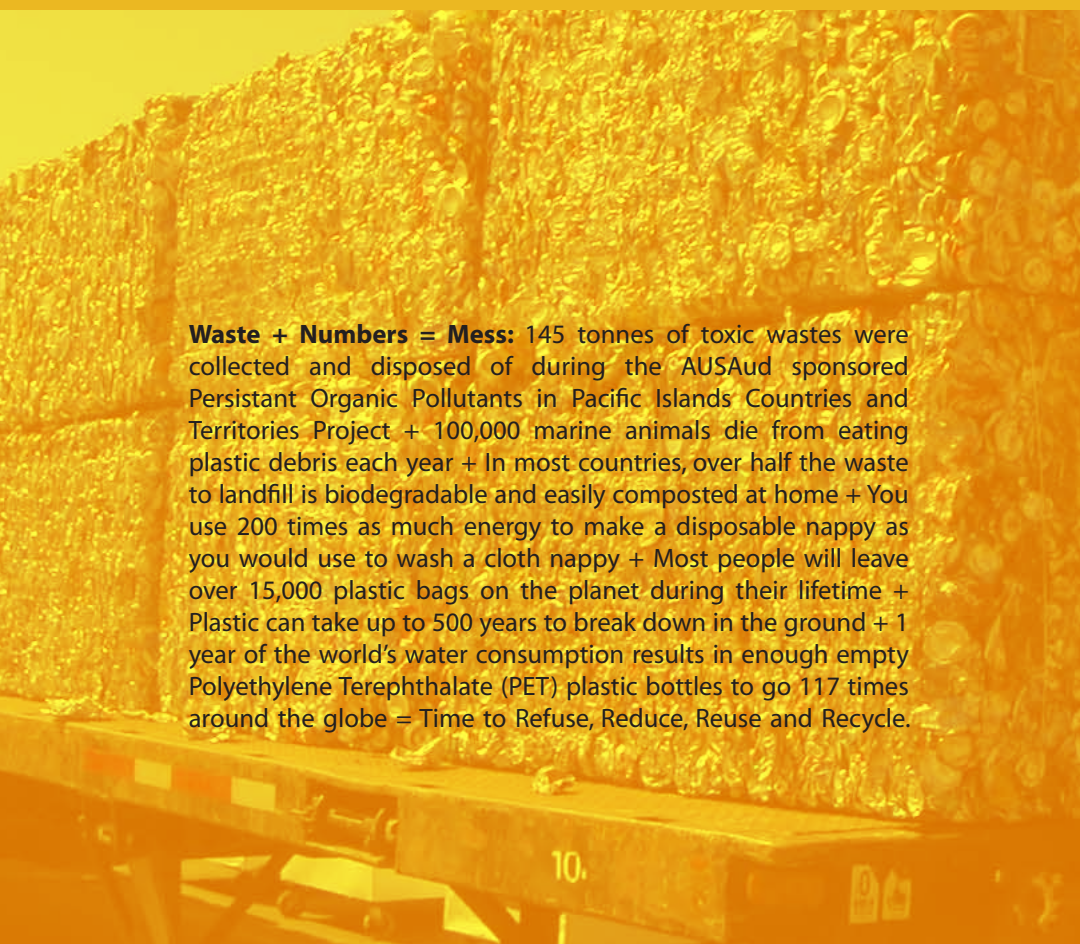




In November, the SAICM workshop participants discussed the role of SAICM as an “umbrella” framework for chemicals management, as well as links and differences with existing national activities and international agreements such as the Stockholm Convention on POPs, and the Basel and Waigani Conventions on hazardous waste management. They exchanges views on difficulties some countries faced for internal coordination of chemicals management issues or the development of a comprehensive national chemicals management policy.

The health care waste management training workshop had the main objectives of providing the participants with key input into the development of Regional Health Care Waste Management Policy, and the tools to develop National, Provincial, and Local level policy. Other secondary objectives include reviewing the experiences of countries in obtaining National endorsement and to review current practices and share experiences in Health Care Waste Management. This workshop also equipped the participants with the ability to develop, implement and maintain a national integrated health care waste management systems and having the financial and budgeting techniques to maintain the system as well as the tools to manage their chemical products and waste better.

“The response that we got from the donor agencies and the Secretariat of SAICM was very successful and encouraging and we are very glad about that. **We are also very eager to build on the outcomes of these workshops and help the region in managing these categories of wastes in a safe and environmentally sound manner.**”



**Waste + Numbers = Mess:** 145 tonnes of toxic wastes were collected and disposed of during the AUSAud sponsored Persistent Organic Pollutants in Pacific Islands Countries and Territories Project + 100,000 marine animals die from eating plastic debris each year + In most countries, over half the waste to landfill is biodegradable and easily composted at home + You use 200 times as much energy to make a disposable nappy as you would use to wash a cloth nappy + Most people will leave over 15,000 plastic bags on the planet during their lifetime + Plastic can take up to 500 years to break down in the ground + 1 year of the world’s water consumption results in enough empty Polyethylene Terephthalate (PET) plastic bottles to go 117 times around the globe = Time to Refuse, Reduce, Reuse and Recycle.

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## Keeping our Pacific Marine Pollution Free.

There is 11 sq. km of ocean for each Pacific Islander, jurisdictionally the sea is 200 times more significant to the average Pacific Islander than it is to the average global citizen. On an international scale the land area of Pacific Island Countries and Territories (PICT's) may be insignificant but the Pacific islands maintain resource rights and management responsibilities over 30 million square kilometres of ocean. This is equivalent to the combined land areas of Canada, China and the USA and is essentially our only "globally significant" resource.

Coastal and marine environments are extremely important to every aspect of the lives of Pacific islanders with the impact of marine spills being a major concern. Pollution of the marine environment is widely recognised as one of the 4 major threats to the world's oceans, along with habitat destruction, over-exploitation of living marine resources and invasive marine species. **Spills and dumping of oil and other chemicals into the marine environment, both from ships and land-based sources, is a significant source of pollution.**

The International Convention on Oil Pollution Preparedness, Response and Cooperation (OPRC) is an international agreement that aims to help Governments around the world combat major oil pollution incidents and ensure all countries comply with Marine Pollution obligations. In the Pacific, the Noumea Convention encompasses the elements relevant to the region

The Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) developed the Pacific Ocean Pollution Prevention Programme (PACPOL) that is in line with the Noumea Convention and takes into consideration the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (MARPOL) that regulates pollution from 'normal' operation of ships.

Under the OPRC convention parties are obligated to put in place National Marine Spill Contingency Plans (NATPLANS) and co-operate with other parties in having regional contingency plans. SPREP through PACPOL has been assisting its members to meet its obligations under OPRC and also the Oil & Hazardous and Noxious Substances (HNS) Protocols of the Noumea Convention.

Since July this year SPREP's Marine Pollution Adviser Anthony Talouli has spent time in different Pacific islands countries, holding training workshops and meetings to help them finalise NATPLAN's for Marine Pollution.



**NATPLAN provides a concise and easy to follow guide to the management of spill response and associated linkages to supporting documentation. The plan consists of two main parts, Part A: the core plan text and Part B the operational appendixes & annexes designed to provide key supporting information to assist with spill response operations and planning. The objective of our NATPLAN is to provide a guide to all agencies, organizations, communities and individuals who may at any time find themselves having to combat a marine spill. The plan has been developed to reflect the essential steps to initiate conduct and terminate an emergency marine spill response.**



# REMEMBER TO TAKE YOUR OWN BASKET OR BAG WHEN YOU GO SHOPPING

In the Pacific Islands region, the framework for the OPRC and its intentions are captured under the revised 'Emergency Protocol' to two new protocols the 'Protocol on oil pollution preparedness, response and cooperation in the Pacific region' & the 'Protocol on hazardous and noxious substances pollution, preparedness, response and cooperation in the Pacific region' of the Noumea Convention.

"Within the Pacific we are still at the very beginning, we're in the early stages of the OPRC/MARPOL, we still have to draft National Legislation and pass them, we still have to purchase equipments and hold trainings on how these are to be used and maintained."

Many Pacific islands countries have been presented with model legislation designed by SPREP and the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC). The Marine Pollution Prevention Acts is in the parliamentary process in Tonga, Samoa and the Cook Islands. They are leading the way to having this legislation become law in their countries.

These 3 Pacific island nations have also been assisted in purchasing the necessary equipment to help them in respond preparedness towards an oil spill or HNS crisis within their port areas. A risk assessment was carried out within each country to find out the equipment needs to help cope with a marine pollution crisis. SPREP in collaboration with the International Maritime Organisation covered the cost to provide 50% of the equipment required in Tonga, Samoa and the Cook Islands.

"This equipment is expensive, which is why we haven't been able to purchase them for the other Pacific countries. We felt we will assist the Pacific nations that have been the most supportive and progressive of the PACPOL and hopefully it will serve as an incentive for our other member countries to move their marine pollution plans forward. Once they do, then we will work towards assisting them with purchasing equipment also."

Since July this year Talouli has visited the Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, Papua New Guinea, Tonga, Niue, Kiribati and the Marshall Islands. They have undergone Marine Pollution training workshops as well as worked on formalising National contingency plans to prepare or respond to oil spills. Tonga and Papua New Guinea have completed their draft national plan for marine pollution, which are now awaiting national endorsement.

"SPREP presented Pacific island countries with models for this in 2000, but these are things that take time to formulate and put into place and eventually implement. In all PIC's there is a draft NATPLAN in place that gets revised constantly over a period of time and then it remains in draft form until a specialist visits and checks it."

As part of his programme, Talouli will visit the remaining Pacific Islands Countries and Territories next year.



PACPOL has 4 main pollution areas; marine pollution, waste management for ships, Invasive Species and port environmental management. It is under PACPOL that SPREP has helped its members meet their international marine pollution obligations, one being to put in place the National Marine Spill Contingency Plans (NATPLANS) and to cooperate with other parties in having regional contingency plans.

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FIND OUT WHAT CAN  
BE RECYCLED IN YOUR  
COUNTRY



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## Compost

**Tips :** Compost acts like a sponge that gives up the water or nutrients more slowly and at the speed that plants can absorb them. It also reduces the need for pesticides by making your plants healthier and stronger

**Banana Circles – the easy way :** Simply make a pile of all mixed garden waste at least 3 metres across and plant bananas or fruit trees around the outside. As the pile decays, it will create compost in about 6 months. The plants' roots will grow into the bottom of the pile and feed off the compost. New material is simply placed on the top. Bananas are a good choice because they like the compost and the stems act like a fence around the pile.



## Tips for an environmentally friendly Christmas

- If you use a real Christmas tree this year, try to get one that has roots so it can grow again
- When Christmas Shopping say NO! to plastic bags and take your reusable bag.
- Recycle your Christmas wrapping paper for other events
- Separate your rubbish and recycle plastics, aluminium cans and newspapers this Christmas.

## SPREP-IWP Waste Resource Kit



## New waste education resources!

SPREP is currently finalising a waste education kit aimed at schools and communities. This will be available late January.

### Current waste resources :

1. Bring your own bag DVD - animated and entertaining tale encouraging the use of reusable bags.
2. Waste World DVD - dramatic story highlighting the need for coordination to minimize waste in Pacific island countries
3. 4Rs poster
4. Solid waste poster
5. Waste comic book
6. Rubbish as a Resource DVD and booklet - aimed at policy makers and practitioners highlighting the value of waste in the Pacific and provides information to support policy formulation.

The Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) is an intergovernmental organisation working with Pacific islands countries and territories to strengthen environmental management and promote sustainable development.

**Waste Management:** SPREP's vision is to minimise the adverse impacts of waste on the Pacific peoples, economies and environment in an efficient and cost-effective manner.

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