

## **Case Study: SPREP-ANZ Turtle Bags, engaging private sector in a low-cost sustainability partnership**

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### **Introduction**

2006 is Pacific Year of the Sea Turtle; a regional initiative to raise awareness about the plight of sea turtles in our waters. Six out of the seven recognised species of turtles are found in the Pacific, and as all the world's turtles are endangered, the campaign aims to foster collaboration to strengthen and streamline conservation initiatives.

One of the key priorities of the Year of the Sea Turtle is the reduction of threats to turtles. The global figure of 100,000 is used to describe the numbers of turtles that die each year from consuming, or becoming caught in, plastic bags and other debris. Turtles can mistake plastic bags as jellyfish, a key food source for some species of turtles.

In July 2005, SPREP and ANZ Samoa commenced discussions on potential partnerships to raise awareness about key environmental issues.

Over a 12 months period, SPREP and ANZ Samoa with its key partners, embarked on developing the Turtle Bag initiative, which provides reusable bags to supermarkets to encourage shoppers to say no to plastic bags.

The Turtle Bag is based on the hugely popular Green Bags found in supermarkets in Australia. The Turtle Bag provides a low-cost, attractive and viable alternative to plastic bags in Samoa.

The Turtle Bag also supports the ban on non-biodegradable plastic bags introduced by the Government of Samoa on 1 June 2006. Under this ban, only biodegradable bags will be able to be sold in Samoa. By providing an alternative at point of sale (supermarkets), people will be discouraged to use plastic bags, but to use a reusable alternative that promotes their interest to save the turtles.

By drawing the connection between turtles and plastic bags, SPREP and ANZ Samoa were able to use a "flagship" species – the loveable turtle – to discourage an unsustainable behaviour – using non-biodegradable plastic bags.

In August 2006, the Turtle Bag was launched in Samoa by the Minister for Natural Resources, Environment and Meteorology (MNREM) which was also attended by the Honourable Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister as well as other dignitaries and guests.

### **Multi-sector approach to sustainability**

One of the key factors in this initiative was the establishment of a self-funding and self-sustaining system through engagement of members of the private sector in Samoa. This cross-sectoral approach to coordination and implementation has ensured that this initiative will be sustained beyond 2006.

Printing and distributing the bags as part of the Year of the Sea Turtle would have been a promotional exercise; working closely with the members of the private sector ensures that a system is now developed for continued supply.

SPREP worked closely with the following partners to establish the Turtle Bag initiative:

- ❖ ANZ Samoa: Provided much-needed seed funding, establishment of the ANZ Save the Turtle Fund
- ❖ AQM: Samoa based importer and distributor who coordinated the storage and distribution of bags to supermarkets stocking the bags
- ❖ Pacific Forum Line: shipped the bags to Samoa free of charge as contribution to initiative.
- ❖ Samoa Broadcasting Corporation (SBC): Local TV station provided free air time to show Turtle Song, television commercials, whilst also including promotional opportunities in feature shows.
- ❖ MediaScope: Samoa based marketing agency provided invaluable campaign development advice and support.
- ❖ Ministry of Natural Resources, Environment and Meteorology (MNREM): supported the initiative.

Engagement of these partners ensured 'buy-in' from corporate sector, increased longevity of initiative, broader marketing potential, strengthened collaboration around a key issue, and demonstrated interest in sustainability issues.

Through engagement of the private sector, the bags are available for purchase from supermarkets throughout Samoa for a recommended retail price of SAT4.00.

### **Promoting corporate philanthropy**

A key element of the Turtle Bag initiative is the establishment of the ANZ Save the Turtle Fund. For every bag sold, ANZ Samoa will donate SAT1.00 towards the Fund, which will be distributed towards community based turtle conservation initiatives. This donation is completely separate from the purchase price. The Funds will be disbursed in November 2006 to correlate with turtle nesting season in Samoa, and also marking the end of the Pacific Year of the Sea Turtle.

The decisions regarding the funds disbursement will be made by a board comprised of representatives from ANZ Samoa, SPREP, and AQM. The grants will be made upon recommendations forwarded by SPREP in consultation with MNREM.

Funding guidelines have been developed to guide the recommendations for the funding, and to also support the board in the decision making process.

As a non-profit initiative, all funds from the sale of the Turtle Bags are distributed either towards the ANZ Save the Turtle Fund, or an operating fund that will support the purchase of the next shipment of bags.

## **From education to behaviour change**

Underlying this initiative is the belief that sustainability can only be achieved through convincing people to take action. SPREP is advocating for people to ACT more, not KNOW more and works with its member countries and territories to focus on behaviour change tools such as social marketing.

Social marketing, in its broadest terms, encourages the use of the commercial marketing model to encourage behaviour change. Social marketing supports the identification of single, easy actions that people can do to reduce their impact on their environment. Social marketing also identifies the *barriers* (real or perceived) that may dissuade people from adopting a certain behaviour. It also recognises that people are at different stages of behaviour change, and recognises that each group may need to be persuaded to adopt a certain behaviour. This could include providing *incentives* that could persuade people to adopt a certain behaviour.

While education lays the foundation for behaviour change, it is being increasingly recognised that information alone does not guarantee change, and that recipients of the information is also exposed to a range of influences that will also affect their decision.

## **Turtle Bag social marketing plan**

### 1. Raise awareness

The first phase of this process was to *raise awareness* about turtles and the threat of floating debris to sea animals.

#### *Launch of Year of the Sea Turtle*

The launch of the campaign and ensuing activities aimed to raise awareness that 2006 was Year of the Sea Turtle.

#### *Turtle Song and film-clip*

This was undertaken by developing a three-minute video clip developed by a local Samoan 'boy-band' that included an emotive plea to say no to plastic for the sake of Pacific culture and heritage. This film-clip was played on SBC in the weeks leading up to the official launch of the Turtle Bag.

#### *Articles*

A series of articles appeared in national and regional publications about the Year of the Sea Turtle and promoting the importance of not using plastic bags and using reusable bags.

### 2. Select a certain behaviour

The key behaviour selected was to use reusable bags to reduce plastic bag use.

### 3. Removing barriers

Often one of the hardest stages of social marketing as this may require equipment, technical expertise and resources. However, in this case, the barriers were identified as follows:

#### Real

- ❖ No knowledge of threats of real costs of plastic bags (social, economic, environmental)

- ❖ No reusable alternatives available at point of sale
- ❖ The plastic bags are handy around the household for rubbish removal and storage
- ❖ Supermarkets encourage shoppers to leave their bags outside when shopping
- ❖ The shopping norms is that all goods are placed within plastic bags, often without asking

Perceived

- ❖ “Too hard” to remember to bring reusable bags
- ❖ “Nobody else is doing it”; fear of standing out
- ❖ Hard to encourage packers to use reusable bags

#### 4. Providing incentives

List of incentives for using the Turtle Bags:

- ❖ Better way to carry goods home from supermarkets (biodegradable bags break easily)
- ❖ Novelty: new bags are attractive
- ❖ Feel-good factor
- ❖ Contributing to the ANZ Save the Turtle Fund through purchasing a bag

#### 5. Establishing a commitment

Supermarkets in Samoa coordinated in-store promotions to encourage their shoppers to bring their Turtle Bags when they go shopping.

#### 6. Promoting to others

The Turtle Bags are very distinctive. Carrying the bags is the best way to encourage other people to use reusable bags.

### **Expanding the initiative**

SPREP is currently exploring the options to launch the Turtle Bags regionally.

### **Sharing the lessons learnt**

For a figure of USD\$2,000 and in-kind support, SPREP was able to develop a low-cost innovative initiative that encourages cross-sectoral engagement in sustainability. Through this initiative, SPREP has been able to establish a model that is replicable throughout the Pacific to discourage plastic bag use.

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