



SPREP
Secretariat of the Pacific Regional
Environment Programme



PROJECT SNAPSHOT

TONGA

This initiative is supported by **PacWastePlus**-a 72-month project funded by the European Union (EU) and implemented by the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) to **sustainably and cost effectively improve regional management of waste and pollution.**

November 2021

ISBN: 978-982-04-1013-8



ASBESTOS PROJECT

Asbestos Removal and Management in Tongatapu

Asbestos-containing materials are a major issue for many Pacific Island countries with a history of use of asbestos-containing materials (ACM) in construction. All forms of asbestos are carcinogenic to humans and inhalation of asbestos fibres that have become airborne can cause serious lung disease. The Department of Environment, from the Ministry of Meteorology, Energy, Information, Disaster Management, Environment, Climate Change and Communications (MEIDECC), seeks to build on the process started by PacWaste and utilise PacWastePlus funds to address asbestos removal and management

The Tonga Asbestos project will focus on appropriate legislation, policies, safe removal and sound disposal:



Legislation and policies to ban Asbestos use



Safe removal and sound disposal



Tonga seeks to utilise the PacWastePlus investment for the following activities:



LEGISLATION

Develop national legislation to ban the importation of asbestos or goods containing asbestos to ensure no more asbestos materials will arrive in Tonga



CODE OF PRACTISE

Update and revise the current asbestos Code of Practise to guide the management and handling of asbestos



TRAINING

Provide training to customs and border protection staff, needed to enact and enforce ACM importation ban



ABATEMENT

Provide removal of ACM from a few selected buildings in Tongatapu for disposal in Tapuhia landfill (licensed for ACM disposal)



COMMUNICATIONS

Implementation of project education and awareness actions to identified stakeholders

PROJECT JUSTIFICATION



Asbestos is a known carcinogen and exposure additionally can cause other disease and serious health conditions as well



June 2018 **Pacific Asbestos Assessment Report** produced under the PacWaste program made a number of recommendations



Legislation should be enacted in each country to enable the asbestos work to be carried out and to enable effective management of asbestos



Setting up a trained regulatory team and putting in place systems for notifying regulatory agencies that asbestos removal work is being carried out



Legislation needed to prevent the import of new asbestos products

SPREP could assist in this matter by drafting model legislation to enable bans to take place



The proposed project aligns with the Tonga's **Hazardous Waste and Chemicals Act 2010**, the **Waste Management Act 2005**, and the **Tonga Strategic Development Framework II**



Removal and sound disposal of existing asbestos materials



Regulate the import of asbestos materials through implementation of a national ban of ACM products



Training in asbestos management



Following **Tropical Cyclone Gita in 2018** and **Harold in 2020**, many buildings were damaged in Tongatapu



These events have heightened the awareness of the risk from asbestos debris and the country seeks to further reduce that amount of ACM in country to eliminate this risk

CURRENT STATUS / MANAGEMENT OF PRIORITY WASTE

Current Situation:

Data collection and Education and Awareness



Previous asbestos survey from the PacWaste Project covered Tongatapu and Vava'u. For non-residential buildings, lab analysis confirmed asbestos present at 12 of the 17 sites surveyed

Awareness messaging for management of Asbestos - on - going as opportunities arise



Policy & Regulation



Currently, asbestos materials can be lawfully imported and used in Pacific island countries and territories



This hampers both the original goal of the **Regional Asbestos Strategy to achieve an 'Asbestos Free Pacific'** endorsed at the Twenty-Second SPREP Meeting (2011), and the efforts of asbestos removal projects such as PacWaste and the PacWastePlus programme



Adopted a **Strategic Action Plan** which details the short- and long-term management options for eventual removal/abatement of ACM in Tonga



(reduce legacy asbestos stockpiles and dispose of it correctly, prevent new ACM coming in and to prevent existing asbestos from being reused)

On-Ground Activity



In 2014, Cyclone Ian caused extensive damage in the Ha'apai Group of Islands. Recently, following TC Gita in 2018 and TC Harold in 2020, many buildings were damaged in Tongatapu and in Ha'apai and 'Eua



Project is vital to ensure that more ACM buildings are remediated to avoid generation of asbestos debris, as tropical cyclones are becoming more frequent in the region



Additional efforts are underway by the government of Tonga to reduce legacy asbestos stockpiles and dispose of it correctly, however, further action is needed at the regional and national level to prevent new ACM coming into the region and to prevent existing asbestos from being reused



(public awareness of ACM exposure risks, establishment of a legal framework to ban the import of ACM and the training of local customs officials to enforce the ban, encapsulation of ACM and delineation of a disposal facility/location)

GENDER EQUALITY, SOCIAL AND DISABILITY INCLUSION (GESDI) CONSIDERATIONS FOR WASTE MANAGEMENT IN TONGA



Equality in today's society requires sound waste management.

All people have the right to access waste infrastructure, participate in decision making and able to voice grievances, access information and awareness messages, and be protected from harmful effects of waste – on health, environment, culture and traditions.



Opportunities for Tonga to provide for equality during the management of recyclables



Continue development of effective legislation to provide coordinated and equitable approach for waste management.



Include considerations regarding equality and inclusion in waste-related legislation and regulation



Consider additional bans and phaseouts of certain types of problematic or hazardous products



Provide for effective implementation, monitoring, and enforcement of waste-related legislation to protect vulnerable members of society



Mobilise additional resources for waste management including through an Advance Recovery Fee system



Enhance the availability and accessibility of information



Include additional Government departments, in particular labour, culture, women, and equality-related authorities and/or bodies, in waste-related decision making to identify and address potential inequalities



Provide waste management facilities for rural and outer island communities



Enhance efforts to protect waste workers



Utilise traditional knowledge and customs to enhance participation, environmental protection and stewardship

MAPPING PROJECT SUCCESS



LONG TERM OUTCOME



People of Tonga living free from asbestos related health issues



MEDIUM TERM OUTCOMES



Construction and Demolition workers employ industry standard techniques as a minimum standard, which eliminates exposure to ACM and protects against possible health complications



Pollution caused by inappropriate management of ACM products is reduced as residents and businesses appropriately store and manage ACM in accordance with the new regulations



Incidents of ACM debris discovered in disaster waste is reduced as high-risk ACM buildings will undergo abatement activities



SHORT TERM OUTCOMES



Demolition workers exercise international standard techniques to safely reduce and eliminate exposure to ACM and reduce possible health complications



Households understand how to 'live safely with asbestos and understand when health risks exist and require management



Code of Practice for safe handling, transportation, and disposal of ACM is adopted by Government leading to a reduction in asbestos exposure that can lead to disease



Potential adverse health impacts from buildings with ACM have risk removed due to appropriate controlled abatement activities



OUTPUTS



Development, implementation, and enforcement of an Asbestos importation ban



Asbestos abated from high-risk sites in Tongatapu



Customs Officers trained and able to enact and enforce Asbestos Ban.



Development and adoption of a Strategic Action Plan for the short and long-term management of asbestos in Tonga

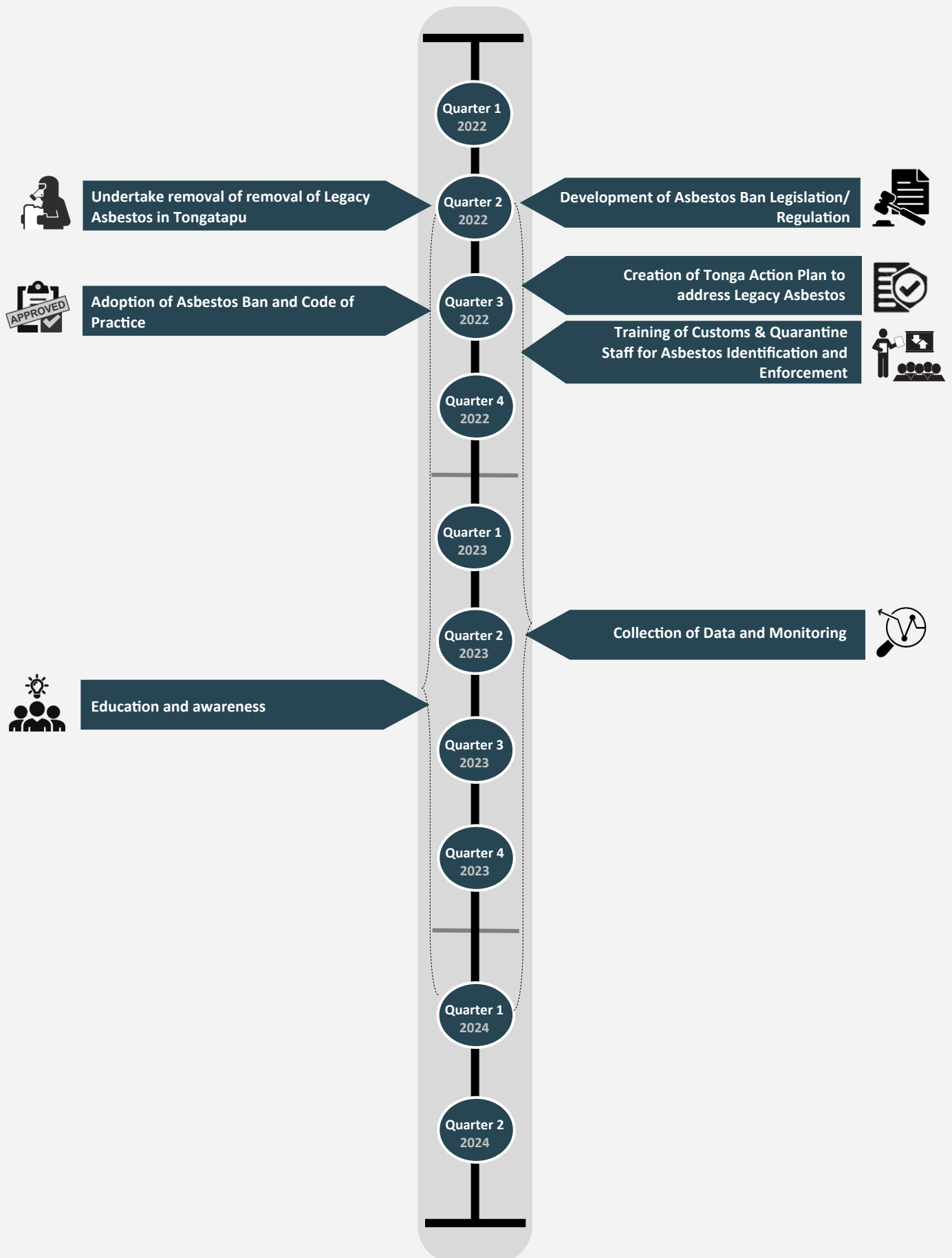


Action Plan identifying high risk sites, and best disposal options with costing and plan for abatement



Implementation of effective national education and awareness program

ACTIVITIES AND TIMELINE



PACWASTEPLUS REGIONAL PROJECTS / ACTIVITIES AND WHAT TONGA CAN EXPECT



Health Care Waste Management

Tonga will receive:

- Healthcare waste training [storage, treatment, and disposal solutions for healthcare waste]
- Assessment of the impact of the PacWaste Project healthcare waste activities
- Repair selected healthcare waste Incinerators in the region
- Work with development partners to implement a long-term plan for the sustainability of health care waste infrastructure
- Ongoing Technical Assistance



Asbestos Management

Tonga will receive:

- A guidance and drafting note to assist with legislative reform to ban the importation of asbestos
- Template Code of Practice to guide the safe handling and management of asbestos
- Communication resources and materials to provide information on safe handling and management of asbestos
- Learnings from other country projects focused on asbestos
- Ongoing Technical Assistance



Organics Management

Tonga will receive:

- Document providing technical analysis of how to compost common organic materials received in the Pacific
- Template Minimum Standard document to guide effective and safe composting
- Resources to guide organic facility design and operation
- Training on organic facility design and operation
- Ongoing Technical Assistance
- Learnings from country projects focused on organics management



ARFD / Sustainable Financing

Tonga will receive:

- Communication resources and materials to provide information to stakeholders on the benefits of ARFD systems
- Resources and training to assist during ARFD system design and guide decisions support
- Learnings from other country feasibility studies and projects focused on ARFD
- Ongoing Technical Assistance



Disaster Waste Management

Tonga will receive:

- Terms of Reference for the establishment of an Environment Sector Working Group (Cluster) within National Disaster Management Framework to ensure effective implementation of disaster Waste Management Response and Recovery
- Drafting/Guiding Notes on National and Community Disaster Waste Management Plans
- Disaster Waste Training Manual for use at both the National and Community level
- Learnings from country projects focused on disaster waste management
- Ongoing Technical Assistance



Regional Course Development

Tonga will receive

- Development of a sustainable capacity building program for waste management in based on country needs
- Training through the adopted training courses, both vocational and tertiary



Schools Curriculum Development

Tonga will receive

- School curriculum on waste management education (eight programme waste streams) incorporated in to existing school core subjects such as Maths, English and Science
- Primary school education-problem based curriculum
- Secondary school education-culturally responsive
- Tertiary school education-culturally responsive
- Training and capacity building opportunities for teachers



Bulky Waste Management

Tonga will receive:

- Guiding document and a Decision Support Tool to guide on how to design and implement a national ELV management programme.
- Drafting/Guiding Notes on how to draft national legislation for the management of End-of-Life vehicles
- Safe Dismantling Training Manual
- Publications and awareness materials



Behaviour Change

Tonga will receive

- Learnings of the community-based social marketing Pilot projects and replication of successfully implemented projects
- Ongoing Technical Assistance

ABOUT THE PACWASTEPLUS PROGRAMME

The Pacific – European Union (EU) Waste Management Programme, PacWastePlus, is a 72-month programme funded by the EU and implemented by the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) to improve regional management of waste and pollution sustainably and cost-effectively.

About PacWastePlus

The impact of waste and pollution is taking its toll on the health of communities, degrading natural ecosystems, threatening food security, impeding resilience to climate change, and adversely impacting social and economic development of countries in the region. The PacWastePlus programme will generate improved economic, social, health, and environmental benefits by enhancing existing activities and building capacity and sustainability into waste management practices for all participating countries.

Countries participating in the PacWastePlus programme are: *Cook Islands, Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Republic of Marshall Islands, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu.*

KEY OBJECTIVES

Outcomes & Key Result Areas

The overall objective of PacWastePlus is “to generate improved economic, social, health and environmental benefits arising from stronger regional economic integration and the sustainable management of natural resources and the environment”.

The specific objective is “to ensure the safe and sustainable management of waste with due regard for the conservation of biodiversity, health and wellbeing of Pacific Island communities and climate change mitigation and adaptation requirements”.

Key Result Areas

- **Improved data collection, information sharing, and education awareness**
- **Policy & Regulation** - Policies and regulatory frameworks developed and implemented.
- **Best Practices** - Enhanced private sector engagement and infrastructure development implemented
- **Human Capacity** - Enhanced human capacity



Learn more about the Tonga Project by visiting

<https://pacwasteplus.org/country-project/tonga/>

For more information please contact:



The PacWastePlus team on pwp@sprep.org



Or visit - <https://www.pacwasteplus.org>

Disclaimer

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**Countries mentioned in this publication are as at November 2021*

(post project please email sprep@sprep.org)