



Mid-Term Evaluation Brief /2023

PacWaste Plus (PWP) is a regional programme working with Pacific Island States to improve their solid waste management practices. Funded by the **European Union**, PWP is implemented by the **Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP)**. Between January and August 2023, **NIRAS** conducted a mid-term evaluation of PacWaste Plus, producing a series of findings, conclusions, and recommendations to improve the programme implementation.

Cook Islands



Country project focus:



Advance Recovery Fees & Deposits (ARFD)

Local actors involved:

Infrastructure Cook Islands (ICI), National Environment Service, Pa Enua councils, Ministry of Finance and Economic Management (Customs and Planning Division).

Good practices

Before PacWaste Plus started, the Cook Islands had introduced segregation at the source for different recyclable waste streams, encouraged household composting and prohibited landfilling of organic waste. A recycling facility in Rarotonga currently has its operations subsidised by the government. When the ARFD legislation drafted by PWP enters into force, this sustainable financing mechanism will ensure the independent operation of the recycling facility. The required infrastructure and technical capacities are already in place, and little behaviour change will be needed, as citizens are already used to segregating their waste. Moreover, the ban on landfilling organic waste drastically reduces the operational costs, leachate pollution and CO₂ emissions.

Main results achieved:

- A waste audit was completed.
- An ARFD policy was developed and a Waste Bill was elaborated.
- Parliament adopted the ARFD policy.
- A detailed model for tariff setting and rollout of the ARFD system was developed.
- Customs systems were updated to enable capture of ARFD items upon import.
- Customs staff was equipped to assume their role in the ARFD system through on-the-job support.
- Feasibility Study and Legislative Guidance completed to guide ICI on options for implementation of ARFD.
- A pilot hand crusher was purchased.

Lessons learned:

- Work on legislation and sustainable financing mechanisms have a high potential for impactful and sustainable project outcomes and should be encouraged to other countries and waste streams where possible.
- Although solid waste management responsibilities fall within federal governments, civil society and the private sector are important actors to involve, as they can engage in awareness raising, urban cleaning, and technology development.
- Besides investing in recycling, activities promoting waste prevention are key, such as banning single-use plastics and other undesirable materials from entering the countries in the first place.



Next steps:

- Adoption of the Waste Bill by Parliament.
- Adoption of the ARFD regulation and implementation in Rarotonga and Pa Enua.
- Train ICI and government staff in ARFD operation.
- Establish community ARFD depots.
- Implement the national education and awareness programme.