

31st SPREP MEETING OF OFFICIALS

5, 6, and 7 September 2023, Apia, Samoa

Agenda item 9.3.3: Capacity development in the waste and pollution sector: regional programmes for behavioural change and community of practice

Purpose of paper:

1. To seek support and endorsement from the meeting to develop a holistic approach to sustainable waste management practices enabled by effective community behavioural change initiatives

Background:

2. Waste management and pollution control is an increasingly pressing issue due to the large amount of waste produced by human activities. The traditional approach of disposing of waste in landfills is unsustainable and has led to pollution of air, land, and the sea. Traditional approaches to combat this simply seek to 'inform' the regulated community of why waste management and pollution is an issue and works on the assumption that if people understand the issue and impact, they will do the right thing.
3. Awareness and Education activities which seek to ensure an educated community making informed decisions is incorporated into numerous Waste Management and Pollution Control implemented projects, including:
 - a. Committing to Sustainable Waste Actions in the Pacific (SWAP) is implementing Marine Litter Pilot Projects in Fiji, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga and Vanuatu to educate local communities and encourage behavioural change in order to tackle Marine Litter and Plastic Pollution while carrying our beach clean-ups and waste audits.
 - b. PacWastePlus – European Union funded Programme that has incorporated a programme wide Communications and Visibility plan into delivery, and has assisted countries to develop a specific National Education and Awareness Plan (NEAP) to ensure project interventions are designed with an 'audience focus' so stakeholders are able to access necessary information to actively and effectively participate in the programme activities.
 - c. POLP – Australian Government funded project designed to reduce the amount of single use plastic utilised in the region is developing various messages and interventions with participating countries to assist consumers to make informed decisions about their consumption patterns.

4. Behavioural Change programmes differ from Education and Awareness projects as activities are designed specifically to assess the desired audiences' attitudes, values, and the specific actions of individuals or groups. They typically use specific techniques that target immediate behaviours and are supported by general education following the behaviour, as opposed to utilising the education to inform the behaviour change.
5. It is relatively easy to design and distribute materials, and projects typically expect that by increasing knowledge and building support for a subject, behavioural change will occur, however studies repeatedly show that information by itself has little to no effect on behaviour. Advertising is normally only effective for getting consumers to choose one brand over another, not creating or changing behaviours. In some cases, information-based campaigns can even draw attention to and increase the frequency of an undesirable behaviour.
6. Behavioural Change activities are an essential element to waste management and pollution control activities as they have been proven to provide a sustained outcome when compared to simple education or awareness campaigns. There are concrete examples of success stories from around the region that support this approach in addressing waste management and pollution. By focussing on an individual and targeting a behaviour to identify the alternate desired behaviour, campaign activities can be developed to encourage the desired behaviour, and place barriers or consequences for the undesirable behaviour.
7. Sometimes called Community Based Social Marketing (CBSM), the CBSM method is based in social psychology and draws from the idea that sustainable behavioural change is most effective when it involves direct contact with people and is carried out at the community level. CBSM typically follows a simple process for development:
 - a. Identify the desirable and undesirable behaviours that will be focus of the work;
 - b. Identify the audiences, barriers and benefits to individuals doing the desired behaviour;
 - c. Develop strategies to encourage the desired behaviour, and discourage the undesirable behaviour;
 - d. Pilot and test the strategies; and
 - e. Implement at full scale and evaluate success.
8. PacWastePlus specifically is implementing a series of pilot CBSM projects in three countries in the region, to prove concept, and develop resources to assist all countries to design and implement meaningful behavioural change projects. Pilot Projects are planned for implementation in:
 - a. **Papua New Guinea** – Community to Segregate and Process Organic Waste. A waste audit undertaken in PNG in 2021 highlighted that 75% of materials landfilled are organics.
 - b. **Vanuatu** – Choosing Reusable over Disposable- A community initiative to change behaviour to adopt reusable diapers instead of disposable diapers.
 - c. **Solomon Islands** – Improving the Management of Organics/Recyclables in the Ontong Java community (Lord Howe settlement)-aligned to Greening of the Games national efforts.

9. The Pacific Ocean Litter Project is also planning to implement CBSM approaches in selected pilot countries to achieve its Outcome 2. *Local and visiting consumers (women, men, girls and boys) are using less single-use plastics and more alternative products.*
10. The outcome of these Pilot projects will be documented, and the Programme will develop resources to assist all countries to design and implement behaviour change projects to complement and enhance their existing education and awareness activities.

Recommendation:

11. The Meeting is invited to:

- 1) **Endorse** the approach of developing and implementing Community Based Social Marketing campaigns; and
- 2) **Encourage** the active engagement of relevant Ministries within Member countries in the implementation of pilot activities to build capacity for implementing similar campaigns across the region.

13 June 2023