

ICI Proposal to the Green Climate Fund

Financing the Cook Islands Integrated Solid Waste Management Framework

Amount sought: NZ\$4,062,500

The breakdown for the figure is provided in Appendix 1.

Period: 3 years

Background

Improperly managed solid waste is a large contributor to greenhouse gas emissions. Small, remote islands, resourcing and socio-economic status compound the issues associated with managing solid waste in Small Island Developing States such as the Cook Islands compared to large land masses.

Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) (insert what POPs is) leach off improperly managed waste and can enter air, groundwater, marine environments and soils and eventually entering the food chain. Global warming worsens POP emissions and concentrations while increased rainfall intensity triggers secondary emissions of Persistent Organic Pollutants in agricultural lands and storage sites.

With all types of waste including recyclables and hazardous waste unremoved from many islands and not properly managed, this places a risk to the populations that dwell on these islands where waste is dumped, buried, littered and burned in yard fires.

Global warming exacerbates the leaching from and degradation of wastes while the expected increases in storm intensity from climate change could drive waste into the ocean. Burning of all types of waste including plastic is common across the Cook Islands and this most likely accounts for a large portion of greenhouse gas emission by the Cook Islands.

Sand mining for construction is practiced across all islands. When sand is mined, from the coastal zone, the mined holes are filled with soil. This soil will eventually be leached into the lagoon nearby which will have a negative impact on the marine environment placing more pressure on marine ecosystems alongside climate change.

To date, no holistic management framework is operating throughout the Cook Islands although an Integrated Solid Waste Management Framework has been designed under the Cook Islands Solid Waste Management Strategy.

Where we want to be

A priority of the framework is to have the framework self-funded by what is termed the Advanced Disposal Fee (ADF) placed on products upon entry into the Cook Islands. Infrastructure Cook Islands (ICI) along with the rest of the Solid Waste Management Committee have been promoting the ADF since its inception in 2013 however, it is not yet implemented.

Work surrounding institutional and legislative arrangements, infrastructure, monitoring and evaluation and communications and awareness make up the remaining priority areas of the Strategy while the Waste Hierarchy is the overarching approach to waste management. The Cook Islands Waste Hierarchy consists of 4 R's, Refuse, Reduce, Reuse and Recycle with the emphasis on Refuse.

ICI's current formal tasks in waste management is to manage the Rarotonga Waste Facility (receives only recyclables and general waste) and the Rarotonga Roadside Collection Contract and progress policies in waste management. There are 8 staff to carry out all functions. Infrastructure Cook Islands is also the focal point for the Cook Islands Solid Waste Management Strategy and has been working via several avenues to implement the Strategy in the absence of the ADF. These avenues are through normal operations, annual business planning, partnerships with the private sector, non-government organisations and other Government organisations and seeking external funding sources.

Overall, ICI aims to expand its responsibilities to being the national focal point for all waste management and return all recyclables, all hazardous and general waste back to Rarotonga for further processing, packing and shipping to recyclers and safe disposal facilities with a view to have a final disposal option in place by 2026. The necessity of this is to prevent further contamination of the environment from unmanaged waste and bad practices to ensure healthy and clean ecosystems for all inhabitants and avert the risks posed by climate change.

The self-funded framework will allow formal contracts to be commissioned with local recyclers rather than arranging friendly partnerships as is done now and risking negative financial impacts. Active progression of import restrictions on goods and products that are easier to manage and have less environmental impact is a strong addition to the aforementioned effort. A strong presence across the community through a strong awareness programme is necessary to support the overall aims and produce individual ownership of waste management across the community. Financing from the Green Climate Fund (GCF) is sought to resource ICI to implement the framework to allow it to begin operating while the ADF is still being investigated and progress the objectives of the Strategy.

Institutional and legislative arrangements

Establishing clear responsibility supported by legislation is in progress with ICI expanding its activities in the waste management field and leading the development of a Solid and Hazardous Waste Bill with the intention of drawing all existing legislation into the single Bill. A single use plastics ban as well as the ADF is set to be submitted to Parliament with the Bill during 2019.

ICI seeks GCF funds to resource its Waste Management Division to administer the Bill

Infrastructure

Infrastructure and equipment for managing solid waste outside of Rarotonga is lacking investment from Government. There has been effort from some individual islands who have sought overseas donor agency support while a local based recycler has been investing in and seeking additional financial support for equipment to be able to continue their recycling efforts.

ICI works closely with the recycler, Cook Islands General Transport and supports their proposal to the GCF for funding to progress shipping and recycling facilities therefore will not include a proposal to seek funds under the ICI proposal. Facility improvements increase efficiency and supports occupational health and safety.

ICI has sought funds both from national budget and a donor to acquire an industrial glass crusher to crush glass bottles thereby diverting 45% of waste from the Rarotonga landfill and producing a valuable resource to substitute for sand preferably in construction. This will reduce sand mining.

The current Rarotonga landfill is nearing capacity. A replacement option is required by 2026 and ICI will be formally seeking options for either on island treatment and disposal or off-island options for disposal through an Expressions of Interest from this year. In the meantime, a rehabilitation of the landfill needs to take place to locate the edge of the existing liner and leachate return pipes buried in the landfill. The leachate return assists in increasing the efficiency of the breakdown of the waste matter.

ICI proposes to initiate the acquiring of the necessary equipment to progress proper processing and packing of waste in the Pa Enua through the GCF as well as planning for the 2026 option and reducing sand mining across the islands.

Sustainable financing

The ADF is proposed to be placed on all products that enter the Cook Islands to cover costs associated with recycling, processing and disposal. The ADF would be added to the cost of products therefore every consumer will pay ADF. The ADF placed on products will not significantly increase the cost of the products. To motivate improved sorting and returns and reduce litter and burning, all recyclable and potentially hazardous products will include a refund within the ADF. As outlined earlier, the ADF would provide a fund to not only enable Government to contract private recyclers services but to also cover the costs associated with the final treatment and/or disposal of general (residual) waste.

ICI does not propose funding from the GCF for this component however, staff resourcing requested above and below will be sufficient to cover resourcing necessary to progress the ADF.

Monitoring and evaluation

Environmental protection relies on the minimisation of anthropogenic impacts on local, national and regional environments. Due to the remote situations and socio economic status of the Cook Islands, emphasis is on best practice rather than technical monitoring. Institutionalised reporting will enable the Cook Islands to properly report to international organisations as well and comply with obligations under specific environmental conventions such as the UNFCCC.

ICI seeks to resource its Waste Management Division with staff to develop and implement best practice guides and associated reporting for waste depots and facilities across the Cook Islands and to also monitor against these guides and reporting systems. Additionally, work with Cook Islands Customs is important to ensure proper application of the ADF and monitoring of imported goods.

Communications and awareness

A planned and regular communications and awareness programme is essential to embedding good practices and acceptance of initiatives across the community. At this time, without a dedicated communications officer or team, awareness work is done when time and resources allow.

ICI seeks to resource its Waste Management Division with communications staff using the GCF and have a budget to carry out necessary awareness and training outreach.

The priority areas above in conjunction with the 4R's, complement each other in progressing the Cook Islands towards a holistic and progressive waste management framework that works to protect human

and environmental health by preventing the negative impacts produced through improperly managed waste exacerbated by climate change induced weather variability.