




# RESPONSE Project

## Multi-stakeholder consultation workshop

Hosted by the National Environment Service & Te Ipukarea Society

Rarotonga: Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> March 2024 | The Rarotongan Beach Resort and Lagoarium



Report by Ngatupuna Kae, NES

Photo by Terena Koteka- Wiki, NES



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## Acronyms

EP	Environmental Partnerships
GEF	Global Environment Facility
NES	National Environment Services
NGO	non-government organization
PPG	Project Preparation Grant phase
RESPONSE	Reducing Single-Use Plastics on Small Island Economies
TIS	Te Ipukarea Society
UNEP	United Nation Environment Programme



## Summary

On March 6<sup>th</sup> 2024, the National Environment Service (NES) in partnership with Te Ipukarea Society (TIS) delivered a consultation workshop in Rarotonga at the Rarotongan Resort & Lagoonarium. This consultation was funded by the global Environment Facility (GEF) through the Circular Solutions to Plastic Pollution integrated programme and supported by the United Nations Environment Programme.

This workshop was intended for stakeholders in the food and beverage sectors, such as tourism, retail and wholesalers. As well as local policy makers, community leaders and relevant community groups and non-government organizations.

The Cook Islands preparatory phase grant (PPG) team, which includes NES Environmental Partnerships (EP) division and TIS as local consultants, are to conduct stakeholder consultations in Rarotonga and Aitutaki, under the GEF 8 Circular Solutions to Plastics integrated programme for its 'RESPONSE' national child project. Given the short timeframe available to compile the necessary documentation for submission to UNEP (April 2024), the Cook Islands PPG team proposed to host stakeholder workshops and in person meetings with relevant stakeholders in Rarotonga from February 26<sup>th</sup> – March 22<sup>nd</sup> and Aitutaki from the 19<sup>th</sup> – 22<sup>nd</sup> March to swiftly collect necessary information to inform the CEO Endorsement package for this project.

The purpose of the workshop was to familiarize participants with the RESPONSE Project, to gain insight, input and ideas for project planning and to identify potential barriers and challenges.

The workshop received a lower turnout than expected (refer to Appendix 1 for participants list), however there were representatives from government, private sector, NGO and Aronga Mana who were highly engaged in the workshop discussions. Additionally, some key stakeholders were consulted with 1 on 1 prior to the workshop so additional perspectives from those can still be included in the PPG's final considerations.

For more information on this workshop, please email [nes@cookislands.gov.ck](mailto:nes@cookislands.gov.ck)



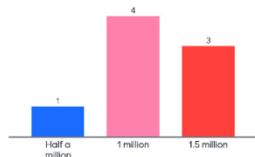
### Session 1: Welcome and Introduction

The GEF 8 Plastics RESPONSE consultation workshop was opened at 9:00am by Mr. Ngatupuna Kae, National Environment Service intern. Mr. Kae provided an overview of the workshop agenda and the objectives of the workshop. Opening prayer was given by Mr. Muraai Herman from Te Marae Ora.

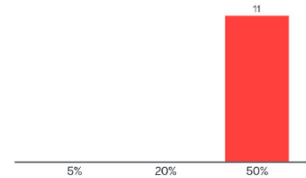
### Session 2: Introduction to GEF

At 9:15am, Ms. Hayley Weeks gave stakeholders an overview of GEF and GEF 8. She started with an ice breaker using a live interactive Menti survey, as shown below:

How many bottles were imported to the Cook Islands in 2020?



How much of our landfill is plastics?



From this quick survey, it was clear many stakeholders underestimated the number of plastics imported into the Cook Islands. Stakeholders also overestimated the composition of our landfill waste composition, though this was likely influenced by the results of the previous question. This was an interactive way to engage stakeholders in the workshop’s topic while also gauging current perspectives prior to beginning the presentations.

Ms. Hayley Weeks then provided an overview of the GEF and the GEF-8 Plastics RESPONSE Project (Appendix 2).

### Session 3: Project RESPONSE Overview- (9:30am)

The following session was presented by Siana Whatarau, NES Senior Environmental Partnerships Coordinator (Appendix 3). In 2023, NES was successful in its expression of interest to participate in the GEF 8 Circular Solutions to Plastic Pollution integrated programme. With a total project budget of US\$6.2million (approx. NZ\$10million), the project aims to reduce the amount of single use and unnecessary plastic products in the food & beverage industry entering the Cook Islands, and support enabling environments for reuse and other alternative solutions, thus reducing the burden of end-of-life waste management, pollution and other harmful plastics impacts. The Cook Islands national level child project under this integrated programme is entitled RESPONSE (**R**educing **S**ingle-use **p**lastics **o**n **s**mall island **e**conomies). Summary note of the RESPONSE project is available in Appendix 5.



RESPONSE project outcomes:

Outcomes	Description
Outcome 1	Upstream policies to limit plastic pollution in the Cook Islands are strengthened
Outcome 2	Large scale regional producers are identified to replace harmful F&B packaging commonly imported into the Cook Islands
Outcome 3	Local private sector (incl SMEs), NGOs and communities are engaged and supported to pilot and scale up innovative solutions
Outcome 4	National data on single use plastics is enhanced to inform and improve decision making
Outcome 5	Best practices, innovative solutions and lessons learned are documented and exchanged through knowledge management and knowledge transfer

Participants showed interest in the following points:

Strengthening Policy & National legislation:

- Opportunities
- Accreditation
- Knowledge exchange

Innovative solutions:

- Enable private sector environment solutions, e.g. Rarotonga Brewery, Pacific Resort, Crown Bch
- Scale up current best practice

Plastics that will be banned:

- Single use Plastic Bags
- Cutlery
- Plastic crockery
- Straws
- Cups/polystyrene products
- Plastic bottles

Other discussion points:

- Imports to be banned by a certain date and phase out use of single use products
- Education - tertiary & CITT accreditation
- CIT- Mana Tiaki program
- TMO - links to Human Health



## Session 4: Breakouts, Consultations and Discussions - (11:00am)

During this session, National Environment Services and Te Ipukarea Society facilitated a guided discussion between participants, via break out groups. Groups discussed the following points:

1. What single-use plastics is your organisation currently using and what are the alternatives that have been or could be used?
2. What challenges do you see yourself facing transitioning to these alternatives?
3. What support would aid your transition to these alternatives?

Please see Appendix 4 for raw notes as presented by the participants.

### Key points from stakeholder discussions:

Most hotel groups expressed their biggest challenge is the lack of alternatives in the market. Food providers, e.g. the bakeries and restaurants, raised concerns about food safety standards if plastics were to be phased out. Some businesses also raised a unique issue whereby the machinery used to wrap their products in plastic may not be compatible with alternative products and replacement machinery would be costly, therefore creating a financial burden.

### How can GEF-8 assist with solutions?

- Include small grants program for NGO's & private sector, ensure stakeholders are included
- Provide recommendations for best practices to transition out of current plastic use
- Support finding solutions to reduce single use plastic

Mura from Te Marae Ora commented that Health Food Licenses will be administered by CITTI

TIS - will NES support partnership with other agencies- Agriculture/TMO etc.

NES - acknowledge - small grants program to support CSO/NGOs & Private Sector

### Communication strategy:

- NES Communications Strategy and Tools
- Establish stakeholder network
- Project consultation workshops, one-on-one meetings
- Project surveys
- Video communications

### Possible solutions raised in discussions:

- Find suitable alternatives to plastic packaging in the market
- Education and awareness to change attitude
- Incentives to return packaging for discounts
- Request - big super market to bulk buy products- for hotels.
- Build an enabling environment - ZERO Waste programs, return plastics to supplier to recycle



- Eco-certification programmes to incentivise
- Food safety best practices should be shared
- Phase out plan is needed to make the change
- More reusable options
- Supermarkets – Could provide bulk purchase options on dry goods
- Gaps analysis in the industry/companies, especially for required technology and best practices to shift to alternative packaging
- TIS - school Holiday programs to educate youth
- Enhancing agriculture sector to upscale local markets and rely less on imported packaged goods
- Youth engagement: Use a school to model a circular system that limits plastic use and consumption. Reduce waste at school. Rent-a-plates project through Te Ipukarea Society. Take your Rubbish Home -policy at Te Oki Ou. Refill water bottles - start building those practices from grass roots.
- Encourage Environmental Champions in schools through zero-plastic school programmes.

**Next Steps:**

- NES & TIS will continue consultations
- Aitutaki consultation from 19<sup>th</sup> – 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2024
- April- UNEP submit project document
- June- GEF council consider project
- 5-year cycle 2025 to 2030 project implementation
- Plastic treaty in progress & consideration- MFAI-NES-TIS

**Recap- (12:30pm):**

The recap session was led by Ms. Hayley Weeks to consolidate all discussions that took place during this workshop. The discussions consolidated into four tables based on single-use plastics being used, alternatives being used. Challenges they will face and opportunities/support where it is needed through funding by the Global Environment Facility (GEF).

Below are discussions:

SUPs being used	Alternatives being used
Bread plastic bags	Rarotonga brewery switch from PET to glass bottles (sourced some from waste facility, applying a bond to return)
Cling film/glad wrap	Magic Reef – makes own jam & muesli with local seasonal fruit and small refill jars, local fruit platters
600ml plastics bottles (water)	Post mix machine (syrup) for sodas
Peanut, marmite	Recycling stations
Food packaging	Offer water refill stations and bottles
Other:	Glass bottles in rooms and bar
Big bags of pool salt (mesh, break down)	





	Free staff meals to reduce waste (reduces skip empty schedule from 7-21) Cereal, jam, etc. dispensers
<b>Challenges</b>	<b>Opportunities/Support needed</b>
<p>High volume (bakery - hard to transition)</p> <p>Hygiene, safety &amp; freshness/shelf life</p> <p>Practicality and wastage</p> <p>Public perceptions to change (visual elements, assumptions, etc.) – mindset change</p> <p>Equipment &amp; machinery</p> <p>Encouraging people to bring back bottles for refills</p> <p>Limited wholesale options</p> <p>Making suppliers accountable to provide alternatives (bulk, etc.)</p> <p>Limited/no real alternatives for glad wrap</p>	<p>Awareness,</p> <p>Switch to paper bags for bread</p> <p>Supplying/Sourcing to/from Pa Enea (RB ginger beer from Mauke)</p> <p>Business case studies (e.g. Avarua to switch to cotton/paper bags) to understand and cost out system changes, etc.</p> <p>Partnerships with accommodations to return Rarotonga Brewery bottles</p> <p>Plastics phase out plan at acceptable timeframes supported by legislation</p>



## Appendices

### Appendix 1: Workshop agenda

## GEF 8 Plastics RESPONSE Project Workshop

Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> March 2024 | The Rarotongan Beach Resort and Lagoonarium, Treetops Verandah Room

Hosted by the National Environment Service & Te Ipukarea Society

### Provisional Agenda

Time	Session	Objectives	Facilitator/Presenter
8:30am	<i>Participants arrival and registration</i>		
9:00am	Opening Prayer	Meeting start	Mr. Ngatupuna Kae, NES
9:05am	Welcome remarks	Familiarize participants with workshop key objectives, desired outcomes and housekeeping matters	NES
9:15am	Overview of GEF & GEF-8	Sensitize participants with the Global Environment Facility	Ms. Hayley Weeks, NES
9:30am	Project R.E.S.P.O.N.S.E overview	Sensitize participants with the objectives, outcomes and outputs of the project	Ms. Siana Whatarau, NES
10:00am	Q & A discussions	Open floor for participants	All
10:30am	<i>Group Photo and Morning Tea</i>		
11:00am	Consultations & break out groups	Break-out sessions to facilitate specific discussions based on sector & focus groups	Te Ipukarea Society & NES
12:00pm	Report back	Groups report back on their discussions	Te Ipukarea Society & NES
12:30	Recap & Next steps	Provide brief summary of discussions held in consultation sessions and next steps for the project	Mr Ryan Donovan, TIS Ms. Hayley Weeks, NES
12:50	Close of workshop	Closing remarks and prayer	Mr Ngatupuna Kae, NES
1:30pm	<i>Lunch</i>		



Appendix 2: Sign in sheets



Name:	Email:	Phone:	Affiliation:	Position:	Gender:	Signature
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Mura Hevava			TMO	Journalist	F	<i>Mura Hevava</i>
Noelani Bruce (Kaitiaki)			Kaitiaki	Manager	F	<i>Noelani Bruce</i>
Fred Nicholas - Terana Kotera-wiki			NES	Project Officer	F	<i>Fred Nicholas</i>
			NES	Project Officer	F	<i>Fred Nicholas</i>
HJAY	FB.manager@the.rarotonga.gov.ck	53295	TRBL	GROUP FOOD & BEVG MGR	MALE	<i>HJAY</i>



### Appendix 3: Presentation slides

The presentation slides can be accessed via the Cook Islands Environment Data Portal:

<https://cookislands-data.sprep.org/resource/gef8-response-project-presentation-slides>

### Appendix 4: Raw notes from break out discussions:

<https://cookislands-data.sprep.org/resource/gef8-response-consultation-activity-sheets>



## Appendix 5: Summary note



Project title: Reducing Single-use Plastics on Small Island Economies (RESPONSE)

Objective: To reduce the amount of **single use and unnecessary plastic products** in the **food & beverage industry** entering the Cook Islands, and support enabling environments for **reuse and other alternative solutions**, thus reducing the burden of end-of-life waste management, pollution and other harmful plastics impacts.

Total Project cost = US\$6,200,000, funded by the Global Environment Facility

Length of project = 5 years, 2025 – 2030

Outcomes	Description
Outcome 1	Upstream policies to limit plastic pollution in the Cook Islands are strengthened
Outcome 2	Large scale regional producers are identified to replace harmful F&B packaging commonly imported into the Cook Islands
Outcome 3	Local private sector (incl SMEs), NGOs and communities are engaged and supported to pilot and scale up innovative solutions
Outcome 4	National data on single use plastics is enhanced to inform and improve decision making
Outcome 5	Best practices, innovative solutions and lessons learned are documented and exchanged through knowledge management and knowledge transfer

To see the full concept note for the RESPONSE project go to the Cook Islands Environment Data portal: <https://pacific-data.sprep.org/resource/annex-8-cook-islands-response-concept-note-plastics-integrated-programme>

For more information, please contact Siana Whatarau: [siana.whatarau@cookislands.gov.ck](mailto:siana.whatarau@cookislands.gov.ck)