

**PACIFIC
WASTEWATER
POLICY STATEMENT**

Majuro, 15 October 2001

VISION

Protect the health of the people and safeguard our fragile environment through improved, effective and efficient management of wastewater.

INTRODUCTION

The Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities (GPA) identifies the priority for action on sewage. In the Pacific region, a consultation process was facilitated by SOPAC, SPREP, PWA and the UNEP/GPA Coordination Office on wastewater management. A Regional Wastewater Management Meeting was held 10-15 October 2001 in Majuro, Republic of Marshall Islands and was the latest in the consultation process, which included preliminary sessions in February and March 2001 in Auckland and Apia. The Majuro meeting was sponsored by the Governments of Belgium, New Zealand and Taiwan/ROC.

The meeting brought together representatives from 15 Pacific Island countries (American Samoa, Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, New Zealand, Niue, Papua New Guinea, Palau, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu), technical experts from in and outside the region, regional and international organisations (SOPAC, SPREP, SPC, PWA, WHO, UNESCO, UNEP/GPA), potential donors and NGO's, to complete the Pacific Wastewater Policy Statement and the Pacific Wastewater Framework for Action.

The development of the PICs has traditionally been hampered by their dispersed populations, small size and vast ocean distances separating them. These circumstances impose large costs on service provision in education, economic development, social welfare, health, travel and communication and have limited the growth of important industries such as fisheries, agriculture and tourism.

Improvements in wastewater management are essential to improve population health and standard of living, thereby increasing economic productivity and education attendance, and reduce the pollution to coastal fisheries and the coastal tourist industry.

Definition of Wastewater

It is recognised that different countries and stakeholders have different interpretations of the terms *wastewater* and *sanitation*.

For the purpose of the Pacific Wastewater Framework for Action the terms *sanitation, public health and environment* refer to only those aspects of sanitation, public health and environment, which are directly linked to wastewater.

The term wastewater is defined as:

Any combination of discharge (liquor/effluent, sludge/biosolids) into the environment, with or without treatment, is defined as: human excrement (including zero waste discharge systems), effluent, flushing water, industrial water and stormwater (run-off caused by rain).

GUIDING PRINCIPLE 1:

NATIONAL WASTEWATER MANAGEMENT POLICIES AND REGULATIONS WILL BE APPROPRIATE AND ACCEPTABLE TO THE PEOPLE AND CULTURES OF THE PACIFIC ISLANDS.

National PIC governments are required to place high priority on wastewater and sanitation issues in order to direct sufficient attention and resources to these areas in national development plans. Regional and national policies should define responsibilities leading to better co-operation between agencies and increased recognition of the linkages between good sanitation, improved public health, economic development, and a cleaner environment. An updated and consistent regulatory framework, combined with effective enforcement, will result in compliance with good practices, reduced pollution, equitable allocation of resources, and increased investment.

Policy 1.1: Governments will consider the wastewater and sanitation sector as a priority for improvement and investment.

Policy 1.2: Governments will develop national wastewater and sanitation policies and regulations that are consistent with international and national laws, regulations, technical standards, and obligations.

Policy 1.3: Governments will develop and implement appropriate wastewater - and associated - regulatory frameworks, compliance and enforcement requirements that benefit the specific cultures, customs, economies and environment of the people of the Pacific.

Policy 1.4: Government regulations will require regular system performance reporting.

Policy 1.5: Governments and regional organisations will co-operate to develop and sustain regional and national capacities in compliance monitoring, including technical and financial resources and data acquisition.

Policy 1.6: Government and service provider decisions on wastewater management will be transparent to improve accountability, donor and investor acceptance.

Policy 1.7: Governments and regional organisations, the private sector and NGOs will actively co-operate to ensure that wastewater management policies and plans are integrated into the national development policies and plans and other cross-sectoral initiatives.

GUIDING PRINCIPLE 2:

APPROPRIATE NATIONAL INSTITUTIONS, INFRASTRUCTURE AND INFORMATION WILL SUPPORT SUSTAINABLE WASTEWATER MANAGEMENT.

Clearly defined responsibilities for all stakeholder organisations in wastewater management can prevent fragmented and uncoordinated plans and actions and improve linkages to other sectors. A specific national agency responsible for wastewater management can be considered to enhance performance. Strengthened institutional capacities and the collection and dissemination of data and information will support appropriate technology selection, increase system performance, increase the understanding of subsequent environmental and public health impacts, and demonstrate the need for water conservation and natural disaster preparedness.

Policy 2.1: Governments will review and specify roles of, and facilitate coordination between existing agencies, and where appropriate, create specific responsible agencies for wastewater management.

Policy 2.2: Governments will ensure that wastewater technologies and related infrastructure are appropriate to meet national and local priorities and needs, within the constraints of available finance and other resources, while recognising the need for protection of human health and the environment.

Policy 2.3: Governments, service providers, institutions and regional organisations will collaborate throughout the region to improve timely access to and sharing of available data and research on appropriate wastewater technologies and the dissemination and implementation of wise practice guidelines.

Policy 2.4: Wastewater reduction (water demand management and conservation, zero discharge toilets) and reuse strategies will be developed and adopted by governments without compromising public health.

Policy 2.5: Governments and regional organisations will co-operate to develop and sustain regional and national water quality monitoring programmes and the use of this information (e.g. benchmarking) to improve wastewater management and environmental protection.

Policy 2.6: Governments, regional organisations and other stakeholders will cooperate to develop integrated wastewater management plans to effectively address the impacts of contingencies, emergencies and disasters.

GUIDING PRINCIPLE 3:

BETTER ACCESS TO FUNDING WILL IMPROVE SERVICE DELIVERY, AND DEVELOP THE PRIVATE SECTOR.

Adequate government financial support, alternative financing mechanisms and improved internal cost-recovery are prerequisites to sustain maintenance and attract external investment.

Policy 3.1: Governments, regional organisations, donors, the private sector and NGOs will co-operate to develop innovative approaches to existing funding structures and establish mechanisms to improve cost-recovery.

Policy 3.2: Where appropriate, governments, regional organisations and NGOs will co-operate to attract the private sector to invest in wastewater management through private-public partnership and other mechanisms.

Policy 3.3: Governments, donors and regional organisations will co-operate to develop appropriate service delivery and funding mechanisms to equitably address the wastewater management needs of both the urban and rural community.

GUIDING PRINCIPLE 4:

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN WASTEWATER MANAGEMENT AND SANITATION, WILL ENSURE EQUITABLE BENEFIT WITH RECOGNITION OF SOCIO-CULTURAL SENSITIVITIES.

Wastewater management and sanitation issues should receive a higher public profile. Public awareness by the community of socio-cultural, economic, environmental and public health impacts on wastewater management will ensure ownership.

Policy 4.1: Governments, regional organisations and NGO's will co-operate to promote and develop education and awareness of wastewater and sanitation issues within national and local government, while incorporating existing social and cultural values.

Policy 4.2: Governments, regional organisations and NGO's will co-operate to promote and develop community education and awareness of public health and environmental issues as related to wastewater while incorporating existing social and cultural values.

Policy 4.3: Governments, service providers and NGO's will in partnership with community agencies determine their respective roles and responsibilities, and will develop and implement culturally appropriate strategies and activities to ensure the implementation of wastewater programmes.

Policy 4.4: Governments, service providers and NGO's will ensure rural and urban communities will be given opportunities for active participation in the choice, development and implementation of wastewater and sanitation projects and on-going operation and maintenance of its facilities.

Policy 4.5: Planning of wastewater facilities will ensure acceptable access for all, with special regard to women, the disadvantaged, the disabled and those in rural and remote communities.

Policy 4.6: Service providers will take into account traditional knowledge and practices complemented by new approaches to wastewater management.

GUIDING PRINCIPLE 5:

VIABLE AND SUSTAINABLE LEVELS OF SKILLED AND KNOWLEDGEABLE PEOPLE WITHIN THE WASTEWATER SECTOR AND COMMUNITIES WILL IMPROVE WASTEWATER MANAGEMENT

Appropriately trained and experienced urban and rural wastewater professionals are needed to develop projects and operate facilities, at both the technical, managerial and community participation levels. Increased training enables communities and individuals to take responsibility for operating and maintaining their systems.

Policy 5.1: Governments, regional and international organisations will cooperate to develop and implement effective human resource development programmes for wastewater management and related personnel (including planners, management and enforcement professional) with particular attention to up-skilling the local workforce.

Policy 5.2: Governments, local institutions, regional and international organisations will work together in the development of regional and national training courses in support of human resource development programmes.

Policy 5.3: Governments, regional organisations and NGOs will promote and facilitate the development and training of communities and individuals to strengthen and assist their participation in wastewater management.

Policy 5.4: Governments, regional organisations, donors, the private sector and NGOs will work together to secure funding in support of human resource development policies and training programmes.