

MINUTES OF INAUGURAL FIJI GREEN PACKAGING STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING

Date and time: Tuesday 6th March 2018, 10am to 11:35am

Venue: PIDF Conference Room, 56 Domain Road.

Present: Marta Ferreira - USP
Christina Choy - FCCC
Robert Randolph - SCC
Dwain Qalovaki - Fiji Fuel Retailers Association
James Bhagwan - Uto ni Yalo Trust
Vinay Narsey - Narseys Plastics
Bou Mawi - PIPSO
Kushaal Raj - UniFiji
Mark Borg - PIDF
Nikhil Lal - PIDF
Riley Morrison - PIDF

Absent: Dept. of Environment

1. Welcome, introductions and confirmation of agenda

Agenda confirmed by all members and Mark states that PIDF (as Deputy Chair) will be taking the role of Chair for this meeting due to the absence of the Chair (Department of Environment).

2. Steering Committee Terms of Reference

- a. Department of Environment seem to have disengaged since the meeting following the Plastics Talanoa in June 2017. The focal point from the Department has resigned and PIDF has made attempts to reengage but these have not been fruitful so far. It is important that we reestablish the relationship with them as designated Chair of the Steering Committee and they will remain key in addressing hurdles of legislation and regulation.
- b. In discussing edits in the TOR for the Steering Committee it was proposed the title of the Steering Committee be changed to "Fiji Green Packaging Steering Committee". Proposal was made by PIDF, seconded and accepted
- c. It was proposed by PIDF that Ministry of Environment should remain as the primary Chair of this Steering Committee. PIDF, as deputy chair, will carry on functions of the Chair in their absence.
- d. Present here today are representatives from private sector, civil society and public sector - a good representation of this multi stakeholder group.

Other TOR Edits Proposed

- e. Deliverables
 - i. In point 1, "strategic plan" will be changed to "action plan"
 - ii. In points 1 and 2, change "plastic bags" to "plastic"
- As the Steering Group, we shouldn't just deal with plastic bags. There are other types of plastic wastes we need to address and develop strategies and action plans to tackle each.

Membership

- f. Dwain says that for Fiji, there are 2 government regulators that have legislative power to ensure that whatever we discuss in policy gets implemented by traders in the country.
 - i. In terms of working with business sector, FCCC is the biggest conduit. They have a good relationship with supermarkets and is the best strategic avenue to engage the business sector with.
- In regard to the Department of Environment - a copy of the minutes from each meeting should be emailed and physically delivered to the Director to ensure that lines of communication are always open. They should be kept informed of everything that happens. Everyone agrees.
- g. Include "The" for University of the South Pacific in the list of members
- h. **Mark nominates GGGI for membership.** They're already scoping in Fiji in terms of what can be done with plastics and also have a close relationship with Ministry of Economy. Not only that, but they seeking the best ways to intervene as far as plastics are concerned. GGGI has expressed interest in becoming a part of the steering committee and have asked for suggestions in ways that they can be involved.
 - i. Mark's nomination endorsed by two others with no objections.

Communication and Reporting

- i. Delete the first sentence and add "all Steering Committee meetings and reports will be publicly available and published on the Pacific Green Business Portal."
 - i. Agreed by all that the minutes should be made public for transparency and information sharing.

Objectives

- j. Change "packaging" to "petroleum based plastic"

Quorum

- k. The language is strange, is there a better way to write this? "A minimum of 2 people without objection" is proposed by Andrew and everyone agrees.

Responsibilities

- I. Drop the word "actors" and use "stakeholders" instead.

Related Legislations/Regulations/Policies

- m. We need to include the amended legislation of 2017, Fiji's voluntary commitments to the oceans summits and to COP23 and whatever commitments relate to plastics.
 - i. Add "...and Fiji's international commitments in regards to the oceans and plastics"
 - ii. In regard to the oceans — commitment #16: by 2025 phase out, to a negligible level, single use plastic bags.

TOR agreed upon with proposed changes

- n. Nikhil has not been able to get in touch with Fiji Grocers Association.
 - i. Dwain suggests to call Peter Royce (GM for New World), Kuna at MH or Mr. Chauhan at RB Patel. They are the ones to speak to. Nikhil will send them an email.
- o. Marta received an email yesterday from an organisation called *Precious Plastics*. It's a startup company in Fiji consisting of students and people of different backgrounds and professions. Marta's reply email to them bounced. She'll get in touch with them in due course and inform us of their intentions.

3. Plastic Bag Initiative - Impacts and Challenges

- s. Close to 2000 kilograms of non-biodegradable waste was collected from 8 sites - 2 of those sites were along the Rewa River. Close to 50% of rubbish collected is plastic related. Heavier pieces like ceramic, broken glass, steel, timber, were also found along the shorelines. What's worrying is that packaging is almost balancing the scale in terms of weight when compared to these heavier items. The weight of plastics wastes are almost the same as that of steel, timber, glasses and other items such as these.
- t. Retailers have noticed a 60% drop in plastic bags usage. They are even transitioning away from plastics bags by creating a revenue line in selling tote bags.
- u. There are opportunities to make a dent but we need industry and industry partners to feed into our meetings.
- v. Andrew - a lot of people aren't actively thinking about these things unless they're "invited to the party." It's all bottom line based, people aren't thinking about the material impact.
- w. There is need to ensure that the private sector is engaged at the nuts and bolts level and that they have access to the latest science.
- x. We are trying to be as open as possible to all people who have a say in the industry, so please make suggestions as to who else to invite. PIDF has approached Fiji Grocers Association, Fiji Retailers Association and Suva Retailers Association. They know about

the processes and are willing to engage, but they don't have any one to come out to the meetings.

- y. Martha comments that public awareness and education are also important. Yesterday, in her class, she collected 15 plastic water bottles from her marine science students. Some even had straws.
- z. Fiji Hotel and Tourism Association has a sub-committee that deals with the marine and dive sector, and is keen to influence on their own industry on reducing straws.

aa. Membership proposal – Fiji chamber of commerce, Fiji hotel and tourism association and FRCS.

- a. All in agreement to invite these three members.
- bb. The Committee should consider moving the venue for the steering committee meetings from PIDF to the Department of Environment, and for the Department of Environment to invite all relevant business stakeholders. From Dwain's experience in working with industry, there's a lot of different considerations that we haven't taken into account yet.

4. Issues for Steering Committee focus for next three years

- cc. Between now and the end of 2020, we should be striving for tangible impacts.
- dd. Current state - uncertainty around who is involved in the process and what's being done right now to achieve Fiji's goals?
- ee. There must be better communication of environment laws between relevant stakeholders and a better understanding of how it's to be applied. There's a gap that needs to be filled.
- ff. Ministry of Industry, Trade, and Tourism should take an active role in what needs to happen in terms of research and development.
- gg. Environmental Management Act has been gazette but is not enforced.
 - a. City Councils can only properly penalize if they have the staff to do so. It looks as though no one is afraid of the penalties of not complying with environmental regulations, even though they exist!
- hh. With reference to the Green Bonds - there is a need to channel funds to eligible sector.
- ii. Plastic Bag Surcharge - collected at the retail-consumer level. They aren't feeling the sting. Supermarket vendors still getting petroleum based plastic bags. There is a need to disincentive the sale of plastic bags at the wholesale-retailer level.
- jj. There are currently no compostable plastic manufacturers in Fiji.
 - a. The costs are way higher to produce these bags, than petroleum based.
 - b. Vinay comments that the compostable bag model doesn't mesh well with the logistics of running a macro level business. The packaging needs to work in tandem with the environment.

- kk. The costs of producing compostable plastic is worth that extra cost to businesses and it should come from their environmental and social responsibility.
- ll. Businesses ignoring this on a macro scale are causing a macro size problem. The idea is to find the most cost effective and environmental solution.
- mm. It's highly possible that we (i.e. Fiji) can make all the packaging we need from agricultural byproducts by simply upcycling these same byproducts (e.g. bagasse)
- nn. At a lower-level, there is a need to separate waste either before or after collection. This is something that can be easily regulated. We can apply standards from elsewhere and modify to local requirements.
- oo. A recent survey from the Raka 7's (<http://fijione.tv/raka-7s-launched/>) revealed that more than half of people would pay for curbside recycling services.
 - a. If people had the option to get money for the plastic they collect, 74% of people would do this.
 - i. There's not many waste collection services in villages and settlements. People can choose to deliver their own waste and get paid for it.
- pp. Mark makes a suggestion that perhaps the next Hibiscus Festival should be declared plastic free. For example, the organizers can make it a condition for vendors to be plastic free and use the learnings from the Raka 7s as a learning tool. Food vendors must ensure, wherever possible, that there are no food wrap, no straws and no Styrofoam boxes. The Steering Committee can agree to work with Suva City Council and Hibiscus Event Group to see if we can reduce plastics at the venue. We need to also be open to the fact that food vendors would still need to provide plastic bags for takeaway and thus, an exercise as such would first be a reduction method and not completely shutting plastic bags out. The real challenge is how to pack the food with no Styrofoam - brown paper bags, paper plates or tissue paper for hot dogs have been used in the past.
- qq. One shortcoming of the Raka 7's was that the organizers didn't go back to stall owners to get their feedback.
 - a. Dwain and Andrew, who were part of the Raka 7s, can perhaps reach out to vendors and request for a video of what they thought - something similar to a testimonials. These can then be used a promotional tool.
- rr. Before asking people to not use certain products, we must ensure that we have an alternative - and these should not palpably decrease convenience.
- ss. Implementation of a plastics phase out has to happen on a stage by stage basis. Fiji isn't a first world country and we must tailor to fit our needs.
- tt. In talking about an action plan, it's important to ensure stakeholders are available for this process. Realistically, where can we be in 2020? What are the steps we can take, and how do we get people to become more ambitious? These are the questions that we must answer together.
- uu. What we don't need is for Government to enforce a sea change overnight. This is where this steering committee can come in most useful.
- vv. Private Sector need to be incentivized to transition rapidly to compostable plastics.
- ww. Let's identify what we want to tackle:

- a. Plastic bags;
 - b. Straws;
 - c. Styrofoam containers;
 - d. Plastic bottles
 - e. Plastic cups, plates and utensils
 - f. Rubbish bags and bin liners
 - g. Frozen produce wrappings
 - h. Product wrappings in manufacturing
 - i. Also need to look at the garment industry; also reusable, compostable nappies.
- xx. Next Meeting Proposed for Wednesday, April 11th, and suggestions are for the Department of Environment to host.

Meeting Concluded