



Project Brief

Sustainable Tourism Enhancement in the Pacific (STEP)

BACKGROUND

The [Pacific Tourism Organisation \(SPTO\)](#) supports 20 member countries in promoting sustainable tourism through marketing, research, and sustainable development initiatives. In 2021, the [Pacific Sustainable Tourism Policy Framework \(PSTPF\)](#) was endorsed by the Pacific Council of Tourism Ministers to guide the sector towards greater sustainability. Aligned with the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Global Sustainable Tourism Council's (GSTC) criteria and the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent, the Pacific Sustainable Tourism Industry and Destination Standards were developed to assist destinations and tourism enterprises in adopting sustainable practices. The standards provide benchmarks for improvement, promote responsible travel, and encourage public-private partnerships. Successful implementation requires ongoing financial and technical support, fostering collaboration to create a sustainable tourism industry that benefits the environment, communities, and local economies.

The European Union (EU) supports the 2030 Agenda and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the Pacific, with the SWITCH-Asia Programme expanding to the region to promote sustainable consumption and production (SCP). SCP practices are crucial for sustainable tourism by optimising resource use, reducing environmental impact, and enhancing social and economic benefits.

Based on the request of the SPTO, the SWITCH-Asia Pacific – Policy Support Component (PSC) will implement the technical advisory (TA) '[Supporting Sustainable Tourism through SCP policy development and implementation in the Pacific: With considerations of the Pacific Sustainable Tourism Standards for destination and for industry](#)'. In short, this Project will be called: **The Sustainable Tourism Enhancement in the Pacific (STEP) Project.**

This will involve SWITCH-Asia Pacific PSC and SPTO working together to support the alignment of national tourism policies with Pacific Sustainable Tourism Standards, with a particular focus on the SCP policies and practices, in consultation with SPTO member countries in the Pacific. This alignment requires country-specific assessments to identify existing gaps, challenges, and necessary policy reforms.

OVERARCHING OBJECTIVES

1. Facilitate the transition to a resource-efficient tourism sector in the Pacific, aligned with the Pacific Sustainable Tourism Standards, by identifying priority areas for action and developing country action plans and a regional road map.
2. Assist SPTO in guiding implementation of the Pacific Sustainable Tourism Standards through a support scheme for national tourism organisations (NTOs) and industry, which provides them with the necessary skills, knowledge, and where possible, resources to implement the Pacific Sustainable Tourism Standard.

WHO IS INVOLVED IN THE PROJECT



Oversees the implementation of the Pacific Sustainable Tourism Policy Framework (PSTPF) and Pacific Sustainable Tourism Standards.



Supports the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the Pacific.
Provides financial and technical assistance, especially through the SWITCH-Asia Programme, focusing on sustainable consumption and production (SCP).



Works with SPTO to promote SCP practices in the Pacific region, aligning tourism policies with sustainable tourism standards.
Facilitates country-specific assessments, policy alignment, and SCP initiatives.



Pacific Member Countries

Collaborate with SPTO and SWITCH-Asia Pacific to identify pathways to implement sustainable tourism practices, align national policies with regional standards and transition the tourism value chain to support a low-carbon, resource-efficient sector.
Engage in public-private partnerships to promote responsible travel and sustainable consumption and production practices across sectors.



Tourism Enterprises and Stakeholders

Work towards adopting sustainable tourism standards and practices, focusing on optimising resource use, reducing environmental impact, and enhancing economic benefits.



Government Agencies, Regional Organisations, Regulators

Play a critical role in supporting resource efficiency in tourism through policies, laws, and incentives to promote circular economy principles, set standards and targets to reduce resource consumption, invest in infrastructure and increase awareness amongst industry and community.



Donors and Development Partners

Donors and development partners play a crucial role in advancing the circular economy by providing financial resources, technical expertise, and strategic guidance to support sustainable practices. Their investments in resource efficiency are often aimed at reducing waste, promoting resource efficiency, and fostering innovation in recycling and upcycling processes.

WHAT WILL THE PROJECT INVOLVE?

The objective is to provide actionable goals and activities for supporting the development of a resource-efficient tourism sector across the Pacific aligned with the Pacific Sustainable Tourism Standards.

Phase 1



Scoping Assessment: Tourism Overview, Context and Sustainability Snapshot of SPTO Nations¹

Aim: To identify current situation and gaps associated with nations implementation of the PSTS to support the identification of priorities and, where appropriate, areas where SPTO can provide support.

- Information will be received via desktop research of existing documents, a short online survey and consultation with SPTO members. This will commence in November 2024 and continue through to February 2025.
- Country profiles and priority areas for ongoing support will be finalised by March 2025.



In Country Consultation for Development of Pathways

Aim: To prepare pathways for up to four selected countries² on applying the PSTS in their policies, focusing on the application of resource efficiency and circular economy principles.

The project team will work with tourism stakeholders in the selected countries to identify and develop systemic solutions to address priority impact hotspots and develop a national pathway. In country meetings will commence in November 2024 and continue through to February 2025.

In country consultants will be completed by February 2025 and roadmaps completed by March 2025.



The Regional Roadmap

The Regional Roadmap will capture the findings of the Country Scans and place the Demonstration Country Pathways back into a broader Pacific context. The roadmap will include recommendations for how SPTO can most effectively support its member nations to implement the pathways, and/or undertake targeted actions to apply resource efficiency approaches in their tourism policies, standards and business operations.

Phase 2

Based on the results of Phase 1, Phase 2 will involve **implementation of the roadmaps/pathways** in consultation with identified nations.



1 Activity 2 Scoping Assessment (D2)

2 Selected Countries – Kiribati, Samoa, Vanuatu and Fiji.

WHY WE NEED TO FOCUS ON THE CIRCULAR ECONOMY IN THE TOURISM SECTOR

Pacific countries have pledged to advance sustainability and circular economy in various industries, tourism included, however there is a long way to go to attain these objectives. The tourism sector requires stakeholders to collaborate towards lessening their environmental impact and adopting sustainable practices. For example, Goal 4 Priority 8 of the Pacific Sustainable Tourism Policy Framework seeks to foster collaboration between stakeholders in the value chain to advance towards a circular economy for plastics and food supply.

The three main principles of circular economy – **designing out waste and pollution, keeping materials and products in use, and regenerating natural systems** – can be applied to various sub-sectors of tourism:



Accommodation providers (hotels, holiday rentals)



Food and Beverages operators (restaurants, hotels)



Ground Transport operators (private coach, private car/bike rental)



Cruise/Yacht operators (open sea and yachts)



Ground Activities operators (museums, attractions, activities operators)



Event organisers

FURTHER INFORMATION ABOUT THE PROJECT

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SWITCH- ASIA PACIFIC POLICY SUPPORT COMPONENT

switchasia
Pacific



Funded by
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SWITCH-Asia is a programme funded by the European Union (EU). Active since 2007, it seeks to promote Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP) in the region. Through its 2019 EU Green Deal and Global Gateway, the EU has further committed to supporting the transition of countries to a low-carbon, resource efficient and circular economy.

The SWITCH-Asia Policy Support Component provides direct support to regional organisations, national governments and related implementing agencies in charge of policies and regulatory frameworks relevant to SCP. This is done in the form of on-demand advisory on scaling up SCP policy and implementation as well as through creating a platform for knowledge exchange and building capacities of regional institutions. All activities rely on the strong engagement of partner countries and organisations in co-creating the requested policies, processes and other deliverables.

<https://www.switch-asia.eu/>

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Photo credits

[Source:](#) Pacific Tourism Media Library, Location: Nauru

[Source:](#) Pacific Tourism Media Library

[Source:](#) Credit: SPTO & David Kirkland, Location: Solomon Islands

[Source:](#) Credit: SPTO & David Kirkland, Location: Niue

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