JANUARY 2026
UA HUKA LOCAL PROJECT

ACCOMPLISHED

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IN PARTNERSHIP WITH:
Pacific Community Communauté du Pacifique · SPREP · IUCN

PROTECT UA HUKA

Development of the Ua Huka biodiversity protection program in French Polynesia

Project coordinator : Local organization "Vaiku'a i te manu o Ua Huka"

IMPLEMENTATION PERIOD

Jan. 2023 – Jan. 2026

AMOUNT OF FUNDING

€ 100,000

Theme

Terrestrial Ecosystem Management and Restoration

Main co-benefits, in addition to climate change adaptation

Biodiversity conservation

Water resource availability and quality

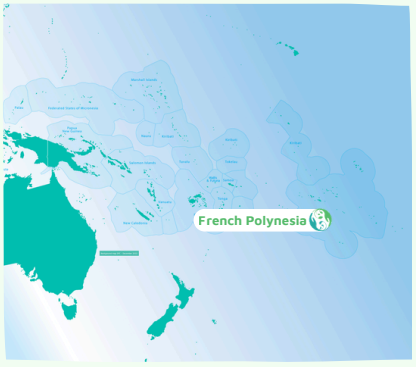
Ua Huka Island is home to critically endangered endemic bird species and several threatened plants, but its unique ecosystems and residents' livelihoods face significant threats from climate change, increased drought affecting copra production, the risk of black rat introduction, and the impacts of invasive herbivores and plants.
The project aims to protect the island's exceptional biodiversity and maintain a healthy ecosystem through biosecurity measures to prevent black rat introduction and by restoring native forests

Specific objectives:

- Prevent the introduction of invasive alien species on the island by **acquiring and deploying a trained biosecurity dog** for cargo inspections, and implementation of a reinforced biosecurity protocol.
- Support natural forest regeneration of 4 ha. by **replanting native species and developing nurseries** for the production of young plants.
- Raise awareness among local populations –from schoolchildren to local authorities– of the **importance of biosecurity,** the preservation of biodiversity and the management of invasive species.

The dog-handling team conducting inspections during the disembarkation of Marquesan delegations who came for the Marquesas Festival in December 2025.
B.Ignace © Kiwa Initiative - 2025

Subregion: ☐ Melanesia/Timor-Leste ☐ Micronesia ■ Polynesia



French Polynesia

The project is implemented on Ua Huka, an island in the Marquesas Archipelago of French Polynesia.

Direct beneficiaries:

- The Beneficiaries of the Teve'a Estate will gain from the economic impact of the planned botanical and avian conservatory, in addition to receiving technical assistance and access to an upcoming water supply system.
- Eight local employees (four women aged 23–42 and four men aged 23–55) benefit from training provided by field experts.

Indirect Beneficiaries:

- Island residents benefit from the island remaining free of major pests that threaten its flora and fauna, the preservation of natural forests, groundwater protection, and biodiversity conservation - all essential to the island's authenticity.
- National authorities benefit from the association's commitment to actions that align with the jurisdiction and conservation goals of the territory.

Key results:

- The PROTECT UA HUKA project, led by the Vaiku'a i te manu o Ua Huka association, aimed to sustainably conserve the island's exceptional biodiversity – notably two endemic bird species – by preventing the introduction of the black rat, restoring natural forests and raising awareness amongst the public and decision-makers.

- The most significant outcome relates to the strengthening of biosecurity. The project enabled the acquisition of a second rat-detecting dog, improving the quality of inspections and animal welfare through the rotation of dog-handler teams. Over three years, at least 137 vessels were inspected, including 31 during the Marquesas Islands Arts Festival in December 2025, a period of high risk for the introduction of invasive species. The land-based programme was also strengthened, with 1,829 rat poison stations restocked, 624 traps set and 12 stations installed on the two inter-island ferries, thanks to a biosecurity agreement signed with CODIM. No black rats were detected, which represents a major success for an island that remains free of this pest.

- The second component focused on forest restoration. The project enabled the testing of at least 15 native pla species, the germination of 12,347 seeds, the production of around 5,000 seedlings in the nursery, the identification of 10 viable species on depleted soils, and the planting of around 446 seedlings over 1 hectare. Nearly 500 additional young plants were distributed to the community. However, this component could not continue as planned due to disputes between co-owners of the restored site. Despite this setback, the experiment validated the technical procedures, germination rates and the selection of suitable species for future projects.

- Awareness-raising constitutes the third component of the project. Four public meetings were organised, 271 schoolchildren were educated on three islands in the archipelago, two advertising spots were broadcast on local television and on social media, and discussions were held with the six mayors of the inhabited islands, t Minister for the Environment, the Biosecurity Directorate and the President of the country. A joint biosecurity protocol has also been drawn up for the Marquesas Islands.

- The outlook is promising. Additional funding has already been secured for 2026 from the Home Planet Fund, BESTLIFE2030, the Ministry of the Environment, CODIM and the municipal council. The project thus leaves a lasting legacy: a strengthened biosecurity framework, consolidated local expertise and a solid technical foundation for relaunching a larger-scale reforestation programme.

« The Matavaa (Marquesas festival) was a real challenge for our association. The lengthy daily inspections over a short period of time required us to be doubly vigilant. Good preparation and awareness raising among everyone, both local communities and politicians and shipowners, were essential to the success of this biosecurity effort. I am proud of our team, human and canine, without whom none of this could have worked. »

BROWN Chloé, project officer - Ass Vaiku'a © Kiwa Initiative - 2025

DATA UNDER IUCN-ORO VALIDATION

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