APRIL 2026
REFUGE LOCAL PROJECT

THE KIWA INITIATIVE IS FUNDED BY: France AFD, Canada, Australian Aid, New Zealand Foreign Affairs & Trade

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

REFUGE
Restoring ecosystems for flora, traditional uses, and water management in New Caledonia

Project coordinator : CaledoClean

IMPLEMENTATION PERIOD

August 2025 – March 2027

AMOUNT OF FUNDING

€ 100,000

Theme

Terrestrial Ecosystem Management and Restoration

Main co-benefit, in addition to climate change adaptation

Biodiversity conservation

The Vallée de la Coulée is a critical area where forests provide essential ecological services. However, due to the impacts of climate change—such as reduced rainfall — and fires, erosion has increased and the soil's infiltration capacity has decreased, affecting both the availability and quality of water, even reaching the lagoon where sedimentation is smothering the reef.

The project aims to promote a Nature-based Solution that falls into the category of "restoration of degraded ecosystems", and will ultimately contribute to the restoration of vegetation cover essential for soil maintenance and enrichment of the mining scrubland degraded by fire.

Specific Objectives:

- Create a patch of "relay" forest to facilitate the reconnection of natural environments and reduce soil erosion
- Raise awareness and involving local communities in preserving forests and the services they provide
- Build local capacity on ecological restoration to involve local actors and multiply high-quality restoration projects

First planting of the REFUGE project
Nicolas PETIT © Kiwa Initiative 2026

Subregion: ■ Melanesia/Timor Leste ☐ Micronesia ☐ Polynesia

New Caledonia

Vallée de la Coulée, commune of Mont Dore, Southern Province

Beneficiaries:
The preservation and restoration of the Coulée valley benefits a wide cross-section of New Caledonia's population, but 300 people will directly benefit from the project:

- Firstly, the association's team of 5 to 8 people has set up professional workcamps, enabling them to acquire skills in environmental preservation fields, and in particular young people to whom the association offers one of their first professional opportunities.
- Secondly, to young people undergoing social and professional reintegration, or even penal reparation, offering them manual activities with a concrete objective.
- Finally, the benefits of this project will reach the inhabitants of the commune of Mont Dore (27,600 inhabitants, 43.5% of whom are under 30 and 49.6% women, divided into 8,500 households), whose main water supply comes from the water catchments located on the Coulée and its tributaries.

Key results to date:

The planting of 8,000 trees to create this biodiversity REFUGE in the fire-damaged valley of la Coulée required significant prior organisation.

To date:

- The boundaries and planting zones have been defined with the site managers,
- Suitable native species have been identified,
- The 8,000 plants, along with the inputs, have been sourced from local suppliers,
- The first ornithological survey campaign has been carried out.

Upcoming operations:
During the second period (March to September 2026), efforts will focus on active restoration with the involvement of users and local residents of the site, who are directly affected by the many ecosystem services provided by forests and biodiversity more broadly, and from which communities benefit.

Restoring ecosystems and the services they provide to communities takes time. Both after planting, while waiting for the vegetation to grow and for ecosystem dynamics, disrupted by disturbances, to restart. But the preparation time required beforehand is often underestimated: the discussions and exchanges needed to secure stakeholder buy-in, as well as the lead times required by nurseries to produce suitable, quality plants, some of which, from seed collection to reaching a sufficient size for planting, can require up to 2 years of advance planning!

DATA UNDER IUCN-ORO VALIDATION

« To restore the water cycle that is essential to life, it is necessary to restore the soils and the vegetation that holds them together. But in this valley, which was very severely impacted by the 2020 fires, we know that we will not be able to replant everything "simply" by sheer manpower. So encouraging birds, bats and insects to return and contribute to this major undertaking means betting on the natural cycle of ecosystems to provide solutions for the development and even the basic survival of our activities. »

Thibaut BIZIEN - Project officer, Caledoclean
Photo: Nicolas.PETIT @ Kiwa Initiative 2025.

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