JOINT PRESS RELEASE

Fifteen new local projects launched under the Kiwa Initiative to strengthen Pacific resilience through Nature-based Solutions

Suva, Fiji, 26 August, 2025 (IUCN-Kiwa Initiative) – Today, the International Union for Conservation of Nature in Oceania (IUCN-ORO), through the Kiwa Initiative, marked a significant milestone with the launch of 15 new locally led projects designed to harness Nature-based Solutions (NbS) in addressing the impacts of climate change across the Pacific. The event, held in Suva, Fiji, was attended by donor representatives, members of the diplomatic corps, and regional partners, reflecting a strong commitment to collaboration in building resilience for Pacific communities.

The newly awarded projects are spread across ten Pacific Island countries and territories; New Caledonia, Fiji, Kiribati, Palau, Papua New Guinea, French Polynesia, Solomon Islands, Timor-Leste, Vanuatu, and Wallis & Futuna. Together, they reflect the diversity and innovation of Pacific approaches to climate resilience, encompassing sustainable fisheries management and habitat restoration, invasive species control, women's economic empowerment, and the preservation of cultural and traditional knowledge.

At the launch, **Ms. Leituala Kuiniselani Toelupe Tago, Regional Director of IUCN Oceania**, highlighted the importance of community-driven solutions.

"*These projects are powerful reminders that Pacific peoples are not passive recipients of climate impacts, but active leaders in designing and delivering solutions that are grounded in their environment, culture, and traditions. Nature-based Solutions strengthen both ecosystems and communities, and they are essential for a resilient Pacific future. We thank our donors for their trust and ongoing support, which ensures that Pacific voices remain central in shaping climate action*.", said Ms Toelupe Tago.

"*In only five years, Kiwa has grown into a family of more than forty projects, benefiting over 220,000 people across 17 Pacific Island countries and territories. The enthusiasm we have seen – with more than 430 proposals received since the beginning, after the calls launched for both the regional and the local projects – shows how much demand and creativity exist across the Pacific. As France's development bank, AFD is proud*

to coordinate the Initiative on behalf of all donors, and to see it delivering such concrete results for communities and ecosystems." said **Ms. Elodie Vitalis, Head of Agence Française de Développement - AFD in Fiji**, speaking on behalf of the donor coalition, noting that the Agence Française de Développement (AFD), one of the five donors, is chairing the Steering Committee in 2025

The launch marks the start of a full programme of activities this week. Following today's event, IUCN-ORO will lead an induction workshop with the newly selected grantees, running from Tuesday 26th August afternoon through to Friday 29th. The workshop will familiarise project teams with the processes that underpin successful implementation — with technical guidance and training on how to effectively manage and deliver their projects.

By combining the celebration of new partnerships with practical training and support, the Kiwa Initiative ensures that local actors are well equipped to deliver meaningful results. Five years after its launch, this integrated approach reflects the Kiwa Initiative's commitment to a Pacific-led course of action, where communities are empowered not only to adapt to climate change but also to inspire resilience and stewardship for generations to come.

Project Highlights

- **Community-based fisheries governance** in Fiji and the Solomon Islands.
- **Ecosystem restoration** in Kiribati, Vanuatu, and Papua New Guinea.
- **Agroforestry and reforestation** in New Caledonia and PNG.
- **Empowerment of women's groups** through sustainable livelihoods in Timor-Leste.
- **Cultural heritage and biodiversity protection** in French Polynesia.
- **Coastal resilience** through mangrove and forest restoration in Wallis & Futuna.

See the appendix for the full list of the 15 projects.

Appendix: The 15 new local projects include:

Pacific Island ACP Countries

1. **cChange Pacific | Fiji**
   cChange focuses on community engagement and communication strategies for climate action. It uses creative storytelling, media, and outreach to shift mindsets and inspire collective responsibility. The project aims to build stronger public awareness and behavioural change towards resilience and sustainability.
2. **MELAD | Kiribati**
   The project supports the restoration and protection of seagrass habitats as a nature-based solution for climate change adaptation in Kiribati. It builds local capacity in seagrass monitoring and restoration, pilots best practice techniques, and raises awareness among schools and communities. The goal is to reduce human pressures, facilitate natural recovery, and strengthen community responsibility for conserving fragile marine ecosystems.
3. **Palau Conservation Society | Palau**
   The project strengthens the climate resilience of Babeldaob's ecosystems and communities by integrating Nature-based Solutions into land use planning and watershed management. It promotes reforestation, erosion control, and stream restoration while building the capacity of state and national institutions. The goal is to embed sustainable ecosystem management into long-term development and resilience strategies.
4. **Dika Suna Nature Conservation (Inc) | Papua New Guinea**
   The project focuses on preserving native plant habitats in the Suai LLG, part of the Bismarck Range Corridor, where diverse ecosystems face growing threats from climate change and human activities. It promotes ecosystem restoration, reforestation, and sustainable land management while engaging Indigenous communities and drawing on traditional knowledge. The goal is to build resilience to climate impacts, conserve biodiversity, and secure the survival of native plant species for future generations.
5. **KUP Reforestation | Papua New Guinea**
   The KUP project focuses on reforestation and restoring degraded lands in the highlands. It engages communities in tree planting to improve livelihoods, water security, and soil fertility. The initiative also reduces pressure on natural forests while promoting climate change mitigation.
6. **Fisheries Division, Guadalcanal Provincial Government | Solomon Islands**
   The project enhances food security and climate resilience by restoring mangrove and coral reef ecosystems while improving coastal biodiversity management. It supports the implementation of the Solomon Islands Community-Based Coastal and Marine Resources Management Strategy (2021–2025), focusing on resilience and climate change adaptation. The goal is to empower communities through

capacity building, ecosystem rehabilitation, and sustainable resource management as nature-based solutions for long-term socio-economic benefits.

7. **Foundation Re-Inventing Local Production (RELOKA) | Timor-Leste**
   The RELOKA project in Timor-Leste strengthens women's resilience to climate-driven poverty and food insecurity. It restores degraded land, improves water management, and introduces sustainable permaculture practices. Women's groups are empowered to create new income opportunities through natural dye resources while enhancing community climate resilience.
8. **Vanuatu Climate Action Network | Vanuatu**
   The project strengthens ecosystem resilience and food security for nearly 5,000 people across six islands by restoring forests, mangroves, and coral reefs. It establishes community-managed agroforestry and sustainable fishing networks, converting 324 hectares of degraded land into climate-resilient systems, replanting 18 hectares of mangroves, and restoring 10 hectares of coral reef. Through inter-island cooperation and training, the project builds community capacity, supports diversified livelihoods, and enhances climate resilience for people and ecosystems.

<u>French Overseas Countries and Territories (OCT)</u>

1. **Tahitian Historical Society | French Polynesia**
   The project preserves and revitalises anthropogenic wetlands, safeguarding buffer zones between land and sea while enhancing food production in shrinking arable areas. It focuses on restoring ecological functions through invasive species control, runoff management, and rehabilitation of wetland ecosystems such as irrigated taro plantations. By blending nature-based solutions with ancestral knowledge, the project strengthens biodiversity, food security, and healthier diets for Polynesian communities.
2. **Moorea Biodiversite | French Polynesia**
   The project restores the resilience of Moorea's natural forests by controlling invasive species, particularly Miconia, across 460 hectares of biodiversity-rich ecosystems. Through sustained removal, monitoring, and ecological assessments, the initiative enhances native species regeneration, soil stability, and water storage while reducing erosion and sedimentation impacts on coastal and lagoon environments. By protecting forests and strengthening ecosystem services, the project safeguards biodiversity, improves fisheries resources, and supports healthier communities.
3. **Association Agroforestiers Engagés pour des Initiatives de Résilience (AGIR NC) | New Caledonia**
   The project strengthens food autonomy and climate resilience by transforming degraded agricultural land into sustainable agroforestry systems. By restoring biodiversity and reducing reliance on imported fertilisers, it enhances food security and supports tribal communities with resilient livelihoods. Through promoting agroforestry as a nature-based solution, the initiative aims to shift farming practices

away from slash-and-burn methods towards biodiversity-friendly agriculture that safeguards ecosystems and strengthens climate adaptation..

4. **Hô-üt | New Caledonia**
   Hô-üt engages local communities in forest and biodiversity protection. It combines traditional knowledge with modern conservation to manage ecosystems sustainably. The project seeks to safeguard cultural heritage while enhancing climate resilience.
5. **CaledoClean | New Caledonia**
   The project supports forest restoration in a fire-degraded valley by planting 8,000 endemic trees to create a 'stepping stone' corridor that reconnects fragmented habitats. By engaging local communities through citizen events, it enhances awareness while promoting the regeneration of biodiversity, including pollinators and seed dispersers such as birds and bats. With avifauna monitoring and the use of native species, the initiative safeguards New Caledonia's unique flora and fauna while strengthening ecosystem resilience and reducing sediment runoff to rivers and lagoons.
6. **Conservatoire Botanique de Nouvelle Calédonie | New Caledonia**
   The BLOSSOM project strengthens ecosystem resilience in the Loyalty Islands and Northern Province through ecological restoration and sustainable land management. By multiplying and planting climate-resilient native species, establishing demonstration sites, and integrating restoration into agricultural systems, the project enhances biodiversity while promoting sustainable livelihoods. Combining traditional knowledge, scientific approaches, and community participation, it fosters stewardship, mitigates climate impacts, and secures long-term conservation outcomes.
7. **Service territorial de l'environnement (STE) | Wallis and Futuna**
   The project tackles the growing threat of feral pigs to biodiversity, agriculture, and food security in Wallis and Futuna by establishing effective monitoring and sustainable control measures. Through population assessments, trapping, and community-led management, it will reduce pig numbers, revitalise forests, and protect crops while enhancing local capacity and customary leadership in natural resource management. By restoring ecosystems, safeguarding livelihoods, and building resilience to climate change, the initiative delivers both ecological and socio-economic benefits for the Territory.

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Notes to editors

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About the Kiwa Initiative

The Kiwa Initiative - Nature-based Solutions (NbS) for Climate Resilience aims to build the resilience of Pacific Island ecosystems, communities, and economies to climate change through NbS by protecting, sustainably managing and restoring biodiversity. It is based on simplified access to funding for climate change adaptation and biodiversity conservation actions for local and national governments, civil society, and regional organizations in Pacific Island Countries and Territories.

The Initiative is funded by the European Union, Agence française de développement (AFD), Global Affairs Canada (GAC), Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) and New Zealand's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT). It has established partnerships with the Pacific Community (SPC), the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP), and the Oceania Regional Office of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN - ORO). www.kiwainitiative.org

About IUCN

IUCN is a membership union uniquely composed of both government and civil society organisations. It provides public, private and non-governmental organisations with the knowledge and tools that enable human progress, economic development and nature conservation to take place together.

Created in 1948, IUCN is now the world's largest and most diverse environmental network, harnessing the knowledge, resources and reach of more than 1,400 Member organisations and around 16,000 experts. It is a leading provider of conservation data, assessments and analysis. Its broad membership enables IUCN to fill the role of incubator and trusted repository of best practices, tools and international standards.

IUCN provides a neutral space in which diverse stakeholders including governments, NGOs, scientists, businesses, local communities, Indigenous peoples' organisations and others can work together to forge and implement solutions to environmental challenges and achieve sustainable development.

Working with many partners and supporters, IUCN implements a large and diverse portfolio of conservation projects worldwide. Combining the latest science with the traditional knowledge of local communities, these projects work to reverse habitat loss, restore ecosystems and improve people's well-being. www.iucn.org