

Supporting resilience and wellbeing through Pacific Islands nature-based solutions

Pacific islands face the forefront of climate change risks caused by sea level rise, extreme weather events, changing rainfall patterns, accelerated coral bleaching, land salinization and ocean acidification. Rises in global temperatures also threaten marine and coastal ecosystems in the Pacific region¹. This could lead to profound impacts on food systems, livelihoods, depletion of land and marine resources, water availability, increased vulnerability to extreme weather events, and ultimately endanger the traditional Pacific ways of life.

Under the Vemööre Declaration², Pacific Island countries and territories committed to implementing nature-based solutions to sustain social-ecological systems as a fundamental response to climate impacts, disaster risk management, water and food insecurity, and threats to human health. They embody the transformational vision for nature and people that is needed to address the interconnected crises of climate change and biodiversity loss, among others.

Nature-based solutions are key tools for our Pacific island people in the battle against climate change. Nature-based solutions³ are:

Actions to protect



Sustainably manage



Restore natural and modified ecosystems



to address social, economic and environmental challenges while simultaneously providing benefits for:

Human well-being and resilience



Biodiversity and ecosystem services



These approaches are not new to the Pacific, where working with nature has been at the heart of the knowledge systems and practices that have sustained resilient island living for generations, and have been implemented for decades through various related ecosystem-based initiatives. Nature-based solutions are designed to address wide-ranging societal challenges, making them versatile for planning purposes and ensuring sustainable land and resources use, and have a significant role in climate change mitigation and adaptation. These solutions are often more cost-effective than hard infrastructure options, considering their numerous co-benefits, and can be implemented at the community level with local stakeholders.

With appropriate social and environmental safeguards in place, these solutions hold potential to uphold the rights of individuals and communities to secure food, clean water, health, cultural traditions, shelter, safety, and livelihoods. They represent pivotal actions towards achieving our regional aspirations outlined in the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent.

Climate adaptation and biodiversity conservation are natural entry points for nature-based solutions. Integrating these solutions across various policy sectors can help achieve multiple objectives and benefits, such as:



Agroforestry can increase the overall yield of the land and adapt to pressures on food production from climate changes, with many co-benefits including making the area more productive and more pleasant to work in.



Integrated water and watershed management through protecting and restoring native forests and riverbanks not only ensures clean water supplies but also reduces risks of waterborne diseases, erosion, flooding, and damage to downstream ecosystems.



Community-based fisheries management that integrates traditional ecological knowledge and local expertise supports locally relevant and climate-smart fisheries.



Controlling invasive species is key to ecosystem restoration. Removing predators supports restoration of key species populations that support seed dispersal and healthy forests, as well as seabird populations, replenishing nutrients that nourish plants and reefs, ultimately benefiting fish populations and local communities.



Protecting and restoring ecosystems also support livelihoods with opportunities in ecotourism, handicrafts, medicine and culture.



Infrastructure and coastal protection: Maintaining and restoring coastal forests, beach vegetation, and mangroves provide affordable protection against storm surges, erosion, and sea-level rise, while also offering numerous additional benefits to communities such as food and timber.

Realizing these benefits requires breaking down silos and adopting collaborative policy approaches. By weaving nature-based solutions into national and regional frameworks, we can harness traditional knowledge and safeguard livelihoods and our precious natural resources for future generations. Let us continue to champion nature for our collective wellbeing and resilience in the face of climate change.

Authors and credits

¹ See IPCC, 2023: Sections. In: Climate Change 2023: Synthesis Report. Contribution of Working Groups I, II and III to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change [Core Writing Team, H. Lee and J. Romero (eds.)]. IPCC, Geneva, Switzerland, pp. 35-115, doi: 10.59327/IPCC/AR6-9789291691647 IPCC_AR6_SYR_LongerReport.pdf and IPCC Key Findings for the Pacific Factsheet

² Vemöðre Declaration Commitments to nature conservation action in the Pacific Islands region, 2021-2025

³ United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) 2022 Resolution 5/5 on Nature-based solutions for supporting sustainable development

The Kiwa Initiative – Nature-based Solutions for Climate Resilience aims at strengthening the climate change resilience of Pacific Islands ecosystems, communities and economies through Nature-based Solutions (NbS), by protecting, sustainably managing and restoring biodiversity. It is based on an easier access to funding for climate change adaptation and NbS for local, national authorities, civil society and regional organisations of Pacific Island Countries and Territories including the three French overseas territories. The Initiative is funded by the European Union (EU), Agence Française de Développement (AFD), Global Affairs Canada (GAC), Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) and New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT). The Kiwa Initiative 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). More information on www.kiwainitiative.org

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