

REGIONAL EXCHANGE FORUMS AND PLATFORMS ON IAS



New Caledonia

French Polynesia

Wallis and Futuna

Pitcairn Islands

 **BUDGET:** €97,000 (XPF 11.5 million)


 **ACTION TIME PERIOD:** January 2023 – September 2024



PARTNERS:



BRIEF SUMMARY

 **Cooperation between the four territories and other Pacific countries and territories has been significantly strengthened through their participation in regional stakeholder network events and in a joint study tour, as well as thanks to the improved access to online exchange platforms.**

The main aim of this cooperation has been to bring together local practitioners facing similar issues, so that they can share knowledge, tools and experiences on invasive alien species (IAS) management.


By enabling the four French Overseas Countries and Territories (OCT) to take part in the two Pacific Invasive Learning Network (PILN) meetings, the project has facilitated experience sharing and fruitful emulation among 18 countries and territories in the region. In addition, agents from the territories took part in a regional exchange on biosecurity, as well as in a study tour leading to certification in skills that are key for IAS management, enabling them to forge links through discussions and joint learning.



The introduction of an English/French translation interface on online regional cooperation platforms will make it easier to integrate Wallis and Futuna, New Caledonia and French Polynesia into the knowledge sharing, information feedback and project structuring processes.

At the end of the project, the application to grants from the *Fonds Pacifique* -a fund set up by the French government to favor the regional integration of territories- could be submitted to allow further participation of French territories in regional events. In the meantime, their integration into the PILN and access to associated resources have been perpetuated.

BACKGROUND

 Exchanges between the Overseas Countries and Territories (OCT) and the ACP countries of the Pacific region represent a major opportunity for cooperation. These islands share similar issues, but the people involved in invasive alien species (IAS) management still have few opportunities to regularly share their tools, knowledge and experiences to improve their collective effectiveness.

The Pacific Invasive Learning Network (PILN) was launched in 2006 by SPREP to promote this collaboration.


Four meetings were held between 2006 and 2016. However, PILN meetings have not been able to take place since 2016 due to travel restrictions linked to the COVID-19 pandemic. Although discussions have continued, a crucial need for enhanced regional cooperation was identified, given the significant developments in IAS management in the Pacific.

“PILN: a regional network for cooperation on invasive species”

In recent years, the Guidelines for the Management of Invasive Species in the Pacific have been revised by the countries in the region. In addition, the Pacific Regional Invasive Species Management Support Service (PRISMSS) has been set up in a context marked by an increase in donor contributions, which are increasingly sensitive to this essential fight to preserve biodiversity in the Pacific.



ISSUES & OBJECTIVES

 Invasive alien species (IAS) management poses a specific challenge in the Pacific Islands, due to geographical remoteness, limited local resources and the fact that many priority invasive species are common to several countries. While pooling feedback is essential in this context, the national stakeholders responsible for these issues have few opportunities to share their experiences outside their respective teams.

“Integrating French territories into regional networks, a major challenge”

French territories, in particular, face additional obstacles, such as the language barrier and different sources of funding, reducing their opportunities to share with other countries and territories in the region.

Involvement in discussions and network training is therefore a crucial factor in improving and strengthening the effectiveness of IAS management in the Pacific.



THESE REGIONAL EXCHANGE PLATFORMS HAVE 3 MAIN OBJECTIVES:

- ☒ **Sharing experiences:** offering stakeholders an opportunity to learn from the successes and challenges of others.
- ☒ **Knowledge community:** creating a shared knowledge base to develop tailored approaches and solutions.
- ☒ **Emulation and mutual support:** fostering cooperation and capacity building through constructive discussions and collective support.



OUTCOMES

At the end of the restrictions linked to the COVID-19 pandemic, which had prevented regional cooperation meetings from being held, the project promoted the integration of the OCTs within a strengthened cooperation between the Pacific islands.

Several major events have been organised since mid-2023 to share experience and provide training, thus contributing to the creation of a dynamic regional exchange platform.

In November 2023, the project enabled six agents, two from each French territory, to take part in the 5th PILN meeting, which was held in Samoa from 13 to 17 November 2023. This event brought together 50 stakeholders in invasive species management from 19 Pacific Islands countries and territories. Each territory was able to share its priorities and the efforts being made to address them, with a view to exchanging feedback. The event also provided an opportunity to present PRISMSS's areas of expertise and support, focusing on support tools such as the online platform *Navigator* and the various forms of technical support available to countries.

“Lots of experience and expertise shared after COVID-19 restrictions lifted”

In August 2024, five agents from the territories of Wallis and Futuna, New Caledonia and French Polynesia took part in the 6th PILN meeting organised in the Cook Islands. The event, which brought together more than 70 people from 18 Pacific countries, enabled participants to share the progress of their projects and the challenges they faced over the past year. The meeting also fostered collaborative work on the integration of cross-cutting issues such as gender equality, social inclusion (GEDSI), traditional knowledge and occupational health and safety.

A field trip was organised to study the results of introducing natural enemies on Rarotonga as part of biological control programmes. *Manaaki Whenua Landcare Research*, a PRISMSS partner working with the Cook Islands government on this project, helped lead the visit by presenting this approach to controlling invasive plant species.





Three agents from Wallis and Futuna took part in the **PRISMSS 2024 study tour**. Partners from New Caledonia, Pitcairn and French Polynesia were not available. **This field training led to the certification of agents in bush first aid and the safe use of agrochemical products.** It also strengthened participants' skills in engagement and communication, and in understanding the social and environmental impacts of invasive species. The tour also included a visit to the *Tiritiri Matangi* scientific reserve, a model of successful IAS management for ecological restoration. During their stay in Auckland, the participants benefited from two days of training specific to the issues facing Wallis and Futuna on natural enemy solutions, aimed at improving invasive plant species management. Discussions took place with the specialist PRISMSS partner to increase knowledge of a solution that could help meet the challenge posed by some invasive plant species.

Two biosecurity officers from New Caledonia and French Polynesia attended a Pacific Plant Protection Organisation (PPPO) workshop in the Cook Islands in August 2023. This workshop, organised as part of the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC), brought together agents involved in plant protection, mainly for agricultural production purposes, and identified regional priorities for border biosecurity.

Finally, the project has facilitated the inclusion of French-speaking territories in online platforms for exchanging and sharing information on IAS, thanks to an automated translation system. This includes access to the *Navigator* PRISMSS tool, which is used for regional reporting and to identify technical and financial support needs. Additionally, the Battler Resource Base library now has a French interface, where all article abstracts are translated from English into French and vice versa. The decision to integrate existing tools at regional level, rather than developing an ad hoc platform, was made in consultation with the territories, in order to strengthen links with ACP countries and ensure the sustainability of the system beyond the timeframe of PROTEGE.





FIRST-HAND ACCOUNTS

CHRISTOPHE BROCHERIEUX

*Biodiversity Unit Project Manager,
Environment Department of French Polynesia*

The wide-ranging presentations given on the first day [of the 2023 PILN meeting] showed strong similarities between the problems associated with invasive alien species, and enabled the various participants to share their experiences throughout the week (pests, resources, methods, etc.).

CAROLE WEMA

*PROTEGE Theme 4 Territorial Coordinator
at the New Caledonian Biodiversity Agency*



One of the highlights [of the 2023 PILN meeting] was the presentation, demonstration and practical use of the PRISMSS tool via the Navigator, developed to facilitate and meet the needs of island countries through the database shared by PILN member countries. It's a really interesting tool.

ALEFOSIO TAUGAMOA


*Environmental Monitoring Technician, Territorial
Environment Service, Futuna Office*



I really enjoyed talking to colleagues from other islands [at the 2024 PILN meeting]. We share the same issues. Finding solutions from other islands is valuable.



PROSPECTS AND SUSTAINABILITY

 The strengthening of regional discussions was warmly welcomed by the agents from the territories who took part in the PILN meetings and the study tour, in particular thanks to the focus on technical subjects.

Even before the end of the project, **the IAS leaders from the four territories had joined the PILN and expressed their wish to continue their engagement within the network.** Once the PROTEGE programme had been financed, it was agreed that the participation of the French territories could be supported by applications to the Pacific Fund, a structure dedicated to the regional integration of New Caledonia, French Polynesia and Wallis and Futuna.

“A bilingual platform and funding opportunities to secure the participation in regional networks”

Sustainable access to online exchange platforms is already guaranteed thanks to the integration of existing tools, with the creation of a French interface. Hosted by PRISMSS, these platforms will remain accessible to the four OCTs, enabling them to share and make requests, regardless of the presence of French-speaking staff within the SPREP team.

KEY FIGURES



1 online discussion platform
made available to French-speaking territories



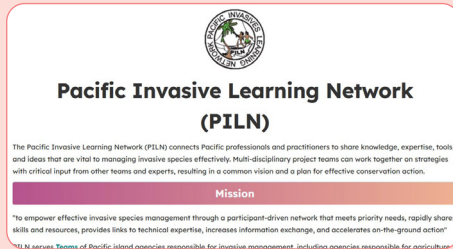
16 participants
benefitted from regional technical discussions



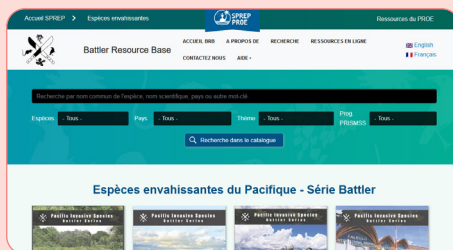
4 regional cooperation events
made available to territories



1 online library
made available to French-speaking territories



A space for regional collaboration: Pacific Invasive Learning Network (PILN)



Find out more about invasive species management in the Pacific: the Battler Resource Base



PRESS RELEASES ON REGIONAL EVENTS

2023 PILN meeting:

- The fifth meeting of the Pacific Invasive Learning Network (PILN) was held in Apia, Samoa



2024 PILN meeting:

- Pacific invasive species management stakeholders embrace traditional knowledge
- The Cook Islands host the 6th Pacific Invasive Learning Network meeting
- New Caledonia wins the 2024 "Battler of the year" award



2024 PRISMSS study tour:

- An immersive study tour begins on invasive species management to empower Pacific stakeholders
- Invasive species management stakeholders in the Pacific certified in agrochemical risk management
- Outdoor First Aid Safety Certification Empowers Pacific Invasive Species Battlers
- Study Tour Field Trips Inspire Pacific Invasive Species Battlers





Find all the project lessons-learned factsheets on invasive alien species **freely available on our website.**



PACIFIC TERRITORIES REGIONAL PROJECT FOR
SUSTAINABLE ECOSYSTEM MANAGEMENT

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