



**Convention on the
Rights of the Child**

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COMMITTEE ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD
CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS SUBMITTED BY STATES PARTIES
UNDER ARTICLE 44 OF THE CONVENTION

Initial report of States parties due in 1998

KIRIBATI* **

[22 August 2005]

* The annexes may be consulted in the files of the Secretariat.

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Abbreviations

ARI	Acute Respiratory Infection
AusAID	Australian Agency for International Development
CEDAW	(United Nations) Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
EFA	Education for All
EPI	Expanded Program on Immunization
FSP	Foundation for the Peoples of the South Pacific
ILO	International Labour Organization
IMR	Infant Mortality Rate
KNACC	Kiribati National Advisory Committee on Children
KNRC	Kiribati National Red Cross
METT	Ministry of Education, Training and Technology
MESD	Ministry of Environment and Social Development
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NPA	National Plan of Action (for Children)
NYP	National Youth Policy
RTC	Rural Training Center
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNESCO	United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
WHO	World Health Organization

PART I. COUNTRY OVERVIEW

1.1 The Land

1. The Republic of Kiribati consists of 33 atoll islands located in three major groupings along the equator in the Pacific Ocean - the Gilberts Group, the Line Group and the Phoenix Group. Kiribati's total land area is 810 square kilometers, although the country's ocean area is about 3.5 million square kilometers (or 0.02 percent of its exclusive economic zone). The inhabited islands are so widely scattered across the ocean that the distance from the capital island, Tarawa, to the eastern-most island of Kiritimati is approximately the same as from Los Angeles to New York.

2. Atolls are among the harshest living environments on this planet: flat ribbons of sand that support only a limited range of vegetation. A few atolls have natural underground water lenses; elsewhere the perennial shortage of fresh water constrains human habitation and use. The geographic fragmentation of Kiribati and its location in the central Pacific Ocean makes transport and communication costly and difficult. The country has limited natural resources. Kiribati is vulnerable to severe droughts, which can devastate the vegetation and fresh water resources, and strong winds, which pose a special risk to fishermen in some seasons. Various reports have stated that climate change and sea level rise threaten the very survival of human settlements in Kiribati.¹

3. The capital island of Tarawa is situated in the Gilberts Group, with approximately one-third of the total population residing on the southern end of the Tarawa atoll.



Source: "The Pacific Community" - The Pacific Islands Map, 1997.

1.2 The People

4. The *I-Kiribati*, which stands for “people of Kiribati”, are generally shy, hard-working people. I-Kiribati are Micronesian by origin, though a number of our people are now of mixed race due to inter-marriage with Tuvaluans, Europeans and Chinese. “*Te Mwaneaba*” (traditional community meeting house) remains the center of people’s lives. It is also the center of political and social activities. There is still a very strong sense of community in all of the Islands of Kiribati.

5. “*Te Utu*” (the family) is the basic foundation of Kiribati society. According to “*mwaneaba*” tradition, males and females have quite separate and closely defined roles. The husband was, and still is, regarded as the head of the family but the mother is considered a very important figure since she is responsible for the family’s welfare on a day-to-day basis. Traditionally, the women manage the day-to-day activities of the household, including the primary care of children, preparation of meals and budgeting of household expenses. While the roles of women are slowly beginning to change, they are still generally expected to listen and implement rather than decide on village or community affairs.

6. In Kiribati, children are always viewed as “the pearl of the family” and the symbol of true love between mothers and fathers. Although children are still seen as the center of the family unit today, decaying social structures and cultural traditions are causing disunity between family members.

7. Most people in Kiribati today live a semi-traditional, semi-subsistence lifestyle, although the demand for cash and the desire to be a part of the wider world is causing enormous social change and creating difficult new challenges for children and parents. Many “modern” concepts have been introduced into the country and as a result, old traditions and customs (*te katei*) are fading away, especially in South Tarawa.

1.3 Population and demographic trends

8. According to the November 2000 national census, the population of Kiribati is currently estimated at 84,494² with the total annual growth rate of 1.69 per cent. However, this rate varies markedly between urban and rural areas with rural areas growing much faster than other islands. This is because the younger age structure of the population in the capital contributes to relatively more births, as well as escalating in-migration from other islands over several decades. Consequently, the average annual growth rate in rural Kiribati is -0.63 per cent, while the urban growth rate is estimated at 5.17 per cent. Given these rates, the total population will double approximately every 41 years.

9. There are a total of 12,615 households in Kiribati, with an average household size of 8.1 persons. Of the total population (84,494), the number of people living in urban South Tarawa is estimated at 36,717 with continued high annual growth anticipated. The population of South Tarawa initially grew in response to the economic and political needs of “nation building”, especially following Independence in July 1979. Despite the increasing social problems and lack of employment opportunities in the capital, people are still migrating to Tarawa in search of work, business opportunities and better schooling for their children. This

concentration of population and economic activity on South Tarawa is having an increasingly negative effect on peoples' lives - with the growth momentum seemingly "unstoppable". The average population density on South Tarawa is high, with over 12,218 people per sq. km.

1.4 The Government

10. The institutions responsible for decision-making at the national level are the Parliament (*Mwaneaba ni Maungatabu*), Island Councils, *Unimane* Associations and the judicial system. Usually the *unimane* (elderly men) of the islands are entrusted to make final decisions on important issues such as how the island will respond to a visit from another island, or how the island festivities should be organized. Today, with the presence of central Government and Island Council Clerks, governance and administration of the islands is left mainly to Government officials but local activities and celebrations are still very much the concern of the *unimane* and church leaders.

11. Members of Parliament are elected from island constituencies every four years, and almost all who get elected are men. Women are slowly taking a more active role in the economy, and more women are being promoted to positions of responsibility within government. There are currently two female Permanent Secretaries in Government and two women Members of Parliament. While all public institutions are still dominated by men, in recent years the setting up of women and youth organizations has encouraged a broader base of participation in decision-making processes.

Overview: National census, 2000

	Males	Females	Total
Population			
Total	41 646	42 848	84 494
Indigenous	41 308	42 548	83 856
Urban (%)	42.8	44.1	43.5
Rural (%)	57.2	55.9	56.5
South Tarawa	17 822	18 895	36 717
Households			
Number of households	N/A	N/A	12 615
Average household size	N/A	N/A	6.7
Households headed by males/females (%)	81.0	19.0	N/A
Median age			
Total population	18.9	20.8	19.7
Indigenous population	18.8	20.7	19.7
Population density (persons per sq. km)			104.2
Population change (2000-1995)			
Total population	8.2	9.4	8.8
Indigenous population	7.9	9.1	8.5
Urban population	28.0	31.0	29.5
Rural population	-3.0	-3.2	-3.1
South Tarawa	28.0	31.0	29.5

Overview: National census, 2000 (continued)

	Males	Females	Total
Average annual growth rates (2000-1995)			
Total population	1.58	1.79	1.69
Indigenous population	1.52	1.74	1.63
Urban population	4.93	5.39	5.17
Rural population	-0.60	-0.66	-0.63
South Tarawa	4.93	5.39	5.17
Males-females (%)	49.3	50.7	-
Dependency ratios			
<15/15-59	N/A	N/A	73.0
60+/15-59	N/A	N/A	9.6
<15 +60/15-59	N/A	N/A	82.6
<15/15-64	N/A	N/A	70.5
65+/15-64	N/A	N/A	5.9
<15 + 65+/15-64	N/A	N/A	76.3
Fertility			
Crude birth rate (CBR)	N/A	N/A	0.0
Total fertility rate (TFR)	N/A	0.00	N/A
Average age at first marriage (SMAM)	25.0	22.2	23.5
Mortality			
Percentage of children ever born still alive	92.3	93.6	92.9
Percentage of fathers still alive	68.4	65.9	67.1
Percentage of mothers still alive	79.1	76.4	77.7
Infant mortality rate			24
Educational characteristics			
School enrolment rate (5-14)	91.4	93.4	92.4
Educational attainment of pop. 15+ (%)	-	-	-
No education	7.0	9.4	8.2
Primary	51.2	51.4	51.3
Secondary or higher	40.7	38.6	39.6
Economic activity			
Labor force participation rate (%)	86.8	85.3	86.0
Employment-population ratio (%)	24.2	12.9	18.3
Unemployment rate (%)	1.5	1.5	1.5

1.5 The economy

12. Historically, people in Kiribati prided themselves on the tradition of sharing wealth through various means of redistribution. These systems are breaking down however, especially in the urban areas, and now some people have considerably more resources than others. As a result of these new economic and social customs, some of our people are suffering.

13. Kiribati's economy depends primarily on world prices for copra and fish (which fluctuate continually), interest earned from a Reserve Fund, remittances from I-Kiribati working abroad, license fees for foreign-owned ships registered locally and from foreign aid. In October 2000, the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) reconfirmed Kiribati's status as a Least Developed Country. This status acknowledges the small size of Kiribati's economy and its high vulnerability to external forces. Kiribati is said to have the lowest GDP per capita (US\$ 702) in the Pacific Island region.

14. Small island countries like Kiribati are exposed to many kinds of disasters, caused by either external economic fluctuations or the natural environment. Kiribati's small, open economy, small internal market and dependence on unprocessed primary commodities (especially copra) puts the nation at the mercy of global and regional economic trends. Due to this vulnerability, development indicators for small island states can be misleading. Even a relatively high development status can be immediately lowered by one major disaster.

15. Kiribati is highly vulnerable to the effects of climate change and sea-level rise; the threats of pollution and salt-water excursion into the subterranean fresh-water lens; deforestation; pollution of the lagoons; depletion of inshore fish and marine species and coastal erosion. Surveys of the coastline of South Tarawa and Betio have shown considerable movement over a few decades and this has important implications for the placement of physical infrastructure. Deforestation might appear to be an unlikely threat on atolls, but the few tree species that exist are very valuable as sources of food, fuel and compost, building materials, shade, habitats for birds, and shoreline protection.³

Economic indicators, 1995-1998 (A\$ 000, in current prices)

	1995	1996	1997	1998
Gross domestic product (GDP) growth rate (%)	14.8	2.0	2.5	11.5
Gross national product (GNP) growth rate (%)	16.3	-11.5	28.7	20.6
Balance of trade, as % of GDP	60.4	65.9	67.9	60.4
Factor income balance, as % GDP	73.4	50.3	88.8	104.2
Current account balance, as % GDP	-5.2	-32.2	1.0	29.7
Official external reserves (in years of imports)	5.1	5.0	5.8	7.4
External debt, as % GDP	14.9	18.6	19.0	18.7
Increase in retail prices (%)	4.1	-1.5	2.2	4.7

1.6 Key development issues

16. Two demographic trends underlie most of the development problems in Kiribati:
- The moderately high rate of population growth; and
 - The growing concentration of the populations on South Tarawa.

17. The growth and distribution of the population has been a concern in Kiribati for several decades. Many of the pressing environmental problems in Kiribati are linked with congestion on South Tarawa: of people, urban development, infrastructure, motor vehicles and the growing volume of solid waste. There are also problems with housing, water and sanitation. While isolation and vast distances makes delivery of basic services in the outer islands difficult and costly.

18. The high density of people in the capital has created serious new social problems such as high unemployment, increased crime and use of alcohol, family breakdown and cultural erosion. The young people are especially vulnerable and their welfare is a major concern to everyone. Given the tightly constrained labor market, the problem of helping the majority of school leavers who will not find jobs is critical.

19. The Government has put in place several measures to address the population growth and distribution problem (outer island development initiatives, resettlement schemes, decentralizing employment and family planning programs) but the population continues to rise on the crowded atoll of Tarawa. Projections of economic and labor force growth suggest that formal sector employment is likely to become progressively scarce.⁴ At the same time, subsistence livelihoods are coming under threat due to the pressure of a growing population and growing consumption.

20. On the Human Development Index, Kiribati ranks 11th out of the 14 countries in the Pacific region and 129th in the world in terms of infant mortality and child morbidity, per capita GDP and living conditions (particularly in regard to water and sanitation).

Basic development indicators

	National	Males	Females
Population at 1995 census	76 618	37 945	38 673
Current population estimate	86 350	-	-
Population growth	1.4	-	-
GDP per capita	US\$ 702	-	-
Life expectancy	60.2 yrs	58.5 yrs	64.7 yrs
Adult literacy	93%	94%	91%
Infant mortality rate	24	27.8	20.8
Child mortality under 5 yrs	62	67.5	56.3
Access to safe water	51%	-	-
Access to sanitation	46%	-	-
Access to health services	95%	-	-
Human Development Index	0.515	0.493	0.517
Human Poverty Index	12.7	13.7	11.8

Sources: Kiribati Dept. Statistics, SPC, 1998, ADB, 1996, WHO, 1995, UNDP, 1999.

PART II. MEASURES OF IMPLEMENTATION

2.1 Ratification of the CRC

21. The Government of Kiribati ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) on July 12, 1995, but declared a number of reservations in accordance with Article 51, Paragraph 1, of the Convention including Articles 24 (b, c, d, e & f); 26 and 28 (b, c & d). In this matter, the Government Declaration states:

“The Republic of Kiribati considers that a child’s rights as defined in the Convention, in particular the rights defined in Articles 12-16 shall be exercised with respect for parental authority, in accordance with I-Kiribati customs and traditions regarding the place of the child within the outside of the family.”

22. Recently, the Government has de-reserved all reservations except Article 26. Currently, discussions are underway within Government to consider withdrawal of this final reservation.

2.2 Implementation of the CRC

23. *What the CRC says:*

Article 4 requires governments to take all appropriate legislative, administrative and other measures to implement the rights set forth in the CRC to the maximum extent of available resources and where necessary within the framework on international cooperation.

Article 41 requires that when existing national standards are higher than those set forth in the CRC, governments must adhere to the higher standard.

Article 44.6 requires governments to make the contents of the CRC and their country report widely known to the general public.

2.2.1 Mechanisms for coordination of policies related to children

24. Following Ratification of the CRC, the Government of Kiribati established the Kiribati “National Advisory Committee on Children” (KNACC) to coordinate and oversee the implementation of the Convention and some advocacy activities. The Ministry of Environment and Social Development (MESD) was asked to assume custodial responsibility for this Committee and a Chairperson from the Ministry of Health was appointed. Terms of Reference for the KNACC were established (see Annex 1) and twelve members of various government ministries and agencies were appointed by a two-year term. In addition, representatives from several churches and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) were asked to serve on the KNACC. Since 1995, there have been three different chairpersons from the Ministry of Health and membership on the KNACC continually changes. The current membership includes only two members of the original committee. Since 1995, the KNACC has met on a sporadic basis - sometimes weekly, sometimes monthly, sometimes not for months. Often members are not able to attend meetings and consequently it has been difficult for the Committee to build momentum and move forward. There are a number of reasons why the KNACC has largely been unable to fulfil its role and these problems are outlined below:

- The KNACC has never been adequately resourced in terms of people or funds. No separate budget was allocated for implementation or monitoring of the CRC and therefore, the Committee tries to operate on the limited funds available through recurrent budgets of the MESD. In terms of human resources, membership on the CRC is an additional responsibility and members have been unable to devote sufficient time to this task given their existing workload and other obligations;
- The effectiveness of the KNACC has been hampered by a general lack of coordination and leadership within the Committee. In addition, Ministries have not always provided sufficient support to the KNACC and tensions between various interest groups sometimes get in the way;
- The lack of available data and mechanisms to gather information in relation to the CRC has seriously limited the ability of the KNACC to effectively monitor the overall situation of children from a national, multi-disciplinary perspective;
- The fact that KNACC members do not clearly understand the role and responsibilities of the Committee or how the CRC relates to the everyday work of Government and NGOs is a fundamental problem. Similarly, parliamentarians, senior decision-makers and community organizations generally do not see the importance or relevancy of the CRC to Kiribati society. This lack of understanding has a negative effect on Governments overall commitment to CRC implementation and reporting.

25. Through the process of preparing this report, it has become clear to KNACC members that a number of actions are required to address these constraints and to advance CRC implementation in Kiribati. KNACC members are pleased that the reporting process has created some new momentum for the CRC in both Government and NGO circles and it is therefore timely to move forward in a systematic and participatory way.

26. The following plan has been proposed by the KNACC to address the issues identified above:

1. The provision of more in-service training for KNACC members is urgently needed. The purpose of this training would be to assist KNACC members to better understand the CRC as well as their role and responsibilities as a national coordinating body for children. In this way, the KNACC will develop greater capacity to assume a leadership role in CRC implementation and monitoring in Kiribati. As a part of this training, the Terms of Reference for the KNACC should be reviewed and recommendations submitted to Cabinet regarding modifications required for greater effectiveness. It is also important to assess the human and financial resource needs of the KNACC and to take immediate action to increase the capacity of this important committee;
2. Parliamentarians, senior decision-makers and national level NGOs and church organizations also require additional training about the CRC and the role of the KNACC. This training must be done in such a way that encourages people to see how the CRC relates to current development concerns and provide sufficient opportunity to explore how the Convention can assist in monitoring the situation of children and the overall effectiveness of current services.

It is essential that this training be done in an inclusive and participatory manner which brings people together from different sectors and interest groups to share concerns and ideas. In addition to increasing peoples knowledge about the CRC, this training process will enable planners and service providers to identify the best ways of working together to benefit children and families at the national and local level. It is also critical that this training initiative successfully dispels the notion that the Convention on the Rights of the Child is a “foreign concept” that threatens traditional structures and relationships;

3. To date, children, youth and families have not been active in the CRC processes in Kiribati. Therefore, the proposed training program must identify appropriate ways to increase the participation of children, parents and communities in CRC implementation in order to ensure plans encompass the needs and aspirations of young people. This begins with increasing the public’s knowledge about the Convention and how it relates to securing a healthy future for our children.

27. It is expected that this training and consultation process will produce the following results:

1. A more active and unified KNACC that better understands its role and has greater capacity to carry out its mandate;
2. Increased commitment by Government to implement the provisions established under the CRC and to fulfil its legal responsibilities as obliged through Ratification;
3. Greater involvement by NGOs, churches, children, parents and community groups in CRC implementation and monitoring;
4. Improved mechanisms for systematic data collection and analysis of children’s overall welfare; and
5. Development of a “National Plan of Action for Children” that promotes and respects local customs and traditions while also promoting and protecting the rights of all children in Kiribati. This plan should seek to strengthen existing programs and services and increase public awareness and participation in development planning for children.

2.2.2 Measures taken to harmonize national law with the Convention

28. To date, a legal review has not been carried out to examine the level of congruence between legal statutes in Kiribati and their compliance with the CRC.

29. However, following the participation of the Assistant Senior State Advocate at UNICEF’s Regional Juvenile Justice Workshop in May 2001, a legal review was one of several activities recommended to the Attorney General. Workshop participants examined various international instruments dealing with the rights of the child (including the CRC) and identified concrete ways to apply such principles within their respective countries, bearing in mind various cultural expectations and traditions.

30. After further consultation with Attorney Generals Office, the KNACC may request financial and/or technical assistance from UNICEF in conducting a review of Kiribati law with respect to “the best interests of the child” tenant.

2.2.3 Status of the Convention under domestic law

31. Since Kiribati acceded to the CRC in 1995 all provisions of the CRC, except Article 26, are now binding. This means that Kiribati is required to modify national laws to conform to the Convention, although this has not yet been completed.

32. The next step in this process is for the CRC to be adopted as part of the national law, which is basically a formality.

2.2.4 Measures taken to ensure the economic, social and cultural rights of the child

33. In recent years, the Government of Kiribati has made a number of commitments to international conventions or declarations related to human rights. In addition to ratifying the CRC, these have included being signatory to, or participating in:

- The Decade for Education for All (Jomtien, 1991);
- The Program of Action from the International Conference on Population and Development (Cairo, 1994); and
- The Beijing Platform of Action (Beijing, 1995).

34. While Kiribati has not yet ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), we have initiated a National Action Plan for Women to ensure that the unique social, cultural and economic rights of women are catered for. It is anticipated that the implementation of this Plan will also benefit children.

35. In March 2001, Cabinet approved the country’s first “National Youth Policy and Action Plan”. The Government of Kiribati initiated the formulation of this policy and plan because it was recognized that today’s youth are the parents, leaders and decision-makers of tomorrow and as such, required more attention and involvement in development planning.

Overall Goal of the National Youth Policy and Action Plan

“To empower the youth so they can receive the maximum opportunity to contribute to the economic, social and cultural advancement of their families, countries and to gain self-fulfillment”.

36. The Government has also been working closely with the International Labor Organization (ILO) to ensure compliance with international standards related to good labor practices. This has included informing Government, workers and community members about workers rights by convening National Tripartite Seminars to promote the Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at work. Efforts have also been made to translate eight fundamental Conventions into local vernacular and conduct in-country meetings to discuss the

ratification of ILO Conventions, including Convention 182 on the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labor. The ILO is conducting a regional study on child labor that involves Kiribati.

37. The Ministry of Health participated in the “Health for All” campaign, assisted by the World Health Organization (WHO). This campaign required Government to adopt basic goals for public health such as immunization and provision of safe water and sanitation. The Ministry of Health makes annual reports on the progress towards specific goals. Several international aid organizations provide assistance to the Government of Kiribati in achieving national health priorities.

38. The Government is also signatory to “Agenda 21”, the Plan of Action adopted at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (Rio de Janeiro, 1993). Since that time, the Ministry of Environment and Social Development has undertaken to protect and better manage freshwater resources and improve overall environmental health. Currently, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) is supporting a major environmental health and sanitation project in South Tarawa.

39. The Government of Kiribati is also signatory to the “Program of Action” adopted at the International Conference on Population and Development, held at Cairo in 1994. In signing this declaration, the Government agreed to invest more resources in human development and to improve integrated health, education and natural resource management. Further, there is a need to provide women with better access to health services, education and skills development and employment opportunities. This Plan of Action also includes the need to make sexual and reproductive health services more widely available, even for adolescents. Further, the Plan requires Government to make more effort to eliminate violence against women and to reduce sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS.

2.2.5 Measures taken to increase public knowledge about the CRC

“There is a need to create more public awareness about the rights of the child so that people understand that it is not a foreign concept to be scared of, nor is it a threat to our culture. What we need to do is look at ways to enhance our various traditions which protect the rights of the child”.

Internal government correspondence, June 2001.

40. In October 2000, a national seminar was held on the implementation and monitoring of the CRC in Kiribati. The workshop involved all members of the KNACC who provided presentations on different sections of the Convention. About 150 people from all over the country attended this seminar including Chief Councilors and the old men, island community workers, womens interest groups, youth, churches and NGOs.

41. This National Seminar proved highly beneficial to helping people in remote areas understand the CRC and why it is important for Kiribati. A number of recommendations arose from this meeting which are summarized below:

- The CRC needs to be translated into Kiribati language and disseminated to the outer islands so that all members of the community understand more about the Convention and how it relates to family and community life;
- Participants raised many issues about the protection of children and parental rights to discipline. It was suggested that more discussion is needed to define what is considered acceptable versus abusive discipline so that the rights of both parents and children are respected;
- The Seminar participants agreed that there is a need to bring the principles of the CRC in line with existing Kiribati laws and recommend that a legal review be carried out as soon as possible. For example, there is a need to examine the Kiribati native adoption law and parental rights to maintain name and authority;
- Participants believe that *unimane* leadership, values and wisdom must be maintained in order to achieve peace and order at the community level. Alternative forms of rehabilitation should be discussed at the Unimane Council (elders meeting) in order to find the best possible solution for the child and the family. People at the workshop agreed that there is a need to be “more comprehensive” in our approach to the protection of children.

2.3 Reporting on the CRC

42. In 1998, the Government commissioned the services of a local consultant to prepare the Initial Report of CRC Implementation in Kiribati. However, it proved difficult and time consuming to complete this report due to the lack of available information on many aspects of the reporting guidelines. Further, the KNACC was unclear about the kind of data required and were overwhelmed by the magnitude of the task.

43. When this report was eventually compiled, feedback was sought and received from UNICEF and other stakeholders outside Government. In June 2001, a second draft of this report was prepared incorporating feedback from the first draft. However, given the lengthy interval between reports it became necessary to update most of the information, making the task even more time consuming. By this time, the KNACC had also acquired a new Chairperson and the membership of the Committee had changed considerably. Given that most members did not have sufficient knowledge of the CRC, the reporting process or the role of the KNACC to prepare this report, the KNACC requested assistance once again from UNICEF.

44. Plans were made to hold a workshop with key stakeholders in Government, NGOs and Churches, with technical assistance provided by UNICEF. The workshop was held on June 28-30, 2001 in South Tarawa and was attended by over 40 representatives from various interest groups, including a delegation of youth from different church groups.

Workshop objectives

1. *To complete the final draft of the “Initial Report on CRC Implementation” in Kiribati ready for submission to Cabinet;*

2. *To increase understanding of the overall purpose and provisions of the Convention;*
3. *To increase understanding of the achievements and constraints in implementation of the CRC to date;*
4. *To develop follow-up plans to improve CRC implementation using cross-sector, participatory approaches; and*
5. *To evaluate the reporting process to date and make recommendations for improvement.*

45. The workshop was conducted using a participatory approach that involved large and small group discussions of critical issues affecting children in Kiribati today. The workshop evaluations indicated that all workshop objectives were met and encouraged Government to hold ongoing community consultation processes on children's welfare. In particular, the youth appreciated the opportunity to participate in the discussions and believe that their knowledge about important issues affecting children and young people was enhanced.

46. Throughout this report, numerous references will be made to workshop findings. These comments provide an important social commentary and represent a wide range of experience about children's overall welfare in Kiribati.

PART III. THE CHILDREN OF KIRIBATI

3.1 Definition of the child

What the CRC says:

Article 1 of the Convention defines a child to be a person under 18 years of age unless national laws recognize the age of majority earlier.

There is no definition of the word "child" in Kiribati law nor is there any specific legislation on juvenile justice. The 2001 National Youth Policy and Action Plan define youth as "young men and women between fifteen and thirty years of age." It also defines a pre-youth group as "both boys and girls between 6-15 years old."

47. There are a number of references to legal sanctions regarding children in the Penal Code, which serve to protect children's rights in Kiribati. For instance, Section 134 of the Penal Code states that a person under the age of twelve is presumed incapable of having sexual intercourse. Therefore, a child's alleged willingness to engage in sexual activity cannot be used as a legal defense by the perpetrator.

48. Section 5 of the Marriage Ordinance stipulates that a marriage solemnized between persons either of who are under the age of 16 is void. This means that children are only permitted to marry once they reach the age of 16. The Marriage Ordinance goes on to say that persons of 16 years and under 21 years of age require the consent of their father, mother or guardian before marrying. However, the Registrar-General may, if satisfied after due inquiry that the intended marriage is a proper one, dispense with such consent.

49. Section 68 of the Liquor Ordinance states that children under the age of 21 cannot drink alcohol, enter drinking establishments, sell or serve liquor.
50. Section 84 of the Employment Ordinance prohibits employment of children under the age of 14 years. Section 85 of this Ordinance states that a person under the age of 15 years shall not be employed in any industrial undertaking, or in any branch thereof except in employment approved by the Minister, or on any ship. However, children under the age of 15 may work upon a school-ship or a training-ship when such work is approved and supervised by a public authority.
51. Under the Education Ordinance, Section 29 provides that “the Minister may by order provide, either generally or in respect of the whole or part of any one or more islands and subject to such exemption as shall be specified, that the parents of every child of a specified age or ages shall secure the regular education of his child at a registered non- Government or Government school or by such means as the Minister may approve”.
52. The proposed “Evidence Bill” pertains to the capacity of children to provide evidence in court. In Kiribati, the youngest child to testify in court has been 7 years of age. The admissibility of children’s evidence is determined by the Magistrates determination of the child’s capacity to distinguish truth from fallacy.
53. Specific legislation dealing with juvenile justice issues is outlined in Section 3.7.0.

3.2 General principles

What the CRC says:

- Article 2* requires governments to protect the child from discrimination of any kind.
- Article 3* requires that in all actions concerning the child, the principle of “best interests of the Child” shall be the primary consideration.
- Article 6* calls on governments to recognize the inherent right to life of any child and to ensure the survival and development of the child.
- Article 12* grants to any child capable of forming his or her own opinion the right to express that opinion in all matters affecting the child with due weight accorded to those views in keeping with the age and maturity of the child.

“The child in particular (should) be provided with the opportunity to be heard in any judicial and administrative proceedings affecting the child...”

3.2.1 Non-discrimination

54. The rights of children to be protected from discrimination are demonstrated through notable achievements in policy and program development over the last several years. For instance, the gender gap in school enrolment has closed and major gains have been made in improving the access and quality of primary health care services for children and mothers.

55. However, the Government recognizes that an increasing number of children may be inadvertently discriminated against because their families do not have sufficient resources to purchase nutritious food, provide clean water and proper sanitation facilities or pay school-related expenses. As a result, more children are not attending school or performing to their full potential because they lack adequate support. Government must find better ways to ensure children are not discriminated against because of family income.

56. Similarly, the increasing number of family problems that result in temporary or permanent separation between parents mean that children are often required to cope with a great deal of stress and turmoil in their lives. This can create insecurity and confusion for children, especially if sufficient support is not provided during these difficult times. Although the lack of counseling and other support services for families is being addressed by Government, NGOs and churches, there is still concern regarding the vulnerability of children from broken homes.

57. Many workshop participants identified parenting problems as a major factor in children's vulnerability. People talked about the lack of supervision and support offered in many families and the increasing number of children who do not receive sufficient guidance, especially in the urban area. More needs to be done to assist parents to understand and fulfill their obligations to their children.

3.2.2 Best interests of the child

58. Usually in cases involving custody and maintenance of children, the Court determines the question of where the child is to stay by examining where the best interests of the child would be better served. The general practice of the Courts is to place nursing children with the mother, but in most other cases, custody of the child is shared between parents in various ways.

59. In general, Kiribati custom is that the father of the child or the child's father's relatives would normally claim custody of the child in cases where parents are not residing together. However, the Court does not consider this custom of paramount importance but rather attempts to rule in the child's best interests in all custodial matters.

60. At one of the CRC Workshops, some participants raised concern that the current practice of "sharing children" between parents who are separated or divorced may in fact cause additional stress for the children. They noted that children are often shuffled between parents who live in different areas. This creates disruptions in the child's schooling and prevents proper socialization. People also mentioned serious concern about the many children sent to live with relatives in South Tarawa who do not have the financial means to support them. Many of these young people are not properly supported or supervised and this is not in the best interest of those children.

"Many parents today are too busy doing other things, like trying to make money to buy food and other things, or to raise money for the church and school. There are so many demands on people's time and money and everyone is confused about their roles and how to handle all these new social problems, like alcohol and videos and family breakdown. We are forgetting our culture and who we really are".

Workshop Participant.

3.2.3 The right to life, survival and development

What the CRC says:

Article 6 stipulates that Governments shall ensure, to the maximum extent possible, the survival and development of every child.

Right to Life

61. Section 3 of the National Constitution of Kiribati, which is the Supreme Law, provides that every person is entitled to the fundamental rights and freedoms of the individual, including the right to life, liberty, security of the person and protection of the law.

62. Section 4 of the Constitution provides that no person shall be deprived of his life intentionally, save in execution of the sentence of a court in respect of a criminal offence under the law in force in Kiribati of which he has been convicted.

63. Under the Penal Code, abortion is not allowed in Kiribati except where the act for causing the death of the child was done in good faith for the purpose of preserving the life of the mother.

64. Concealing the birth of children is an offence under Section 213 of the Penal Code. Section 214 states that evidence that a woman had at any material time been pregnant for a period of 28 weeks or more shall be prima facie proof that she was at that time pregnant of a child capable of being born alive.

65. Infanticide is also an offence under section 199 of the Penal Code. Furthermore, Section 201 provides that a child becomes a person capable of being killed when it has completely proceeded in a living state from the body of its mother, whether it has breathed or not, and whether it has an independent circulation or not, and whether the navel-string is severed or not.

66. Cruelty to children is also an offence under Section 226 of the Penal Code and child stealing is an offence under Section 246.

Right to survival

67. The life expectancy at birth⁵ in Kiribati is estimated at 61.6 years of age, which is generally shorter than in other Pacific Island countries. This is due to the high mortality rate both in infants and adults.

68. The Infant Mortality Rate (IMR)⁶ is estimated at 65 per live 1000 births, which is one of the highest IMR rates in the Pacific.

Five priority health problems - 1998

Condition	Total number of cases
Respiratory tract infection	69 344
Wounds and accidents	18 445
Skin diseases	11 504
Diarrhoea	8 779
Parasitic infection	5 239

Source: Ministry of Health.

69. The incidence of Acute Respiratory Infection (ARI) is also high among children, especially in Betio, South Tarawa where there is a great deal of overcrowding and other sanitation problems. A total of 15 children died from ARI complications in 1998.

70. Diarrhoeal diseases are a primary cause of morbidity and mortality with children and this is associated with poor water supply and sanitation. With adults, high mortality among men is due to the high prevalence of infectious and non-communicable diseases.

71. Vitamin A deficiency is common among children in Kiribati. In 1998, 78 per cent of cases recorded were children between 5 to 14 years, and 21 per cent were those under 5 years.

72. A Vitamin A distribution program is continuing with assistance from UNICEF. Government is also taking additional measures to increase availability of green vegetables for consumption.

Total number of vitamin A deficiency 1993-1998

1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998
590	637	570	739	716	745

Source: Ministry of Health.

73. Although infectious diseases are common, non-communicable diseases are also becoming more prevalent. These include heart diseases, hypertension, diabetes and cancer. These diseases present major public health problems.

Water

74. The main water supply for South Tarawa is piped from a subterranean water lens in the Eastern part of the atoll. This system is over stretched due to the rapidly increasing demand and many illegal connections into the system. Some households have water wells and rainwater tanks, although well water is mostly commonly used for washing. Contaminated water is a common cause of illness.

Sanitation

75. Sanitation is still a major problem in Kiribati, especially on the crowded islet of Betio in South Tarawa. Traditionally, people have used the sea as their toilet and while this poses little public health problem in the sparsely populated outer islands, it is becoming a serious public concern in South Tarawa. It is estimated that one third of all households still use the ocean beach for toilet purposes, and another third use the lagoon beach.

76. Other sanitation problems include the high volume of household waste and the concentration of other pollutants such as waste oil and chemicals, derelict vehicles and machinery on the islands. A number of improvements are needed to upgrade and improve sanitation at household and community levels in accordance with community expectations and increasing demand.

77. The Ministry of Health has developed plans to improve the availability of safe water, increase availability of wholesome foods, improve sanitation and personal hygiene practices, and the control of diarrhoeal diseases in children. Several international aid agencies are providing assistance in these areas.

Right to development

78. Under Kiribati law, education is compulsory and free for all children in primary and junior secondary schools. School enrolment rates have increased a great deal over the last decade and attempts are being made to improve the overall quality of education provided.

79. However, there is a concern in some rural areas that the cost and availability of road and sea transportation negatively affects children's ability to attend school. Workshop participants also mentioned that very poor families are unable to meet the cost of school related expenses (such as bus fares, uniforms and books) and fees for secondary school students.

80. The quality of instruction and educational resources and children's access to information also varies from urban and rural areas and even from island to island. The National Youth Policy states that rural children are disadvantaged in terms of education, training opportunities, employment and access to health services and sports facilities. The Policy emphasizes that priority attention should be directed to the development of rural youth.

81. Not all children in Kiribati have access to preschool education and consequently, this prevents some children from getting "a head start" in life. Pre-school educational services should be expanded so all children have this opportunity.

82. There are an increasing number of young people out of school, with very limited employment prospects. The National Youth Policy states that priority attention must be given to open up opportunities for specialized basic skills training for this disadvantaged group of youth.

"Of the 900 students who enter Senior Secondary School each year, only 150 will continue their education to university level. Therefore, each year an astonishing 1.700 youth are unable to further their education...leaving thousands of youth unemployed and not knowing what to do".⁷

83. The ever-increasing congestion and environmental degradation in South Tarawa is also having a negative effect on the quality of life of all children living in this area, particularly given the rising level of crime and lack of sanitary conditions. Young people are at added risk in this situation and more needs to be done to ensure their safety and welfare.

84. There is also concern regarding the future for the growing numbers of people who lack secure land tenure on South Tarawa. The Government leases most of the land in Betio and this accounts for the high number of squatters residing on this small islet. Elsewhere, traditional owners control the occupancy of their land and the use of their resources. Most of the houses in South Tarawa are government owned and crowded far beyond their intended use and there is limited availability of land or opportunity for subsistence activities for non-I-Tarawans.

3.3 Civil rights and freedoms

What the CRC says:

Article 7 requires birth registration and grants the child the right to a name, nationality and to know and be cared for by his or her parents.

Article 8 requires governments to assist a child deprived of his/her identity to re-establish that identity.

Articles 13-17 grant the child fundamental human rights including; (a) freedom of expression (b) freedom of thought, conscience and religion; (c) freedom of association and peaceful assembly; (d) privacy; (e) access to information.

Article 37 protects the child from torture of other “cruel, inhumane or degrading treatment”.

3.3.1 Right to a name, nationality and identity

85. The Births, Deaths and Marriage Registration Ordinance requires children to be registered within 10 days of birth. However, the Government does not have the capacity to enforce this regulation and as a result, it is estimated that only about 65-70 per cent of children register within 10 days. But since school registration requires parents to produce a birth certificate, most children not previously registered with the Government will do so prior to entering school.

3.3.2 Right to know and be raised by biological parents

86. Native adoption is carried out in the Magistrates Court; however, the effect of adopting a child is that the adopted child will be able to inherit land from the adopting parents. However, it does not make an adopted child a son or daughter for the purposes of immigration laws. For example, if a couple are thinking of taking their adopted child outside Kiribati with them, the adoption does not necessarily make the adopted child a legal son or daughter.

3.3.3 Freedom of expression, thought and religion

87. Section 3 of the Constitution provides for freedom of conscience, of expression and of assembly and association for all citizens.

88. However, in traditional Kiribati society children were basically supposed to be “seen and not heard” and therefore, were not encouraged to openly share their opinions. This custom is gradually changing though and young people are now playing a more important and vocal role in society.

“Children and youth today get confusing messages from their parents and at school and church about whether to express themselves or not. If children are really going to be free to say what they think, we need to give them more encouragement and opportunities”.

Workshop participant.

89. The youth in Kiribati have a well-developed network of associations and groups, mostly connected to various church denominations. These groups provide spiritual guidance for young people and serve to meet important social and recreational needs as well. Some CRC workshop participants believe these groups should play a more active role in civic affairs as well as providing needed vocational and life skills training for their members.

90. The new National Youth Policy promotes youth as a critical resource for nation building and encourages the participation of young people as “equal co-partners of the Government and the community” in development efforts.

91. The Government has tried to encourage the involvement of youth in development planning. For example, the preparation of the National Youth Policy involved extensive consultation with young people living in both urban and rural areas. Over 400 youth were interviewed on a one-to-one basis and the draft policy was shared with numerous youth groups throughout the country during community workshops. The Chief Counselor, the Island Community Worker and representatives from the *unimane*, the women and the churches also attended these meetings. Over 160 people, many of whom were youth, attended the National Youth Policy Workshop. There is no restriction on the formation of local NGOs that concern themselves with human rights issues in Kiribati but none have been formed to date.

“The increasing social problems amongst youth today are becoming imminent and almost impossible to control. The changes in our cultural values, practices and the traditional I-Kiribati way of life are the end result of all of the development taking place”.

National Youth Policy and Action Plan, 2001-2005.

The National Youth Policy recognizes the rights of young men and women based on the sanctity of human life and dignity as follows:

- Freedom of speech;*
- Protection against any form of exploitation, discrimination and abuse;*

- *Access to all benefits such as education, employment, legal services, health care etc.;*
- *The right to good parental care;*
- *Freedom to form their own lawful associations; and*
- *The right to Rights under the Constitution of Kiribati.*

This policy recognizes that young men and women have important responsibilities and obligations toward their nation, their community and to one another. Young people must make positive contributions for the development of their society. Under this policy, the youth will actively participate in the implementation of this policy by:

- *Freedom of speech;*
- *Showing initiative and zestfully participating in the national development process;*
- *Taking responsibility to ensure that they acquire skills that will enable them to become active citizens;*
- *Protecting and conserving the environment for future generations;*
- *Respecting senior citizens; and*
- *Honoring and respecting the Constitution and Laws of Kiribati.*

This policy also recognizes the important role of adults in youth development. The responsibilities and obligations of adults, as identified in this policy are:

- *To provide for the physical, social, mental and economic well-being of the youth;*
- *To never exploit or abuse youth for personal profit or pleasure;*
- *To serve as positive role models for young people; and*
- *To teach and train youth to become good citizens.*

3.3.4 Protection of privacy

92. Section 9 of the Constitution provides for the protection of privacy of home and other property. In traditional Kiribati culture, children had sufficient privacy and there was plenty of space for everyone. While this is still the case on the outer islands, privacy has become an issue of concern on South Tarawa, especially in Betio. The number of people living in one household is very high and continuing to rise. As a result, children are expected to share sleeping quarters with extended family members and this practice is not considered appropriate in Kiribati custom.

93. Workshop participants raised concern about privacy for children because crowded living conditions often make it difficult for children to sleep properly or to concentrate on their homework. Further, crowded housing can lead to physical or sexual abuse of children by relatives and visitors.

3.3.5 Access to information

94. Kiribati is a democratic country. To promote peace and stability in the country it is very important for young people to fully understand their rights, duties and responsibilities as good citizens and future leaders. It is also important for youth to become more knowledgeable about the Constitution and the structure of our Government. Further, youth must be given opportunities to acquire basic skills in organizing, leadership, mediation and communication.

95. Churches, NGOs and Government have conducted some very good training programs for youth on these topics. However, to avoid duplication of efforts and improve cost efficiency there is a need for all organizations to better coordinate their training programs and workshops.

96. Children residing in urban areas have greater access to information about national and global issues and better opportunities to learn about interesting topics than the children residing on remote outer islands. At the same time, there is a real concern about the suitability of some of the information accessible to children, such as violent and pornographic videos.

“Western videos are the greatest threat to I-Kiribati culture today. They are making our young people wish they could live a life that is not possible on our small islands. These movies are full of people drinking alcohol and hurting each other, for what? Do we want to be like that?”

CRC workshop participant.

97. The National Youth Policy has developed several strategies to promote greater civic consciousness among young people and encourage the sharing of traditional knowledge.

National Youth Program - Civic Consciousness

Objectives:

- Ensure the principles of democracy are maintained and upheld in Kiribati for political stability;*
- Increase youth awareness of their rights and responsibilities;*
- Increase youth participation and contributions so they can actively assist in the overall development of the country;*
- Policy strategies;*
- Promote the principles of civic consciousness, which are to maintain a stable and peaceful environment for all;*

- *Pursue programs to enhance youth awareness of their rights under the existing laws, legislation and international conventions;*
- *Enhance and stimulate the political process, leadership, organization, mediation, communication, conflict prevention and resolution skills through workshops and other special training programs for youth;*
- *Facilitate opportunities for youth to participate in organized meetings and workshops at island and national level;*
- *Facilitate opportunities for youth to voice their concerns at island and national levels;*
- *Develop training programs on gender awareness, good governance, human rights and democratic practice for youth; and*
- *Develop training programs to ensure that youth are informed of their rights.*

3.4 Social and family environment

98. During the nation-wide consultation process carried out to develop the National Youth Policy, a number of social and family related issues were identified as having a profound impact on the well being of children and youth in Kiribati today. Many of these same issues were raised during the CRC Workshop held in June 2001. The most pressing of these issues include:

- Wide spread unemployment;
- Changes in culture due to western influence;
- Increasing incidents of sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS resulting from multiple sexual partners and unprotected sex;
- Use of alcohol;
- Teenage pregnancy;
- Lack of leadership;
- Juvenile delinquency;
- Lack of self-esteem in young people;
- Family problems leading to separation and divorce;
- Family violence;
- Depression and suicide;
- Lack of training opportunities for skills development;
- Lack of recreational and leisure options;
- Lack of parental supervision and support.

3.4.1 Parental guidance and responsibility

99. One of the major issues identified by participants at the CRC Workshop was the need for parents to develop better parenting skills and to take their responsibilities as parents more seriously. While most mothers and fathers are trying to do their best, many are overwhelmed by all of the changes taking place in society and are confused about the best way to raise their children. Youth are becoming more unruly and even young children sometimes do not listen to their parents anymore.

“Sometimes the mother and father are too busy working in offices and spend less time with their children. Other times, children stay with guardians on Tarawa who are always looking for somewhere else for the child to go”.

National Youth Policy and Action Plan, 2001-2005.

100. The Ministry of Environment and Social Development (MESD) has four trained Welfare Officers based in South Tarawa who are available to assist families in need of financial or emotional help. The number of families that come to the MESD has continued to increase over the last several years as more families struggle with financial and social pressures. More staff and resources are required to meet the growing demand for family support.

Social welfare case statistics for 2000

Case category	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
Aged maintenance	0	1	3	1	1	0	0	1	4	5	1	0	17
Assaulted woman	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Child access	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Child maintenance	0	7	5	2	5	4	5	1	9	7	5	4	54
Child negligence	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Child custody	2	3	4	3	11	4	4	2	6	1	1	2	43
Disagreement with court decision	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Divorce	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Domestic violence	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	2
Emotional disturbance	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Family dispute	0	1	0	1	3	0	2	1	2	1	1	2	14
Financial disturbance	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Juvenile delinquency	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	1	0	5
Land dispute	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Local repatriation	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	3
Lost child	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3
Marriage separation	0	0	2	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	5
Matrimonial property	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Monetary share (KPF)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Overseas repatriation	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Parental negligence	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Parole release	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	3
Physical abuse	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Request for divorce	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
Running child	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	2
School fee support	1	0	2	0	4	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	12
Total	24	13	24	10	29	13	12	6	24	20	11	9	176

101. In addition to the support provided to parents by the Government, most church ministers and pastors provide counseling for families in their parishes. Sometimes though, people feel embarrassed to ask for help and do not want others to know about their personal problems. Some NGOs also provide counseling services and are conducting training programs for local island community workers. In addition, most secondary schools employ chaplains who provide spiritual and emotional guidance for students who need personal support.

102. The Foundation for the Peoples of the South Pacific (FSP)/Aia Maea Ainen Kiribati (AMAK) in collaboration with UNDP, NZ Government and DFIT, has recently initiated the Virtues Program that promotes and teaches basic Christian values and helps family members learn how to communicate with each other more cordially and peacefully.

3.4.2 Abuse and neglect

103. There is mounting concern about the increasing number and severity of incidents involving all kinds of child abuse, especially sexual abuse in urban areas. As a result, a national seminar called "Protecting our Children Against Sexual Abuse" was held for two days in September 2000. The Social Welfare Department of the MESD initiated the workshop. Its objective was to try and address the issue of child rape and attempted rape of young children. Between the months of May to September 2000, there were four reported child rape cases, and one attempted rape case, of children under the age of 7 by members of the child's household.

104. The Child Protection Seminar involved people from NGOs, government departments, legal institutions, the media and community members from the areas in which the rapes had occurred. The main objective of the Seminar was to provide a forum for open discussion of this sensitive issue and to:

- Raise awareness about child sexual abuse and find ways of solving this problem;
- Enable the community to have their views on the issue heard;
- Raise awareness within the community about the roles various institutions play in dealing with this issue; and
- Identify recommendations and follow-up action needed.

105. Recommendations for follow-up action:

- Further training is needed on child care and protection, positive parenting and the laws relating to child protection;
- More counseling services should be provided to the victims, parents and perpetrators;
- Strict and long term penalties should be placed on child sexual abusers and they should be imprisoned and permanently reside outside of their own islands;
- Governments and Churches should try and provide jobs or education for the unemployed to discourage them from violence and enable them to make better use of their talents;

- The media should be more sensitive and cautious in publishing news and make sure it is truthful and accurate and will not infringe upon people's human rights;
- Better enforcement of laws would assist in reducing or eliminating child rape and sexual abuse;
- Reviewing and updating national laws so as to better protect vulnerable people;
- Establish support groups for victims;
- Use a systematic approach to dealing with each child abuse case to ensure all possible strategies are explored and children are adequately protected and supported.

106. The Ministry of Environment and Social Development is currently trying to follow-up on as many of these recommendations as possible.

107. These cases were very high profile in the national media and served to raise the general public's awareness about the problem of child abuse. Until then, sexual abuse was not acknowledged as a problem because people did not believe, or did not want to believe, it was happening. Culturally, this is very strictly forbidden. There is also much shame associated with sexual abuse for the victims, perpetrators and their families.

108. Also during the CRC Workshop, participants raised concern about the sexual exploitation of young women by men working on fishing boats. They indicated that seamen are giving these young women money, clothes and fish in exchange for sex while putting them at considerable risk of contracting HIV and other diseases.

3.5 Basic health and welfare

3.5.1 Health and health services

What the CRC says:

Article 24 grants the child the right to the highest attainable standard of health and health services without exception. Governments are required to give priority to reducing child/infant mortality by providing; pediatric and primary health care; pre-natal and postnatal care health education and counseling. Additionally, governments are obliged to promote sound nutrition and adequate food, clean drinking water and safe sanitation. Governments shall also abolish traditional practices prejudicial to children's health.

Overview: Health issues

109. People in Kiribati generally have a shorter life span than those in other Pacific Island countries, with an average life expectancy at birth of 61.6 years. There are two reasons for this. First, infant and child mortality is high, generally because of the prevalence of diarrhoea and respiratory diseases. Second, adult mortality, especially for men, is high because of the prevalence of both infectious and non-communicable diseases. Men have an average life expectancy at birth of 59 years, six years less than for women.

110. In the late 1970s there was a cholera outbreak in South Tarawa and many people died, especially children. After this, Australia funded the construction of a water and sewerage system that was completed in 1986. Unfortunately, because of the population pressure and electrical problems this system has progressively deteriorated exposing people once more to serious diseases. The Asian Development Bank (ADB) is currently supporting a major environmental health and sanitation project to address this problem. The Ministry of Health makes announcements over the radio about the importance of boiling water before use to prevent the spread of disease.

111. The effect of over-crowding on the health status of people in South Tarawa is evident from the prevalence of infectious diseases such as influenza, diarrhoea and conjunctivitis. Tuberculosis also poses a serious public health problem.

112. Although infectious diseases are common, non-communicable diseases are also becoming more prevalent. Heart diseases, hypertension, diabetes and cancer are major public health problems. Cases of diabetes, for example, increased from 118 in 1992 to 300 in 1996 and there are many amputees. Lifestyles and dietary habits are changing quickly, especially in the urban areas.

113. Over 80 per cent of the adult population smokes tobacco and alcohol consumption is also becoming very high for young women and men.

114. Another problem is the increase in mental illness, depression and suicide. The increasing number of suicide attempts among young people is a major concern.

Diarrhoeal diseases

115. Diarrhoeal diseases are a major cause of sickness and death at all ages but especially for young children. The prevalence of these diseases is connected with poor water supply and sanitation. The main water supply for South Tarawa is piped from the subterranean water lens in the northern part of the atoll. This system is over-stretched by growing demand and illegal connections. It is also threatened by housing encroachments onto the land above the water lens and the widespread use of pit toilets, water-seal toilets, and (less often) septic tanks. Relatively few houses have rainwater tanks. Although well water is mostly used for washing, contaminated drinking water is a common source of illness.

Diarrhoea cases 1995-1998

Year	1995	1996	1998
Number of diarrhoea cases	9 606	8 842	6 458

Source: Ministry of Health.

116. While Oresol rehydration fluid is widely used in the country for treating diarrhoea, deaths still occur due to the caretakers late response for treatment.

Sanitation

117. Sanitation is generally poor on South Tarawa and especially so on the crowded islet of Betio. A traditional practice in Kiribati is to use the sea for toilet purposes. On the sparsely populated outer islands, this poses little public health risk. However, on South Tarawa one third of households still use the ocean beach as their toilet, or worse still, another one third utilize the lagoon beach where the water circulates much more slowly. The reason for this practice is that most houses do not have toilet facilities. Further, studies have shown that people feel uncomfortable using “modern” toilets and so prefer to use the beach. There are also those who consider the price of imported toilets too expensive on limited income. With the increasingly high density of people living in South Tarawa “the beach practice” is creating a serious health problem.

118. Other sanitation problems include the high volumes of household waste and the concentration of other pollutants such as waste oils and chemicals, derelict vehicles and machinery, on the islands.

119. Food-borne and insect or animal-borne diseases are other major causes of illness. An important source of food-borne diseases, especially on South Tarawa, is shellfish from lagoon waters polluted by sewerage. Flies, mosquitoes, scavenging dogs, rats and pigs are other vectors of disease.

Nutrition

120. Many illnesses in Kiribati are associated with poor quality diets, where traditional foods have been replaced by imported low-grade foods, such as white flour, white rice, sugar and fatty meats. One reason for this change is that people have acquired a taste for these foods but do not know about the health risks. Another reason is that these foods are cheaper than traditional foods. As low-income families maximize the quantity rather than the quality of food they buy, poor diets are also associated with poverty.

“My main concern for children in Kiribati is malnutrition”.

CRC Workshop Participant.

121. In 1998, 245 cases of malnutrition were recorded with 173 of this number being children under 5 years of age. Most of these cases were associated with infective diarrhoea and tuberculosis. That same year recorded 12 malnutrition cases, which resulted in death.

122. The Ministry of Health is attempting to reduce the incidence of under-nutrition among children, to eliminate Vitamin A Deficiency and to reduce the prevalence of anemia among children. UNICEF and local NGOs like the Foundation of the Peoples of the South Pacific (FSP) are helping the Government to achieve these goals. For instance, UNICEF has supported training for health workers about the importance of Vitamin A and distributing Vitamin A capsules and by promoting breastfeeding.

Accidents

123. Traffic accidents are becoming more common, especially on South Tarawa. There were 261 people involved in accidents in 1998, including 3 deaths, a high rate of injuries relative to the size of the national population.

124. Workshop participants felt strongly that more needs to be done to promote safe driving and to ensure children are more closely supervised when around the road.

Sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS

125. Another significant health concern is Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs). Little is known about their prevalence in Kiribati, for there is little surveillance, no specialist clinic, until recently, little concern about STDs, and a high social stigma attached to these infections. One indicator to a significant incidence of STDs is that cervical cancer is now the most common form of cancer in Kiribati. Cervical cancer is associated with the Human Papilloma Virus (HPV), an STD. This currently is probably the most life-threatening STD, for most cases of cervical cancer are diagnosed too late for effective treatment. There is no national program of pap smears, which means that a woman has to personally request for this test at the Tungaru Central Hospital. Few women do this.

126. Another life-threatening disease is HIV. The number of known HIV/AIDS cases has escalated quickly, from two in 1994, to 29 by October 1999. This sudden increase has had a big impact on public awareness. The principal route for infection appears to be the many I-Kiribati men who work overseas, especially as merchant seamen, and who, largely through heterosexual activity, infect their wives and other people in Kiribati. The Government and the public recognize that STDs and HIV/AIDS prevention must be stepped up to forestall widespread HIV infection. Factors that heighten the country's vulnerability to an HIV/AIDS epidemic include:

- Cultural and religious constraints on talking about reproductive and sexual health issues or using condoms;
- Unprotected adolescent sexual activity;
- The extent of sexual violence;
- Many men who work abroad are vulnerable and risk infection with STDs and HIV, putting women at risk of infection within marriage.

127. The Government is committed to countering the spread of STDs and HIV, and donor organizations are concerned about the situation in Kiribati. Public informational materials are being developed. Several NGOs are concerned with STDs and HIV/AIDS, such as the Seamens Wives Association, the Red Cross Society and various other youth and women's groups. A national strategy to counter the spread of HIV has been drawn up through the Kiribati HIV/AIDS Taskforce under the Ministry of Health with assistance from WHO and SPC.

128. Problems that need to be addressed include the concentration of STDs and HIV testing on Tarawa, and the need to make these and other relevant services, including counseling, nationally available. The Health Education Program has also been unable to communicate preventative messages to all sectors of the I-Kiribati population.

Overview: Health services

129. The Government currently allocates around 10-14 per cent of its annual budget to health. In addition, aid donors support most public health programs with the Government primarily contributing human resources for these initiatives.

130. Health worker training is a major priority of the Ministry of Health and several international organizations are assisting the Government in this area. For instance, UNICEF is assisting the Ministry of Health to build the capacity of health workers and community volunteers and to improve the skills and technical knowledge of Medical Assistants and Nursing Officers on issues concerning (CDD), acute respiratory infection (ARI), expanded programme on immunization (EPI) and safe motherhood. Training is also being provided to Nursing Aids, Village Welfare Groups and community members on primary health care services, practices and reporting systems. WHO is providing assistance to the Ministry of Health in addressing national health priorities such as health development, reproductive health, health education and promotion and communicable disease control. UNFPA supports the Reproductive Health, Family Planning and Sexual Health Program. AusAID provides assistance to allow health workers to receive training overseas when this is required.

131. While it is estimated that 95% of the population has access to health services, CRC Workshop participants noted that access involves more than just physical proximity to health services. For instance, the attitude of health workers and their ability to develop good relationships with patients determines to a large extent people's willingness to seek medical attention. Another issue that effects access rates is whether the facility's hours of operation are convenient for local people.

“A big concern is that people tend to wait too long to get medical treatment. By the time they come to the health center, little things have become serious problems - especially for children. Another problem is that people are sometimes put off by the attitude of health workers and mothers feel guilty if their children are sick so they don't want to come. Also, medical centers operate at times that are convenient for the people who work there, not the people we are trying to help.”

CRC Workshop Participant

132. In 1999, the Ministry of Health produced two plans setting out their immediate and mid-term priorities. These were the *Public Health Plan 1999-2002* and the *Health Workforce Plan 1999-2020*. The Fourth National Health Plan (1996-2002) is currently being implemented. The priorities, objectives and strategies established in these plans are outlined in Annex B.

Maternal and child health (MCH)

What the CRC says:

Article 24 states that Governments shall take appropriate measures to ensure pre-natal and postnatal health care for mothers.

133. Maternal & Child Health (MCH) and Family Planning services are carried out in 78 clinics over most Islands and are held every two weeks. During these visits, nurses conduct growth monitoring on babies, provide advice on proper nutrition, immunization and carry out examinations for minor ailments or illnesses. The Health Plan states that in order to halve the child mortality rate by 2002, accessible, well equipped and trained health workers will be made available throughout the country.

134. During ante-natal visits, mothers are given tetanus toxoid when required. Health education is provided to mothers, with emphasis on how to maintain a healthy baby during pregnancy and after delivery. During these visits, consultation on family planning and infertility are also carried out.

Expanded program on immunization (EPI)

135. A full program of immunization is required for all children under 1 year of age, with 90% coverage of all vaccines. Babies are given the first dose of Hepatitis B vaccine within 24 hours of birth. Throughout the 78 Health Clinics, immunization is carried out every fortnight to ensure coverage of defaulters.

National immunization coverage rate for children under one 1992-1999

Immunization	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
DPT1 (%)	78.34	99.30	91.33	89.88	88.88
DPT2 (%)	79.05	89.25	95.10	89.83	86.72
DPT3 (%)	71.33	78.71	91.37	88.88	78.96
POLIO	57.22	107.22	103.9	100.0	99.75
POLIO1 (%)	80.58	94.27	98.92	91.12	90.33
POLIO2 (%)	73.11	81.83	95.48	90.58	86.52
POLIO3 (%)	66.47	71.25	93.11	84.73	77.26
BCG (%)	55.73	106.72	102.95	98.76	95.77
MEAS (%)	55.15	63.73	81.78	78.34	63.36
HEP1 (%)	50.37	94.36	110.91	102.4	98.88
HEP2 (%)	57.64	76.89	99.75	90.91	87.14
HEP3 (%)	45.10	65.98	97.26	91.08	82.86

136. Due to the difficulty in shipping and transportation, there have been delays in the arrival of vaccines, which account for low coverage rate in some areas. UNICEF is assisting the Government in producing public information and education material on Hepatitis and the importance of immunization.

3.5.2 Disabled children

What the CRC says:

Article 23 states mentally and physically disabled child should enjoy a full and decent life, in conditions that ensure dignity, promote self-reliance and facilitate the child's active participation in the community.

Section 15 of the Constitution offers disabled children protection from discrimination.

137. Traditionally, family members and communities look after their disabled children well. However, while the child's physical needs are adequately catered for, there are few ways of integrating these children in modern community life. As a result, many disabled children may have potential to develop in ways that are not being catered for through lack of opportunity.

138. To address this issue, the Youth Entrepreneurship Scheme intends to develop a special grant scheme for youth with disabilities to encourage their involvement in appropriate micro-enterprise development.

“Although the number of youth with disabilities in Kiribati is minimal, it is not fair that the special needs and aspirations of these young people are ignored”.

National Youth Policy.

139. For education, disabled children are under the care of the Kiribati National Red Cross Society (KNRC), which provides daily transportation for children to attend classes at the Red Cross School for the Disabled. Teachers and volunteers assist School staff in the daily running of the Red Cross School.

Type and number of disabled children in school - 2001

Type of disability	Total number
Blind	7
Hearing impaired	14
Physically handicap	14
Intellectually handicap	19
Total	54

Source: Kiribati National Red Cross Society.

140. The placement of health units throughout the country ensures that special needs children are able to access health care at all times. Disabled children also have access to specialist medical care once a year when medical teams from abroad visit and carry out cosmetic and cardiac surgery. There are also yearly visits by medical teams specializing in vision and hearing impairment. The Red Cross plays an important role in liaising with these teams and organizing children that require these services.

141. A Disability Survey was carried out in South Tarawa in 1999 to determine the prevalence and nature of disabilities afflicting this population. Results of the survey indicated there were a total of 450 people with different types of disabilities, of which 150 of these are children under 18 years of age. The survey proved to give important baseline data, but in areas was very vague.

142. However, the lack of financial resources available means the Red Cross School cannot adequately meet all of these children's needs. Disabled children generally experience difficulty integrating back into the community or mainstream schooling since their special needs are not well understood or catered for. At the moment, the Kiribati Government, with its financial

resource constraints, could not provide sufficient financial support to the school. The limited funds available from abroad means that Red Cross School cannot pay the teachers and other required staff. There is also an urgent need to train teachers in special education and provide training to ensure attainment of a local teaching certificate for those already trained abroad.

143. The 1999-2000 health plan stipulates that all health service activities and programs should reach at least 90% performance level and that at least 90% of the population is served effectively by efficient and knowledgeable staff by the year 2002 and beyond. Health Units are well positioned to ensure that the community has appropriate access to them and that they are within walking distance of not more than 30 minutes.

3.5.3 Social security and child care services

What the CRC says:

Article 26 recognizes that for every child has the right to benefit from social security including social insurance and shall take the necessary measures to achieve the full realization of this right in accordance with their national law.

144. There are no special childcare services or social security in Kiribati, however the Ministry of Environment and Social Development provides some assistance to families who are in desperate need. The Ministry also provides some assistance to disadvantaged families through the “School Fee Support Scheme” if families are unable to pay secondary school fees.

3.5.4 Standard of living

What the CRC says:

Article 27. 1-3 grants every child the right to a standard of living adequate for his/her physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development.

145. There are great differences in living standards and cash incomes between South Tarawa and the outer islands, and between the outer islands themselves. In Tarawa, the standard of living is based primarily on the level of cash income and adequacy of housing, which is limited and often over crowded. There is better access to health and education services in Tarawa than the outer islands, but limited opportunity to supplement income through subsistence activities. The traditional system of wealth redistribution is generally weaker on South Tarawa and the demand for cash for everyday living is much higher.

146. Based on cash incomes alone, many people in Kiribati would be impoverished according to the World Bank definition of poverty, namely living on less than US \$1 per day. However, besides cash, most households are supported by gardening, fishing, carpentry and exchange for local goods, such as mats or housing materials. These activities, together with the traditional kin-based economy, provide for a “materially-poor” but adequate lifestyle for most people.⁸

147. Nevertheless, poverty is an issue of concern on South Tarawa, especially since income and other resources are not evenly distributed. As a result, some groups of people are becoming quite disadvantaged and there is particular concern for children of families with low income.

3.6 Education, leisure and cultural activities

3.6.1 General education

What the CRC says:

Article 28 gives the child the right to an education. Governments are responsible for making available free and compulsory primary education, different forms of secondary education accessible to every child, higher education on the basis of capacity, vocational education and vocational information-guidance.

Article 29 states that the aim of education should be to develop the child's personality and mental/physical abilities to the fullest extent. Education should also aim to prepare the child for an active adult life in a free society and to foster respect for the child's parents, culture, language, and values as well as for the culture and values of others.

3.6.1.1 Overview and aims of education

148. Initiated in 1874, formal education in Kiribati was managed by Protestant and Catholic Church Missions for about 50 years, supplemented by small grants from the Government. It was not until the 1920s that Government primary schools opened on Banaba (Ocean Island), Tarawa and Funafuti (now the capital of Tuvalu). In 1962, the Protestant Mission handed over the administration of its schools to Government, followed by the Catholic Church in the 1970s.⁹

149. Until the late 1950s, girls were not allowed to attend school because it was considered unsuitable. When girls first enrolled in school, they were taught sewing, weaving and “a little bit of English and arithmetic”.¹⁰ Slowly, the educational needs and aspirations of girls and women began to be appreciated by the authorities. Today, education is considered to be the right of every child, regardless of sex and attendance at school has been compulsory since the late 1970s for all children between the ages of six and fourteen years. Since that time, enrolments have continued to rise, more teenagers now stay in school and the gender gap in attendance and attainment have almost closed.

“These days, most parents are eager to send their children to school hoping that education will help their son or daughter get a job and make enough money to support the family. When they can't find work, everyone loses out. People get very frustrated and upset with this situation”.

Workshop participant.

150. The national Government is now responsible for all primary education while most secondary education continues to be provided by the Churches subsidy support from Government. Pre-schools provide for children aged three to five years old and are operated by private organisations, mostly community associations. UNICEF has supported the development of the Early Childhood Education Association and the Ministry of Education, Training and Technology has provided some assistance in policy development.

Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning (MFEP) statistics - 2000

Indigenous population by sex, 5-year age group and school attendance 2000

Sex/age	Total	At school	Left school	Never been	Ns	NA
Total	83 856	28 940	41 712	13 184	20	0
Male	41 308	14 469	20 447	6 381	11	0
Female	42 548	14 471	21 265	6 803	9	0

Indigenous population by sex, 5-year age group and highest level of education - 2000

Sex/age	Total	None	Preschool	Lower primary	Upper primary	JSS	Lower secondary	Upper secondary	Graduate	Ns
Total	83 856	13 253	6 745	16 556	24 684	2 155	10 955	9 073	435	0
Male	41 308	6 404	3 374	8 248	12 165	1 138	5 530	4 175	274	0
Female	42 548	6 849	3 371	8 308	12 519	1 017	5 425	4 898	161	0

Indigenous population by sex, 5-year age group and attending school - 2000

Sex/age	Total	None	Preschool	Lower primary	Upper primary	JSS	Lower secondary	Upper secondary	Graduate	Ns
Total	28 940	0	6 613	11 433	3 572	2 080	3 596	1 644	2	0
Male	14 469	0	3 305	5 960	1 868	1 098	1 582	654	2	0
Female	14 471	0	308	5 473	1 704	982	2 014	990	0	0

Indigenous population who left school by sex, 5-year age group and education - 2000

Sex/age	Total	None	Preschool	Lower primary	Upper primary	JSS	Lower secondary	Upper secondary	Graduate	Ns
Total	41 712	131	95	5 107	21 101	72	7 350	7 423	433	0
Male	20 447	64	44	2 278	10 290	40	3 942	3 517	272	0
Female	21 265	67	51	2 829	10 811	32	3 408	3 906	161	0

151. Given the young age of our population, there is a high demand for educational services and school places. The Government currently allocates about 25% of the total national budget to education. Approximately 61% of this budget is spent on basic education, which includes primary schools (Class 1-6) and junior secondary schools (Form 1-3). Around 55% of the education budget goes to early childhood education. Despite these expenditures, the prohibitive cost of providing a comprehensive education program and maintaining schools in isolated areas continues to hinder the quality of services provided. The rapidly increasing student numbers and ongoing shortage of teachers exacerbates this situation.

152. As a result of this shortfall, the education sector is heavily dependent on community contributions and assistance from Churches, NGOs and international donor agencies. Community contributions come from school fees and fund-raising. Secondary school fees and other costs are considered expensive given average cash income levels. Concern has been raised about the number of children who are out of school because their families are unable to meet school-related costs for all of their children.

153. Aid donors play an important role in education in Kiribati. Estimated donor spending on education since 1995 is approximately A\$52.2 Million. Aid funds per student are expended in the ratio of 0.03:0.3:0.07 for primary, secondary and tertiary levels respectively. Principle activities of the major donors to the education sector include:

- The European Union is embarking on a major program to revitalize and extend Rural Training Centers;
- AusAID is funding and assisting with an education sector review and assisting with in-country teacher- training;
- UNICEF is supporting early childhood education through the Early Childhood Education Association;
- The Japanese Government is helping to provide one secondary school with classrooms;
- Other assistance is being provided through WHO's Health Promoting Schools Project;
- UNFPAs In-School Population Project, the United States Peace Corps Kiribati Education Project, the United States Government Humanitarian Primary School Classroom Project and UNESCO's Regional Youth Project.

3.6.1.2 Enrolment rates

154. The net enrolment ratio for the 6-14 year old age group was around 80-82 per cent throughout the 1990s. There has been a slight improvement in this rate, but it continues to show that some 3,329 school age children do not go to school for various reasons.

155. On the outer islands - especially the sparsely populated eastern islands, the provision of education is difficult and costly because of communication and transport difficulties, the effects of isolation and the high expense involved in servicing remote schools. Since the 1980s, in order to improve efficiency, Government has consolidated many rural schools. However, while classes in outer islands are relatively small, on Tarawa they are becoming more and more overcrowded due to continuing drift to the urban areas. As a result, enrolment in the urban schools has increased from 84% to 86% from 1995 to 2000, with an associated decline in rural school enrolments.¹¹

156. In 2000, there were a total of 108 schools in Kiribati catering to a total of 16,880 children. The number of children who complete Class 6 each year is about 1,170, while the number of new students commencing Form 1 is approximately 1,745.

3.6.1.3 Early childhood education

157. The number of children enrolled in pre-school during 1998 is estimated at 58. Since 1990, the number of preschool centers and pupils has grown quickly, with urban enrolment jumping from about 100 students in 1990 to 1,800 in 1999. On outer islands, the number of children attending preschool increased from zero to approximately 2,500 during that time.

158. Early childhood education is considered a vehicle for both child and community education. Young children are prepared for the formal school but are also better grounded in their own language and culture. Adults, principally mothers, have opportunities to learn about childcare, parenting skills, health and nutrition, as well as become empowered through the involvement in a dynamic civil society association.

3.6.1.4 Quality of learning

159. Although school enrolment is now relatively high, considerable problems with the quality of basic education and school facilities still exist. The results of standard tests in literacy and numeracy indicate a need to closely monitor school achievement standards and improve basic education through teacher education and curriculum reform and by improving learning conditions in Kiribati's schools.

160. Throughout the country, the quality of formal education is constrained by the widespread shortage of teaching resources in schools and sub-standard physical facilities. For instance, in 1992, less than one-half of all primary school classrooms were considered permanent structures and of all primary schools, 10 percent had no writing surfaces or chalkboards, 30 percent had no seats and 70 per cent had no toilets. The quality of education is also affected by the fact that there are still many untrained teachers working in schools. In 1997, 25 per cent of primary teachers were temporary staff and of those, about 75 per cent were untrained. New teachers are being trained at the Kiribati Teacher College but it will be some time before they replace all the untrained teachers.¹²

2000 Education for All Report

The Government of Kiribati is committed to the Jomtien Agreement (1990) on Education for All (EFA). The EFA targets, namely early childhood education, primary education, learning achievements, adult literacy, training in essential skills and education for better living have been recognized and supported by successive national development plans. UNESCO has encouraged and supported the progress made towards the EFA goals, under the leadership of the Ministry of Education, Training and Technology.

The 2000 EFA Assessment Report for Kiribati noted that although the Jomtien Conference resolutions did not translate directly into a special EFA Country Action Plan, these resolutions reinforced and reinvigorated the national drive to develop an educational system that provided people of all ages "the means to self-fulfillment". The Report described the growth of education in Kiribati over the past decade as "steady". Future progress needed to build on the cooperation between Government and NGOs, supplemented by resources from donor agencies. Issues that still needed to be addressed included consolidation of the work being done by NGOs in early childhood development and non-formal education; the urgent upgrading of primary school curriculum, facilities, classroom resources, and teacher education; and monitoring students achievements in key areas such as literacy and numeracy.

The 2000 EFA Report notes progress in the following areas:

- *Significant development of early childhood education;*
- *Increased access to secondary schools through the establishment of a new high school in Tarawa;*
- *Expansion of junior secondary schools on outer islands;*
- *Improvements in school facilities and resources (although not yet to the desired level); and*
- *Increased number of qualified teachers and overall improved access to all levels of learning.*

The EFA Report outlined two primary requirements needed to ensure progress in these areas. (1) Good collaboration between Government and NGOs, in particular the Churches; and (2) enhanced leadership and management capacity of the Ministry of Education, Training and Technology.

3.6.2 Vocational training and guidance

161. A major development problem in Kiribati is that the formal school system has not been able to meet the needs of young people by equipping them with the knowledge or skills required to be productive, satisfied adults, whether they succeed at school or not. Low educational standards together with limited opportunities for secondary education produce many “drop-outs” or “push-outs” that leave school, without adequate livelihood skills. Furthermore, the continuing focus on academics encourages students to aspire to white-collar jobs that are scarce in Tarawa and essentially nonexistent in outer island communities. This is creating a generation of young people who feel marginalized and frustrated.

162. The relatively low number of people in Kiribati with advanced degrees reflects the stage of the country’s economic development. There are no proper universities or research centers in the country and most local industries are quite rudimentary. Consequently, the small number of people with an opportunity to acquire high qualifications or very specialised training often decide to seek employment abroad. Given the slow pace of economic development and limited opportunities for career advancement in the country, young people with higher qualifications will seek employment abroad, especially in regional and international agencies.

163. Currently, some churches operate rural training centers that cater for children who do not proceed to secondary school. NGOs provide various types of short-term training, but there is no coordinated structure for education outside of the formal school system.

164. The issue of non-formal education has become critical to development in Kiribati because of the urgent need to expand opportunities of formal employment and to improve the quality of life and livelihood options for the large part of the population. Given the limited national resources and prospects for economic development, most people will continue to live a semi-traditional, semi-subsistence lifestyle. Nevertheless, people want to be part of the global community. Cash is becoming a more important part of this lifestyle and the self-sufficiency of rural communities is eroding because of population growth and environmental decay. Vocational education is necessary to equip people with the knowledge and skills needed to cope with changing circumstances and to develop new forms of livelihood.

165. A variety of programs have been established to assist our youth to develop useful life skills in agriculture, fishing and other income generating areas and to create more public awareness about environmental, population and cultural or traditional issues. These programs are sponsored by various Government Ministries and NGOs such as: the Non-Formal Education Section (Ministry of Education, Training and Technology); the Health Education Unit (Ministry of Health and Family Planning); the “Fisheries and Agriculture Outer-Island Program” (Ministry of National Resources and Development); the “Environmental Public Awareness Program” (Ministry of Environment and Social Welfare) as well as numerous women’s and youth groups. While these programs may be quite effective, there is generally little coordination between them as each agency has its own focus and impact. Therefore, it has been difficult to monitor the overall effectiveness of these initiatives.

166. There have been various attempts since the 1960s to operate Rural Training Centers (RTC) in the outer islands to provide more viable options to formal academic education for the large majority of school leavers who will not be able to find a paid job. In the early 1990s, Churches and other groups attempted to revive these Centers with little outside assistance. While communities provided some support, there was little coordination between groups and this served to distract from their effectiveness. For example, on one island in the Gilbert Group, the Catholic Church, the Kiribati Protestant Church and the Government established three separate RTCs. To overcome this type of problem, a joint meeting of key stakeholders was held in 1992 and plans were made for a more strategic, centrally coordinated RTC plan. However, the development of RTCs continues to be constrained by a shortage of funds and qualified staff and a lack of active support from communities and students. Most RTCs today are functioning at a minimal level.

167. The European Union is currently developing a project to support and expand RTCs throughout the outer islands. The International Labor Organization (ILO) is assisting the Government to develop a Youth Employment Policy Framework.

168. As a part of the National Youth Policy, the Government has recently introduced the Youth Entrepreneurship Scheme. This Scheme has been designed to assist young men and women to start their own business and attempts to reduce the increasing problem of unemployment amongst youth.

Youth entrepreneurship scheme

169. *The Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Tourism (MCIT) is the lead agency of the Government for the development of the private and public sectors. According to MCIT, the following services are available and can be helpful to youth:*

- *Technical support and advise in business development;*
- *Training programs and workshops;*
- *“Start Your Own Business” information;*
- *“Improve Your Business” information;*
- *On-the-job training with relevant organizations.*

Objectives:

- *Create a good business environment for youth that wish to venture into business;*
- *Generate a sustainable economic growth for out by implementing programs that encourage and facilitate an increase in business development;*
- *Identify and develop project profiles.*

Policy strategies:

- *Design appropriate business training programs for youth;*
- *Identify feasible income generating projects for youth;*
- *Provide support to youth undertaking new business ventures;*
- *Provide financial assistance through credit and grant schemes, to assist youth organizations, groups and individuals that venture into business;*
- *Provide technical assistance and supervisory support in the management and implementation of the above scheme.*

Governmental strategies:

- *Develop a youth entrepreneurship scheme through the collaboration of MESD and MCIT;*
- *Allocate revolving funds to provide capital assistance to youth that express interest in beginning their own business;*
- *Facilitate advisory services for young people on business management skills;*
- *Initiate a youth entrepreneurship awards program to recognize outstanding young men and women in business;*
- *Review current policies of the Development Bank of Kiribati to enable young men and women to have equal access to funds to begin small business and medium scale income generating projects;*
- *Invite and encourage other major financial institutions to design a lending and loan scheme created especially for young men and women; and*
- *Develop a special grant scheme for youth with disabilities.*

3.6.3 Leisure, recreation and cultural activities

What the CRC says:

Article 31 recognizes the child's right to leisure, play and participation in cultural and artistic activities.

Recreation and leisure

170. Numerous activities have taken place over the past decade to promote children's participation in sporting activities and to improve the quality of facilities and coaching available. This includes:

- Organization of national championships and provision of opportunities for young people to compete in international sporting competitions;
- Creation of multi purpose courts on the outer islands;
- Hosting of professional sport coaches and clinics;
- Establishment of a National Sports Council;
- Distribution of sports equipment to outer islands and sports organisations; and
- Creation of the Sports Authority Act of 1999.

171. The National Youth Policy states that in order to upgrade the standard and availability of sports in Kiribati, it is important to strengthen the capacity of the Sports Section of the Social Welfare Division (Ministry of Environment and Social Development). The Policy also addresses the need to promote sporting activities in order to enhance fitness levels and encourage unity between youth organisations. The MESD has developed a strategy that seeks to improve national sports centers and outer island facilities, develop training programs and increase opportunities for competition at island and national levels.

Cultural activities

“Young people are energetic, enthusiastic and curious. At the same time, they are going through a lot of physical, mental and spiritual changes in their lives. All of these natural factors can contribute to placing youth at risk for accepting risky behaviors into their lives and for experimenting with activities that may go against their traditional culture”.

National Youth Policy.

172. Culture is a division under MESD. One of the most important functions of this division is to preserve, develop and promote traditional I-Kiribati culture. This is to maintain a cultural identity and pride for being I-Kiribati.

173. The division realizes how important it is to involve the youth in the preservation, development and promotion of Kiribati culture. As a result, the *National Action Plan for Youth* seeks to:

- Promote cultural pride among youth through identification of effective programs to enhance cultural awareness among youth; and
- Raise cross-cultural awareness and sensitivity in today's ever-changing world by facilitating opportunities for young people to participate more actively in organized cultural activities at island and national levels.

174. To achieve these objectives, the Government plans to:
- Encourage and facilitate competitions between schools and youth organizations on cultural activities such as traditional sports, skills development, story writing etc.;
 - Provide youth and elder forum opportunities on mutual issues, conflicting goals and aspirations to foster a better understanding and appreciation of the different status and interest of both groups;
 - Organize workshops and training programs for youth and invite specialists in traditional skills such as navigation, *maneaba* building, cutting toddy, weaving etc; and
 - Encourage and promote youth participation in organized cultural events at island and national levels.

3.7 Special protective measures

3.7.1 Children involved with the juvenile justice system

What the CRC says:

Article 37 provides that no child shall be subjected to torture, cruel treatment or punishment, unlawful arrest or deprivation of liberty. Both capital punishment and life imprisonment without the possibility of release are prohibited for offences committed by persons below 18 years of age.

Article 40 states that the administration of juvenile justice (i.e., a child in conflict with the law) has the right to treatment which promotes the child's sense of dignity and worth takes the child's age into account and aims at his or her reintegration into society. The child is entitled to basic guarantees as well as legal or other assistance for his or her defense. Judicial proceeding and institutional placements should be avoided wherever possible.

175. Kiribati does not have any specific legislation on juvenile justice, however there are numerous references to juveniles in the Penal Code. For instance, Section 14, Cap 67 states that a person aged ten years or younger cannot be held criminally responsible for any act or omission. The Penal Code goes on to say that a person under fourteen years of age is not criminally responsible for an act or omission unless it is proved that at the time of doing the act or making the omission they had the capacity to know that this act was wrong.

176. Under current Kiribati law, juvenile offenders are those children under the age of 16 years.

177. According to the Penal Code, children under the age of 15 cannot be put in prison. However, Section 40 of the Prisons Ordinance, Cap 76, states that juvenile offenders must be separated from “young persons” and adults.

178. The Government recognizes that there is a need to develop better legislation to address the needs and rights of juvenile offenders. The new legislation must clearly define the difference between a young offender and a juvenile offender.

“The major reason for increasing crime is the break down of family ties between parents and children”.

Workshop Participant.

179. According to reports from the Division of Social Welfare, the Police and the courts, there are an increasing number of reported young offenders, especially in urban South Tarawa. Many of these incidents involve alcohol and are prompted by peer pressure and the growing number of children out of school and unable to find work or meaningful activities. Other factors contributing to the escalating crime rate are believed to be family breakdown, the negative impact of violent videos and culturally inappropriate western influences.

180. In order for crime to be more effectively addressed, the Attorney General’s Office has recommended further training about juvenile justice issues for police officers, prosecutors, magistrates and social welfare workers. This training should focus on the principles of restorative justice, diversion principles, the need for family counseling and “child-friendly” trials. In this way, most cases involving youth would not end up in court, except for the very serious ones, the rights of the child would be protected and it would assist in addressing the backlog of cases in the Magistrates Court.

“If people are fully aware of their rights under the existing law, it is then more likely they will cooperate with the laws of the country. This will certainly lead to the development of a more peaceful and better environment for all”.

National Youth Policy and Action Plan, 2001-2005, page 23.

181. The National Youth Policy and Action Plan outlines the following governmental strategies to address the issue of juvenile crime:

- Form partnerships with church and island authorities to assist in ensuring that youth are abiding to existing laws;
- Enhance public awareness on law and order through organized workshops, radio programs, newspaper advertisements and video films;
- Establish a special “Juvenile Court” for young offenders. In this court, parents or guardians of the young offenders must also present during the court proceedings;
- Make appropriate legislation provisions for the establishment of a “Juvenile Court” and “Juvenile Conferencing”;
- Design an appropriate “rehabilitation” program for young offenders that will be coordinated and managed by the Youth and Social Welfare Sections of MESD and the police force;

- Participate in programs such as a mentor program to expand police duties to include youth probation practices for reparations for harms done to individuals and communities; and
- Make appropriate legislation to protect young women.

3.7.2 Children subjected to exploitation

182. Children requiring special protection because of abuse and neglect are covered in Section 3.4.2 Abuse and Neglect.

Notes

¹ United Nations Common Country Assessment for Kiribati, United Nations, Suva, Fiji, October 2000.

² All statistics contained in this section were derived from unpublished results of the November 7, 2000 national census. As yet, the National Bureau of Statistics has not finalized this information and as such, findings should not be considered definitive.

³ United Nations Common Country Assessment for Kiribati, United Nations, Fiji, Oct. 2000.

⁴ United Nations Common Country Assessment for Kiribati, United Nations, Suva, Fiji, 2000, page 30.

⁵ Life Expectancy at Birth is calculated based on the number of years newborn children would live if they experienced the same mortality risks as currently prevail for each age group of the population.

⁶ Infant Mortality Rate is calculated based on the statistical probability of dying between birth and one year of life and is expressed per 1,000 live births.

⁷ National Youth Policy and Action Plan, page 8.

⁸ United Nations Common Country Assessment for Kiribati, United Nations, Suva, Fiji, 2000, page 34.

⁹ Kiribati Education Sector Review, Government of Kiribati, November 1992.

¹⁰ A Statistical Profile on Men and Women of Kiribati, Department of Social Welfare, Ministry of Environment and Social Development, July 1997.

¹¹ Ministry of Education, 1999.

¹² Ministry of Education, 1999.
