



KIRIBATI NATIONAL LABOUR MIGRATION POLICY



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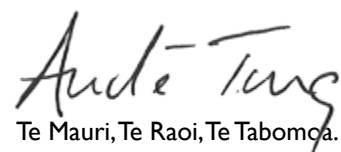
PREFACE

Although migration is a running thread through much of Kiribati's long history, never has it been so relevant and critical a topic as it arguably is today. However, migration is not unique to Kiribati or the Pacific region. One only has to look at what is happening globally to understand that migration continues to be relevant today as it was in the past. Migration is often seen as synonymous with displacement, with brain drain and with loss of culture. However, these fears are not inherent in the concept of migration, but rather are the consequences of what happens if we don't manage migration well.

For Kiribati, migration is the proud tradition of seafaring – in which hundreds of our young men voyage the world and send back savings and remittances which stimulate our economy. Migration is the involvement of hard-working i-Kiribati men and women on Australian and New Zealand farms, filling vital labour shortages while also gaining skills and experience abroad. Migration is the strength of our diaspora communities, which can support our country's development and help to integrate future migrants, particularly if we are forced to move due to the impacts of climate change. Migration is many things to many people, but above all, migration is a voluntary choice which people should be able to make based on a realistic understanding of options; and a choice which can be exercised safely and for the long-term benefit of our people.

The Government of Kiribati recognises the important role of international labour migration in addressing a deficit of employment opportunities on our islands, and promoting economic and social development. It is also a critical component in the concept of Migration with Dignity, which articulates the importance of training i-Kiribati to take up skilled labour migration opportunities in response to climate change threats to livelihoods at home.

For this reason, I am pleased to be presenting this policy to the people of Kiribati, as a testament to the Government's commitment to ensuring that safe and productive opportunities are available for labour migration, as a choice that they can make.



Te Mauri, Te Raoi, Te Tabomga.
His Excellency Mr Anote Tong
President of the Republic of Kiribati

MINISTERIAL FOREWORD

There is no doubt that our country faces critical challenges in generating decent work opportunities for our people. As is the case for most small island countries, the tyranny of distance from other countries makes creating a strong private sector – the engine of growth in many other countries - undeniably challenging. However, our country is also blessed with a youthful and energetic labour force which can bring not only bring new dynamism to our own labour market, but can also fill labour shortages in other countries, earning remittances that can help spur development in our country.

I am honoured to be presenting Kiribati's first National Labour Migration Policy and Action plan which, for the first time, develops a clear pathway for how our country will promote opportunities for decent foreign employment while at the same time protecting the rights of migrant workers and providing support services.

This policy could not have been achieved without the tireless work of the Ministry of Labour and Human Resource Development (MLHRD) with technical and financial support from the International Labour Organization (including consultant Dr Carmen Voigt Graf), through a European Union-funded project titled Pacific Climate Change and Migration. My thanks go not only to the efforts of these key stakeholders, but the many other organizations that participated in numerous consultations on this policy to ensure that it reflected a whole-of-government approach to increasing decent work opportunities abroad. These included the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Immigration, the Ministry of Commerce Industry and Cooperatives, the Ministry for Women Youth and Sports, the Ministry of Environment, Lands and Agriculture Development, the Ministry of Education, the Public Service Office, the Ministry of Fishing and Marine Resources Development, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development, the Office of the Beretitenti, the Ministry of Communications, Transport and Tourism Development, the Kiribati Trade Union Congress, the Kiribati Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Kiribati Major Employers Organization.

This policy is not simply a document but a commitment to action that our Government has pledged. Specific, time-based activities have been outlined in this policy to be completed between 2015-2019. These activities will be thoroughly monitored, tracked and evaluated, to make sure that we are doing everything we can to establish a workforce that has the skills and knowledge to compete for labour migration opportunities, and that these opportunities lead to stronger diasporas, greater remittances, and long-term development for our people.



Hon Martin Moreti,
Minister of Labour and Human Resource Development

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

APTC	Australia-Pacific Technical College	MFAI	Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Immigration
DoE	Department of Employment, Australia	MFMRD	Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources Development
EEZ	Exclusive Economic Zone	MHMS	Ministry of Health and Medical Services
EQAP	Educational Quality and Assessment Programme	MIA	Ministry of Internal Affairs
FNU	Fiji National University	MLHRD	Ministry of Labour and Human Resources Development
FTC	Fisheries Training Centre	MHMS	Ministry of Health and Medical Services
GFC	Global Financial Crisis	MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
GOK	Government of Kiribati	MTC	Marine Training Centre
HIES	Household Income and Expenditure Survey	MWYSA	Ministry of Women, Youth and Sports
IAU	Inter-Agency Understanding	NLMP	National Labour Migration Policy
ITAC	Industry Training Advisory Committee	OB	Office of Te Beretitenti
ITF	International Transport Workers' Federation	PAC	Pacific Access Category
ILO	International Labour Organization	PACER	Pacific Agreement on Closer Economic Relations
IMF	International Monetary Fund	PAISL	Pacific Islands Labour Sending Forum
IMO	International Maritime Organization	PIC	Pacific Island Country
KANI	Kiribati Australia Nursing Initiative	PICTA	Pacific Island Countries Trade Agreement
KCCI	Kiribati Chamber of Commerce and Industry	PLMAM	Pacific Labour Mobility Annual Meeting
KDP	Kiribati Development Plan 2012–2015	PNA	Parties to the Nauru Agreement
KIT	Kiribati Institute of Technology	PSDS	Private Sector Development Strategy
KJIP	Kiribati Joint Implementation Plan on Climate Change and Disaster Risk Management	PSO	Public Service Office
KIOSU	Kiribati International Overseas Seamen's Union	RERF	Revenue Equalisation Reserve Fund
KNSO	Kiribati National Statistics Office	RSE	Recognised Seasonal Employer scheme, New Zealand
KPA	Key Policy Areas	SPC	Secretariat of the Pacific Community
KSON	Kiribati School of Nursing	STCW	Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping
KTC	Kiribati Teachers College	SWP	Seasonal Work Program, Australia
KTUC	Kiribati Trade Union Congress	TMNP	Temporary Movement of Natural Persons
LDC	Least Developed Country	TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
LMWG	Labour Mobility Working Group	TVETSSP	TVET Sector Strengthening Programme
MBIE	Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment, New Zealand	USP	University of the South Pacific
MCIC	Ministry of Commerce Industry and Cooperative		
MCTTD	Ministry of Communications, Transport and Tourism Development		
MoE	Ministry of Education		
MELAD	Ministry of Environment, Lands and Agriculture Development		
MFAT	Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, New Zealand		

1. INTRODUCTION

The Government of Kiribati recognises the important role of labour migration in addressing the lack of employment opportunities, promoting economic and social development, alleviating poverty, and adapting to climate change. The **National Labour Migration Policy (NLMP)** is designed to provide a coherent strategy for promoting overseas employment and protecting the welfare of I-Kiribati abroad, within the broader context of generating productive and decent employment opportunities for all I-Kiribati. The Government recognises that labour migration will become an increasingly important strategy for permanent migration and population control according to the government's "Migration With Dignity" Policy, which articulates the importance of training I-Kiribati to take up skilled labour migration opportunities in response to climate change threats to livelihoods at home.

The Government of Kiribati adopts this **National Labour Migration Policy** to achieve the following objectives:

1. Protecting the rights of migrant workers and providing support services;
2. Promoting opportunities for decent foreign employment;
3. Increasing the development benefits of labour migration; and
4. Improving the administration of labour migration.

The International Labour Organization's (ILO) Office for Pacific Countries was requested in 2014 by its partner – the Ministry of Labour and Human Resource Development (MLHRD) – to help develop a coherent strategy and action plan for labour migration from Kiribati. The product of this collaboration is this **NLMP** which contains the following substantive sections: context, vision and policy statement, policy areas and action plan, and inception, follow-up, monitoring and evaluation. The NLMP is concerned with the emigration of workers from Kiribati and focuses on the permanent, temporary and seasonal migration of workers of all skill levels to anywhere in the world. The policy does not cover immigration into Kiribati and the situation of foreign workers in Kiribati.

A fundamental requirement for the successful achievement of better labour migration outcomes for Kiribati is a co-ordinated, whole-of-government approach to increasing work opportunities overseas, and mainstreaming of labour migration into the country's policies for national development. The Government of Kiribati (GOK) welcomes the participation and contributions of all stakeholders including donor governments in facilitating the implementation of the action plans and recommendations of the policy which has been developed through a process of consultation with key stakeholders from the Government of Kiribati and the social partners.

2. CONTEXT

The Government of Kiribati recognises three key pressure points on the domestic labour market: 1) the number of school leavers entering the labour market and seeking employment is increasing at a faster rate than the creation of decent employment opportunities in the domestic economy; 2) due to internal migration to South Tarawa, the population there is increasing at about double the national rate, leading to increased pressure on the labour market in these already densely populated areas; and 3) Kiribati today has fewer opportunities for labour migration than it had a decade ago due to falling overseas demand for seafarers from Kiribati and ongoing challenges with increasing the number of seasonal workers in Australia and New Zealand. In addition to these pressures on the labour market, Kiribati's long-term sustainability as an island nation is under threat from climate change, one response to which is the permanent relocation of some of its people, under the Government's "Migration with Dignity" Policy.

These challenges call for a review of the current situation and for the development of a **National Labour Migration Policy** that promotes a balanced approach to future labour migration, provides an outlet to alleviate domestic employment pressures, and helps secure Kiribati's long-term survival as a nation, people and culture. It is crucial that this policy is in line with the Government's overall strategy for national development, and provides I-Kiribati with opportunities for safe and productive employment abroad that contribute to the maintenance of sustainable livelihoods at home.

2.1 Overview of the economy, population and labour market

Kiribati is one of the lowest earning and most remote islands among small states (IMF, 2014). It is categorised by the United Nations as both a "Small Island Developing State" and a "Least Developed Country". Kiribati faces major development challenges and relies heavily on foreign aid to finance its large development needs.

National economy

Kiribati consists of 33 small islands with an Economic Exclusive Zone (EEZ) of 3.5 million square kilometres, and a land mass of 810 square kilometres. In 2010, its population was 103,058 (KNSO, 2012). The per capita income was USD 1,650 in 2013, down from USD 1,736 in both 2011 and 2012 (World Bank), which was the lowest of any Pacific Island Country (PIC) included in the World Bank database.

In common with other small island atoll states Kiribati faces obstacles posed by remoteness, lack of scale and vulnerability to external shocks and environmental degradation. Internal and external remoteness and weakness in business climate has kept the private sector small. Kiribati has few natural resources and tourism is negligible.

Notwithstanding its limited range of economic assets, Kiribati has largely had a solid record of financial stability since independence in 1979. Governments have adopted a cautious approach to domestic spending combined with a deliberate policy of capitalising its sovereign wealth fund, the Revenue Equalisation Reserve Fund (RERF). The RERF is used to supplement recurrent revenues and smooth volatility in other income sources, e.g. seasonal fluctuations in fishing revenue.

In 2014, the Kiribati economy grew by 3.0%. Growth was sustained by construction projects funded by development partners and continuing high revenue from fishing license fees. As a party to the Nauru Agreement, Kiribati has benefitted from rising rates under the vessel day scheme. Growth in Kiribati's economy is projected to halve to 1.5% in both 2015 and 2016 as projects funded by development partners are completed. The IMF Article IV of 2014 states that Kiribati's key economic challenges are: to reduce large structural fiscal imbalances and to increase growth and employment opportunities.

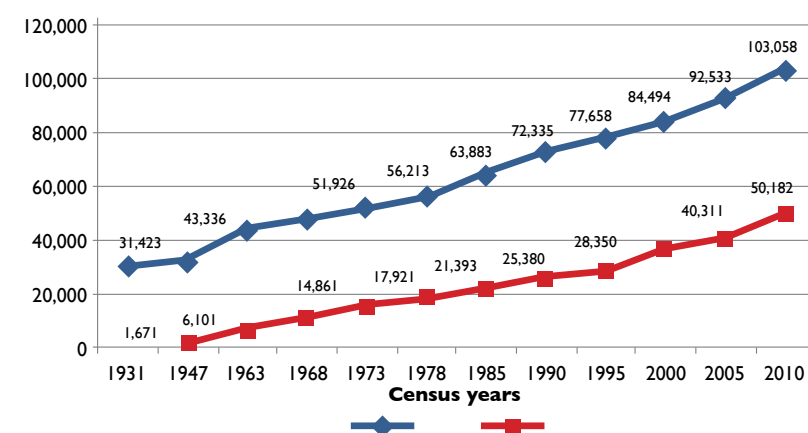
Communication services remain limited throughout Kiribati and when they are available they are very expensive. Internet penetration remains relatively weak, with just 4% of households having access to the internet in 2010 according to the 2010 Census. Communication between islands, particularly outer islands, is also difficult because of isolation and a lack of access to affordable transport. The main island of South Tarawa is connected through two commercial flights per week to Fiji with Fiji Airways and two flights a week to Nauru and Majuro with Air Nauru.

Population

At the time of the last Census in 2010, the population of Kiribati was 103,058 including 50,796 males and 52,262 females (KNSO, 2012). Kiribati faces two key demographic challenges: a rapidly growing population, and increasing overcrowding in South Tarawa.

In 2010, Kiribati's population was almost four times that recorded in the first Kiribati census in 1931, which reported 29,671 people (Fig. 2.1). Over the past five years, Kiribati's population has increased by 11,000 people. Figure 2.1 shows that there is no abating of the population growth rate and that South Tarawa's population has experienced an even higher population growth, from 1,671 in 1947 to 50,182 in 2010. The urban growth rate in South Tarawa between 2005 and 2010 was 4.4% per annum, compared to 2.2% for the total population (KNSO and ILO, 2012). The densely populated atoll of Tarawa is particularly vulnerable to climate change impacts and development pressures.

Figure 2.1: Population of Kiribati and South Tarawa, 1931 to 2010



Source: KNSO and SPC, 2012.

Labour market

There is a lack of reliable labour market data in Kiribati since no labour market survey has been conducted and there is no centralised database to coordinate labour market information within the MLHRD. The main source of labour market data is the five-yearly population census with the most recent census conducted in 2010. Some labour market information is collected in the Household Income and Expenditure Survey (HIES), the most recent being conducted in 2006. The National Statistics Office is the main government office responsible for all national statistics including population censuses and household surveys. The lack of reliable labour market data, fragmentation of data and absence of a proper and centralised database at MLHRD is a potential threat to the Government's efforts to increase labour mobility.

Kiribati has a relatively youthful population with 36% of the total population in 2010 below 15 years of age. Between the last two censuses in Kiribati, the working age population of 15 to 64 years increased from 55,060 in 2005 to 62,208 in 2010 (KNSO, 2007; KNSO 2012). Table 2.1 shows that while the economically active population increased, the number of employed persons actually decreased. As a consequence, the number of unemployed increased from 2,254 in 2005 to 11,426 in 2010.

Table 2.1: Activity status of the Kiribati population: 1985 – 2010

	1985	1995	2000	2005	2010
Total population	63,432	77,658	84,494	92,533	103,058
Working age population (15 – 64 years)	36,540	43,019	47,917	55,060	62,208
Economically active (labour force)	25,348	36,613	39,425	35,929	39,261
Employed	24,730	36,547	38,811	33,692	27,835
Paid employment	6,459	7,787	9,046	12,014	10,847
Self employment	18,269	28,760	29,767	21,662	16,988
Unemployed	618	66	648	2,254	11,426

Source: Kiribati National Statistic Office, 2013.

Table 2.2 shows more detail on the economic activities of the population aged 15 years and over in 2010.¹ In 2010, the unemployment rate was 31% of the labour force. It was higher amongst females (34.1%) than males (27.6%) (KNSO, 2012). Youth unemployment was particularly high, with 54% of the 15-24 year old persons being unemployed (KNSO, 2012). According to the National Youth Policy, over 2,000 students leave school each year. However, there are only 400 to 600 paid jobs available, and training institutions absorb around 300 to 400 school leavers (GOK, 2011), leaving at least half of the school leavers without training opportunities or jobs. It is also obvious from Table 2.2 that the public sector dominates the Kiribati economy. 34% of the paid labour force are employed by the government (KNSO 2012, KNSO & SPC 2012).

Table 2.2: Economic activity of population aged 15 years and over, 2010

Economic activity	Males	Females	Total
1. Labour force			
1.1 Employed - paid work			
Employer	775	343	1,118
Employee	9,158	7,974	17,132
- Employee government	3,586	3,135	6,721
- Employee private	2,569	1,689	4,258
- Producing goods for sale	3,003	3,150	6,153
Self-employed	829	514	1,343
Total employed - paid work	10,762	8,831	19,593
1.2 Employed - unpaid work			
Voluntary work	355	223	578
Unpaid family work	1,887	1,028	2,915
Subsistence - Village work	2,329	1,681	4,010
Total employed - unpaid work	4,571	2,932	7,503
Total employed	15,333	11,763	27,096
1.3 Unemployed	5,853	6,085	11,938
Sub-total in the labour force	21,186	17,848	39,034
% unemployed	27.6	34.1	30.6
2. Not in the labour force			
Student	2,561	2,816	5,377
Home duties	2,771	6,967	9,738
Inactive	2,838	3,007	5,845
Retired	1,993	3,117	5,110
Disabled	384	386	770
Total not in the labour force	10,547	16,293	26,840
Total	31,733	34,141	65,874

Source: KNSO and SPC, 2012.

¹ The figures in Table 2.1 differ slightly from those in Table 2.2 because Table 2.1 refers to the working age population of between 15 and 64 years of age, whereas Table 2.2 refers to the population above 15 years of age.

The 2010 Census showed that only 3% of the labour force had a higher education in 2010. More than one-half the working population (57%) has attained a secondary level education, with just over 30% having a primary education and about 10% of the working population having no formal education (see Table 2.3).

Table 2.3: Highest school attainment of working population aged 15 and over, 2010

	Males	Females	Total
School attainment			
No school	9.5	10.6	10.0
Primary	30.8	29.9	30.3
Secondary	56.2	56.8	56.5
Higher education	3.5	2.8	3.1
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: KNSO and SPC, 2012.

2.2 Labour migration from Kiribati: Current trends, opportunities and challenges

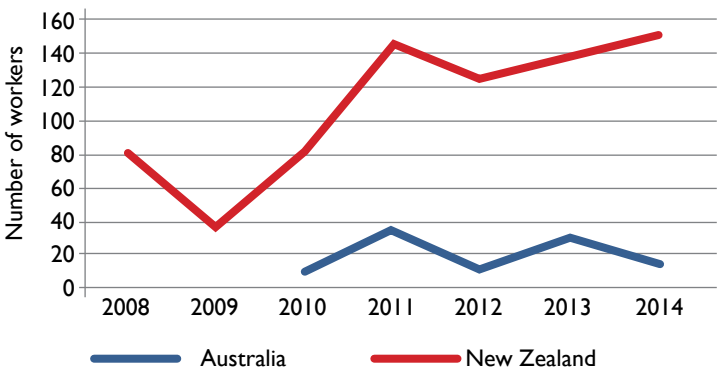
Current migration trends

After independence, **seafaring** has presented the best overseas employment opportunity for I-Kiribati, complemented by other temporary work and few permanent migration opportunities. The Marine Training Centre (MTC) is a world class marine training institution, providing training for ratings to work in deck and engineering positions under the international maritime convention STCW-95. Ship-owning companies represented by the German shipping line South Pacific Marine Services (SPMS) employ seamen who trained at MTC. However, employment of seafarers fell sharply in the wake of the Global Financial Crisis. (IMF, 2014). In June 2015, there were about 750 Kiribati seamen on board, compared to 1,452 in 2006. The recovery in world trade from the global crisis did not produce a corresponding recovery in seafarer employment for a number of structural reasons within the shipping industry (IMF, 2014), including a restructuring of the industry and lower demand for crew globally. On a positive note, the number of I-Kiribati seafarers is on the rise again.

The **maritime and fisheries sector** also offers employment opportunities for I-Kiribati who used to be trained at the former Fisheries Training Centre (FTC) which has become a new department under MTC following the merger in 2015. Access agreements currently dictate I-Kiribati crewing requirements and I-Kiribati crew have built a strong regional reputation, particularly among Japanese fleets. It is estimated that approximately 325 I-Kiribati crew are working on Japanese fishing vessels and between 100 and 200 on Korean, Taiwanese and Chinese fleets (MFMRD 2013).

Migration flows to New Zealand intensified partly as a result of a work permit scheme in New Zealand in the 1990s and early 2000s, and the introduction of the **Pacific Access Category (PAC)** Scheme in 2002. Under the PAC Scheme, up to 75 I-Kiribati are accepted to New Zealand every year for permanent settlement under a lottery scheme. The lottery winners have six months to secure a job in New Zealand in order to stay in New Zealand. If

Figure 2.2: Number of I-Kiribati seasonal workers in Australia and New Zealand



Source: Data provided by MLHRD

The **Kiribati Australia Nursing Initiative (KANI)** programme, completed in September 2014, educated 84 young I-Kiribati women and men in nursing at Griffith University in Brisbane. As of February 2014, 78 had graduated with a Bachelor degree in Nursing (63), Social Work (3) or Human Services (1), Diploma of Nursing (4), Diploma of Community Welfare (1) or Certificate III in Aged Care qualifications (6) (Shaw, Edwards and Rimon, 2014), while five had withdrawn and one was still studying. The programme was a response by the Australian Government to the Government of Kiribati's concerns about climate change, youth unemployment and the need to give I-Kiribati the opportunity to gain internationally recognised qualifications. Of the 68 graduates with Bachelor degrees, 55 were working as trained nurses in the aged care sector (24 full time and 22 part-time in Australia, and 9 in Kiribati). While KANI will not be continued, the Australian Government has declared its commitment to pursue the objective of increased labour mobility through other programmes.

One of the most recent initiatives is a five-year **pilot program** to provide up to 250 citizens (around 50 per year) of Kiribati, Nauru and Tuvalu access to a multi-year work visa (two years, with the option of applying for an additional (third) year) to work in lower-skilled jobs in Northern Australia.² The pilot program will target non-seasonal occupations, where employers are unable to attract Australian-resident workers. Department of Employment and Austrade labour market analysis and industry and stakeholder consultations will be used to identify sectors, occupations and geographic areas of labour demand and the Australian DFAT will work to ensure Australia's aid program targets technical and vocational training needs to match labour market analysis.

Another initiative by the Australian Government to endow Pacific Islanders with skills and qualifications to Australian standards was the establishment of the **Australia-Pacific Technical College (APTC)** in 2008 with training centres in Fiji, Samoa, Vanuatu and PNG and offering training in hospitality and tourism, automotive, construction, manufacturing and electrical services, and health and community service. APTC scholarships provide opportunities to upgrade skills and gain internationally recognised qualifications. Since 2008, some 232 I-Kiribati students have graduated from APTC with qualifications in areas including children's services, youth work, aged care, disability, hospitality, tourism, hairdressing, automotive, electrical, carpentry, painting, and tiling. However, most APTC graduates from Kiribati are unemployed due to limited employment opportunities in Kiribati and difficulty in accessing overseas employment opportunities.

A Memorandum of Understanding between the Republic of China (Taiwan) and the Republic of Kiribati regarding Labour Cooperation was signed in 2007 according to which Taiwan permits the employment of I-Kiribati in Taiwan in certain roles (manufacturing workers, construction workers, domestic helpers, caretakers and crews on ships or fishing boats). Taiwan also welcomes vocational trainees and undertakes to protect female labourers from sexual exploitation and physical abuse. However, there is no record that any labour migration from Kiribati to Taiwan has taken place under this MoU. Chinese language skills are one of the criteria to consider when preparing workers for Taiwan. The MLHRD is currently working with respective agencies in assessing and working on requirements for accessing the Taiwan market.

² Australian Government 'Developing Northern Australia White Paper', released in June 2015

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