



Diaspora engagement mapping KIRIBATI

Facts & figures

Terminology: The term “I-Kiribati overseas” has generally been used in official policies and strategies, although the term “I-Kiribati diaspora” is also used by the government.

Political rights



Dual citizenship¹



Right to vote in national elections for citizens residing abroad²



Remittances



Remittances as a share of GDP: **4.76%**
Remittances inflow (USD million): **14.66**

Data disclaimer

As diaspora definitions vary widely, we have chosen to use comparable data on emigration as a proxy. This does not include all who consider themselves diaspora and is not necessarily aligned with national definitions of diaspora. Emigration data comes from [UNDESA \(2024\)](#) and remittances from the [World Bank \(2024\)](#).

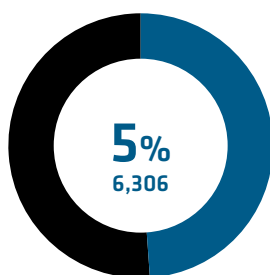
Emigration



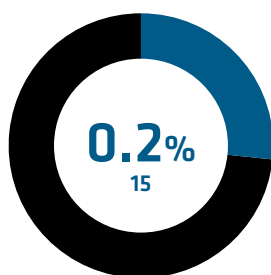
% of emigrants in total population



% of which in the EU



♂ 48.8%
♀ 51.9%



♂ 26.7%
♀ 73.3%

Top countries of destination



New Zealand	3,015
Australia	1,585
Fiji	808
Nauru	279
Marshall Islands	276

¹ The Constitution distinguishes those of I-Kiribati descent from all other categories, with the latter having no right to dual citizenship whilst the former may be able to claim Kiribati citizenship and retain another, with sufficient proof of ancestry. A constitutional lawyer should be consulted for advice on how to prove descent, with reference to clauses 19 through 28. [\[The Constitution of Kiribati\]](#)

² ACE Electoral Knowledge Network, <http://aceproject.org/epic-en/CDCountry?country=KI>

Overview of the policy and legislative framework



- 2007** ● The **Act to amend the Provident Fund Ordinance (Cap 78A)** allows Kiribati citizens, including those living abroad, to apply to make voluntary contributions to the national provident fund. The government of Kiribati described the Provident Fund as a useful strategy for I-Kiribati working abroad to save for their future, and for their families.³
- 2015** ● The **Kiribati National Labour Migration Policy's (NLMP)⁴** long-term vision is “to provide I-Kiribati with increased opportunities to migrate with dignity by accessing decent work opportunities abroad”. The policy recognises the important role of international labour migration in addressing the lack of local employment opportunities and acknowledges that the permanent relocation of some of its citizens is part of Kiribati’s long-term climate-change adaptation strategy.⁵ The policy aims in particular at increasing work opportunities under seasonal labour schemes in Australia and New Zealand. In this policy, the government formally acknowledges the role of the I-Kiribati diaspora as “an important partner in Kiribati’s strategy to maximise development outcomes”.
- 2016** ● The **Kiribati 20-year vision (KV20)** is a long-term development blueprint for Kiribati. It includes the objective to increase the number of overseas employment opportunities for I-Kiribati workers by 100% by 2036.
- 2024** ● **Kiribati Development Plan 2024 - 2027** is the 12th KDP and the third under the Tobwaan Kiribati Government. It aligns with KV20 and builds on previous KDPs with the core priorities of eliminating poverty, reducing inequality, strengthening governance and accelerating growth by maximizing our natural, human and cultural capital. The plan includes ambitions to maintain and expand overseas employment opportunities for its citizens through strategic labour migration policies aligned with the KV20 development goals, leveraging existing programs like Observers, Australia’s PALM Scheme and New Zealand’s RSE program while negotiating new agreements to access emerging sectors. It also plans to invest further in TVET institutions and pre-departure training programmes so as to enhance worker quality, whilst continuing to prioritise the protection of the rights, safety and dignity of all I-Kiribati workers across domestic and international labour markets.

Practices

Explore 520+ practices by country, SDG or sector of engagement in the [interactive database!](#)



Kiribati Language Week in New Zealand 2020

I-Kiribati diaspora communities in New Zealand collaborated with the New Zealand Ministry for Pacific Peoples in the framework of the first Kiribati Language Week, which was launched on Kiribati Independence Day in 2020 under the theme ‘Ribanan te Taetae ni Kiribati e Kateimatoa ara Katei ao Kinakira’, meaning ‘Nurturing Kiribati language promotes our Cultural Identity and Heritage’. The event included publication of Kiribati language cards, animated videos and a bilingual children’s book.

³ Government of Kiribati, Kiribati National Labour Migration Policy, 2015, http://www.ilo.int/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/---ilo-suva/documents/publication/wcms_431833.pdf

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ ILO Office for Pacific island countries, Labour Mobility in Pacific Island Countries, November 2019, https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/---ilo-suva/documents/publication/wcms_712549.pdf

Tibuta – Kinaakiia Ainen Kiribati: Tibuta – Identifies Kiribati Women

To address the lack of information on the Kiribati traditional garment “tibuta”, i-Kiribati diaspora in New Zealand conducted research and ran an exhibition to fill the gap and celebrate the tibuta as part of Kiribati’s indigenous culture. The exhibition subsequently led to a publication about the tibuta.

Observations

The “Observations” and “Obstacles” sections contain additional information on the context of diaspora engagement that does not fit directly into the other sections. They are based on a combination of literature review and comments from the authors. New information is incorporated during the annual updates. Readers are invited to verify the relevance of the information at the time of reading, as the context may have evolved.

Although relatively small numbers of I-Kiribati live overseas,⁶ the government has made it a priority to encourage its citizens to work abroad. The country’s long tradition of providing workers in the seafaring sector has been recognized by the government as a significant source of employment in Kiribati in recent decades.⁷ As a result, remittances have historically been a large source of income in the country. They amounted to 18% of Kiribati’s GDP in 1990, and they still represent more than 9% of the GDP today.⁸

The government has established very few institutionalised relations with the diaspora residing permanently outside the country, and neither dual citizenship, nor overseas voting are permitted. However, as most of the population of Banaba island in Kiribati was relocated to Rabi island in Fiji during the last century due to the environmental damage caused by phosphate mining, Rabi islanders from the I-Kiribati diaspora are today represented by a member of parliament nominated in Kiribati’s house of assembly, who himself is a Fijian citizen of I-Kiribati descent.⁹

In order to address the decline in foreign employment opportunities for I-Kiribati seafarers in the past few years (which the government attributes to the global financial crisis, changes in vessel technology with larger ships, and increased competition from Asian nations),¹⁰ the government started promoting other opportunities for overseas employment, such as the seasonal labour schemes in place in Australia and New Zealand. The government mandated several of its ministries to manage the country’s participation in the Seasonal Worker Programme (SWP) in Australia and Recognised Seasonal Employer scheme (RSE) in New Zealand, and to negotiate with foreign governments in order to pursue work opportunities overseas.¹¹ Although the number of I-Kiribati workers taking part in the SWP and RSE schemes remains low compared to other Pacific countries, it almost doubled between the years 2016-2017 and 2017-2018.¹² Kiribati joined Australia’s Pacific Engagement Visa programme for its second cycle, 2025-26.

6 Development Policy Centre Discussion Paper No. 56, Migration and Labour Mobility from Kiribati, March 2017, https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/Delivery.cfm/SSRN_ID2937416_code1669161.pdf?abstractid=2937416&mirid=1

7 Government of Kiribati, Kiribati National Labour Migration Policy, 2015, http://www.ilo.int/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/---ilo-suva/documents/publication/wcms_431833.pdf

8 Ibid.

9 Parliament of Kiribati, ‘Current Members’, <https://www.parliament.gov.ki/current-members>

10 Government of Kiribati, Kiribati Development Plan 2016-2019, <http://www.mfed.gov.ki/sites/default/files/Kiribati%20Development%20Plan%202016%20-%202019.pdf>

11 Ministry of Labour and Human Resources Development (MLHRD), Information & Guide for Kiribati seasonal workers

12 ILO Office for Pacific island countries, Labour Mobility in Pacific Island Countries, November 2019, https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/---ilo-suva/documents/publication/wcms_712549.pdf

The PEV provides opportunities for up to 3,000 Pacific island and Timorese nationals to live, work and study in Australia each year. The inaugural PEV ballot in 2024-25 received 56,000 registrations.

The government also pays considerable attention to protecting the welfare of I-Kiribati abroad. The concept of “migration with dignity” is at the heart of its policy on labour migration, and it collaborates with the ILO on issues such as pre-departure training and information for I-Kiribati migrant workers.¹³

Obstacles



- **Lack of diaspora rights and services:** Very few rights and services are available to the I-Kiribati diaspora, as illustrated by the fact that only a small part of the diaspora (those on Rabi island, Fiji) is currently represented at the Parliament of Kiribati.
- **Lack of policy and institutional framework** is an obstacle to further diaspora engagement in Kiribati. There is currently no strategy or policy in place for diaspora engagement, and none of the government agencies or authorities have been mandated to manage diaspora issues.
- **Geographic isolation:** Kiribati’s geographic isolation and expensive air linkages to the main countries where the diaspora resides, such as New Zealand and Australia, are an obstacle to further diaspora engagement, in particular regarding the temporary return of I-Kiribati diasporans. The additional costs of bringing seasonal workers from Kiribati to Australia or New Zealand are also an obstacle to Kiribati’s participation in labour migration schemes in both countries.¹⁴

¹³ Government of Kiribati, Kiribati National Labour Migration Policy, 2015, http://www.ilo.int/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/---ilo-suva/documents/publication/wcms_431833.pdf

¹⁴ ILO Office for Pacific island countries, Labour Mobility in Pacific Island Countries, November 2019, https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/---ilo-suva/documents/publication/wcms_712549.pdf

Annex:

List of Actors

Explore the institutionalisation of diaspora engagement worldwide via the [typology of 520+ institutions](#)



Diaspora related institutions

- **At regional level**

Pacific Community (SPC)

Kiribati is a member of the Pacific Community, an international development organisation that focuses on scientific and technical expertise. SPC's Social Development Programme is involved in managing the Festival of Pacific Arts (FESTPAC), which was created in 1972 as a tool for preserving Pacific culture.

Pacific Islands Forum

Kiribati is a member of the Pacific Islands Forum, an inter-governmental organisation that seeks to foster cooperation between countries and territories of the Pacific Ocean. Its work covers migration issues; the forum has organised regional meetings on climate change and migration, as well as workshops between immigration officials from the region.

Pacific Immigration Development Community (PIDC)

Kiribati is a member of the PIDC known as the Pacific Immigration Director's Conference until 2018). PIDC is a regional consultative process that aims to gather official immigration agencies of the Pacific region and enable the heads of the participating states' immigration agencies to discuss issues of mutual interest and foster cooperation. Other objectives of the PIDC include modernising national immigration legal frameworks in the region.

International Labour Organisation (ILO)

Kiribati became a member of the ILO in 2000. In Kiribati, ILO supported the government in developing the National Labour Migration Policy. It also assisted the Ministry of Labour and Human Resources Development (MLHRD) in putting in place career counselling and pre-departure trainings for I-Kiribati migrant workers. In 2015, ILO produced the Guide to Overseas Employment for I-Kiribati graduates in collaboration with the MLHRD.

- **National institutions**

Ministry of Labour and Human Resources Development (MLHRD)

The MLHRD is the lead agency responsible for overseeing employment relations and labour administration across different sectors of employment, including labour mobility. It developed the country's National Labour Migration Policy. The MLHRD has the mandate to increase the number of I-Kiribati workers taking part in seasonal labour schemes in New Zealand and Australia.

MLHRD's Seasonal Worker Unit

The Seasonal Worker Unit, which operates within the MLHRD, is responsible for managing and administering Kiribati's participation in the Seasonal Worker Programme (SWP) in Australia and Recognised Seasonal Employer scheme (RSE) in New Zealand.

MLHRD's Career Counselling & Employment Centre (NCCEC)

The NCCEC was established with technical assistance from the ILO. Its objective is to address unemployment in Kiribati, and its activities include counselling for unemployed workers and linking them with the national and international labour market, notably through the RSE and SWP schemes.

Ministry of Employment and Human Resources (MEHR)

The MEHR's objective is to provide quality technical and vocational educational training programmes to enhance workforce skills, productivity, employability, and to maximise decent work opportunities for I-Kiribati nationally and internationally. The Kiribati Institute of Technology (KIT) operates within the MEHR and provides I-Kiribati workers with trainings to help them prepare their interviews in English with overseas employers.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Immigration (MFAI)

The MFAI is responsible for assisting I-Kiribati citizens abroad. It acknowledged the increasing demand for consular services by the ever-growing number of I-Kiribati living, travelling and working abroad as a challenge to address.

Bank of Kiribati

Part of the ANZ Group, the Bank of Kiribati has been mandated in the National Labour Migration Policy to explore options for improving bank transfer processes and reducing costs of financial transactions for migrant workers.

Diaspora organisations in Europe

Kiribati Tungaru Association (KTA) of the UK and the Republic of Ireland 1994 UK & Ireland

KTA is a non-profit organisation, and its main objectives are to bring together families who have lived and worked in or have other links to Kiribati, and to support I-Kiribati visitors while they are in Europe. KTA organises an annual get-together to celebrate Kiribati Independence Day.

Read more about diaspora organisations
in "[Starting guide: What is a diaspora organisation](#)"



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