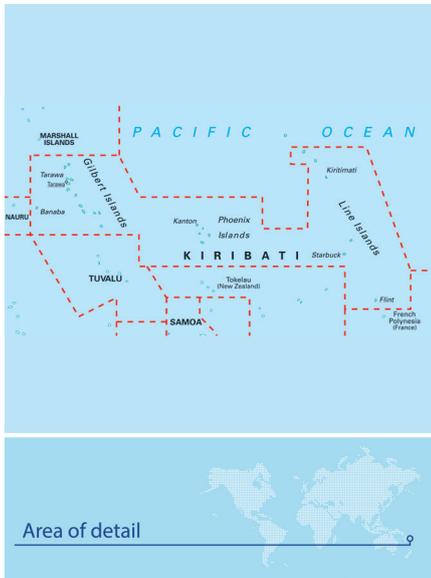




# KIRIBATI



## KEY FACTS

### POPULATION (2015 Census):

110,136

### AREA (UN 2006):

849 sq km

### CAPITAL:

Tarawa

### CURRENCY:

Australian dollar (AUD)

### HEAD OF STATE AND GOVERNMENT:

President Taneti Mamau

### FORM OF GOVERNMENT:

republic

### PARLIAMENTARY SYSTEM:

unicameral

### STATE STRUCTURE:

unitary

### LANGUAGES:

English and I-Kiribati (official)

### NATIONAL ELECTIONS:

last: 2016, turnout: na; next: November 2021

### WOMEN IN PARLIAMENT (2015):

6.5%

### LOCAL ELECTIONS:

last: 2016, turnout: na; next: 2020

### WOMEN COUNCILLORS (2013):

3.4%

### LOCAL GOVERNMENT EXPENDITURE as a percentage of total government expenditure 2015:

1.0%

## SUMMARY

Kiribati is a unitary republic with two levels of government, national and local. Local government is mentioned in the constitution and the main legislative act is the Local Government Act 1984 (amended 2006). The Minister of Internal and Social Affairs is responsible for overseeing local government, which is made up of three town (urban) councils and 23 island (rural) councils. Following the 2013 local elections, women made up 3.4% of councillors. Local authorities are empowered to raise local revenue through by-laws, although this forms a much greater proportion of overall revenue for town councils than for island councils, which rely far more on transfers from national government. Local government services include early years schooling, primary healthcare, public sanitation, transport, water supply and economic regulation.

### 1. NATIONAL GOVERNMENT

Kiribati is a unitary republic with a unicameral parliament.<sup>20.1a</sup> The head of state and government is the president (beretitentii) who is elected following nomination of three candidates from amongst the members of parliament (MPs). The president appoints a vice-president, an attorney general and up to 12 further MPs to make up the cabinet. Parliament is known as the House of Assembly (Maneaba ni Maungatabu) and comprises 44 elected members, one ex-officio member (the attorney general) and one nominated member from the Banaban community in Rabi, Fiji Islands. Each MP is elected by the first-past-the-post system to represent a single constituency. Following the 2015 national election, 6.5% (3/46) of MPs were women.<sup>20.1b</sup>

### 2. LEGAL BASIS FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT

#### 2.1 Constitutional provisions

Local government is mentioned within in the constitution but is not provided specific protection.<sup>20.2a</sup>

#### 2.2 Main legislative texts

- Local Government Act 1984 (amended 2006)<sup>20.2b</sup>
- Electoral Ordinance Act 1978.

#### 2.3 Proposed legislative changes

The Kiribati Development Plan (KDP) 2016–19<sup>20.2c</sup> identifies a number of issues facing local government, including: poor administrative management of councils which affects service delivery; a lack of transparency and accountability; a lack of capacity of staff; the unavailability of policy and tools for urban management; and a lack of resources for councils to deliver services to communities. Facilities and equipment for councils in the outer islands require upgrading.

#### 2.4 National urban policy

The KDP commits the government to drawing up an urban development policy to be adopted by cabinet in 2018.

This will build on the Kiribati Sustainable Towns Programme 2009–13, which was delivered in with Cities Alliance.<sup>20.2d</sup>

### 3. STRUCTURE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT

#### 3.1 Local government within the state

Local government is established on all inhabited islands and is made up of two types: town (urban) and island (rural) councils.

#### 3.2 Ministerial oversight

The Minister of Internal and Social Affairs<sup>20.3b</sup> (MISA) is responsible for local government, administers the Local Government Act 1984, and oversees local government policy. S/he also provides assistance to local councils in drafting by-laws, undertaking internal audits, compiling financial accounts for the auditor general's scrutiny, and approving local authority budgets. There have been four cases in which the minister has suspended a council due to corruption and abuse of office.

#### 3.3 Council types

The system is uniform across the country. Sub-committees deliberate and make recommendations to full council, which takes the final decision. Each council is required by law to establish a liquor licensing committee and area committees must be established in urban councils to provide planning approval. Councils have the discretion to establish other committees.

**3.3.1 Town (urban) councils:** There are three town councils: Kiritimati (Christmas) Island Urban Council, Betio Town Council and Teinainano Urban Council.

**3.3.2 Island councils:** There are 23 island councils, which face considerable problems with communication due to their distance from the capital. They also struggle to provide the basic infrastructure for which they are responsible, in contrast to urban areas where this infrastructure is mostly provided by national government. For these reasons Kiribati experiences considerable migration from rural to urban areas.



Table 20.1a Distribution of councils and population

Island	Island councils	Villages	Town	Population (2010 Census)	Population (2015 Census)	% rural (2015)
Banaba	1	3	–	295	268	na
Makin	1	2	–	1,798	1,990	na
Butariti	1	12	–	4,346	3,224	na
Marakei	1	8	–	2,872	2,799	na
Abaiang	1	18	–	5,502	5,568	na
North Tarawa	1	14	–	6,102	6,629	na
South Tarawa	1	15	1	34,427	56,388	na
Betio	–	–	1	15,755		na
Maiana	1	12	–	2,027	1,982	na
Abemama	1	13	–	3,213	3,262	na
Kuria	1	6	–	980	1,046	na
Aranuka	1	3	–	1,057	1,125	na
Nonouti	1	9	–	2,683	2,743	na
North Tabiteuea	1	12	–	3,689	3,955	na
South Tabiteuea	1	6	–	1,290	1,306	na
Beru	1	9	–	2,099	2,051	na
Nikunau	1	6	–	1,907	1,789	na
Onotoa	1	7	–	1,519	1,393	na
Tamana	1	3	–	951	1,104	na
Arorae	1	2	–	1,279	1,011	na
Teeraina	1	8	–	1,690	1,712	na
Tabuaran	1	8	–	1,960	2,315	na
Kiritimati	1	4	1	5,586	6,456	na
Kanton	1	1	–	31	20	na
<b>Total</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>181</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>103,058</b>	<b>110,136</b>	<b>48.8</b>

Source: MISA communication with CLGF<sup>20.3a</sup>

### 3.4 Traditional leadership

Kiribati has a strong system of traditional authority. The traditional leadership (unimane) is well respected and can, on occasion, influence council decision-making to make it more responsive to local people's needs. The unimane has a reserved seat on the council as a nominated member. Local government arrangements often blend traditional governance with democratic governance.

## 4. ELECTIONS

### 4.1 Recent local elections

The last elections were held in 2016. No turnout figures are available. The next are due to take place in 2020. The turnout at the 2012 election was 70%.<sup>20.4a</sup>

### 4.2 Voting system

Councillors are elected by the first-past-the-post system on the basis of universal adult suffrage. The council also includes those MPs who represent the area, in an ex-officio capacity, and co-opted members. The number of ex-officio and co-opted members cannot exceed one-third of the elected members.

### 4.3 Elected representatives

There are no political parties. Councillors are elected for a term of four years. By-elections can be triggered by resignation or death. The leader of the council is the mayor (meea) and is elected by registered voters on the island. The mayor holds office for four years.

### 4.4 Women's representation

Following the 2012 elections, 3.4% of councillors were women, including 3.5% (7/199) of island councillors and 2.9% (1/34) of urban councillors.<sup>20.4b</sup>

## 5. SYSTEMS FOR COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

### 5.1 Legal requirement

There is no legal provision for community involvement in councils' decision-making; however, under the Local Government Act 1984 the public is allowed to observe council meetings.

### 5.2 Implementation

In practice, councils consult with the local community when setting their annual budgets. Together they review past performance and agree current and future actions.

### 5.3 ICT use in citizen engagement

No information is available.

## 6. ORGANISED LOCAL GOVERNMENT

The Kiribati Local Government Association<sup>20.6</sup> (KILGA), established in 2012, is recognised by national government and serves urban and rural councils. It is funded by annual subscriptions and member councils are represented by their mayors.

## 7. INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS

Dialogue between national and local government is formally conducted through a forum involving all mayors and clerks and the relevant minister. In addition, all councils have MPs representing their area as ex-officio members. The Local Government and the Rural Planning divisions of the MISA, which is mandated to promote intergovernmental relations, are responsible for assisting local authorities in achieving their goals and pursuing revenue-generating projects. KILGA is beginning to represent members in discussions with ministers.

## 8. MONITORING SYSTEMS

Councils have established finance committees to oversee the smooth running of the council, and which report to the full council. The auditor general is responsible for independent scrutiny of local government and is empowered by the Local Government Act 1984.

## 9. FINANCE, STAFFING AND RESOURCES

### 9.1 Local government expenditure

Local government expenditure in 2015 was 1.0% of total government expenditure.<sup>20.9</sup>

**Table 20.1b Women councillors and mayors following the last two local elections**

Election	2012		2016	
	#	%	#	%
<b>All councillors</b>				
All female councillors	8	3.4	na	na
All male councillors	225	96.6	na	na
<b>Total councillors</b>	<b>233</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>na</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Island councillors</b>				
Female island councillors	7	3.5	na	na
Male island councillors	192	96.5	na	na
<b>Total island councillors</b>	<b>199</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>na</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Urban councillors</b>				
Female urban councillors	1	2.9	na	na
Male urban councillors	33	97.1	na	na
<b>Total urban councillors</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>na</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Chairpersons</b>				
Female mayors	na	na	na	na
Male mayors	na	na	na	na
<b>Total mayors</b>	<b>na</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>na</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: MISA communication with CLGF

### 9.2 Locally raised revenue

Under the Local Government Act 1984, a council is empowered to charge fees to the public only if a corresponding by-law is in place. Disabled and disadvantaged citizens, and those with special needs, are exempt from paying rates and this is reflected in the Act and in by-laws. Urban councils have a diverse range of income-generating activities. Local authorities are not permitted to set deficit budgets.

### 9.3 Transfers

There is an annual support grant (AUD\$1.2m) shared between all rural councils according to a formula based on population.

A certain percentage is reserved for specific activities such as the maintenance of roads and causeways, offices, school buildings, hospitals and housing for government-seconded staff. Other grants from national government are project-specific and are not part of the support grant. They are very significant in enabling councils to take forward priority projects.

### 9.4 Loans

No information is available.

### 9.5 Local authority staff

Mayors do not have full-time posts but instead receive an honorarium paid by their council. Councillors receive a sitting allowance for attending meetings. The level of remuneration is determined by a resolution of each full council, and must be approved by the minister. Individual councils pay for their own elected representatives and officers' allowances and salaries. Seconded officers from national government are paid by national government and financial assistance is given for their salaries, housing, office stationery and ferry travel between main islands and islets that cannot be accessed by road. Senior staff are recruited jointly by the ministry and the individual local authority. Both retain the power to promote and discipline. Each council is required by law to have a clerk, treasurer and assistant treasurer. The head of the paid service is referred to as the town clerk in the urban authorities and as clerk to the council in island authorities. The staffing structure typically follows simple hierarchical lines and councils are permitted to jointly employ staff.

## 10. DISTRIBUTION OF SERVICE DELIVERY RESPONSIBILITY

### 10.1 Overview of local government service delivery responsibility

Local government is responsible for a wide range of services including fire protection, early years schooling, social welfare services, primary healthcare and health protection, town planning, transport and its local infrastructure, environmental and public sanitation, water supply and economic regulation. Sharing of responsibilities for services between local government and national government often results in the local authority taking responsibility for day-to-day management and monitoring, while national government provides funding.

### 10.2 ICT use in service delivery

No information is available.

### 10.3 The role of local government in achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

The KDP 2016-19<sup>20.10</sup> takes into account various international obligations that the Government of Kiribati has assented to. These include the SDGs, the Istanbul Plan of Action, the Small Island Developing States (SIDS) Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) pathway, and the Framework for Pacific Regionalism. In particular, all SDG targets and indicators have been reviewed and assessed for relevance to Kiribati's context, including initial country conditions in each key priority area and accounting for progress possible in the four-year timeframe of the KDP.

**Table 20.2a Aggregate income and expenditure for Betio Town Council 2014**

Income	AUD	Expenditure	AUD
<b>Centre-local transfers</b>		<b>Administration</b>	
Restricted	na	Staff	na
Unrestricted	20,000	Property	
		Other	na
<b>Locally raised revenue</b>		<b>Services</b>	
Property taxes	na	Water	na
Licences and fees	na	Road maintenance	na
Other	na	Other	na
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	<b>614,784</b>	<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURE</b>	<b>594,249</b>

Source: MISA communication with CLGF



**Table 20.2b Local government expenditure as a percentage of total government expenditure 2015**

	2015 actual AU\$m
Total government expenditure	119.9
Total local government expenditure	1.2
<b>Local government expenditure as a percentage of total government expenditure</b>	<b>1.0%</b>

Source: MISA communication with CLGF

A pathway approach towards achievement of the SDGs has been adopted, based on the guiding principles underscored in the 2030 UN Development Agenda: namely, the need to take account of national realities, capacities and levels of development, and to respect national policies and priorities.

#### REFERENCES AND USEFUL WEBSITES

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- 20.1b Women in national parliaments. Inter-Parliamentary Union [www.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm](http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm)
- 20.2a Constitution of Kiribati [www.parliament.gov.ki/content/constitution-kiribati](http://www.parliament.gov.ki/content/constitution-kiribati)
- 20.2b Local Government Act 1984 (amended 2006) [http://datasearch.uts.edu.au/site\\_manager\\_sites/clg/pdfs/KiribatiAct.pdf](http://datasearch.uts.edu.au/site_manager_sites/clg/pdfs/KiribatiAct.pdf)
- 20.2c Kiribati Development Plan 2016-19 [www.mfed.gov.ki/sites/default/files/Kiribati%20Development%20Plan%202016%20-%202019.pdf](http://www.mfed.gov.ki/sites/default/files/Kiribati%20Development%20Plan%202016%20-%202019.pdf)
- 20.2d Kiribati Sustainable Towns Programme 2009-13 [www.citiesalliance.org.ca\\_projects/detail/14682](http://www.citiesalliance.org.ca/projects/detail/14682)
- 20.3a 2010 Census [www.mfed.gov.ki/wp-content/uploads/2011/05/Census-Report-2010-Volume-1.pdf](http://www.mfed.gov.ki/wp-content/uploads/2011/05/Census-Report-2010-Volume-1.pdf)
- 20.3b Ministry of Internal and Social Affairs [www.president.gov.ki/ministry-of-internal-affairs/](http://www.president.gov.ki/ministry-of-internal-affairs/)
- 20.4a Elections Commission (no website available)
- 20.4b Women's participation and leadership in governments 2013 [www.asia-pacific.undp.org/content/dam/rbap/docs/Research%20&%20Publications/democratic\\_governance/RBAP-DG-2014-Gender-Equality.pdf](http://www.asia-pacific.undp.org/content/dam/rbap/docs/Research%20&%20Publications/democratic_governance/RBAP-DG-2014-Gender-Equality.pdf)
- 20.5 No reference for this section
- 20.6 Kiribati Local Government Association [www.kilga.org.ki](http://www.kilga.org.ki)
- 20.7 No reference for this section
- 20.8 No reference for this section
- 20.9 Based on a total grant transfer figure of AUD1.2m provided by the Ministry of Internal and Social Affairs for Table 20.2b, and the total government expenditure of AUD119.93m in the national government budget 2015, p. 1 [www.mfed.gov.ki/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/2015-Budget-Final.pdf](http://www.mfed.gov.ki/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/2015-Budget-Final.pdf)
- 20.10 Kiribati Development Plan 2016-19 [www.mfed.gov.ki/sites/default/files/Kiribati%20Development%20Plan%202016%20-%202019.pdf](http://www.mfed.gov.ki/sites/default/files/Kiribati%20Development%20Plan%202016%20-%202019.pdf)
- 20.11a UN statistics surface area <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/products/dyb/dyb2006/Table03.pdf>
- 20.11b Commonwealth Local Government knowledge hub [www.clgf.org.uk/resource-centre/knowledge-hub](http://www.clgf.org.uk/resource-centre/knowledge-hub)
- 20.11c UNDP HDR Kiribati country profile <http://hdr.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/KIR>

**Annex 20a Summary of service provision in different spheres of government in Kiribati**

Services	Delivering authority			Remarks
	National government	Island councils	Town councils	
<b>GENERAL ADMINISTRATION</b>				
Police	■	■	■	
Fire protection		■		
Civil protection	■			
Criminal justice	■			
Civil status register	■	■	■	
Statistical office	■			
Electoral register		■		
<b>EDUCATION</b>				
Pre-school (kindergarten and nursery)		■	■	
Primary		■	■	
Secondary	■	■	■	
Vocational and technical	■			
Higher education	■			
Adult education	■			
<b>SOCIAL WELFARE</b>				
Family welfare services	■	■	■	
Welfare homes	na	na	na	
Social security	na	na	na	
<b>PUBLIC HEALTH</b>				
Primary care		■	■	
Hospitals	■			
Health protection	■			
<b>HOUSING AND TOWN PLANNING</b>				
Housing		■	■	
Town planning		■	■	
Regional planning	■			
<b>TRANSPORT</b>				
Roads	■	■	■	
Transport		■		
Urban roads	■			
Urban rail	na	na	na	
Ports	■			
Airports	■			
<b>ENVIRONMENT AND PUBLIC SANITATION</b>				
Water and sanitation	■	■	■	
Refuse collection and disposal		■		
Cemeteries and crematoria		■		
Slaughterhouses		■		
Environmental protection		■		
Consumer protection	■	■	■	
<b>CULTURE, LEISURE AND SPORTS</b>				
Theatres and concerts			■	
Museums and libraries	■		■	
Parks and open spaces	■	■	■	
Sports and leisure facilities	■	■	■	
Religious facilities				
<b>UTILITIES</b>				
Gas services	■			
District heating	na	na	na	
Water supply	■	■	■	
Electricity	■	■	■	
<b>ECONOMIC</b>				
Agriculture, forests and fisheries	■	■	■	
Local economic development/promotion	■	■	■	
Trade and industry	■	■	■	
Tourism	■	■	■	

■ sole responsibility service ■ joint responsibility service ■ discretionary service