KIRIBATI

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. The head of state and government is the president (berettenti) 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.

2. LEGAL BASIS FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT

2.1 Constitutional provisions

Local government is mentioned within the constitution but is not provided specific protection.

2.2 Main legislative texts


2.3 Proposed legislative changes

The Kiribati Development Plan (KDP) 2016–19 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.

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 (MISA) is responsible for local government, administers the Local Government Act 1984, and oversees local government policy. She 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: Kirimitati (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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Banaba</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>295</td>
<td>268</td>
<td>na</td>
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<tr>
<td>Makin</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1,798</td>
<td>1,990</td>
<td>na</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Butariti</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4,346</td>
<td>3,224</td>
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<td>Marakei</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2,872</td>
<td>2,799</td>
<td>na</td>
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<tr>
<td>Abalang</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>5,502</td>
<td>5,568</td>
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<td>North Tarawa</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>6,102</td>
<td>6,629</td>
<td>na</td>
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<tr>
<td>South Tarawa</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>34,427</td>
<td>56,388</td>
<td>na</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Betio</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>15,755</td>
<td>na</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maliana</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2,027</td>
<td>1,982</td>
<td>na</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abemama</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3,213</td>
<td>3,262</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kuria</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>980</td>
<td>1,046</td>
<td>na</td>
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<tr>
<td>Aranuka</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1,057</td>
<td>1,125</td>
<td>na</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nonouti</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2,683</td>
<td>2,743</td>
<td>na</td>
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<tr>
<td>North Tabiteuea</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3,689</td>
<td>3,955</td>
<td>na</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Tabiteuea</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1,290</td>
<td>1,306</td>
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<tr>
<td>Beru</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2,099</td>
<td>2,051</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nikunau</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1,907</td>
<td>1,789</td>
<td>na</td>
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<tr>
<td>Onotoa</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1,519</td>
<td>1,393</td>
<td>na</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tamana</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>951</td>
<td>1,104</td>
<td>na</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arorae</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1,279</td>
<td>1,011</td>
<td>na</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teeraina</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1,690</td>
<td>1,712</td>
<td>na</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tabuara</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1,960</td>
<td>2,315</td>
<td>na</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kiririti</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5,586</td>
<td>6,456</td>
<td>na</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kanton</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>na</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>181</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>103,058</td>
<td>110,136</td>
<td>48.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: MISA communication with CLGF

### 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%.\(^{20,24}\)

#### 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.\(^{20,26}\)

### 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\(^{20,28}\) (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.\(^{20,33}\)
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 health care 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 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.

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.

9.4 Loans
No information is available.

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

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

Source: MISA communication with CLGF

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

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

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

<table>
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<th>Reference</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>20.1a</td>
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<td>20.1b</td>
<td>Women in national parliaments. Inter-Parliamentary Union <a href="http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm">www.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm</a></td>
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<td>20.2a</td>
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<td>20.4a</td>
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<td>20.5</td>
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<td>20.6</td>
<td>Kiribati Local Government Association <a href="http://www.kilga.org.ki">www.kilga.org.ki</a></td>
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<td>20.8</td>
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<td>20.9</td>
<td>Based on a total grant transfer figure of AUD12m 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 <a href="http://www.mfed.gov.ki/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/2015-Budget-Final.pdf">www.mfed.gov.ki/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/2015-Budget-Final.pdf</a></td>
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<td>20.11a</td>
<td>UN statistics surface area <a href="http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/products/dyb/dyb2006/Table03.pdf">http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/products/dyb/dyb2006/Table03.pdf</a></td>
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</table>

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expenditure Type</th>
<th>2015 Actual AU$m</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>119.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total local government expenditure</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Local government expenditure as a percentage of total government expenditure: **1.0%**

Source: MISA communication with CLGF

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

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**THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT SYSTEM IN KIRIBATI**

**COUNTRY PROFILE 2017–18**

[www.clgf.org.uk/kiribati](http://www.clgf.org.uk/kiribati)
## Annex 20a Summary of service provision in different spheres of government in Kiribati

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Services</th>
<th>Delivering authority</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
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<tr>
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<td>National government</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Administration</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Police</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fire protection</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civil protection</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criminal justice</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civil status register</td>
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<tr>
<td>Statistical office</td>
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<tr>
<td>Electoral register</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-school (kindergarten and nursery)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocational and technical</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher education</td>
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<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family welfare services</td>
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<tr>
<td>Welfare homes</td>
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<td>Primary care</td>
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<td>Health protection</td>
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<tr>
<td>Housing and Town Planning</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Town planning</td>
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<td>Regional planning</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Transport</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Urban roads</td>
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<tr>
<td>Urban rail</td>
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<td>na</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ports</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Airports</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environment and Public Sanitation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water and sanitation</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refuse collection and disposal</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cemeteries and crematoria</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slaughterhouses</td>
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<tr>
<td>Environmental protection</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consumer protection</td>
<td></td>
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[sole responsibility service] [joint responsibility service] [discretionary service]