

Kiribati

‘Domestic violence issues and concerns of women are not that highly voiced. For me, it’s important to have women in that decision making circle.’

Hon Maere Tekanene, Kiribati’s Former Minister for Education and Pacific Women Advisory Board member.¹

Kiribati is an island republic in the Pacific, made up of one main island and 32 coral atolls. Kiribati faces distinctive economic, environmental and social issues. Climate change, including the challenges of sea level rise, soil salination and drought are key concerns to Kiribati’s population.

Kiribati is ranked 137 of 188 countries on the Human Development Index.² When it comes to education access, there are more girls enrolled in secondary schools than boys.³ However, progress is faltering on several indicators that convey the status of women. They include namely the low economic participation of women; low contraceptive use, with a quarter of women reporting an unmet need for contraception (especially among 15-24-year-old females); and an increase in teen pregnancies, from 39 per 1,000 females in 2005 to 51 in 2010.⁴

Leadership and Decision Making

Women represent 6.5 per cent of Kiribati’s National Parliament.⁵ At the local government level, there are ten women serving as councilors out of a total of 332. Out of the 23 mayors in the country, only two are women.⁶ While rates of women in political leadership remain low, women hold the majority of senior leadership positions within the public sector. As at January 2017, there are ten female and ten male government secretaries; seven female and seven male deputy secretaries; and 14 female and seven male senior government officers. Overall, there are 73 female high-level government officials compared to 66 male.⁷

Economic Empowerment

Economic opportunities in Kiribati are limited. Fisheries and subsistence agriculture account for a quarter of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and involve most of the population.⁸ Kiribati has significant economic limitations due to its physical remoteness, coupled with irregular and costly outer island transport, resulting in limited opportunities for integration with regional and international markets. Further, Kiribati has the lowest GDP per capita in the Pacific region at US\$2,047.⁹

The 2009 Kiribati Demographic and Health Survey noted that only two in ten married women who had cash earnings decided for themselves how it was spent. Around one quarter of women reported that they have no say in decisions relating to household purchases.¹⁰

Ending Violence Against Women

Kiribati has a high prevalence of intimate partner violence, with 68 per cent of women and girls aged 15-49 years who have ever been in a relationship experiencing violence. Social norms dictate that women must be obedient to their husbands and violence against women has traditionally been accepted. 90 per cent of women report controlling behavior by their partner.¹¹ In 2014, the Government committed to ending sexual and gender based violence with the passing of the *Te Rau N Te Mwenga Act* (Kiribati Family Peace Act). This Act provides instruction on measures to prevent and respond to domestic violence, gives direction on how survivors can be supported, and includes measures to hold offenders accountable. There is also a Strategic Action Plan (2011-2021) in place to support the elimination of sexual and gender based violence.

Enhanced Agency

Kiribati ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women in 2004.

Key Statistics

Leadership and Decision Making

- **6.5 per cent** of Kiribati's National Parliament is made up of women (3 out of 46 seats).¹²
- **36 per cent** of management and decision making positions are held by women.¹³

Economic Empowerment

- **52 per cent** of women participate in the labour force (includes formal and informal economy).
- **15 per cent** gender gap in the labour force participation rate (male to female).

Ending Violence Against Women

- **68 per cent** of women have experienced physical and/or sexual violence by their partner in their lifetime.

Enhancing Agency

- Kiribati has ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women.
- **22.3 per cent** is the contraceptive prevalence rate of women aged between 15-49.
- **130** is the Gender Parity Index for secondary school enrolment (gross) in 2008 - for every 100 boys enrolled, there were 130 girls enrolled.

Note: Statistics in this section are from the [Asian Development Bank \(2016\) Gender Statistics: The Pacific and Timor Leste](#) report unless otherwise stated.

Partnership with *Pacific Women*

Through *Pacific Women*, the Australian Government will spend approximately AU\$9.9 million over ten years (2012-2022) on initiatives supporting gender equality and women's empowerment in Kiribati. Approximately AU\$595,000 has been spent delivering activities in-country (FY2012-2013 to FY2015-2016). More information on the partnership and nature of support is included in the [Pacific Women Kiribati Country Plan Summary 2013-2016](#) valued at AU\$1.8 million. Details on activities currently underway in-country with various partners is available via our [interactive map](#). The list of program partners can be found [here](#). Kiribati is also supported by *Pacific Women's* regional program, details of which can be viewed on the interactive map under regional activities.

Stories of Change

1. [A Fair Legal Response to Violence Against Women on Remote Islands](#)
2. [Using the Law and Community Participation for Protection](#)

Further Information

- [SPC Stocktake of the Gender Mainstreaming Capacity of Pacific Island Governments \(2015\) Kiribati](#)
- [Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat – 2012 Kiribati Gender Profile](#)
- [Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat \(2016\) Pacific Leaders Gender Equality Declaration Trend Assessment Report 2012-2016](#)
- [United Nations Statistics Division, Minimum Set of Gender Indicators](#)

¹ [Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development \(2015\) First Progress Report 2012-2015](#)

² [United Nations, Human Development Indicators 2015](#)

³ [Asian Development Bank \(2016\) Gender Statistics: The Pacific and Timor Leste](#)

⁴ Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (2012) Pacific regional MDGs tracking report, as quoted in *Pacific Women's Kiribati Country Plan 2013-2016*

⁵ [Pacific Women in Politics](#) as at May 2017

⁶ [Pacific Women in Politics](#), as quoted in *Pacific Women's Kiribati Country Plan 2013-2016*

⁷ DFAT (2017) Latest list of Government positions, as at January 2017

⁸ [UN Women Country Assessment](#)

⁹ [World Bank. \(2016\). Kiribati GDP per capita](#)

¹⁰ Kiribati National Statistics Office and The Secretariat of the Pacific Community (2009). Kiribati Demographic and Health Survey 2009.

¹¹ Kiribati Family Health and Support Study (2010)

¹² [Pacific Women in Politics](#) as at May 2017

¹³ Managerial positions include politicians, senior government officials, and corporate and general managers in the public and private sector.