

Kiribati

Official name: The Republic of Kiribati

Capital: Tarawa

Land: 811 sq. km

Population: 103,500 (2010)

Currency: Australian Dollar

EEZ: 3.6 million sq. km

Language: Kiribati, English

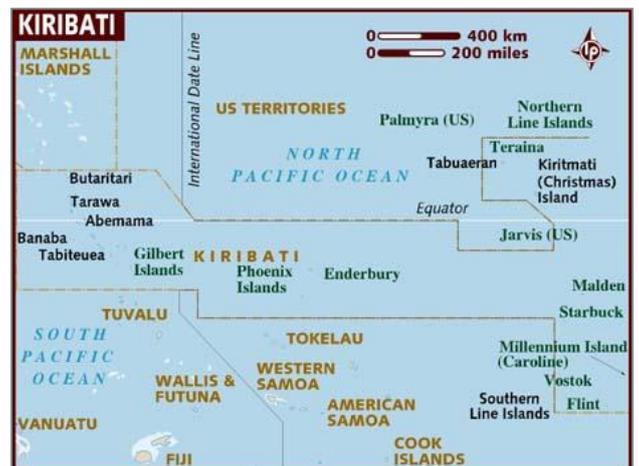
Economy: Copra, fisheries and seaweed

Religion: Roman Catholic Church, Kiribati Protestant Church, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and Seventh-day Adventist Church

Brief history:

Kiribati was first settled by early Austronesian-speaking people long before the 1st century AD. Fijians and Tongans arrived about the 14th century and subsequently merged with the older groups to form the traditional i-Kiribati Micronesian society and culture. The islands were first sighted by British and American ships in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, and the first British settlers arrived in 1837. A British protectorate since 1892, the Gilbert and Ellice Islands became a Crown colony in 1915-1916. Kiritimati (Christmas) Atoll became a part of the colony in 1919; the Phoenix Islands were added in 1937.

Tarawa and others of the Gilbert group were occupied by Japan during World War II. Tarawa was the site of one of the bloodiest battles in US Marine Corps' history when marines landed in November 1943 to dislodge the Japanese defenders. The Gilbert and Ellice Islands (now Tuvalu) were separated in 1975 and granted internal self-government by Britain. Kiribati became independent on July 12, 1979.



(Source: www.lonelyplanet.com)

Political overview:

The Kiribati Parliamentary system is quite unique in that it is a blend of both the British and American systems. Te Beretitenti (President) is elected nationally. Members of the Cabinet are appointed by Te Beretitenti from amongst the members of Parliament. The Speaker, although not a member of Parliament, is elected by the members. The first form of a Parliamentary system began in 1963 with the establishment of the Advisory Council that had five elected members and some appointed ex-officio members. In 1967 the Advisory Council was replaced by the House of Representatives and the number of elected members was increased to 23. The House of Representatives was replaced by the Legislative Council in 1970 and the number of elected members further increased to 28 while the number of ex-officio members decreased. In 1976 the House of Assembly replaced the Legislative Council. The House of Assembly continued until independence when it became the Maneaba ni Maungatabu with 44 elected members, one nominated member (from Rabi) and one ex-officio member (the Attorney General).

The President is both Head of State and Head of Government, and is nominated from among members of the Maneaba ni Maungatabu to be elected in a presidential election by universal adult suffrage. The President appoints his/her own Cabinet, which is composed of the President, Vice President, Attorney General and no more than 12 ministers selected from members of the Maneaba ni Maungatabu.

Economic overview:

Kiribati's economy faces significant constraints common to other island atoll states. These include its small size, remoteness and geographical fragmentation, a harsh natural environment with infertile soils, limited exploitable resources and the need to create jobs and promote growth for an expanding population. Kiribati relies heavily on fishing license fees and remittances from Kiribati citizens employed abroad, mainly as seafarers.

Notwithstanding its limited range of economic assets, Kiribati has largely had a solid record of financial stability since independence in 1979. Governments have traditionally adopted a cautious approach to domestic spending combined with a deliberate policy of accumulating offshore investments. The Revenue Equalization Reserve Fund (RERF), a sovereign wealth fund established in 1956 by the British administration, holds earnings from Kiribati's phosphate mining (which ceased in 1979).

Education overview:

The Kiribati education system is based upon a 6-3-3 model and consists of five stages: Early Childhood Education (ECE) for ages 3–5, Primary for ages 6–11 (Years 1–6), Junior Secondary for ages 12–14 (Years 7–9), Senior Secondary for ages 15–18 (Years 10–13) and Post-Secondary, including TVET, (no age limit). Age determines the level of education. Repetition is not encouraged as it usually poses the problem of excessive number.

Schooling in Kiribati is free up to Junior Secondary level and attendance is legally compulsory between the ages of six and fourteen. It is noted that there is a proportion of children in the primary and junior secondary age groups who do not attend school and the Ministry is doing its best to attract all children to attend school.

Students who fail competitive examinations at Year 9 and Year 11 are unable to continue their studies. High school fees charged by senior secondary schools also contributes to the high attrition rate among older school-age children but the government schools now offer free education through subsidy provision but this is on a competitive basis.

English is the medium of instruction in secondary schools. The Kiribati language is widely used in primary schools, although its use is discouraged from Year 3 in line with the Language Policy. Basically, there is a gradual decrease of Kiribati language as one moves up the education ladder.

Accrediting agency:

At the moment there is no national accrediting agency for post-secondary qualifications and providers.

Immigration:

All visitors to Kiribati must possess a valid passport and onward ticket and must have proof of sufficient funds to support themselves while staying in the country.

References:

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