

# Kiribati

## Government Policies and Programs to Eliminate the Worst Forms of Child Labor

The Government of Kiribati is working with the ADB on the implementation of its 2002-2004 Country Strategy and Program to address key issues that include poverty reduction and human development. Part of its poverty reduction strategy and plan to invest in human capital development will focus on enhancing quality and relevant education and expanding the coverage of social services, particularly for people living in the outer islands.<sup>1989</sup> AusAID is also assisting the country to enhance the policy framework surrounding the education sector for the period between 1998 and 2005.<sup>1990</sup>

The “Quality of Life Improvement” policy by the government includes a commitment to invest more financial resources in health, education, sports, and other activities that enhance the social, physical and economic environment for children. As a signatory to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the government has made progress in reaching the Convention’s standards by amending the Film Education Act to protect children from pornography, assisting with the training of teachers, funding construction, providing teacher materials for the Early Care and Childhood Education centers, instituting vocation training centers, and expanding the education system.<sup>1991</sup>

The Ministry of Education, Training and Technology is responsible for implementing the National Development Strategy for 2000-2003 to improve the quality of education at each level. One of the primary goals is to increase access to education through the provision of universal education at little or no direct cost to parents throughout Kiribati, including the outer islands of Teraina and Tabuaeran. Increasing the availability of pre-schools, training teachers to adapt to changes in the new curriculum and renovating classrooms are all a part of the national policy to strengthen its education system.<sup>1992</sup> UNICEF is also active in Kiribati implementing child and youth advocacy projects.<sup>1993</sup>

## Incidence and Nature of Child Labor

Statistics on the number of working children under the age of 15 in Kiribati are not available. Some children who are not in school are reported to work in the informal sector, either in small-

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<sup>1989</sup> Asian Development Bank, *Country Strategy and Program Update (2002-2004): Kiribati*, July 2001, [cited December 23, 2002]; available from [http://www.adb.org/Documents/CSPs/KIR/2001/CSP\\_KIR\\_2001.pdf](http://www.adb.org/Documents/CSPs/KIR/2001/CSP_KIR_2001.pdf).

<sup>1990</sup> AusAID, *Country Brief: Kiribati*, [online] 2002 [cited September 5, 2002]; available from <http://www.ausaid.gov.au/country/country.cfm?CountryId=20>.

<sup>1991</sup> United Nations Special Session on Children, Statement by His Excellency Teburoro Tito, President of the Republic of Kiribati, May 10, 2002, [cited December 23, 2002]; available from <http://www.un.org/ga/children/kiribatiE.htm>.

<sup>1992</sup> *Kiribati Education Policy: National Development Strategies 2002-2003*, [online] [cited August 8, 2002]; available from [http://www.janeresture.com/kiribati\\_edupolicy/](http://www.janeresture.com/kiribati_edupolicy/).

<sup>1993</sup> UNICEF, *UNICEF’s Programme of Assistance to Pacific Island Countries*, [online] [cited August 8, 2002]; available from [http://www.undp.org/fj/un/UNICEF/UNICEF\\_PIC.htm](http://www.undp.org/fj/un/UNICEF/UNICEF_PIC.htm).

scale enterprises or in their homes.<sup>1994</sup> The Kiribati Chamber of Commerce has noticed an increase in the number of children working as vendors on the street, visiting households and in social establishments at night.<sup>1995</sup>

Education is free and compulsory for nine years, until the age of 16.<sup>1996</sup> Basic education includes primary school for grades one through six, and Junior Secondary School for three additional grade levels.<sup>1997</sup> In 1998, the gross primary enrollment rate was 84.4 percent, and net primary enrollment rate was 70.7 percent.<sup>1998</sup> Attendance rates are not available for Kiribati. While enrollment rates indicate a level of commitment to education, they do not always reflect children's participation in school.<sup>1999</sup> School quality and access to education are better in urban areas; schools in small communities on isolated islands are expensive to maintain.<sup>2000</sup>

## Child Labor Laws and Enforcement

Part IX of the Employment Ordinance, "Employment of Children and Young Persons," sets the minimum age for employment at 14 years,<sup>2001</sup> and children under 16 years are prohibited from industrial employment or jobs aboard ships.<sup>2002</sup> The Constitution prohibits forced labor.<sup>2003</sup> The Penal Code criminalizes the procurement of girls under 18 years of age for the purpose of sexual relations and establishes a penalty of two years imprisonment for offenses.<sup>2004</sup> The Penal Code

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<sup>1994</sup> Informal sector economic activities in the Pacific Islands include small-scale agriculture in rural areas and small enterprises or domestic services in urban areas. The informal sector is not widely visible in Pacific Island towns, because much of the activity is home-based. This makes it particularly difficult to monitor the extent of child labor practices. See United Nations Development Programme, *Pacific Human Development Report 1999*, Suva, Fiji Islands, June 1999, 41-42, 80, [cited December 23, 2002]; available from [www.undp.org.fj/Pacific\\_Human\\_Dev\\_Report\\_1999.htm](http://www.undp.org.fj/Pacific_Human_Dev_Report_1999.htm).

<sup>1995</sup> ILO, *Review of Annual Reports Under the Follow-Up to the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, Part II*, Geneva, 2002, 386.

<sup>1996</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1997</sup> U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices- 2001: Kiribati*, Washington, D.C., March 4, 2002, 1021-22, Section 6d and 6f [cited December 23, 2002]; available from <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2001/eap/8323.htm>.

<sup>1998</sup> UNESCO, *Education for All: Year 2000 Assessment* [CD-ROM], Paris, 2000.

<sup>1999</sup> For a more detailed discussion on the relationship between education statistics and work, see the preface to this report.

<sup>2000</sup> United Nations Development Programme, *Pacific Human Development Report 1999*, 41.

<sup>2001</sup> ILO, *Review of Annual Reports 2002*, 384-87.

<sup>2002</sup> U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2001: Kiribati*.

<sup>2003</sup> *Constitution of Kiribati*, Chapter 2, Article 6 [cited October 25, 2002]; available from [http://www.vanuatu.usp.ac.fj/paclawmat/Kiribati\\_legislation/Kiribati\\_Constitution.html](http://www.vanuatu.usp.ac.fj/paclawmat/Kiribati_legislation/Kiribati_Constitution.html).

<sup>2004</sup> *Kiribati Penal Code, 1977*, Article 136 [cited October 25, 2002]; available from [http://www.vanuatu.usp.ac.fj/paclawmat/Kiribati\\_legislation/Consolidation\\_1977/Kiribati\\_Penal\\_Code.html](http://www.vanuatu.usp.ac.fj/paclawmat/Kiribati_legislation/Consolidation_1977/Kiribati_Penal_Code.html).

also bans parents or guardians from prostituting children under 15 years old.<sup>2005</sup> Child labor laws are enforced by the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Employment.<sup>2006</sup>

The Government of Kiribati has not ratified either ILO Convention 138 or ILO Convention 182.<sup>2007</sup>

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<sup>2005</sup> Ibid., Articles 141, 43.

<sup>2006</sup> U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2001: Kiribati*, Section 6d.

<sup>2007</sup> ILO, *Ratifications by Country*, in ILOLEX, [database online] [cited August 8, 2002]; available from <http://ilolex.ilo.ch:1567/english/newratframeE.htm>.