

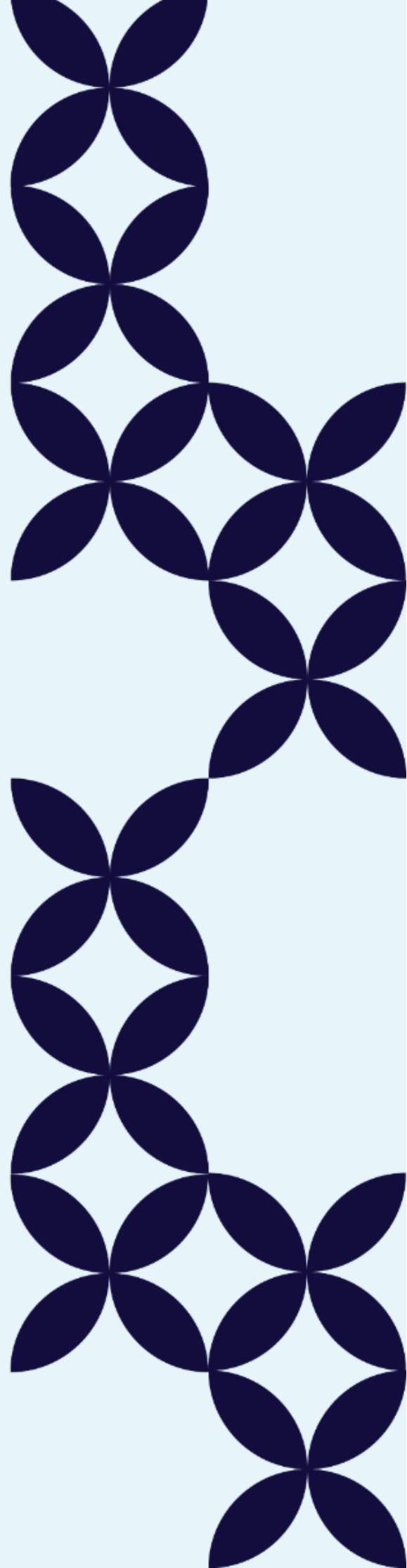
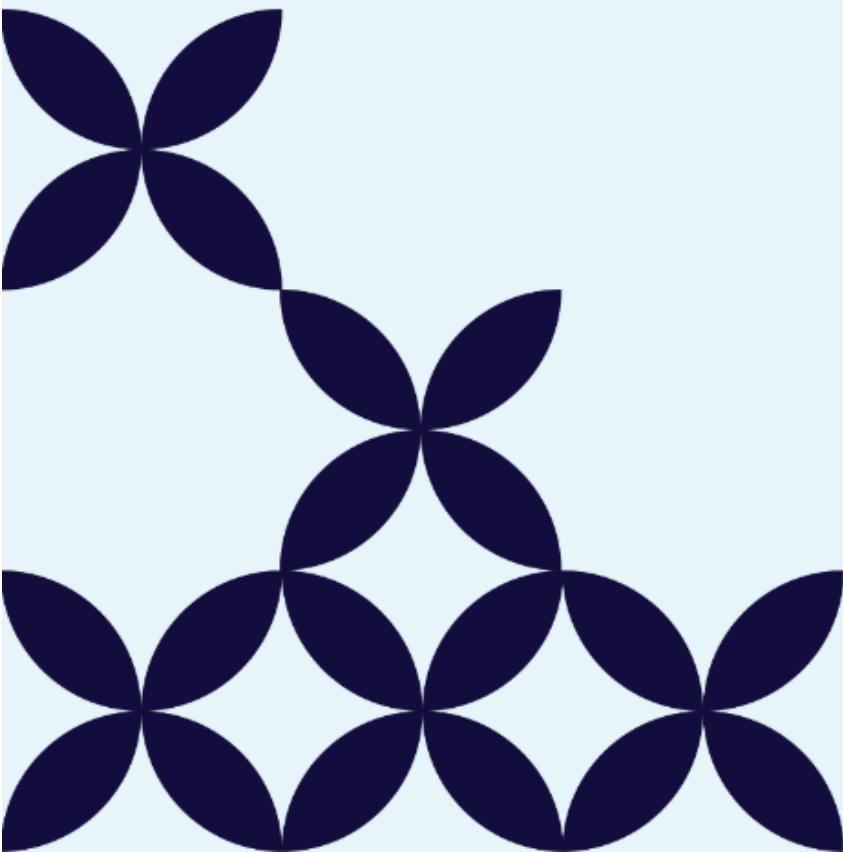


NEW ZEALAND
FOREIGN AFFAIRS & TRADE
Manatū Aorere

Kiribati

Country Plan

March 2025



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Purpose of this document

The New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT) has developed this Plan to guide the planning and management of New Zealand’s overall engagement with Kiribati, and as a foundation for dialogue with partners and stakeholders.

The Plan is used to bring clarity to what work should be prioritised, and to help monitor progress towards shared outcomes and strategic goals.

This is a living document that will be reviewed with partners and updated periodically to ensure it responds to changes in country context, including the impacts of any external shocks.

An integrated approach to Pacific engagement

New Zealand pursues an integrated approach to engagement with Kiribati. We focus on coherence across our diplomatic, trade and economic, climate change, environment, security and development objectives to deliver sustainable progress in developing countries, and advance New Zealand’s interests and values. As such, our development contribution (both policy and financial) is an integral pillar of our foreign policy – it reflects our network of international relationships and commitments, and is an expression of our values.



Country overview

Country context

Kiribati is a Micronesian country with 33 atolls spread over 3.5 million square kilometers of the Pacific Ocean. As a remote nation Kiribati faces significant economic and development challenges, including maintaining fiscal sustainability, improving the health and well-being of its citizens and mitigating the impacts of climate change.

Categorised as a Low Income Country by the World Bank, Kiribati is one of the least developed countries in the Pacific region. With a narrow economic base and one of the largest Exclusive Economic Zones in the world, it relies heavily on its national fishery.

Its population of 120,000 is growing rapidly¹. On the capital island of South Tarawa half the country's population lives in a land area of just 16 square kilometres and overcrowding drives many of Kiribati's health and social issues impacting wellbeing and productivity.

The country's 33 atolls are divided into three distinct island groups: the Gilbert group (west); the Phoenix group (centre); and the Line group (east). As one of the most geographically dispersed countries in the world, Kiribati depends heavily upon maritime and aviation transport for essential imports and exports, and to connect outer island communities. Limited infrastructure and services, and high transport costs restrict its ability to connect both domestically and internationally.

Climate change is the greatest threat to Kiribati and its people. With an average elevation of just two metres above sea level, it is among the most vulnerable countries in the world to the impacts of climate change. Impacts could include severe flooding and coastal erosion, increasing intensity of extreme rainfall events, changes in patterns of fish migration, and damage to coastal reefs and fisheries. Significantly these impacts also have the potential to disrupt Kiribati's largest economic resource, fisheries. Kiribati's national priorities to respond to climate change largely relate to water and food security, disaster risk management, coastal protection and infrastructure, climate finance, and renewable energy.

¹ [Kiribati 2020 Census – Kiribati National Statistics Office](#)



New Zealand's partnership with Kiribati

New Zealand has a deep and enduring partnership with Kiribati, underpinned by shared values, mutual respect and common interests as members of the Pacific Islands Forum. Since opening its High Commission to Kiribati in 1989, New Zealand has remained committed to working alongside Kiribati to deliver shared priorities. Kiribati has an honorary consulate in Wellington and has committed to opening a High Commission to New Zealand.

Annual High Level Consultations discuss priority areas of cooperation and ways of working together. As one of just four countries to have a diplomatic presence, New Zealand remains a key development partner for Kiribati. New Zealand has provided long term support in a number of important sectors and cross cutting areas, including health, education, fisheries, utilities (power and water), waste management, economic development, governance and climate resilience.

Despite a relatively small trading relationship (approximately NZ\$35 million per annum in the year ended June 2024), I-Kiribati make a strong contribution to New Zealand's horticulture and viticulture sectors through the Recognised Seasonal Employer (RSE) scheme. As part of the RSE scheme Kiribati sends over 250 workers to New Zealand annually and another 75 I-Kiribati a year are given the opportunity to migrate permanently through the Pacific Access Scheme (PAC). New Zealand is home to a strong I-Kiribati community, which has more than doubled since 2006 to over 3,000 people. In 2020 they celebrated the first ever Kiribati language week in New Zealand.

Education opportunities are provided to I-Kiribati through the Manaaki New Zealand Scholarship Programme, which offers tertiary and short-term training scholarships. This programme has produced over 400 I-Kiribati alumni who retain a key role, enabling enduring relationships and strengthening ties between New Zealand and Kiribati.

New Zealand adopts a partnership approach to supporting humanitarian response and disaster management in the Pacific. We focus on responding quickly to requests by Pacific governments, and delivering practical and financial assistance for those most in need when a disaster strikes. This includes a 'whole of Government' commitment to work with other New Zealand Government agencies to deploy specialist emergency capabilities in a disaster response. We also work closely with other development partners, the United Nations, international and local non-government organisations and the private sector. Our bilateral development programmes invest in our Pacific partner's longer-term recovery from disasters. We also recognise the value of investing in measures that reduce and manage the risks of disasters, and increase resilience; and in helping countries be better prepared for disasters through regional, bilateral and NGO partner initiatives.



Partner plans relevant to the relationship

The Kiribati 20-Year Vision² (KV20) guides development priorities for the period 2016-2036. It is an ambitious strategy with the goal of a wealthy, healthy and peaceful Kiribati. It prioritises economic and human development, peace and security, infrastructure, and governance. Fisheries and tourism are highlighted as key productive sectors to achieve the country's development aspirations. New Zealand's development support is guided by Kiribati's priorities and as such is well aligned the KV20.

The 2024-2027 Kiribati Development Plan (KDP) is the most recent guide for formulating policies and programmes to advance inclusive economic development in Kiribati. It includes the following key performance areas:

- harnessing human wealth;
- growing economic wealth and leaving no one behind;
- improving I-Kiribati's health;
- protecting the environment and mitigating climate change;
- strengthening the integrity and independence of institutions;
- maintaining the value of Kiribati's assets.

Kiribati's KDP is also supported by its National Adaptation Plan³, Nationally Determined Contributions⁴ and other sectoral strategies.

Strategic framework for the Kiribati Country Plan

The IDC Priorities Framework 2024-27⁵ is a guiding document for this Plan. It shows how the IDC Programme contributes to the Ministry's overall goals, as set out in the Ministry's Strategic Framework⁶, and articulates the priority outcomes that we aim to advance through the IDC Programme. The logic diagram on the next page sets out our ambitions for our work with Kiribati, in alignment with the IDC Priorities Framework. It represents integrated delivery across development, foreign policy, trade, and security and covers a total country view of our IDC investment, covering our core IDC programme, multi-country investments, NGO partnerships and scholarships.

The logic diagram sets out how our strategic goals drive more specific medium and short term outcomes. New Zealand will work towards these outcomes in partnership with Kiribati. The medium term outcomes in the logic diagram describe our interests in more detail. The short term outcomes cover areas of immediate focus rather than all the initiatives required to deliver these medium term outcomes.

² <https://www.president.gov.ki/resources/kiribati-20-year-vision-kv20.html>

³ <https://unfccc.int/documents/306970>

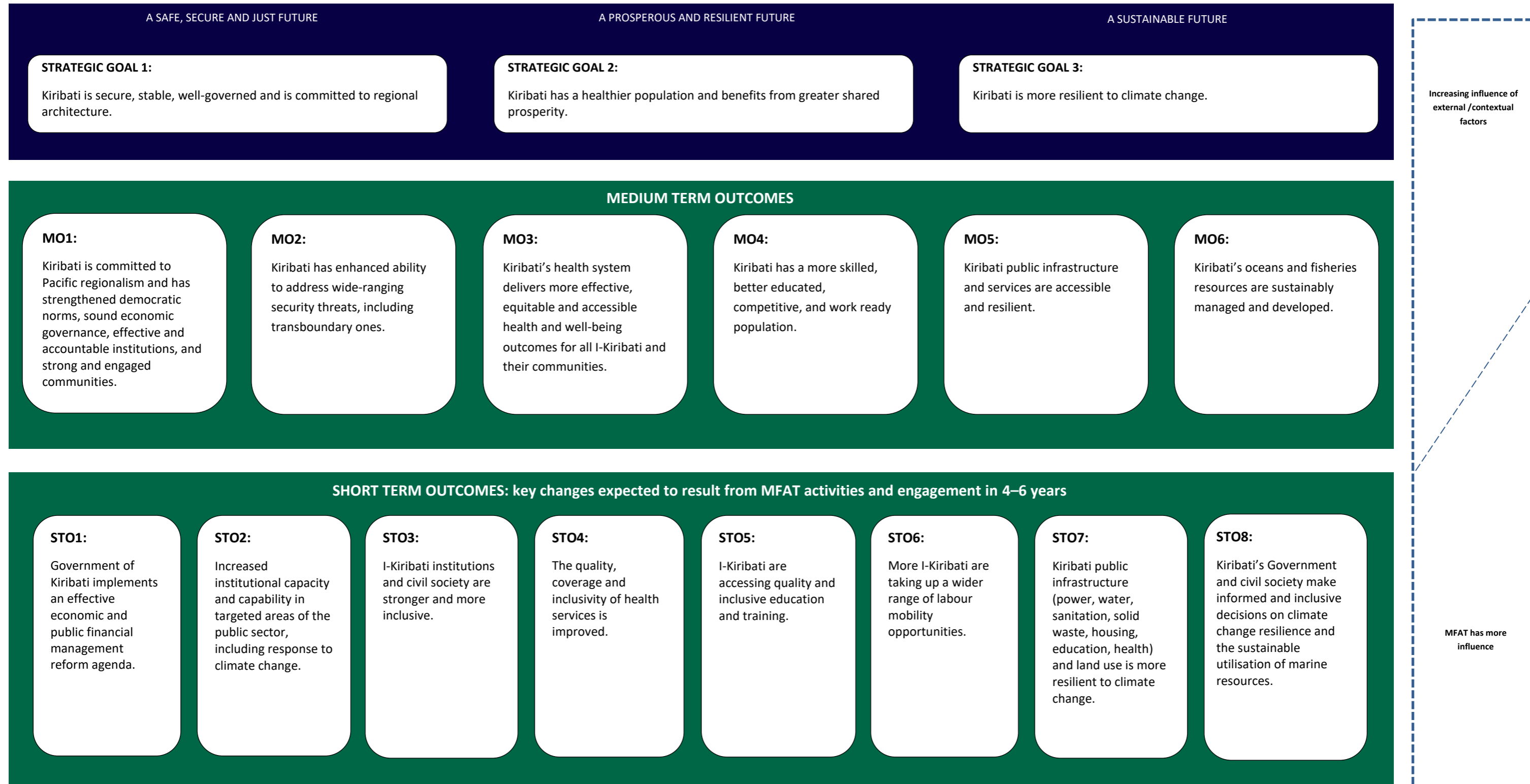
⁴ <https://www.president.gov.ki/presidentgovki/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Intended-Nationally-Determined-Contributions.pdf>

⁵ <https://www.mfat.govt.nz/assets/Aid/Aid-General/IDC-Priorities-Framework-2024.pdf>

⁶ [New-Zealand-Timor-Leste-Statement-of-Partnership-2022-2026.pdf](#)



Logic diagram for Kiribati Country Plan



How we put this Plan into action

New Zealand's IDC funding for this Plan is managed over a three year period. There is flexibility to move funds into and between Plans in order to respond to rapidly changing contexts. Current information about New Zealand's overall International Development Cooperation budget for the current funding triennium is on the MFAT website⁷.

How we will work to deliver on this Plan

New Zealand's International Cooperation for Effective Sustainable Development (ICESD) Policy⁸ identifies four development principles that guide New Zealand's work with partner countries, and sets out a commitment to deliver development that is effective, inclusive, resilient and sustained.

It is through this lens that New Zealand will maintain ongoing, open communication at all levels with the Government of Kiribati to ensure inclusive and effective cooperation, coordination and accountability in delivering this Plan. This includes holding Annual High-Level Consultations (HLC). Our development approach will be reviewed at each HLC.

Our approach will be transparent and values-based, driven by the local context and evidence based decision making. Where possible development outcomes will be locally owned and operated to ensure knowledge and accountability are institutionalised within I-Kiribati communities.

New Zealand will consolidate development activities in line with the outcomes listed above in the logic diagram. In doing so we will be able to sustain a deeper and more efficient focus on the priority areas as identified above. In time, these activities will ideally be implemented through higher order modalities such as budget support to provide Kiribati with the flexibility to use the support to their needs of the day.

⁷ www.mfat.govt.nz/en/aid-and-development/our-approach-to-aid/where-our-funding-goes/our-planned-aid-expenditure/

⁸ <https://www.mfat.govt.nz/assets/Aid-Prog-docs/Policy/Policy-Statement-New-Zealands-International-Cooperation-for-Effective-Sustainable-Development-ICESD.pdf>



Who we will work with to deliver on this Plan

The Government of Kiribati will be New Zealand’s primary partner in shaping and delivering this plan. This partner led approach ensures that the Plan is aligned with Kiribati development priorities.

MFAT will engage widely across New Zealand Government agencies (NZ Inc), many of who support the delivery of this Plan in Kiribati. This includes but is not limited to New Zealand Police, New Zealand Defence Force, New Zealand Custom Service, Immigration New Zealand, Maritime New Zealand and the Ministry of Primary Industries.

As a member of Council of Regional Organisations of the Pacific (CROP) Kiribati’s development has a vested interest in a number of Pacific regional agencies. New Zealand is committed to regionalism and working with the existing framework of Pacific regional agencies and mechanisms to support Kiribati’s development.

A range of multilateral agencies and third country donors are active in Kiribati and many are growing their presence. MFAT works closely with a number of these partners to coordinate effort and minimise duplication. This includes the Asian Development Bank, the World Bank, United Nations agencies, the World Health Organization, the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, the European Union and Japan.

MFAT partners with New Zealand non-governmental organisations (NGOs) through the *Partnering for Impact* programme, which supports inclusive economic, social and environmental resilience, good governance and strengthening of civil society. Through this approach, we partner with New Zealand NGOs and local civil society to use their experience, knowledge and reach, to support delivery of locally-led solutions for people experiencing vulnerabilities.



How we will assess progress against this Plan

The logic diagram sets out the strategic goals, medium and short term outcomes we hope will result from New Zealand's activities and engagement with Kiribati.

We report back on progress towards our goals in Kiribati via the annual Minister of Foreign Affairs Report on the IDC appropriation⁹. We also report back on this Plan to the Government of Kiribati via our annual High Level Consultations and engagement with senior officials. This not only gives us an opportunity to discuss what has been achieved in partnership, but also to test whether our Plan remains fit-for-purpose or if we need to change anything.

Progress against the Plan will be assessed with the following indicators.

Strategic Goals	Indicators
Goal 1: Kiribati is secure, stable, well-governed and is committed to regional architecture.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> World Bank Worldwide Governance Indicators
Goal 2: Kiribati has a healthier population and benefits from greater shared prosperity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SDG 3.1.1 Maternal mortality ratio SDG 3.2.1 Under-5 mortality rate SDG 3.8.1 Coverage of essential health services SDG 3.4.1 Mortality rate attributed to cardiovascular disease, cancer, chronic respiratory disease or diabetes SDG 8.1.1 Annual growth rate of real GDP per capita; Gini Index (World Bank Estimate)
Goal 3: Kiribati is more resilient to climate change.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ND-GAIN Vulnerability score

Short Term Outcome (STO)	Indicators
STO1: Government of Kiribati implements an effective economic and public financial management reform agenda.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evidence that Kiribati remains on-track on their economic and public sector reform programme. Evidence of the fiscal sustainability of state owned enterprises.
STO2: Increased institutional capacity and capability in targeted areas of the public sector, including response to climate change.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of people receiving training or capability-building support in governance (M/F) Evidence of improved decision making in key policy areas (marine resources, climate change, health, education, water and power).
STO3: I-Kiribati institutions and civil are stronger and more inclusive.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of people receiving training / capability-building support in governance (M/F)

⁹ See <https://www.mfat.govt.nz/en/aid-and-development/our-approach-to-aid>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence of the interests of marginalised groups including women and youth being reflected in policy, legislation and regulation.
STO4: The quality, coverage and inclusivity of health services is improved.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of people benefitting from sexual and reproductive health services (M/F) • Evidence of coverage by health services within Kiribati with an emphasis on non-communicable diseases and early childhood.
STO5: I-Kiribati are accessing quality and inclusive education and training.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of people supported to improve their livelihoods (M/F) • Number of people that complete tertiary or vocational training scholarships • Evidence of women, youth and groups at risk of marginalisation participating in education and training.
STO6: More I-Kiribati are taking up a wider range of labour mobility opportunities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of people participating in a labour mobility initiative (M/F) • Evidence of awareness of labour mobility opportunities amongst I-Kiribati.
STO7: Kiribati public infrastructure (power, water, sanitation, solid waste, housing, education, health) and land use is more resilient to climate change.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of people directly benefitting from improved infrastructure and services (M/F) • Evidence of I-Kiribati incorporating climate resilience into public infrastructure and land use planning.
STO8: Kiribati's Government and civil society make informed and inclusive decisions on climate change resilience and the sustainable utilisation of marine resources.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of people receiving training or capability-building support in fisheries and oceans (M/F) • Evidence of informed decisions on climate change resilience and marine resource use being made.

The Plan will be evaluated approximately once every four years. The next strategic evaluation of the Kiribati Country Plan is expected to take place in 2026. The Ministry's forward strategic evaluation schedule is available on the website¹⁰.

¹⁰ [Evaluation and research | New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade](#)



For further information

Contact details for the New Zealand High Commission to Kiribati are available on the MFAT website¹¹.

To find out more about New Zealand's engagement with Pacific Island countries also go to the MFAT website, at www.mfat.govt.nz/en/countries-and-regions/australia-and-pacific/.

This document is one in a series of Plans published by the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT) and managed by the Ministry's Pacific and Development Group. For the latest version please go to www.mfat.govt.nz

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¹¹ <http://www.mfat.govt.nz/en/countries-and-regions/>

¹² <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>

¹³ <https://www.legislation.govt.nz/act/public/1981/0047/latest/DLM51358.html>

