



**"E MATERAOI ARON RIBANAKINA IBUKIN KAUBWAIN AO RIKIRAKEN ABARA, TE RORONRIKIRAKE."**

## **NATIONAL YOUTH POLICY**

**2011-2015**

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## PREFACE

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A STATEMENT BY HIS EXCELLENCY

PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF KIRIBATI

I would like to offer my sentiments and appreciation of presenting this National Youth Policy and National Plan of Action to Government and citizens of Kiribati, in particular our young citizens.

I hold utmost belief that the adolescents and young people of Kiribati are the caretakers of this nation's future, and thus it is our responsibility, as leaders today, to equip our young with the skills and opportunities they need to provide for our citizens – today and in the future.

There are many ways that this is to be done. The Kiribati Development Plan is the overall framework for national development that serves to advance economic and social development for all citizens, including young people. Supporting this, and more specifically for youth, this National Youth Policy lays the roadmap for youth development for the next five years. It contains a strategic selection of key actions that will make a positive difference in the lives of young people in Kiribati. Importantly, it also outlines the institutional mechanisms for operationalizing this Policy. Implementation of the strategies and actions within this Policy will make significant contributions to Kiribati's overall development.

For such an important resource as our young i-Kiribati citizens, I fully endorse this Policy and the accompanying plan of action. I call on all stakeholders to pledge commitment to the framework this Policy provides and to the effective implementation of the strategies.

I look forward to seeing the advancement of our young citizens and our beloved nation as a whole.

Te Mauri, Te Raoi, Te Tabomoa.

His Excellency Mr Anote Tong

President of the Republic of Kiribati

## MINISTERIAL FOREWORD

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It is a great honour and a privilege for me to introduce this National Youth Policy (NYP) and National Plan of Action (NPA) for Kiribati.

Let me first acknowledge with appreciation the invaluable contributions of the following institutions throughout the consultation process for this NYP 2011–2015; Government Ministries, Churches, Unimane, NGOs the Adolescent Health Development (AHD), the Kiribati Youth Panel (KYP). A special mention goes to Tamana, Marakei and Aranuka Island communities for the kindness and hospitality when they hosted our consultative team. We realize however that we could not have completed this very important task without the technical and financial support of the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF)

A policy framework focused specifically on youth issues has been in the pipeline for some time now. A draft national youth policy for the years 2000 to 2003 was published. It however received little support from government at that time. The result was that all plans and strategies identified therein were neglected. However Government and all other stakeholders are well aware of the difficulties we face in this regard.

It is no secret that issues confronting youth today cut across a multitude if not all sectors of the economy. In that sense a multi-disciplinary approach will be necessary. This NYPF shall need to incorporate and encourage participation across a spectrum of disciplines, and shall welcome the public and private sector partnerships, in particular. The emphasis of this policy is to focus on Kiribati’s young people as key resources and contributors to national development. Rather than focus on ‘youth problems’, this policy takes a preventive approach to provide for young people’s development needs, open opportunities for livelihood and employment to minimise the occurrence of youth problems. In this regard, there is a greater emphasis on ‘capacity development’ for young people.

Specific youth issues are best addressed by different stakeholders from various sectors of Government. Different Ministries are mandated to carry out different functions which in one way or another impact on youth health, education, and employment. Take for instance health and employment issues. The Ministry of Health and Medical Services (MHMS), have worked extensively on health related problems facing young people. This has been made possible through the assistance of regional organizations such as the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) and the Fiji School of Medicine (FSM). Employment issues are currently addressed by the Ministry of Labor and Human Resources Development (MLHRD). Financial donations and expertise are provided from the International Labor Organization (ILO).

Like other countries in the Pacific region, and indeed around the world, Kiribati is limited by its technical and financial resources to implement the whole range of actions that need to be done. It is essential, for this policy to be realised in the given time-frame, that the actions are both strategic and realistic. Strategic in that the most priority issues are addressed, while ensuring that those most marginalised are included, implies that the *targeting* of this policy is critical. Realistic in that we understand what can be done within our capacities, and where there are gaps, assistance is sought from development agencies.

This National Youth Policy is considered as a key national development policy. For the strategic focus areas of this policy impact upon – and are impacted by – all areas of the Kiribati Development Plan. The development of our young people is a solid advancement for Kiribati’s national development.

Hon. Kouraiti Beniato

Minister of Internal and Social Affairs

Te Mauri Te Rāoi ao te Tabomoa iaomi ni bane.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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This National Youth Policy is the result of much hard work of many people over the last few years. I take this opportunity to express my sincere thanks to the tireless effort, dedication and contribution of the many organizations, ministries, and individuals including young people themselves who have been directly involved in formulating this National Youth Policy and Action Plan as well as the Situation Analysis on Youth, upon which this Policy is based on.

I thank the team in the Youth Unit for diligently taking on this responsibility and for coordinating the valuable inputs of youth stakeholders and development partners.

Our deepest appreciation goes to our previous consultants for their contributions, in particular, Ms Mereia Carling of UNICEF Pacific for her efforts in revising and completing this NYP and Action Plan.

To UNICEF Pacific, thank you so much for your financial support to the consultative process.

Together, with your commitment to this important milestone in youth development, we have completed this National Youth Policy and Action Plan. Your efforts will not be forgotten and we look forward to continuing our collaborations as we embark on the critical task of implementation and monitoring our progress.

With this NYP and Action Plan, we pledge our commitment to work together with our partners and stakeholders to recognize and promote youth as valuable contributors and resources to the development of Kiribati.

Kam bati n rabwa

Te Mauri Te Raoi Te Tabomoa

Secretary,

Ministry For Internal and Social Affairs

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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The Government of Kiribati has demonstrated its commitment to the development of young I-Kiribati citizens through its endorsement of this National Youth Policy. Implementation of this Policy is recognized for its potential contribution to the realization of the goals of the Kiribati Development Plan. Additional value of this Policy is also recognized in the development of its framework, through participation of youth stakeholders and young people themselves in both Tarawa and the outer islands. Youth stakeholders and young people in Kiribati have over the last three years determined the essential elements of this National Youth Policy. Firstly, the important policy areas were constructed upon outer island youth consultations held in 2008. Youth stakeholders refined the critical issues into strategic Policy Areas. These are:

- 1. Education and Skills Building:** The overall proportion of government expenditure on education is one of the highest in the Pacific, resulting in a clear improvement on educational achievement in Kiribati. Despite this, however, there are still significant numbers of young people who do not attend school for various reasons, particularly from age 13 years and more so for boys and young people living with disabilities.
- 2. Economic Participation and Employment:** Like elsewhere in the Pacific, the number of employment and livelihood opportunities for young people are limited, and are constrained by global pressures hindering national economic growth. The need to support young people to lead productive and self-sustaining lives in both the formal and informal sectors is an important poverty reduction strategy.
- 3. Health and Safety:** Young people in Kiribati can only develop and contribute to the nation's development if they are in good health – mentally and physically and are protected from risks. The four priority health issues relevant to youth development included in this Policy are *Sexual and Reproductive Health, Mental Health and Suicide, Accidents and Alcohol and Substance Abuse*.
- 4. Social Cohesion and Civic Participation:** There is a growing concern over the numbers of young people coming into contact with the law as offenders, victims or witnesses. While an important aspect of this is the legislative and regulatory framework that protects young people and promotes restorative justice principles, a major emphasis is to instill in young people values of civic responsibility and social cohesion.

In addressing the issues under each of these Policy Areas, this Policy endorses a vision which sees equal rights, access and opportunities for every I-Kiribati youth to participate and contribute fully to all aspects of spiritual, physical, social, cultural and economic development. To achieve this vision, four Policy Objectives have been determined by youth stakeholders, for each of the four Policy Areas:

1. To provide young people with opportunities to develop vocational skills and life skills to enable them to become responsible self-reliant and contributing members of the community;
2. To explore and increase opportunities and means of providing decent employment and livelihood for young entrepreneurs;
3. To promote healthy lifestyles amongst youth with special focus on the dangers of alcohol and substance abuse, unwanted pregnancy, STIs, HIV&AIDS and other social problems;

4. To promote youth-friendly environments within community, institutional and at national levels that nurture youth participation and that have the commitment and capacity to respond to youth needs.

Each Policy Objective has a set of strategies, the sum of which, should lead to the achievement of the objective. These have been derived from several consultations with stakeholders representing different sectors of government and non-government organizations and respond to the priority issues determined by situational analysis. They are presented in the logical planning matrix – the National Plan of Action. A feature of this Policy is the specific targeting of each strategy. Target groups have been specified for each Policy Area, to ensure that the most vulnerable feel the impacts of this Policy first. Each strategy is planned to be implemented within the five-year time-frame of this Policy, and each has been assigned to a lead agency or agencies, responsible for implementation.

The monitoring and evaluation aspects of the Policy – indicators and means of verification – are integrated into the Plan of Action, to ensure that each strategy is measurable and an agency is responsible for monitoring progress. Additionally, it is important that the review and evaluation activities are factored into the planned activities. A critical part of the Plan of Action is the financial resourcing. The intention is where possible and where appropriate, activities should be mainstreamed into sector strategies in relevant government ministries and relevant development agency mandates. In this regard, planned activities need to be realistic and achievable.

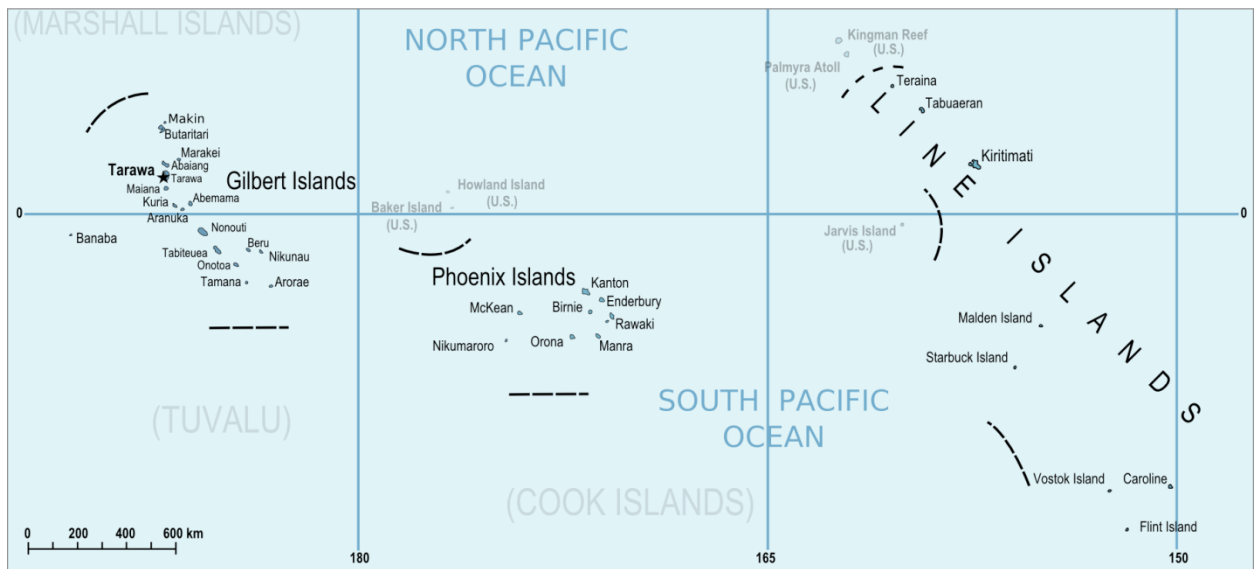
Finally, the Policy outlines the Policy Implementation Mechanism by defining the roles and responsibilities of the lead Ministry – the Ministry of Internal and Social Affairs, the youth stakeholders, young people themselves and development and donor agencies. The success of this Policy can be realized through multi-sectoral commitment and dedication.



# MAP OF KIRIBATI



Source: [http://pacificislandsaid.org/images/kiribati\\_map.jpg](http://pacificislandsaid.org/images/kiribati_map.jpg)



Source: [http://maneaba.net/img/kiribati\\_map\\_large.png](http://maneaba.net/img/kiribati_map_large.png)

## ABBREVIATIONS

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AHD	Adolescent Health Development
BAC	Business Advisory Centre
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
HIV&AIDS	Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
MCIC	Ministry of Commerce, Industry & Co-operatives
MHMS	Ministry of Health and Medical Services
MLHRD	Ministry of Labour & Human Resources Development
MOE	Ministry of Education
NDP	National Development Plan
NGO	Non-Government Organizations
NYP	National Youth Policy
NYPF	National Youth Policy Framework
RERF	Revenue Equalization Reserve Fund
SPC	Secretariat of the Pacific Community
STIs	Sexually Transmitted Infections
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
WHO	World Health Organization

## 1. INTRODUCTION

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**“E MATERAOI ARON RIBANAKINA IBUKIN KAUBWAIN AO RIKIRAKEN ABARA, TE RORONRIKIRAKE.”** The phrase is translated as “It is worthwhile to cultivate for the future resource and development of the country, THE YOUTH.” This phrase is to be kept in our minds, hearts and souls as citizens of Kiribati consider the role and place of young people.

This National Youth Policy 2011-2015 is presented to the nation, especially to those working for the empowerment and development of the young people across all sectors. It is a guiding tool for decision-making concerning the development and welfare of young people in Kiribati. The National Youth Policy is relevant to all sectors and services, for ‘youth’ require a cross-sectoral field of intervention and a multidisciplinary approach and effort. It means that the implementation of this policy will be possible only if all the stakeholders combine their efforts and work consistently to provide young people with opportunities for their prosperous and successful futures.

The NYP has been formulated on the basis of consultations in three outer islands (Tamana, Aranuka and Marakei), with government departments, youth organizations, NGOs, churches, and communities. The consultations identified priority issues affecting the lives of young people in Kiribati. A stakeholder consultation held in Tarawa in May 2009 further deliberated on this issues with government and non-government representatives from different sectors, determined guiding principles and reviewed the first draft of the policy. The NYP Working Committee<sup>1</sup> that developed this policy undertook an analysis of the key development issues and their underlying causes, facing young people. Recommended interventions necessary for development of youth respond to these issues and their causes. The Policy has been further informed by recommendations arising out of the National Youth Parliament 2011. After the reviewing of the document by committees, the Youth Division of the Ministry of Internal and Social Affairs is now able to present this policy to approval by its supervisory Cabinet.

After analysis of the different definitions of youth, the NYP concludes that youth is characterized by people under the age of 30. Within this age-group this Policy targets specific priority groups that include young people living with disabilities and specific groups of young people at greater risk and vulnerability.

As part of the effort to promote policy implementation, an action plan has been developed thus specifying the responsibility of identified role players towards youth development. The writing and reviewing process has been supervised by the Youth Division of the Ministry of Internal and Social Affairs which is composed of the Senior Youth Development Officer and two Youth Officers. A local consultant was recruited for a period of three months (August – October 2008) in order to draw the document up. She was helped in her task by members of the Kiribati Youth Panel and Adolescent Health Development. The Division is grateful for the continuous support of UNICEF throughout the development of this Policy, financially and through technical assistance.

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<sup>1</sup>A NYP Working Committee was established to fine-tune the Draft Policy. The Committee was composed by representatives of the Ministry of Internal & Social Affairs (MISA), the Ministry of Education (MOE), the Ministry of Health & Medical Services (MHMS), the Ministry of Labor & Human Resources Development (MLHRD), Ministry of Commerce, Industry & Co-operatives (MCIC), the Kiribati Association of NGOs (KANGO) and the disability association Te Toa Matoa. Three meetings were held between the period starting from 15th August to 16th September 2009 to discuss, comment and improve the document. The Committee was assisted by a French volunteer in its final work.

## 2. KIRIBATI YOUTH PROFILE

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### ***Youth Definition***

The National Youth Policy refers to young people as those falling within the age group of 15 to 29 years. This is based on the previous policy definition and the consultations that have been led both in the outer islands and with the different stakeholders. This approach makes it possible for policy to take into account the whole of the following points of view.

People aged between 15 and 29 years represent a total of 26,149 persons and 28.3% of the population in 2005. The median age was 20.7, which means that half of the population was younger than that.

As demonstrated in the 2005 census, even with a medium population scenario, the size of the population will continue to increase considerably during the next years with a projection of 119,000 to 140,000 people in 2025.

There are, however, variations on the definition of youth, as follows:

**Community definition:** Kiribati communities define youth as people who have reached puberty, which can imply males and females aged 12 years and older until marriage. The average of marriage is at 22.2 for female and 24.6 for males. From this stage they are automatically called 'adult' even when they are married at a teenage age. Young married people are able to have their say and a seat at the Community and the Maneaba for decision making. However, a person is not regarded as an adult until he or she reaches the age of 35 if he is not married.

**Law definition:** as stated in the Laws of Kiribati:

- Young persons (under the age of 21) prohibited to be within the curtilage of licensed premises.
- At the age of 16 years, a young person is allowed to marry but with the consent of his/her parents or guardians.
- In the Constitution of Kiribati, at the age of 18 a young person is entitled to register as an elector and so registered to vote at an election of a member of the Maneaba ni Maungatabu.

**Statistical Definition:** The Statistics Office of the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development defines 'youth' as people aged from 15 to 24 years. This age bracket is also referred to as the 'youth' bracket by the United Nations.

These variations acknowledge the fact that young people are not a homogenous group and a differentiated approach should be adopted in dealing with them. Furthermore, the definition of youth is perhaps harder to define by age, rather by the stage of *transition* from dependence as a child to independence as an adult, the process of which can start and end at different ages.

### 3. RATIONALE FOR THE POLICY

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Youth represent more than 20% of the actual population of Kiribati and their number will be growing in the next decades. As the future leaders of the country, they also represent the possibility of change and development and in this regard, the Government values the contributions of young citizens made today. The people of Kiribati are very proud of youth in their community and society and regard them as their asset.

The Government also recognises the social, environmental and economic challenges facing young people today are growing and need commitment at all levels to address these issues. Therefore the overall rationale for this policy is the need to build potential in young people to effectively counteract these problems.

#### ***Legislative and Policy Framework***

The Constitution of the Republic of Kiribati, (1980) is the supreme law of the country and guarantees in Chapter II, the respect of “the fundamental rights and freedoms of the individual”. These rights but also responsibilities apply to everybody including young people.

The legal rights of young i-Kiribati are also defined in several other pieces of domestic legislation. The revised Employment Ordinance (1977) specifies the rights of young workers. The National Education Policy (1999–2012) commits further support for the rationale for youth, as does the Youth Employment National Action Plan (2009–2012) and the Kiribati National Disability Policy (2010–2013).

Finally, the Pacific Youth Strategy, adopted by the Second Conference of Youth Ministers of the Pacific Community in December 2005, provides the regional framework for youth development in the Pacific region to the year 2010 and beyond. The Strategy provides highlights key development areas for young people: to have access to integrated educational opportunities; to nurture sustainable livelihoods; lead healthier lifestyles; build stronger communities; benefit from effective national and community mechanisms for addressing youth issues; and strengthen their cultural identities.

#### ***Rights and Responsibilities of Young People***

The rights of young i-Kiribati citizens are articulated by the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) that states in Article 21, “(1) *Everyone* has the right to take part in the government of the country, directly or through freely chosen representatives” and “(2) *Everyone* has the right of equal access to public services in his country”.

Article 1 of the United Nations Declaration on the Right to Development (1986) states, “...[e]very human person and all peoples are entitled to participate in, contribute to, and enjoy economic, social, cultural and political development...”.

The rights of children and young people under 18 years are specifically defined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), 1990. This legally binding international instrument spells out children’s right to survival, to develop to the fullest, to protection from harmful influences, abuse and exploitation, and to participate fully in family, cultural and social life. Every right spelled out in the Convention is inherent to the human dignity and harmonious development of every child. The Convention protects children's rights by setting standards in health care; education; and legal, civil and social services. The Kiribati Government ratified the Convention in 1995.

The Convention for the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), 1979, is an international bill of rights for women and girls. Consisting of a preamble and 30 articles, it defines what constitutes discrimination against women and girls and sets up an agenda for national action to end such discrimination and allow for their equal access to development. Kiribati ratified the Convention in 2004.

With these rights, are several freedoms which are restricted by what is commonly understood as 'responsibilities'. For example, under Article 13 of the CRC, children and young people have the right to freedom of expression. Once this right is provided for, children and young people have the responsibility to respect the rights and reputations of others and respect the protection of national security, public order, public health or morals. Duty bearers implied by these Conventions – governments, parents and others – also have the responsibility to provide young people with their rights.

## **4. POLICY PRINCIPLES**

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The following principles are derived from the policy rationale. They provide the foundational basis, to guide reasoning or conduct for the policy framework that follows:

### **1. Participation**

- Empowerment of young people as assets for national development. Interventions should raise the confidence of youth so that they can contribute meaningfully as instruments and agents of their own development and to the broader society.
- The promotion of inclusive social and economic strategies must create opportunities to involve young men and young women in decision-making, and policy, strategy and program development. Young people should own the outcomes of the development process and should view human rights as a fundamental basis for human development.
- Participation should be facilitated with respect to cultural values, social networks and protocols to ensure social cohesion while fostering commitment to democracy and nation building.

### **2. Equity**

- All youth development initiatives should not discriminate against young people on the basis of age, gender, race, sexual orientation, disability, geographic location or any other form of discrimination as enshrined in the Constitution of the country. This principle recognizes and celebrates equity with diversity. While acknowledging the impact of socialization, this principle promotes respect for the human rights.
- The National Youth policy promotes equal rights and opportunities for all young women and men and calls for women to be respected and valued as equal and able partners. All young women and young men of diverse backgrounds must access resources and services crucial to their holistic development. Young people living in outer islands require the same access to resources and services as those living in the urban capital in Tarawa.

### **3. Respect for Culture**

- Young people are social beings belonging to a network of family and community structures, which are essential to their development and social cohesion in general. It is critical that these support systems are strengthened to ensure proper development of youth. In this respect, the provision of

services and youth development interventions should promote the development of cultural identity and include young people in cultural preservation initiatives, including environmental preservation.

- Within the cultural context, it is important that all interventions recognize at all times, the inherent worth and inborn dignity of youth. Initiatives should support youth to unleash their strengths and talents and counter negative perceptions of youth.

#### **4. Good Governance**

- This policy recognizes the need to prioritise youth-focused interventions that address the *holistic needs* of young people effectively. Youth development initiatives must encompass all aspects of a young person's life and respond to their physical, psychological, social, economic and spiritual needs within the socio-political environment thus ensuring that they gain the necessary knowledge, skills, and experience required to ensure smooth transition into adult life. In this regard, the *coordination* of these initiatives is essential to ensure the integration of youth development objectives across government sectors, civil society and the private and business sectors, has positive impact in the lives of young people.
- To ensure that young people's voices are heard and acted upon, the governance principle of *responsiveness* is imperative to this policy. The principle of participation requires service providers to faithfully consider the voice of young people and respond with the best interests of young people. Institutions and organisations involved in youth development should operate in a transparent and accountable manner.
- *Sustainable development* – young people's assets, potential, capacity and capability must be maximised so that they can respond effectively and efficiently to life's challenges without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Social protection measures that seek to reduce the vulnerability of young people need to be contextualized in climate adaption and environmental preservation strategies.

## 5. KEY ISSUES AFFECTING YOUTH

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This section highlights and summarises several priority issues drawn from an analysis conducted in 2009. They are deemed priority issues because of their scale and the significance of their implications on young people's lives and futures. The intention of the National Youth Policy 2011-2015 is to respond to these issues:

### 5.1. Youth and Health

While general health issues affect the lives of young people in Kiribati, as they do for the wider community, there are several specific health issues that are particularly pertinent to the well-being and situation of young people.

#### 5.1.1. Sexual and Reproductive Health

For young people in Kiribati, sexual and reproductive health is of critical importance, and more so for young people with disabilities who often receive less education and information. The teenage (15–19 years old females) fertility rate in Kiribati is at 39% which is not high and some births are intended. However, it is evident that *“some young people engage in unprotected sex and risk having unwanted pregnancies or contracting sexually transmitted diseases”* (UNICEF, 2005). Between 1994 and 2003, there were 25 recorded births to girls aged 15 or less. However, this number is expected to be higher with many births occurring outside of the official health system and sometimes are not officially registered due to shame associated with early teenage pregnancy.

Policies toward family planning have been successfully implemented in the past. But in 2005, the contraceptive prevalence rate/family planning users was only 20.5%. The access to sexual health services for young people is much more difficult in the outer islands than in South Tarawa. When it exists, *“there is little confidentiality in the health services where everyone knows everyone and young people can risk ridicule or beatings by asking for contraceptives or seeking for treatment even when they know they have a sexually transmitted infection.”* (UNICEF, 2005). So it is difficult for women to exercise a full choice over their use of contraceptives.

It is, of course, a concern in terms of health, but also because of the cultural context, which highly values the premarital chastity of girl. *“When a girl loses her virginity, consensually or through rape, apology and reconciliation (tekabara bure’) is sought between the two families and her marriage is often arranged to the boy or man involved. Most schools will not accept girls as students once they are engaged, married or pregnant, a policy which discriminates against girls and, in the case of rape or an unintended pregnancy, adds to their burden of guilt and shame.”* (UNICEF, 2005).

Patterns of sexual behavior make the young population highly vulnerable. Indeed, if traditionally young women are expected to be virgins at marriage, men are encouraged to gain sexual experience. Cervical cancer is now the most common type of cancer in Kiribati, with limited facilities for diagnosis or for treatment. Increasing numbers of women are hospitalized for reproductive and sexual health problems such as sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and the maternal mortality rate is considered high (158% recorded in 2005, WHO, 2009). Strategies need to be targeted to both young men and young women to



reduce risk and promote healthy practices. In addition, a main focus in this area is to improve the delivery and access of youth-friendly health services for both young women and young men.

### **5.1.2. Mental Health and Suicide**

According to UNICEF, “*Mental disorders are a serious concern with a sharp rise in the number of cases, particularly involving males in the 15–44 age group, with the most common condition being various types of schizophrenia.*” (UNICEF, 2005).

Suicides are not well recorded but seem to be quite common among young people, especially young men. 31 young people aged 15–29 years committed suicide between 1991 and 2001 (UNICEF, 2005). There were 21 suicides recorded in 2005 (WHO, 2009). It is believed that suicide is often linked to a broken relationship, excessive alcohol use, or depression.

With the number of deaths by ‘intentional injuries’ exceeding that of traffic injuries, it is necessary to promote mental health as a key area of intervention.

### **5.1.3. Accidents**

Alcohol contributes to the high rate of traffic accidents, particularly on South Tarawa. The wearing of seat-belts is not compulsory. Speed bumps have been placed along the road and the police control the speed but without any repercussion for those who are in breach of the law and without capacity to test blood alcohol level. Buses are known to travel at high speeds, competing for passengers and stopping or restarting without any warning.

Between 1991 and 2001, seven 15–19 year olds, eleven 20–24 year olds and fourteen 25–29 year olds died from accidental injuries – in total four females and 28 males (UNICEF, 2005), which made young men seven times more likely to die on the roads than young women. Interventions to reduce road accidents should specifically target young men and should involve them in the process of development and implementation.

### **5.1.4. Alcohol and Substance Abuse**

Though the purchase and consumption of alcohol is prohibited by law (Liquor Ordinance of 1973 and Manufacture of Alcohol Act of 1997), it is not enforced by any of responsible agencies (police, island councils, ministry of health). Consumption of cigarettes and alcohol among the youth and under age is evident and growing.

According to the last census, 20% of 15–19 year olds are regular smokers; it increases rapidly to about 60% for 20–24 year olds and 65% for 25–29 year olds. More males smoke compared to females. The gift of tobacco (Mweaka) remains closely tied to spiritual beliefs in the Outer Islands and, in urban areas, a gift of tobacco is still considered polite.

The percentage of regular drinkers is lower than the smokers – around 4% of the 15–19 year olds, 7% for 20–24 year olds and 25–29 year olds. This still, however, constitutes a high rate. With a greater percentage of young people reported to be occasional drinkers, there are around 20% of 15–19 year olds and 30% of 20–24 and 25–29 year olds who consume alcohol or a large range of home-made substances, on a regular or occasional basis. Drinking to excess is a common practice with deliberate mixing to

increase the effects. Again, there are more males represented in these figures, than females. Young women are limited by social expectations to not drink or to drink less alcohol and also by their restrictions on socializing. Young people drink to be independent, to aspire to 'modern' trends, to relieve boredom, gain confidence and to socialize with peers (UNICEF, 2005). Those who are at greater risk are those who have completed formal education, who are unemployed and who live with relatives and extended family.

Considering the frequency of admissions to hospital for tobacco and alcohol-related illnesses – in 2003, tobacco and alcohol-related illnesses represented 10% of the admissions (UNICEF, 2005) – the issue requires attention with particular focus on young people. Furthermore, the close association between alcohol and substance abuse with crime and unsafe sex further highlights the need to focus on preventive measures.

Previous attempts at raising awareness have largely been ignored by young people. This policy seeks to engage young people in the development of appropriate and effective communication messages for young people to ensure their ownership and adherence. In addition, strategies should aim to provide alternative constructive past-times for young people.

## **5.2. Youth and Education**

Education in Kiribati is free and compulsory from age 6 to 15 years. Schools are quite well distributed all over the country, but senior secondary schools are concentrated in South Tarawa and there are insufficient numbers to absorb all potential students coming from the primary section. While the overall proportion of government expenditure on education is one of the highest in the Pacific, the greatest proportion of this spending is on primary education. Despite a clear improvement on educational achievement in Kiribati – from 23.85% of the population 15 years or older with secondary or higher level education in 1995 to 50.55% in 2005, there are still significant numbers of young people who do not attend school for various reasons, particularly from age 13 years and more so for boys. The proportion of people without schooling rose from 7.75% on average in 1995 to 8.25 % in 2005. These young people are said to join the lines of village workers or unemployed. Some, however, secure places at the 6 training institutes, all located in South Tarawa. The overall low percentage of qualified I-Kiribati represents a major issue for employment and development in the country.

Most children with disabilities do not receive or complete education especially in the outer islands as there is lack of disabled-friendly school resources as well as a lack of trained teachers for children with disabilities. Kiribati school building infrastructure restricts access for children with disabilities. This contributes to their lack of knowledge and lack of skills, and renders them vulnerable to a life of dependence, abuse and exploitation, and other natural and human disasters.

The key issues related to youth and education are: access to learning resources; insufficient numbers of qualified teachers, particularly for Combined Secondary schools; poor conditions of school infrastructure, transportation difficulties and water and sanitation facilities, especially in the outer islands; schools and resources for young people living with disabilities; and insufficient opportunities for informal education. While some of these issues are related to general improvements required for education, and would relate to development strategies already formulated for this sector, there remains some youth-focused areas that are pertinent for inclusion in this policy. These include providing education or skills-building opportunities for

young people living with disabilities and for young people who opt for non-formal options to encourage relevant learning for future livelihoods. These may include the development of talents in craft, sport, music or entertainment, or may be related to agriculture or fishing. Open Learning Centres for young adults should be considered as a development option to address this issue.

In addition, there is a need to explore strategies for retaining young people in schools to reduce the likelihood of young people turning to alcohol consumption and substance abuse. The focus in this area may be to educate parents and guardians on the importance of education and their roles to support and guide their children appropriately, or it could be to provide a greater range of extra-curricular interest-topics such as Girl Guides and Boy Scouts for students. 'Student support services' that offer career counseling, vocational guidance and work experience programs are preventative measures to address school drop-outs and truancy. Programs of this sort are also beneficial in preparing young people for the work-force.

### **5.3. Youth and Employment**

While there is a lack of labour market data, which hampers labour market analysis to date, the 2005 Census provides information on the labour force, split between three categories – cash workers (employees and self-employed), village workers (subsistence sector) and unemployed. The category of village workers is often considered as a sub-category of the unemployed category due to the fact that subsistence work is of a necessity when a cash income is not available. This is consistently the largest category of the labour force. If it is to be assumed that village workers are looking for a paying income or a cash job, then the percentage of unemployed people approaches 65% in 2005. The greater majority of these reside in the outer and rural areas, where there are less education facilities and job opportunities, leading to a higher unemployment level.

When 15–24 years old represent on average 25.5% of the labour force from 1990 to 2005 and when village workers are included in the unemployed category, we can see that young people aged 15–24 years are under-represented in the cash work sector and over-represented within the unemployed.

Considering the three labour force categories separately, a decline is observed in the number of youth engaged in subsistence work while an augmentation is noted in both the number of youth getting paid jobs and a significant increase of unemployed young people. The point to highlight, however, is the fact that the unemployment rate of young people aged 15–24 years is more than double that of the entire workforce in Kiribati. There is considerably more detail for analysis available that explores the work status in each labour force category: The largest majority of young cash workers are of employee status; Of all the professions in the cash worker category, young people systematically constitute less than 25% of each activity sector and are mainly present in clerk, agriculture/fisheries and elementary occupations; In rural areas, young people, represent a large majority of the workers in agriculture and fisheries and a small majority in the professional sector. They are a minority in all the other occupations.

With only 400 to 600 paid jobs available and over 2000 students leaving school each year (ROUATU I., 2009), even if all the jobs were taken by the youth, there would still be in excess of a thousand young people underemployed and unemployed each year.

The training institutes can absorb some of the school leavers, up to 300-400 and give them an opportunity to find a job. But not all students will qualify or pass their courses. For example, in 2008, just over half of the

MTC students passed to become able-bodied seamen. The recruitment of I-Kiribati seafarers is slowing down because of health and disciplinary issues as well as a lack of demand linked to the downturn in the world economy. In addition, in recent years, the government and public enterprises have tried to reduce their staff to lower costs.

The situation is exacerbated for young people with disabilities. Firstly, as mentioned above, most are not able to receive or complete education. Furthermore, there are no vocational opportunities available for them. The development of vocational skills for young people with disabilities is essential to recognise the special and unique talents they have and to enable a level of independence for them.

In 2007, the Kiribati Government negotiated the “Recognized Seasonal Employment Scheme” with the New Zealand Government enabling 70 unskilled I-Kiribati to work in farms. All of them returned in 2008 and only 20 were sent in 2009. The scheme was not focused on only recruiting young people.

To support women’s participation in the rural sector, Government has responsibility to recruit Women Interest Worker (WIW) positions on Island Councils (originally established in the mid-1960s). Though there are difficulties related to retaining women in these positions, the positions are, nonetheless, important resources for disseminating understanding about women’s status and CEDAW related issues. Social pressure of the community appears to influence women to accept a domestic role rather than to aspire for a career. This is particularly true for the rural area. Those who do follow a career, often opt for nursing or teaching.

The focus in this area would be to increase opportunities in the formal sector (cash workers) in a larger range of technical professions as well as providing greater opportunities for livelihood development in the informal sector – what might be construed as ‘village work’ and that would also provide opportunities for the greater number of unemployed young people. Specific focus for employment or livelihood opportunities for youth with disabilities is necessary. Furthermore, a clearly targeted focus on youth recruitment, at least for a minimum proportion, in government employment schemes would ensure that youth are allocated opportunities in all initiatives.

#### **5.4. Youth and Justice / Social Issues**

There is growing concern with increasing numbers of young people coming in contact with the law as perpetrators or victims, especially on South Tarawa. Most youth crimes are against property and the person, and often they are fuelled by alcohol abuse. An emergence of youth ‘gangs’, increased violence and general disorder and crime, has sometimes been attributed to the breakdown of the family support structure. Young men feature more as perpetrators while young women are more often victims of sexual offences and domestic violence. Young women with disabilities have a greater vulnerability to being victims of crime, such as rape. Their ability to defend themselves against violence and abuse and within the justice system is seriously inhibited by the lack of services and support for disabled young people in the justice system.

A few young women also get involved with the illegal sex industry. Known to be as young as 14 years of age, some declare that they have the support of their families. While the police carry out regular checks on boats, they and the community are more concerned with sanctioning the *ainen matawa* instead of the clients or business managers. In 2002, police reported more than 40 cases of women boarding the boats, down from 70-80 women arrested in 2000, however anecdotal evidence suggests the trade is growing.

There are several key factors related to youth crime. The need for cash or commodities may be one reason, but there are others related to gender equality, lack of recreation and work opportunities for young people, difficulties negotiating the conflict between modern and traditional ways of living, social pressures, lack of guidance or lack of positive adult role models, as well as alcohol and substance abuse. The strategies mentioned in the youth issues above also serve to address youth and justice issues. It is important that these strategies are developed and clearly targeted for males and females to address the gender differentiations mentioned above. In addition, the laws and justice system for young people coming in contact with the law as perpetrators and/or victims need to promote restorative justice, over punitive justice, and support victims with services for rehabilitation, to allow all the opportunity to reform and make positive contributions to the economy and society.

## 6. NATIONAL YOUTH POLICY

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This section outlines the Policy framework:

### 6.1. VISION

The vision of the National Youth Policy 2011-2015 is for every I-Kiribati youth to have equal rights, access and opportunities to participate and contribute fully to all aspects of spiritual, physical, social, cultural and economic development.

### 6.2. MISSION

The mission of the National Youth Policy 2011-2015 is to reinforce the capacities of young people to achieve a better quality of life for themselves, their families, their communities, and Kiribati as a nation through addressing their needs, promoting their actions, providing services, opportunities and support necessary for their development and fulfillment. The Policy aims is to facilitate and support youth participation in local, national, regional and international levels so that they may play a greater and more meaningful role in shaping their future and the world they live in.

### 6.3. TARGET GROUPS

To ensure the greatest impact, this policy targets specific strategies to specific groups of young people who face greater marginalisation, are at greater risk or who are especially vulnerable. These are:

#### *Young Women*

The status of women in Kiribati being subservient to men, has particular influence on the well-being and future opportunities for young women. Issues that have a greater pertinence to young women are sexual and reproductive health, mental health, substance abuse, employment and livelihood opportunities.

#### *Young Men*

Gender dimensions of youth issues see young men featured in strategies addressing the following issues: sexual and reproductive health; mental health; accidents; substance abuse; education; employment and livelihoods; and youth crime.

#### *Youth Living with Disabilities*

The principle of equity ensures that young people living with disabilities are included in strategies addressing key youth issues. In particular, specific strategies are required for education and employment/livelihoods.

#### *Unemployed young men and young women*

With youth employment featuring as one of the key youth issues to be addressed by this Policy, there is the need to target these strategies towards those who are unemployed or those who are categorised as 'village workers' who have the need to secure a living – either through formal or informal sectors – in order to achieve their independence and well-being. Within this target group, it is important to target employment or livelihood strategies to young men and young women, for different strategies may be needed.

### ***School-aged Out-of-school Youth***

With school drop-outs featuring as one of the significant youth issues with the education issues to be addressed by this Policy, this target group will need specific intervention. This may require efforts to be targeted towards parents and schools in addition to the youth themselves.

### ***Youth in Rural Areas***

The principle of Equity determines youth in rural areas as requiring specific attention in all areas addressed by this Policy.

### ***Youth at Risk***

Some groups of young people are in positions of greater vulnerability than others and as such, need specific targeting to ensure that they benefit from interventions. For example, young women engaged in the sex industry will need specific targeting with sexual and reproductive health strategies, and possibly also employment and livelihood strategies. Some groups may be more at risk of mental health issues or suicide. Young people living in single-parent households may be at greater risk.

## **6.4. POLICY AREAS, OBJECTIVES & STRATEGIES**

### **PA 1 Education and Skills Building**

#### **Policy Objective**

*To provide young people with opportunities to develop vocational skills and life skills to enable them to become responsible self-reliant and contributing members of the community*

#### **Strategies**

1. Provide education and/or skills development for children and young people at risk or living with disabilities, particularly for secondary level education.
2. Raise awareness for parents and guardians to understand adolescent development and the importance of education and their roles in supporting and guiding young people appropriately.
3. Provide Student Support Services to offer career counseling, vocational guidance and work-experience programs for school students.
4. Expand formal school curricula to provide relevant learning for young people, including non-formal options for skills development at primary and junior secondary level education, life-skills education, cultural heritage and promoting use of information technology.
5. Expand and strengthen the range of vocational training centres focusing on specialized areas, including for example, marketing for handicrafts, for young women and young men, outside of the formal education system.
6. Expand community learning centres to provide a wider range of training for youth, and a greater access to information through establishment of libraries.

## **PA 2 Economic Participation and Employment**

### **Policy Objective**

*To explore and increase opportunities and means of providing decent employment and livelihood for young entrepreneurs*

### **Strategies**

1. Increase opportunities in the formal sector (cash workers) in a larger range of technical professions and small business development. Strategies should essentially involve the private and non-government sector and should explore youth apprentice or intern schemes.
2. Ensure all government investment, employment, business and trading strategies and schemes include a minimum allocation of opportunities and support for youth recruitment or small-business development, and special effort is sought to provide opportunities in areas where there is greater youth unemployment, in outer islands.
3. Explore opportunities to develop markets and provide livelihoods for young people based on Kiribati cultures and traditions, such as weaving, singing, sewing *tibuta*, *maneaba* building, fishing etc.

## **PA 3 Health and Safety**

### **Policy Objective**

*To promote healthy lifestyles amongst youth with special focus on the dangers of alcohol and substance abuse, unwanted pregnancy, STIs, HIV&AIDS and other social problems.*

### **Strategies**

1. Provide access to improved and youth-friendly health services including sexual and reproductive health and counseling services for both young men and young women, in both rural and urban areas, as well as to young people in positions of greater risk and vulnerability. Young men and women should be involved in the process of development and implementation.
2. Develop communication strategies with the involvement of both young men and young women to reduce alcohol and substance abuse, address violence, abuse and exploitation issues, and promote healthy sexual and reproductive behaviour. Communication strategies should involve the delivery of messages through the school curricula, extra-curricular activities of advisory/support services in schools, as well as through community-based and non-government organisations.
3. Develop and implement strategies with young people to promote mental health for young people.
4. Develop interventions to reduce road accidents that specifically target young men and involve them in the process of development and implementation.
5. Promote healthy living through good nutrition and physical activity, through both the schools system and through community-based programs.



## **PA 4 Social Cohesion and Civic Participation**

### **Policy Objective**

*To promote youth-friendly environments within community, institutional and at national levels that nurture youth participation and that have the commitment and capacity to respond to youth needs.*

### **Strategies**

1. Provide youth-friendly spaces through establishment of youth centres, particularly on outer islands to provide youth-focused services and a venue for social associations.
2. Raise civic awareness through introduction of civic education in primary and secondary school curriculums and community education initiatives targeting young people. These initiatives should cover human rights issues and promote cultural heritage. Issues such as domestic violence and gender equality should be emphasized.
3. Provide alternative constructive options for past-times for young women and young men, including volunteer work and promotion of different sports, music, art and craft and other areas based on young people's talents.
4. Promote restorative justice practices for young offenders at legislative, institutional and community levels.
5. Provide support for young people facing social stigma and victimisation, such as teenage mothers, ex-offenders or young people living with disabilities by providing counseling and by educating communities.
6. Facilitate inter-generational dialogue, mentorship and activities to foster respect and understanding between older and younger generations, parents and their children, between modern and traditional values and between community and national levels.
7. Review and reform legislation and policies at national and at island level to ensure that young people are protected and provided for with regards to the principles and policy areas of this Policy. Particular attention should be made to regulations controlling consumption of tobacco and alcohol, justice for young offenders, and enforcement of compulsory education.

### **6.5. POLICY IMPLEMENTATION MECHANISM**

In order to facilitate the effective implementation of this policy, the following mechanism and action plan are proposed:

#### ***The Role of the Ministry of Internal and Social Affairs (MISA)***

The Ministry of Internal and Social Affairs is the leading Ministry responsible for the youth affairs and activities. The Youth Unit was set up within this Ministry and manned by three officers, one Senior Youth Development Officer and two Youth Officers. As stated in the MISA's Strategic Plan 2009-2011, the Youth Division's core responsibilities include "the development, co-ordination and management of all youth related programs, initiating and conducting youth training programs at island and national levels, provide

technical assistance to NGOs with youth related programs, and representing Kiribati at international and regional meetings. Its objectives are to improve and enhance the development status and general welfare of the youth and children in relation to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)”.

The Youth Unit within MISA is responsible for coordinating, monitoring and overseeing implementation of the National Youth Policy and its accompanying Plan of Action. MISA plays both advocate and catalyst roles and maintains regular discourse across all government departments, CSOs/NGOs, including churches, youth organisations and other youth stakeholders throughout Kiribati.

The capacity of the youth office and its officers should be strengthened to enable the effective management and coordination of implementation under this Policy. MISA’s key role is summarized here:

- Ensure that there is mutual understanding of the key issues, obligations and commitments highlighted in the Policy, between Government agencies and related government ministries who are responsible for aspects within this Policy.
- Establish in partnership with young people, a National Youth Council (NYC) to act as the voice of young people. Consult with this network of young people where necessary and act on behalf of the NYC.
- Form partnerships with NGOs and other youth stakeholders to implement activities under the Plan of Action.
- Seek donor assistance where required for funding gaps relating to the Plan of Action.
- Monitor implementation by designated Ministries, NGOs and other youth stakeholders on a regular basis. Involves coordinating the data collection related to policy areas, disseminating information to stakeholders and Cabinet.
- Advocate on behalf of youth to ensure that policies and laws are compliant with the principles and objectives of this Policy.

### ***The Role of Line Ministries and Other Youth Stakeholders***

The aim of this policy is to engage collaborative efforts of Government, churches and other NGOs to support implementation of the Policy. Line Ministries and youth stakeholders whose mandates are implied by the Policy Areas are responsible for supporting the thrust of this Policy. Their role is summarized here:

- Collaborate with MISA and other government agencies and development partners to determine key activities under relevant Policy Areas and Strategies. Involves pledging commitments to implementation of the National Youth Policy and its accompanying Plan of Action. NGOs are not ‘obliged’ as such to implement, but the policy should guide their work.
- Where appropriate, seek funding to support implementation of activities committed to in the Plan of Action. These should be incorporated into development strategies and work-plans to go through regular budget allocation processes of Government or donor assistance proposals for NGOs. Where necessary, identify funding gaps to MISA.

- Implement activities committed to in the Plan of Action within regular stakeholder programs to advance capacity development for young people.
- Contribute to monitoring reporting templates, Policy reviews and evaluations, providing progress of implementation as per the indicators of change, financial expenditure and results achieved.

### ***The Role of Regional and International Development and Donor Agencies***

While the intentions of this Policy are to embed the activities into Government development strategies and work-plans, existing budgetary limitations will inevitably create some funding gaps relating to the implementation of activities. These may especially relate to areas of capacity building or where additional technical or human resources are required. The Government of Kiribati requests donor and development partners to regard and support the areas of this Policy as key development areas. The role of development partners is summarized here:

- Provide technical support in their areas of expertise relevant to the National Youth Policy, the accompanying Plan of Action and roles defined in the Policy Implementation Mechanism.
- Ensure that all country and regional youth related programs and activities support implementation of the National Youth Policy.
- Strengthen the linkages between regional support mechanisms and strategies and the national bodies, especially with regard to the Pacific Youth Strategy, the Pacific Plan, the Pacific Youth Council and other regional strategies.

## **6.6. PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT**

Monitoring and evaluation are critical to realising youth development results and for gathering evidence that the action strategies of the Policy are indeed supported the aspirations of young women and young men in Kiribati. Indicators of change are determined for each activity under each Strategy of each Policy Area. Each stakeholder with responsibilities for implementation in the Plan of Action is responsible for monitoring their activity against the indicators of change, with monitoring templates provided by MISA. In this way, MISA can collate all stakeholder reports to understand comprehensively the progress of all implementation and the overall results achieved by the Policy.

It is important to link the Strategies of this Policy with those of the Kiribati Development Plan, the Millennium Development Goals, the Pacific Plan, the Pacific Youth Strategy and other relevant plans and strategies. Effective monitoring of this Policy implementation will then contribute to effective monitoring of other plans and strategies.

Finally, in monitoring implementation, all efforts should be taken to ensure that data is disaggregated by age, gender and location. This will ensure that results relate to specific groups of young people and can be translated into reports for CRC, CEDAW and other development plans.

## **6.7. PERFORMANCE REPORTING**

MISA is responsible for archiving all collated monitoring reports related to this Policy. Implementation of the Policy will be reported regularly to Cabinet through Annual Reports and only to other Cabinet meetings for extraordinary matters. Key issues relating to challenges and achievements will be raised for discussion and policy response recommendations by Cabinet members.

MISA is responsible for sharing annual reports with youth stakeholders and young people themselves through the National Youth Council.