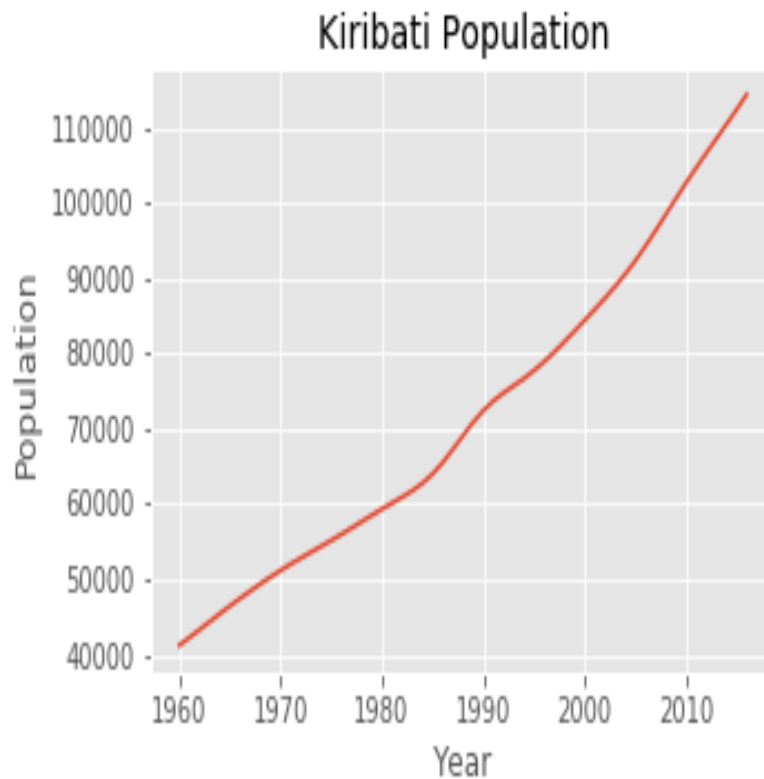


Kiribati



Kiribati (kirr-i-BASS, -BAH-tee), officially the Republic of Kiribati (Gilbertese: Ribaberiki Kiribati), is a sovereign state in the central Pacific Ocean. The permanent population is just over 110,000 (2015), more than half of whom live on Tarawa Atoll. The nation comprises 32 atolls and reef islands and one raised coral island, Banaba. They have a total land area of 800 square kilometres (310 sq mi) and are dispersed over 3.5 million square kilometres (1.3 million square miles). Their spread straddles both the equator and the 180th meridian, although the International Date Line goes round Kiribati and swings far to the east, almost reaching the 150°W meridian. This brings the Line Islands into the same day as the Kiribati Islands. Kiribati's easternmost islands, the southern Line Islands, south of Hawaii, have the most advanced time on Earth: UTC+14 hours. Kiribati became independent from the United Kingdom in 1979. The capital and now most populated area, South Tarawa, consists of a number of islets, connected by a series of causeways. These comprise about half the area of Tarawa Atoll. Kiribati is a member of the Commonwealth of Nations, the IMF and the World Bank, and became a full member of the United Nations in 1999. == Etymology == The name Kiribati was adopted at independence. It is the local enunciation of Gilberts. This name derives from the main archipelago that forms the nation. It was named the Gilbert Islands after the British explorer Thomas Gilbert. He sighted many of the islands in 1788 while mapping out the Outer Passage route from Port Jackson to Canton. The Kiribati archipelago was named Îles Gilbert (Gilbert Islands in English), in about 1820, by Russian admiral Adam von Krusenstern and French captain Louis Duperrey. Both their maps, published in 1820, were written in French. In English, the archipelago was often referred to as the Kingsmills in the 19th century, although the name Gilbert Islands was used increasingly, including in the Western Pacific Order in Council of 1877. The name Gilbert was incorporated into the name of the entire Gilbert and Ellice Islands Colony from 1916, and was retained after the Ellice Islands became the separate nation of Tuvalu in 1976. The spelling of Gilberts in the Gilbertese language as Kiribati may be found in books in Gilbertese prepared by missionaries and others (see e.g. Hawaiian Board of Missionaries, 1895). It is often suggested that the indigenous name for the Gilbert Islands proper is Tungaru (see e.g. Arthur Grimble, 1989).

However, the name Kiribati was chosen as the name of the new independent nation by local consensus, on such grounds that it was modern, and to acknowledge the inclusion of islands (e.g. the Phoenix Group and Line Islands), which were never considered part of the Tuarua (or Gilberts) chain. The pronunciation differs: Kiribas is the official pronunciation as ti in Kiribatese makes an s sound. == History ==

=== Early history === The area now called Kiribati has been inhabited by Micronesians speaking the same Oceanic language since sometime between 3000 BC and AD 1300. The area was not isolated; invaders from Samoa, Tonga, and Fiji, later introduced Polynesian and Melanesian cultural aspects, respectively. Intermarriage tended to blur cultural differences and resulted in a significant degree of cultural homogenisation. === Colonial era ===

Chance visits by European ships occurred in the 17th and 18th centuries, as these ships attempted circumnavigations of the world or sought sailing routes from the south to north Pacific Ocean. A passing trade, whaling the On-The-Line grounds and labour trade ships visited the islands in large numbers during the 19th century with social, economic, political, religious and cultural consequences, good, bad and indifferent. The passing trade gave rise to European, Chinese, Samoan and other residents from the 1830s: they included beachcombers, castaways, traders and missionaries. In 1892 local authorities (uea, atun te boti) on each of the Gilbert Islands agreed to Captain Davis RN declaring them part of a British protectorate with the nearby Ellice Islands. They were administered by a resident commissioner based in Butaritari (1893–95), Tarawa (1896–1908) and Banaba (1908–1941), who was under the Western Pacific High Commission based in Fiji. Banaba, known to Europeans as Ocean Island, was added to the protectorate in 1900. The conduct of W. Telfer Campbell, the resident commissioner of the Gilberts of 1896 to 1908, was criticised as to his legislative, judicial and administrative management (including allegations of forced labour exacted from islanders) and became the subject of the 1909 report by Arthur Mahaffy. In 1913 an anonymous correspondent to the New Age journal described the mis-administration of W. Telfer Campbell and questioned the partiality of Arthur Mahaffy as he was a former colonial official in the Gilberts. The anonymous correspondent also criticised the operations of the Pacific Phosphate Company on Ocean Island. The islands became the crown colony of the Gilbert and Ellice Islands in 1916. The Line Islands, including Christmas Island (later spelled Kiritimati) and Fanning Island (Tabuaeran), were added to the colony in 1919 and the Phoenix Islands were added in 1937. Sir Arthur Grimble was a cadet administrative officer based at Tarawa (1913–1919) and became Resident Commissioner of the Gilbert and Ellice Islands colony in 1926. In 1902, the Pacific Cable Board laid the first trans-Pacific telegraph cable from Bamfield, British Columbia to Fanning Island (Tabuaeran) in the Line Islands and from Fiji to Fanning Island, thus completing the All Red Line, a series of telegraph lines circumnavigating the globe completely within the British Empire. The location of Fanning Island, one of the closest formations to Hawaii, led to its annexation by the British Empire in 1888. Nearby candidates including Palmyra Island were disfavored due to the lack of adequate landing sites. The United States eventually incorporated the Northern Line into its territories and did the same with the Phoenix Islands which lie between Kiribati and the Line Islands including Howland, Jarvis, and Baker islands, thus, bringing about a territorial dispute. This was eventually resolved and they became part of Kiribati as part of the Treaty of Tarawa. This was signed shortly after independence and ratified in 1983, the United States relinquishing all claims to the sparsely inhabited Phoenix Islands and those of the Line Islands that are part of Kiribati territory. Tarawa Atoll and others of the Gilbert group were occupied by Japan from 1941 to 1943 during World War II. Betio became an airfield and supply base. The expulsion of the Japanese military in late 1943 involved one of the bloodiest battles in US Marine Corps history. Marines landed in November 1943 and the Battle of Tarawa ensued. Further military incursions into the colony occurred in the late 1950s and early 1960s when Christmas Island was used by the United States and United Kingdom for nuclear weapons testing including hydrogen bombs. Institutions of internal self-rule were established on Tarawa from about 1967. The Ellice Islands were separated from the rest of the colony in 1975 and granted their own internal self-rule institutions. In 1978 the Ellice Islands became the independent nation of Tuvalu. === Independence ===

The Gilbert Islands gained independence as the Republic of Kiribati on 12 July 1979. The United States gave up most of the Line Islands and recognised Kiribati in 1983. Kiribati received Canton Island, Enderbury Island, Birnie Island, McKean Island, Rawaki, Manra, Orona, and Nikumaroro from the Phoenix Islands; and Teraina, Tabuaeran, Kiritimati, Malden Island, Starbuck Island, Caroline Islands, Vostok Islands and Flint Island from the Line Islands. Although the indigenous Gilbertese language name for the Gilbert Islands proper is "TRawkungaru", the new state chose the name "Kiribati", the I-Kiribati enunciation of "Gilberts", as an equivalent of the former colony to acknowledge the inclusion of Banaba, the Line Islands, and the Phoenix Islands. The last two of these were never occupied by I-Kiribati until

the British authorities, and later the Republic Government, resettled I-Kiribati there under resettlement schemes. In the post-independence era, overcrowding has been a problem, at least in British and aid organisations' eyes. In 1988, an announcement was made that 4,700 residents of the main island group would be resettled onto less-populated islands. Teburoro Tito was elected president in 1994. In 1995, Kiribati unilaterally moved the international date line far to the east to encompass the Line Islands group, so that the nation would no longer be divided by the date line. The move, which fulfilled one of President Tito's campaign promises, was intended to allow businesses across the expansive nation to keep the same business week. This also enabled Kiribati to become the first country to see the dawn of the third millennium, an event of significance for tourism. Tito was re-elected in 1998. Kiribati gained UN membership in 1999. In 2002, Kiribati passed a controversial law that enabled the government to shut down newspapers. The legislation followed the launching of Kiribati's first successful non-government-run newspaper. President Tito was re-elected in 2003 but was removed from office in March 2003 by a no-confidence vote and replaced by a Council of State. Anote Tong of the opposition party Boutokaan Te Koaua was elected to succeed Tito in July 2003. He was re-elected in 2007 and in 2011. In June 2008, Kiribati officials asked Australia and New Zealand to accept Kiribati citizens as permanent refugees. Kiribati is expected to be the first country to lose all its land territory to global warming. In June 2008, the Kiribati President Anote Tong said that the country has reached "the point of no return." He added, "To plan for the day when you no longer have a country is indeed painful but I think we have to do that." In early 2012, the government of Kiribati purchased the 2,200-hectare Natoavatu Estate on the second largest island of Fiji, Vanua Levu. At the time it was widely reported that the government planned to evacuate the entire population of Kiribati to Fiji. In April 2013, President Tong began urging citizens to evacuate the islands and migrate elsewhere. In May 2014, the Office of the President confirmed the purchase of some 5,460 acres of land on Vanua Levu at a cost of 9.3 million Australian dollars.

== Politics ==

The Kiribati Constitution, promulgated 12 July 1979, provides for free and open elections. The executive branch consists of a president (te Beretitenti), a vice-president and a cabinet. The president, who is also chief of the cabinet, is elected from the legislature and is limited to three four-year terms. He remains a member of the Assembly while serving as president. The cabinet is composed of the president, vice-president, and 10 ministers (appointed by the president) who are also members of the House of Assembly. The legislative branch is the unicameral Maneaba Ni Maungatabu (House of Assembly). It has elected members, including by constitutional mandate a representative of the Banaban people in Fiji (Banaba Island, former Ocean Island), in addition to the attorney general, who serves as an ex-officio member. Legislators serve for a four-year term. The constitutional provisions governing administration of justice are similar to those in other former British possessions in that the judiciary is free from governmental interference. The judicial branch is made up of the High Court (in Betio) and the Court of Appeal. The president appoints the presiding judges. Local government is through island councils with elected members. Local affairs are handled in a manner similar to town meetings in colonial America. Island councils make their own estimates of revenue and expenditure and generally are free from central government controls. There are a total of 21 inhabited islands in Kiribati. Each inhabited island has its own council. Since independence, Kiribati is no longer divided into districts (see Subdivisions of Kiribati). Kiribati has formal political parties but their organisation is quite informal. Ad hoc opposition groups tend to coalesce around specific issues. Today the only recognisable parties are the Boutokaan te Koaua Party, Maneaban te Mauri Party, Maurin Kiribati Party and Tabomoa Party. There is universal suffrage at age 18.

=== Foreign relations ===

Kiribati maintains close relations with its Pacific neighbours, Australia, New Zealand, Republic of China (Taiwan), Japan and Fiji. The first three of these provide the majority of the country's foreign aid. Taiwan and Japan also have specified-period licences to fish in Kiribati's waters. There are four resident diplomatic missions headquartered in Kiribati: the Embassies of the Republic of China (Taiwan) and Cuba and the High Commissions of Australia and New Zealand. In November 1999 Kiribati agreed to allow Japan's National Space Development Agency to lease land on Christmas Island for 20 years, on which to build a spaceport. The agreement stipulated that Japan was to pay US\$840,000 per year and would also pay for any damage to roads and the environment. A Japanese-built downrange tracking station operates on Kiritimati and an abandoned airfield on the island was designated as the landing strip for a proposed reusable unmanned space shuttle called HOPE-X. HOPE-X, however, was eventually cancelled by Japan in 2003. As one of the world's most vulnerable nations to the effects of global warming, Kiribati has been an active participant in international diplomatic efforts relating to climate change, most importantly the UNFCCC conferences of the parties (COP). Kiribati is a member of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS), an

intergovernmental organisation of low-lying coastal and small island countries. Established in 1990, the main purpose of the alliance is to consolidate the voices of Small Island Developing States (SIDS) to address global warming. AOSIS has been very active from its inception, putting forward the first draft text in the Kyoto Protocol negotiations as early as 1994. In 2009, President Tong attended the Climate Vulnerable Forum (V11) in the Maldives, with 10 other countries that are vulnerable to climate change, and signed the Bandos Island declaration on 10 November 2009, pledging to show moral leadership and commence greening their economies by voluntarily committing to achieving carbon neutrality. In November 2010, Kiribati hosted the Tarawa Climate Change Conference (TCCC) to support the president of Kiribati's initiative to hold a consultative forum between vulnerable states and their partners. The conference strove to create an enabling environment for multi-party negotiations under the auspices of the UNFCCC. The conference was a successor event to the Climate Vulnerable Forum. The ultimate objective of TCCC was to reduce the number and intensity of fault lines between parties to the COP process, explore elements of agreement between the parties and thereby to support Kiribati's and other parties' contribution to COP16 held in Cancun, Mexico, from 29 November to 10 December 2010. In 2013, President Tong has spoken of climate-change induced sea level rise as "inevitable". "For our people to survive, then they will have to migrate. Either we can wait for the time when we have to move people en masse or we can prepare them—beginning from now ...". In New York in 2014, per The New Yorker, President Tong told The New York Times that "according to the projections, within this century, the water will be higher than the highest point in our lands". In 2014, President Tong finalized the purchase of a 20 km² stretch of land on Vanua Levu, one of the larger Fiji islands, 2,000 km away. A move described by Tong as an "absolute necessity" should the nation be completely submerged under water. In 2013 attention was drawn to a claim of a Kiribati man of being a "climate change refugee" under the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees (1951). However this claim was determined by the New Zealand High Court to be untenable. The New Zealand Court of Appeal also rejected the claim in a 2014 decision. On further appeal the New Zealand Supreme Court confirmed the earlier adverse rulings against the application for refugee status, but rejected the proposition "that environmental degradation resulting from climate change or other natural disasters could never create a pathway into the Refugee Convention or protected person jurisdiction." === Law enforcement and military === Law enforcement in Kiribati is carried out by the Kiribati Police Service which is responsible for all law enforcement and paramilitary duties for the island nation. There are police posts located on all of the islands. The police have one patrol boat. Kiribati has no military and relies on both Australia and New Zealand for its defence. The main prison in Kiribati is located in Betio, named the Walter Betio Prison. There is also a prison in Ronton (London) on Kiritimati Island. === Administrative divisions === There are a total of 21 inhabited islands in Kiribati. Kiribati is divided geographically into three island groups, including a group that unites the Line Islands and the Phoenix Islands (ministry at London, Kiritimati Island). The groups have no administrative function. They are: Gilbert Islands Phoenix Islands, in one of the largest marine protected areas on Earth (was largest from 2008 to 2010) Line Islands. The original districts before independence were: Banaba Tarawa Atoll Northern Gilbert Islands Central Gilbert Island Southern Gilbert Islands Line Islands Four of the former districts (including Tarawa) lie in the Gilbert Islands, where most of the country's population lives. Five of the Line Islands are uninhabited (Malden Island, Starbuck Island, Caroline Island, Vostok Island and Flint Island). The Phoenix Islands are uninhabited except for Kanton, and have no representation. Banaba itself is sparsely inhabited now. There is also a non-elected representative of the Banabans on Rabi Island in Fiji. Each of the 21 inhabited islands has its own local council that takes care of daily affairs. There is one council for each inhabited island, with two exceptions: Tarawa Atoll has three councils: Betio Town Council, Te Inainano Urban Council (for the rest of South Tarawa) and Eutan Tarawa Council (for North Tarawa); and Tabiteuea has two councils. == Geography == Kiribati consists of 32 atolls and one solitary island (Banaba), extending into the eastern and western hemispheres, as well as the northern and southern hemispheres. It is the only country that is situated within all four hemispheres. The groups of islands are: Banaba: an isolated island between Nauru and the Gilbert Islands Gilbert Islands: 16 atolls located some 1,500 kilometres (932 mi) north of Fiji Phoenix Islands: 8 atolls and coral islands located some 1,800 kilometres (1,118 mi) southeast of the Gilberts Line Islands: 8 atolls and one reef, located about 3,300 kilometres (2,051 mi) east of the Gilberts Banaba (or Ocean Island) is a raised-coral island. It was once a rich source of phosphates, but was exhausted in mining before independence. The rest of the land in Kiribati consists of the sand and reef rock islets of atolls or coral islands, which rise only one or two metres above sea level. The soil is thin and calcareous. It has a low water-holding capacity and low organic matter and nutrient content—except for calcium, sodium,

and magnesium. Banaba is one of the least suitable places for agriculture in the world. Kiritimati (Christmas Island) in the Line Islands is the world's largest atoll. Based on a 1995 realignment of the International Date Line, the Line Islands were the first area to enter into a new year, including year 2000. For that reason, Caroline Island has been renamed Millennium Island. The majority of Kiribati, including the capital, is not first, for example New Zealand (UTC+13 in January) has an earlier new year. === Environmental issues === According to the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (previously South Pacific Regional Environment Programme), two small uninhabited Kiribati islets, Tebua Tarawa and Abanuea, disappeared underwater in 1999. The United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change predicts that sea levels will rise by about 50 cm (20 in) by 2100 due to global warming and a further rise would be inevitable. It is thus likely that within a century the nation's arable land will become subject to increased soil salination and will be largely submerged. The exposure of Kiribati to changes in sea levels is exacerbated by the Pacific decadal oscillation, which is a climate switch phenomenon that results in changes from periods of La Niña to periods of El Niño. This has an effect on sea levels. For example, in 2000 there was a switch from periods of downward pressure of El Niño on sea levels to an upward pressure of La Niña on sea levels, which upward pressure causes more frequent and higher high tide levels. The Perigean spring tide (often called a king tide) can result in seawater flooding low-lying areas of the islands of Kiribati. The atolls and reef islands can respond to changes in sea-level. Paul Kench at the University of Auckland in New Zealand and Arthur Webb at the South Pacific Applied Geoscience Commission in Fiji released a study in 2010 on the dynamic response of atolls and reef islands in the central Pacific. Kiribati was mentioned in the study, and Webb and Kench found that the three major urbanised islands in Kiribati—Betio, Bairiki and Nanikai—increased by 30% (36 hectares), 16.3% (5.8 hectares) and 12.5% (0.8 hectares), respectively. The study by Paul Kench and Arthur Webb recognises that the islands are extremely vulnerable to sea level rise, and concluded that: "This study did not measure vertical growth of the island surface nor does it suggest there is any change in the height of the islands. Since land height has not changed the vulnerability of the greater part of the land area of each island to submergence due to sea level rise is also unchanged and these low-lying atolls remain immediately and extremely vulnerable to inundation or sea water flooding." The Climate Change in the Pacific Report of 2011 describes Kiribati as having a low risk of cyclones; however in March 2015 Kiribati experienced flooding and destruction of seawalls and coastal infrastructure as the result of Cyclone Pam, a Category 5 cyclone that devastated Vanuatu. Kiribati remains exposed to the risk that cyclones can strip the low-lying islands of their vegetation and soil. Gradual sea-level rise also allows for coral polyp activity to raise the atolls with the sea level. However, if the increase in sea level occurs at a rate faster than coral growth, or if polyp activity is damaged by ocean acidification, then the resilience of the atolls and reef islands is less certain. Also, coral bleaching has led to the death of up to 80% of the coral. The Kiribati Adaptation Program (KAP) is a US \$5.5 million initiative that was originally enacted by the national government of Kiribati with the support of the Global Environment Facility (GEF), the World Bank, the United Nations Development Program, and the Japanese government. Australia later joined the coalition, donating US \$1.5 million to the effort. The program aims to take place over six years, supporting measures that reduce Kiribati's vulnerability to the effects of climate change and sea level rise by raising awareness of climate change, assessing and protecting available water resources, and managing inundation. At the start of the Adaptation Program, representatives from each of the inhabited atolls identified key climatic changes that had taken place over the past 20–40 years and proposed coping mechanisms to deal with these changes under four categories of urgency of need. The program is now focusing on the country's most vulnerable sectors in the most highly populated areas. Initiatives include improving water supply management in and around Tarawa; coastal management protection measures such as mangrove re-plantation and protection of public infrastructure; strengthening laws to reduce coastal erosion; and population settlement planning to reduce personal risks. === Climate === The climate is pleasant from April to October, with predominant northeastern winds and stable temperatures close to 30 °C (86 °F). From November to March, western gales bring rain and occasional cyclones. Precipitation varies significantly between islands. For example, the annual average is 3,000 mm (120 in) in the north and 500 mm (20 in) in the south of the Gilbert Islands. Most of these islands are in the dry belt of the equatorial oceanic climatic zone and experience prolonged droughts. === Ecology === Because of the young geological age of the islands and atolls and high level of soil salination the flora of Kiribati is relatively poor. It contains about 83 indigenous and 306 introduced plants on Gilbert Islands, whereas the corresponding numbers for Line and Phoenix Islands are 67 and 283. None of these species are endemic, and about half of the

indigenous ones have a limited distribution and became endangered or nearly extinct due to human activities such as phosphate mining. Coconut and pandanus palms and breadfruit trees are most common wild plants, whereas the five most cultivated crops are Chinese cabbage, pumpkin, tomato, watermelon and cucumber. Over eighty percent of the population participates in either farming or fishing. Seaweed farming is an important part of the economy, with two major species *Eucheuma alcaezii* and *Eucheuma spinosium* introduced to the local lagoons from the Philippines in 1977. It competes with collection of the black-lipped pearl oyster (*Pinctada margaritifera*) and shellfish, which are dominated by the strombid gastropod (*Strombus luhuanus*) and *Anadara* cockles (*Anadara uropigimelana*), whereas the stocks of the giant clam (*Tridacna gigas*) have been largely exhausted. Kiribati has a few land mammals, none being indigenous or endemic. They include the Polynesian rat (*Rattus exulans*), dogs and pigs. Among the 75 bird species, the Bokikokiko (*Acrocephalus aequinoctialis*) is endemic to Kiritimati. There are 600–800 species of inshore and pelagic finfish, some 200 species of corals and about 1000 species of shellfish. Fishing mostly targets the family Scombridae, particularly the skipjack tuna and yellowfin tuna as well as flying fish (*Cypselurus* spp.). Dogs introduced by European settlers have continued to grow in numbers and are roaming in traditional packs, particularly around South Tarawa. == Economy == Kiribati has few natural resources. Commercially viable phosphate deposits on Banaba were exhausted at the time of independence. Copra and fish now represent the bulk of production and exports. Kiribati is considered one of the least developed countries in the world. In one form or another, Kiribati gets a large portion of its income from abroad. Examples include fishing licenses, development assistance, worker remittances, and tourism. Given Kiribati's limited domestic production ability, it must import nearly all of its essential foodstuffs and manufactured items; it depends on these external sources of income for financing. The economy of Kiribati benefits from international development assistance programs. The multilateral donors providing development assistance in 2009 were the European Union (A\$9 million), the United Nations Development Programme (A\$3.7 million), UNICEF, and the World Health Organisation (A\$100,000). The bilateral donors providing development assistance in 2009 were Australia (A\$11 million), Japan (A\$2 million), New Zealand (A\$6.6 million), Taiwan (A\$10.6 million), and other donors providing A\$16.2 million, including technical assistance grants from the Asian Development Bank. The major donors in 2010/2011 were Australia (A\$15 million), Taiwan (A\$11 million); New Zealand (A\$6 million), the World Bank (A\$4 million) and the Asian Development Bank. In 1956, Kiribati established a sovereign wealth fund to act as a store of wealth for the country's earnings from phosphate mining. In 2008, the Revenue Equalization Reserve Fund was valued at US\$400 million. The RERF assets declined from A\$637 million (420% of GDP) in 2007 to A\$570.5 million (350% of GDP) in 2009 as the result of the global financial crisis and exposure to failed Icelandic banks. In addition, draw downs were made by the government of Kiribati to finance budgetary shortfalls during this period. In May 2011, the IMF country report assessment of the economy of Kiribati is that "After two years of contraction, the economy recovered in the second half of 2010 and inflation pressure dissipated. It is estimated to have grown by 1.75% for the year. Despite a weather-related drop in copra production, private sector activity appears to have picked up, especially in retail. Tourist arrivals rebounded by 20% compared to 2009, although from a very low base. Despite the rise in world food and fuel prices, inflation has bounced from 2008 crisis-highs into negative territory, reflecting the strong appreciation of the Australian dollar, which is used as the domestic currency, and a decline in the world price of rice. Credit growth in the overall economy declined in 2009 as economic activity stalled. But it started to pick up in the second half of 2010 as the recovery gained traction." A major Australian bank, ANZ, maintains a presence on Kiribati with a number of branches and ATM units. === Transport === Beginning in January 2009, Kiribati has two domestic airlines: Air Kiribati and Coral Sun Airways. Both airlines are based in Tarawa's Bonriki International Airport and serve destinations across the Gilbert Islands only. Neither the Phoenix nor Line Islands are served by the domestic carriers. The only served airport by any airline is Cassidy International Airport on Kiritimati. Fiji's national carrier Fiji Airways provides an international service from Fiji's main airport, Nadi International Airport to Cassidy Airport as well as to Bonriki Airport. == Demographics == The November 2015 census showed a population of 110,136. About 90% of that population lived in the Gilbert Islands, with about 40% of them on South Tarawa. If nearby Betio is included with South Tarawa, the percentage rises to more than 50%. Until recently, the people of Kiribati mostly lived in villages with populations between 50 and 3,000 on the outer islands. Most houses are made of materials obtained from coconut and pandanus trees. Frequent droughts and infertile soil hinder reliable large-scale agriculture, so the islanders have largely turned to the sea for livelihood and subsistence. Most are outrigger sailors and fishermen. Copra plantations serve as a

second source of employment. In recent years large numbers of citizens have moved to the more urban island capital of Tarawa. Increasing urbanisation has raised the population of South Tarawa to 50,182.

=== Ethnic groups === The native people of Kiribati are called I-Kiribati. Ethnically, the I-Kiribati are Micronesians. Recent archaeological evidence indicates that Austronesians originally settled the islands thousands of years ago. Around the 14th century, Fijians, Samoans, and Tongans invaded the islands, thus diversifying the ethnic range and introducing Polynesian linguistic traits. Inter-marriage among all ancestral groups, however, has led to a population reasonably homogeneous in appearance and traditions.

=== Languages === The people of Kiribati speak an Oceanic language called Gilbertese. Although English is also an official language, it is not used very often outside the island capital of Tarawa. It is more likely that English is mixed in its use with Gilbertese. Older generations of I-Kiribati tend to use more complicated versions of the language. Several words in Gilbertese have been adopted from European settlers, for instance, kamea is the Gilbertese word for dog, which has its origins in the I-Kiribati people hearing the European settlers saying "come here" to their dogs, and adopting that as kamea.

=== Religion === Christianity is the major religion in Kiribati, having been introduced by missionaries in the 19th century. The population is predominantly Roman Catholic (56%), although a substantial portion of the population belongs to the Kiribati Uniting Church (34%). Many other Protestant denominations, including evangelical churches, are also represented. The Bahá'í Faith religion also exists in Kiribati (2.2%), along with Jehovah's Witnesses. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS Church) self-reports a membership of 19,690 (16.7%) with 30 congregations at the end of 2018. The Kiribati Uniting Church and the LDS Church maintain large physical presences in Kiribati; both churches have a large number of church buildings, predominantly in Betio and Bonriki.

=== Health === The population of Kiribati has a life expectancy at birth of 60 years (57 for males, and 63 for females) and an infant mortality rate of 54 deaths per 1,000 live births. Tuberculosis has a small presence in the country, with 365 cases of 100,000 a year. Government expenditure on health was at US\$268 per capita (PPP) in 2006. In 1990–2007, there were 23 physicians per 100,000 persons. Since the arrival of Cuban doctors, the infant mortality rate has decreased significantly. Most health problems are related to consumption of semi-raw seafood, limited amount of food storage facilities, and bacterial contamination of fresh water supplies. In the early 2000s, between 1 and 7% of the population, depending on the island, were annually treated for food poisoning in a hospital. Modernization and cross-cultural exchange of the late 20th century brought new issues of unhealthy diet and lifestyle; heavy smoking, especially among the young population; and external infections, including HIV/AIDS. Kiribati is the country with the third highest prevalence of smoking, with 54% of the population reported as smokers. Fresh water remains a concern of Kiribati – during the dry season (Aumaiaki), water has been drilled for instead of using rain water tanks. In recent years, there has been a longer than usual Aumaiaki season resulting in additional water having to be drilled from beneath the water table. This has introduced water-borne illnesses, compounding the health problems within Kiribati.

=== Education === Primary education is free and compulsory for the first six years, now being extended to nine years. Mission schools are slowly being absorbed into the government primary school system. Higher education is expanding; students may seek technical, teacher or marine training, or study in other countries. To date, most choosing to do the latter have gone to Fiji to attend University of South Pacific, and those wishing to complete medical training have been sent to Cuba. University of South Pacific has a campus in Kiribati for distant/flexible learning, but also to provide preparatory studies towards obtaining certificates, diplomas and degrees at other campus sites. The other prominent School in Kiribati is the Kiribati institute of technology and offers lots of courses that had shaped many lives in the country.

== Culture == Songs (te anene) and above all, dances (te mwaie), are held in high regard.

=== Music === Kiribati folk music is generally based on chanting or other forms of vocalising, accompanied by body percussion. Public performances in modern Kiribati are generally performed by a seated chorus, accompanied by a guitar. However, during formal performances of the standing dance (Te Kaimatoa) or the hip dance (Te Buki), a wooden box is used as a percussion instrument. This box is constructed to give a hollow and reverberating tone when struck simultaneously by a chorus of men sitting around it. Traditional songs are often love-themed, but there are also competitive, religious, children's, patriotic, war and wedding songs. There are also stick dances which accompany legends and semi-historical stories. These stick dances or "tirere" (pronounced seerere) are performed only during major festivals.

=== Dance === The uniqueness of Kiribati when compared with other forms of Pacific island dance is its emphasis on the outstretched arms of the dancer and the sudden birdlike movement of the head. The Frigate bird (Fregata minor) on the Kiribati flag refers to this bird-like style of Kiribati dancing. Most dances are in the standing or sitting position with movement limited and

staggered. Smiling whilst dancing is generally considered vulgar within the context of Kiribati dancing. This is due to its origin of not being solely as a form of entertainment but as a form of storytelling and a display of the skill, beauty and endurance of the dancer. === Sport === Kiribati has competed at the Commonwealth Games since 1998 and the Summer Olympics since 2004. It sent three competitors to its first Olympics, two sprinters and a weightlifter. Kiribati won its first ever Commonwealth Games medal at the 2014 Commonwealth Games when weightlifter David Katoatau won Gold in the 105 kg Group. The Kiribati national football team is an associate member of the Oceania Football Confederation, but not of world-governing body FIFA. It has played ten matches, all of which it has lost, and all at the Pacific Games from 1979 to 2011. The Kiribati football stadium is Bairiki National Stadium, which has a capacity of only 2500. The Betio Soccer Field is home to a number of local sporting teams. === Outside perspectives === Edward Carlyon Eliot, who was Resident Commissioner of the Gilbert & Ellice Islands (now Kiribati & Tuvalu) from 1913 to 1920 describes this period in his book "Broken Atoms" (autobiographical reminiscences) Pub. G. Bles, London, 1938. Sir Arthur Grimble wrote about his time working in the British colonial service in Kiribati (then the Gilbert Islands) from 1914 to 1932 in two popular books *A Pattern of Islands* (1952) and *Return to the Islands* (1957). He also undertook academic studies of Gilbertese culture. J. Maarten Troost's more recent autobiographical experiences on the Tarawa Atoll are documented in his book *The Sex Lives of Cannibals* (2004). == See also == List of towns and villages in Kiribati Howland and Baker islands Human rights in Kiribati LGBT rights in Kiribati Outline of Kiribati Telecommunications in Kiribati Visa policy of Kiribati == References == == Cited sources == Thomas, Frank R. (2003). "Kiribati: 'Some aspects of human ecology,' forty years later" (PDF). *Atoll Research Bulletin*. Natural Museum of Natural History Smithsonian Institution. 501: 1–40. doi:10.5479/si.00775630.501.1. == External links == Kiribati National Tourism Office Parliament of Kiribati Kiribati National Climate Change Portal Chief of State and Cabinet Members General information "Kiribati". *The World Factbook*. Central Intelligence Agency. Kiribati from UCB Libraries GovPubs Kiribati at Curlie (based on DMOZ) Kiribati from the BBC News Wikimedia Atlas of Kiribati Phoenix Islands Protected Area Paradise Lost? (A recent PBS/NOW program on global warming) Exhibit: The Alfred Agate Collection: The United States Exploring Expedition, 1838–1842 from the Navy Art Gallery