

Kiribati: National Statement of Commitment

Introduction

As a small and remote island nation, Kiribati's education system faces a unique set of challenges, which often require a unique approach to improvement and transformation. Being a small nation, however, Kiribati has been able to push to 'Make Education Everyone's Business', requiring that all the government, partners, and community stakeholders actively lead this transformation. Through extensive stakeholder consultations, and with reference to the Kiribati Vision for 20 years (KV20), Kiribati Development Plan, Education Sector Strategic Plan, SDG4, and a range of other key policies, Kiribati has been able to formulate this condensed Statement of Commitment for its own vision of how to transform the sector to make sure no one is left behind.

Thematic Areas

I. COVID-19 learning recovery

Kiribati, like many other countries, implemented school closures for whole 1 term (February to May 2022) To ensure that children's learning does not fall behind, Kiribati implemented a number of interventions. These included: a 'Learning Passport' – a digital learning platform accessible both online and offline that provides access to structured learning material; radio lessons; and paper-based materials delivered by teachers through dropbox. Teachers also received specialized training to be better equipped for supporting pupils' after they return to school, in areas such as well-being, minimizing learning loss, and engaging parents and pupils remotely. Should the pandemic escalate again, a system of learning shifts, utilising what has been learnt over this period, would be employed rather than closing schools completely to minimize the impact on learning outcomes.

II. Transforming education

Why is transformation needed

Despite the recent positive changes, there is still need for further transformation. Demand for education is continually outgrowing the supply of qualified teachers, parts of the system are under-developed, such as ECE and education for children with disabilities, the system relies heavily on donor financing to operate, and it remains very vulnerable to impact of climate change.

Consequently, Kiribati commits to the following improvements to achieve a better education for all:

Educational Exclusion and MHPSS

Kiribati commits to:

- Rehabilitation of local classrooms, particularly in remote and poorer areas, and converting them to semi- and permanent buildings with appropriate furniture and equipment, including for children with special educational needs and disabilities to help eliminate educational exclusion;
- Supporting physical health and safety, by including safe classrooms, and separate, clean WASH facilities for all pupils.
- Supporting MHPSS by developing a new counsellor workforce, which will be deployed in schools to assist pupils and train teachers on psycho-social first aid.
- Implementing alternative learning pathways to integrate OOSC into formal education, as well as developing technical and vocational education opportunities to offer more direct routes to income generating opportunities aligned with market needs.

Transforming the teaching profession

Kiribati commits to:

- Making the teaching profession more attractive by revising the teacher remuneration policy, increasing the pay overall, and offering financial incentives for teachers in remote areas;
- Using ICT for remote teaching and learning, including training of teachers so all children access the quality of education with no one is to be left behind.
- Providing training opportunities to assist teachers in upgrading their qualification to the required teacher registration level;
- Supporting institutional strengthening of the Kiribati Teachers College to achieve accreditation.

Renewing curricula and pedagogies

Kiribati commits to reviewing its curricula focusing on:

- Early Childhood Development (to improve foundational literacy, numeracy and school readiness);
- ICT literacy;
- SDG and global citizenship education;
- Creativity;
- Developing TVET pathways as part of formal curricula.

Digital Transformation for just and equitable learning

Kiribati commits to:

- Increasing the ICT infrastructure at all secondary schools and majority of primary schools;
- Improving the stability of internet connection in those schools;

- Developing a full-fledged ICT literacy curriculum;
- Expanding the Learning Passport to include secondary and technical curricula and for non-formal education purposes (particularly to make reintegration of out-of-school children easier),
- Deploying digital tools for school and pupil data collection and reporting allowing for real-time analysis.

III. Financing education as a common good

Though reliant on international aid to finance a significant portion of the education sector, the ministry has been able to gradually improve its revenue and spend more on education overall. To increase its chances of building sustainable models of education financing, Kiribati commits to exploring and piloting a number of financial innovations, such as:

- Public-private partnerships (particularly for TVET);
- Improving efficiency of spend;
- Improving fundraising with international donors as well as local communities;
- Regional and international partnership agreements; and
- Results-based financing initiatives.

IV. Next steps

To achieve these transformations, a lot needs to be done. Some of the initiatives discussed are quick wins (e.g., expansion and deployment of the Learning Passport), others are pre-requisites for long-term positive development (e.g., expansion of school infrastructure, improving teacher remuneration), and others still are long-term priorities, which will take longer to develop and yield benefits (e.g., recruitment of counsellors and professional development). To ensure that these transformations are well-conceived, planned out, and eventually realized, the ministry has one primary task ahead of them; namely review their Operational Plans to include all commitments made here today, to set appropriate tasks, timelines, and targets, and last but not least validate these with local communities and stakeholders across the country.

Conclusion

The one commitment that binds all of those mentioned together is the Kiribati's government commitment to improve. A commitment to pursue the progress of its education system for the benefit of the children of Kiribati continuously and relentlessly. Kiribati hopes to inspire others through the positive change it has already achieved and that which it has yet to achieve, as well as to be inspired through the initiatives and goals of other countries presenting here today.