

Facing the Future: Education, Training, and Employment

Laying the Foundations

Kiribati is laying a sound foundation for the continued development of a literate population. Successive governments' commitment to providing more and better education has been reflected in the consistent allocation to METT of around 20% of government recurrent expenditure. This is one of the highest proportions of public funds spent on education in Pacific island countries.

The basic strategy in recent years has been to assume government responsibility for compulsory education to 12 years of age and free education for all students to 14 years of age. The result is that in 2000 around 80% of children aged 6–14 were enrolled in schools, where they received education in the Kiribati language to grade 3 and in English from grade 4 up. Table 6.1 reflects the rise in all school enrollments from 1982 to 2000. In recent years, the gender balance has been slightly in favor of females. Numbers of girls and boys in primary and junior secondary were usually equal, but there were 25% more girls than boys enrolled at the secondary level in 2000. This may in part reflect the departure of males to apply for training places at MTC or the FTC, but the difference of over 600 students suggests that girls are more motivated to make use of secondary opportunities than boys.

This public investment in education, particularly at the primary level, should pay dividends in maintaining high literacy rates and providing a base for the development of a skilled work force with potential for productive participation in economic activity.

Table 6.1: School Enrollments

	1982 ^a			1992 ^a			2000 ^b		
	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T
Primary			7,014	6,822	8,115	16,020	8,160	7,936	16,096 ^c
Community/JSS				106	98	204	1,857	1,808	3,665
Secondary	792	869	1,661	1,468	1,601	3,069	2,550	3,193	5,743
Total	7,806	7,691	15,497	9,479	9,814	19,293	12,567	1,2937	25,505
% by Sex	50	50		49	51		49	51	

F = female; JSS = junior secondary school; M = male; T = total.

^a Digest of Education Statistics, METT.

^b Republic of Kiribati 2002.

^c Includes 403 students enrolled in primary classes 7–9.

^d Includes Forms 1–7.

The JSS program, which started in 1998, has supported this improvement in enrollment at the basic secondary level (Forms 1–3). The JSS program has seen 19 junior secondary schools built to date with another to be located in an existing facility in Banaba. Teraina and Tabuaeran are now the only permanently inhabited islands without a JSS, and Tabuaeran has a full-range secondary school.

There has also been an increase in the provision of secondary school places. The number of secondary schools increased from 10 to 13 in the last four years, while enrollment increased by 87% from 1992 to 2000, largely due to the expansion in church schools. The latter now account for about 77% of secondary school enrollments.⁶⁶ From a government standpoint this is very cost effective. A student in a church secondary school costs the Government about \$300 per year, compared with \$2,000 per year for a student in a government secondary school. The difference in the cost to government is borne by the parents of students attending church schools, who pay fees and are heavily involved in fund raising.

Preschool education is encouraged, although METT expects it to be funded by parents and NGOs, mainly churches. METT sees its role as training trainers of preschool teachers and registering preschool premises.

Government vocational and tertiary education provision is through the range of vocationally oriented colleges in agriculture, nursing, teaching, seamanship, police training, the Tarawa Technical Institute (TTI), and the extension program of the University of the South Pacific (USP). The courses that lead to direct employment, such as teaching nursing, agriculture, police, and seamanship, are all provided free. Courses at TTI and USP cost from \$30 for short courses to about \$1,800 for a year of university study.

Current Government Policies and Priorities

NDS 2000–2003 (Box 1.2 in Chapter 1) states that the national priority for education is an education system that achieves high standards, broad coverage, relevance, and cost-effective delivery through strengthening of the primary school system, universal access to education up to Form 3, and improved quality and relevance of the education system.⁶⁷ NDS priority developments for 2000–2003 are

- strengthening and expanding preschool facilities;
- strengthening primary education including teacher skills, facilities, and resources;
- completion of the JSS program;
- expanding capacity and enrollments in Forms 4–6 by 25%;
- improving vocational technical programs in the JSSs and extending them to Forms 5 and 6;

- upgrading TTI and Kiribati Teachers College by increasing courses and staffing, and by strengthening curricula and lecturer qualifications;
- expanding linkages with USP and other tertiary institutions; and
- completion of planning for consolidation of higher education programs.

These statements indicate that METT will be stressing the improvement of quality at each stage of the education system. The need to strengthen teacher skills and raise qualifications in the sciences and vocational-technical areas including accounting, computer studies, and commerce, has been identified at the JSS level.

The Government also states that it wishes to achieve a minimum 25% increase in enrollment of students in government and missionary secondary schools (Forms 4-6).⁶⁸ This expansion of secondary capacity is seen as achieving the strategic outcome of providing the work-force skills needed to support private sector development.

With the stated government commitment to these strategies, the people of Kiribati can expect that budget allocations will reflect these priorities and that government performance will reflect achievement in these priority areas. Ways in which the budget reflects these priorities will demonstrate the Government's progress in achieving its desired results. This is discussed in the next section.

Intention and Reality

The ready accessibility⁶⁹ of recurrent budget information makes it easy to identify allocations to priority outputs. The total recurrent allocation for education in 2002 at \$17.4 million is almost 25% of the recurrent budget and \$4.5 million or one third higher than in 2000. This rate of growth will be impossible to sustain, but it clearly reflects continuing government commitment to education.

METT is continuing to allocate increased funds to the JSS program and the teacher training program in the current budget.

Additionally, there have been increases in funds through donor activities to such education priorities as the strengthening of primary schools through the Australian International Development Agency (AusAID)-funded Kiribati Education Sector Program and support to technical training through the EU-funded Kiribati Training Program II.

One priority area appears, however, to have fewer funds in the 2002 recurrent budget. This is primary education services. It may be that METT is relying on donor funds to replace local recurrent funds in this area. If so, the sustainability of strengthening these services may be at risk when the project support is completed.

Other priority areas appear, to have no financial allocation, such as the expansion of preschool facilities, and expanding the capacity and enrollments in Forms 4–6 by 25%. The assumption in these cases is that churches will provide these services. This is a reasonable assumption given that the churches are already heavily involved in these areas. There is a need, however, for the Government to discuss the resources available and the capacity of the churches to achieve in these targets. Churches, the Government, and parents who will be funding substantial amounts of this expansion all need to be involved in setting the targets to be achieved.

Performance

The importance of primary education in cultivating attitudes toward learning and laying the foundations of numeracy and literacy skills is well recognized. Key elements of the NDS in education are strengthening primary education by increasing classroom resources, upgrading teacher qualifications and skills, and renovating facilities. Strengthening these inputs to education should result in quality services, improved attendance, and continued high literacy rates.

Increasing Classroom Resources

It is reported by teachers, particularly in the outer islands, that classroom resources in primary schools, such as readers for English

and textbooks, are meager, in some cases almost nonexistent. There has, however, recently been important progress in this area with the launch by the Curriculum Development Unit of new syllabuses in English, mathematics, writing, environmental science, and physical education (Box 6.1).

Teacher Qualifications and Skills

METT statistics, which provide *inter alia* information on the qualifications of current teachers, indicate that more than 500 of the current 627 teachers in primary schools require upgrading to certificate level.⁷⁰ Because of teacher shortages many class monitors, appointed by Island Councils, have been acting as classroom teachers. Some of the more able teachers are probably performing their jobs competently without needing to upgrade their skills. There is no doubt, however, that overall there is a great need to upgrade teachers' qualifications at the primary level.

At the current rate of upgrading teachers' qualifications, and with the input of the AusAID-funded Primary Education Teacher Upgrade Project, it will take almost 10 years to upgrade all primary teachers to a minimum of certificate level. A similar situation exists for JSS teachers where 186 of 206 teachers hold only a teaching certificate.⁷¹ The METT intends to upgrade all JSS teachers to diploma level, clearly a massive undertaking. The implication for METT planning and financing is that there will be a continuing need to upgrade qualifications and to train teachers at the primary and JSS level for many years to come.

A useful strategy to give more students access to qualified teachers at the primary level would be to increase the teacher/pupil ratio from its current 1:25 to 1:30. This strategy would require fewer qualified teachers overall, and enable qualified teachers to be appointed to all classes more quickly.

Maintenance

School facilities, other than those recently constructed by donors or made of locally available materials, are generally in poor

Box 6.1: Progress in Curriculum Development

The Curriculum Development Unit of the Ministry of Education, Training and Technology (METT) has just launched five primary syllabuses in English, mathematics, writing, environmental science, and physical education, respectively, the first such revisions since the 1970s.

Teachers in South Tarawa have attended workshops to launch the syllabuses and were able to obtain copies. Teachers on other islands will be attending workshops but they will have to wait much longer to receive the syllabuses and a small supply of supporting books.

Teachers and students in the outer islands do not have the same access to classroom resource materials as those in South Tarawa because of transport constraints and lack of coordination between divisions in METT.

An AusAID-funded project starting in July 2002 is supporting the development of materials to accompany these syllabuses and will assist in filling the backlog of need for classroom resources at the primary level.

The result should be equitable access to classroom materials by primary children nationally. To demonstrate the success of this strategy, METT will need to show that the classroom resources are available in minimum numbers and on a continuous basis. METT will need to provide funding, supervision, and collection of information on the availability and condition of teaching resources.

condition. The buildings most in need of repair are the so-called permanent buildings, particularly in the outer islands. Roofs are often leaking, in some instances reported as collapsing, walls can be damp, and window shutters and doors broken or missing. There also appears to be a wide difference in the quality standards between the JSS schools that government agencies have had responsibility for constructing, and those constructed with foreign supervision under a donor project. Many of the maintenance needs identified in older buildings are already evident in JSSs newly constructed by the Government.

It seems that in many schools nobody feels responsible for the maintenance of these so-called “permanent” buildings. They are often covered in graffiti, have no furniture, broken blackboards, leaking

tanks, no toilets, and cannot be locked. It is demoralizing for both staff and students to work in such environments and it would be difficult to implement a health curriculum (as is being developed as part of the health education strategy) in schools where good health practice is not possible.

Head teachers are reportedly unhappy and frustrated by this situation. Other groups that might be expected to be concerned such as school committees, parents, and Island Councils seem to feel that repairs are the Government's responsibility, even if that means that the repairs obviously will not be made.

In the primary education services item in the 2002 budget, building repairs and maintenance receive the second largest allocation of funds (\$714,362). This amount may be insufficient to meet the backlog of needs. The funds might be used more effectively if they were managed by people with a direct interest in the school. For example, funds could be allocated directly to the head teacher who could then, with the assistance of the school committee, use local labor (voluntary or paid) or contract out the work locally to get the best maintenance value for the school from whatever funds are allocated.

If METT adopts such an approach, senior managers will need to set minimum standards for maintenance and the resources that METT would provide, i.e., minimum funding for maintenance and minimum numbers of classroom resources. The community could then supplement these minimum standards by providing resources, labor, and expertise. The capacity of communities to care for schools should not be underestimated. If they have ownership of the outcomes, they can transform the school environment.

Attendance

METT is aiming to achieve 100% attendance at primary level.⁷² In 2000, approximately 80% of age-eligible children were enrolled at the primary level.

METT collects attendance data but it does not routinely record and analyze the information. Returns from schools are irregular and in many cases appear unreliable. An analysis of the attendance data

Box 6.2: Enabling Children with Disabilities

Some of the children not enrolled at primary schools are children with disabilities.

There is no public provision of education for children with disabilities. Some children with mild disabilities are already attending school, but those with moderate or more severe handicaps are denied any formal education. Children with disabilities often need additional support to assist them to integrate. Where they are unable to integrate, they need as normal as possible an educational program with as much exposure to peers as possible. Children with disabilities are capable of growing into independent and productive members of society. To help them do this, community support through nongovernment organizations, churches, and volunteers will be needed to organize and provide facilities and teachers. Government funding for training and assistance with buildings, equipment and transport can appropriately be fitted into a small corner of the Ministry of Education, Training and Technology budget.

available for 2001 (see Statistical Appendix) indicates that in most schools where attendance has been reported the average rate of attendance is a little over 80% of those enrolled.⁷³ Thus, METT has a long way to go to its full attendance target. If attendance is to be used as a quality measure, METT will need to train teachers in submitting data, check the data for accuracy and reliability, and then use them as part of a regular statistical reporting process.

Further Education

TTI offers a range of vocational courses ranging from 2 weeks to 3 years for which it charges fees ranging from \$40 to \$200. In 2002, the staff included a principal, 24 lecturers, an administrative support staff of 9, and a librarian⁷⁴ as well as a number of part-time lecturers. TTI enrolled 1,072 students in 2000.⁷⁵ Generally, students were employed office workers and other self-employed persons, with some students and school leavers. They enrolled in courses in language, secretarial and business, computing, management,

mechanical and electrical engineering, building and carpentry, accounting, finance mathematics, and science. In addition TTI provides local government training and provides trainer support to the extension campus of the USP and MTC as needed.

The facilities and teaching capacity of TTI will be upgraded with the implementation of the EU-funded Kiribati Training Program II. This program will fund 10 to 12 Island Learning Centres (ILCs) in the outer islands that will be operational by 2004. These ILCs will provide formal and nonformal vocational education. Their nonformal courses will focus on livelihood activities. There will be a need to introduce standards in vocational and professional areas in the future. Motor mechanics, welders, personal assistants, accountants, engineers, etc., will be more competitive if they are able to demonstrate minimum standards of performance and professionalism.

The USP has an extension center in Tarawa, which offers distance and flexible learning programs from preliminary certificate courses (at Form 6 level) to foundation courses, which prepare students for admission to degree studies at the university. The center in Tarawa is the second largest extension center of the university, with an enrollment in first semester 2002 of 1,471 students (585 male and 886 female).

Many of these students borrow money from the BoK for their fees. Most students at USP are already employed and are upgrading their qualifications in order to increase their salaries. All Form 7 students from King George Fifth School (KGV) attend USP to undertake their foundation studies. Two hundred students currently at USP are on government scholarships. About 70 are from KGV; the remainder are on government scholarships administered through the Public Service Office. There are 40 JSS teachers upgrading their qualifications at USP.

The Government is currently supporting 33 students, all of them government employees, on overseas scholarships. AusAID is supporting approximately 70 scholarship students overseas and the New Zealand Government supports approximately 8 scholarship students in that country. Students awarded overseas scholarships are expected to serve in the public service for at least two years on their return.

Comments have been made in past reports regarding a large gender imbalance at the tertiary and post-school education level. This is not the situation currently; scholarship allocation and USP enrollment figures indicate a distribution in favor of females (see above). TTI enrollment figures, which indicate very low female participation in the METT Statistics Annual Report 2001, are at variance with the observed classroom situation. While the gender balance at TTI still appears to favor males, strong female participation is evident in accounting and computing courses, but not accurately recorded. As females have had the opportunity to complete high school and compete for employment, their participation at the tertiary and post-school level has increased.

Prospects of Formal Employment

Up to and after independence, the completion of 8 or 10 years of formal education meant a very good chance of landing a government job or a scholarship for further training, after which employment was virtually guaranteed. Attitudes to education are still colored by the memories of those days, but the reality is now quite different.

Around 1,700 students—soon to reach 2,000 and growing—leave school every year, and 450–500 jobs become available in the formal economy. Even the most optimistic (or unsustainable) economic growth scenarios would yield only an additional 200–300 jobs annually in addition to the present number. It is critically important to the future well-being of Kiribati that the solution is found to this conundrum: how can the same public education system equip young people both for the practical realities of the lifestyle that most will lead and the intellectual demands that a much smaller number must confront. Education systems in developing countries everywhere are facing a similar problem. Kiribati has to work out its own way forward.

NDS states that upgrading vocational technical education at the secondary and post-secondary level will improve the occupational skills of the workforce and facilitate sustainable growth in employment. In an important sense that is true, but it is even more

important that the process produces young people with skills and attitudes appropriate to a lifestyle that combines elements of the monetary economy with elements of subsistence living. That requires a revolution in the philosophy of an education system historically geared to supplying the Government and the churches with paid employees.

In November 2000, the census counted 9,200 people working in the cash economy. Two thirds of them were employed by the public sector, either in the Public Service or in PEs.⁷⁶ Of these, 37% were female and 64% were in South Tarawa.

Other large employers were the South Pacific Marine Services (SPMS), which currently has 1,050 merchant seafarers on board German merchant ships, the Kiribati Fishermen's Service (KFS), which has 325 fishers on board Japanese Tuna Company fishing boats, and the churches, which now employ more than 700 people. The Nauru Phosphate Corporation has been employing some 270 workers, but they are expected to return to Kiribati in late 2002 with further employment opportunities in Nauru unlikely.

The opportunities for Kiribati seafarers to be employed aboard international ships do not come without a price in terms of social stress and health risks, but on balance the opportunities to earn foreign income appear to outweigh the disadvantages (Box 6.3).

The formal private sector accounts for about one third of paid jobs. It consists of a few large and many small businesses, mostly retail, transport, and construction with employment opportunities for motor and electrical mechanics, carpenters, and financial and administrative officers with IT skills. Industries in which employment fell from the 1995 to 2000 census were agriculture, fisheries, and financial services, while public administration (including churches) and land/air transport, especially the bus service in Tarawa, experienced significant growth. Construction and the wholesale industry also showed increases in employment over the period (Table 6.2).

Employment Opportunities

Table 6.3 illustrates the current possible paid employment opportunities for school leavers and the qualifications required. Based

Box 6.3: Exporting World-standard Skills: Seafarers and Tuna Fishers

Kiribati has a long and successful history of providing seafarers of international standard. This success can be attributed to the people's close relationship with the sea, the skills and knowledge they acquire to complement their natural abilities, their natural upper body strength and their command of English. Both the Marine Training Centre (MTC) and the Fisheries Training Centre (FTC) have close and well-developed relationships with overseas marine companies, which have been in place for almost 30 years. The standard of training delivered by MTC and FTC is high and internationally respected.

The overseas employment of Kiribati seafarers and fishers (currently about 1,050 and 350, respectively, away at any time) could continue to expand gradually, by 200–300 in each case. While there is pressure to increase the supply of seafarers, it is important to maintain the standards of training, which both the South Pacific Marine Services and Kiribati Fishermen's Service expect. It is essential, therefore, that qualified and competent staff and well-equipped training facilities be available before training can be increased. The Kiribati Seamen's Union is very aware of the need to continue to provide seafarers of good quality and to maintain their access to the job market, and plays an active role in support of seafarers and their wives.

Seafarers lead a hard life with most of their time spent away from home. Tuna fishers usually spend 5 to 10 years on the tuna boats before retiring from their life at sea, while seafarers can work into their 50s. This separation from family results in inevitable pressures on relationships and sometimes, family break-up. Seafarers have also been involved in the transmission of the HIV/AIDS virus and now all must be tested for HIV/AIDS before signing on for each new 12-month contract. These social and health outcomes are addressed through the Ministry of Environment and Social Development and the Ministry of Health. The remittances of around \$10,000 per man per year that seafarers send home are an important source of income to households in Kiribati.

Kiribati is currently on the “white list” of countries accredited to deliver the Standard Training Certificate of Watchkeeping, which enables seafarers to be employed on internationally registered ships. There is a risk that Kiribati could lose its white list accreditation unless the domestic shipping standards, which are part of the white list accreditation process, are improved. The implications for government and private shipping companies are that their standards of safety and service must be upgraded and maintained if Kiribati is to retain its accreditation to deliver this training.

Table 6.2: Five-year Changes in Formal Employment

Industry	1995	2000	Change	% change
Agriculture and Fisheries	487	254	-233	-47.8
Manufacturing	104	150	46	44.2
Electricity	182	187	5	2.7
Construction	215	346	131	60.9
Wholesale	222	323	101	45.5
Retail	627	672	45	7.2
Hotels	177	186	9	5.1
Land/Air Transport	710	944	234	33.0
Financial Services	349	317	-32	-9.2
Public Administration	4,775	4,989	214	4.5
Total	7,848	8,368*	520	6.6

* There is an unexplained discrepancy in the 2000 census table from which these data are taken. The total of this column is 832 less than the figure of 9,200 given elsewhere in the census report for total employment. The difference is significant when considering employment growth rates. The higher figure is used in the following discussion.

Sources: Kiribati Statistics Office 1997, and Republic of Kiribati 2001b.

on estimates compiled in consultations for the present report, about 500 school leavers could expect to gain paid employment in 2002. Currently, about 1,700 students leave school each year⁷⁷ and, as mentioned, this will increase to more than 2,000 per year in the next few years. Two thirds to three quarters of school leavers in the future are not likely to find formal wage employment.

Between the 1995 and 2000 censuses, total reported employment in the formal sector grew by 17% or about 3.2% per year, close to the estimated rate of growth of real GDP and equivalent to 250–300 new jobs a year. In the same period, the number of persons 15–49 years old grew by about 11%. The result is that there were slightly more jobs available per person in the job-seeking age group in 2000 than in 1995, but there were still jobs for only a fraction of those looking for them.

Most of the growth in employment is in Tarawa and Kiritimati. People in Tarawa have the best chance of obtaining government employment because of the need to apply in person for government jobs through the National Employment Register office in Tarawa.

Future public service opportunities are likely to grow more slowly than in recent years as fiscal expansion levels off—the public service has increased by about 3% per year in the last five years. Turnover in the public service is about 1% per year because people

Table 6.3: Identified Training and Employment Opportunities for School Leavers, 2002

Employment	Qualifications	Number per year	Graduate to job
Merchant seafarer (MTC)	Entry test, quota by island	100	70 ^a
Fisher on tuna boats (FTC)	Entry test, fitness test, medical test, quota by island	108	100
Tungaru School of Nursing (3-year course)	Entry Form 5/6	25/30	18
Kiribati Teachers College	Primary Certificate (25)	38	31
	Primary Diploma	17	12
	JSS Diploma	59	48
	Upgrade to JSS Diploma	25	25
	AusAID additional persons	37 ^b	35
Police Training College		23-25	20
Agricultural Training College	9-month course	10	7
National Public Service through National Employment Register	Generally minimum Form 5 ^c entry, very low turnover	30+	35
Public Enterprises	Approx 2,000 currently employed		44 ^d
Private Sector construction (through Councils, funded by Councils, aid projects), land/sea transport, wholesale, retail	Approximately 2,300 currently employed, low turnover		55 ^e
Total			500

FTC = Fisheries Training Centre; MTC = Marine Training Centre.

Source: Consultants' estimates based on information from educational institutions, census data, and Chamber of Commerce.

- ^a The graduation rate for the past few years has been below 30, but with a revision of instructional approaches it is expected to increase to more than 70.
- ^b The AusAID project will be training an additional 50 teachers per year, but the Kiribati Teachers College would like to take the opportunity to reduce its intake when the project starts.
- ^c The minimum qualification was Form 3, but was recently raised to Form 5 for most positions. Candidates are expected to apply in person in Tarawa.
- ^d Estimate is based on less than 1% turnover in public service and slower growth.
- ^e Estimate is based on information from the Chamber of Commerce.

do not leave the service readily and most try to remain employed beyond the 50-year retirement age. The National Employment Registry often has as few as two vacancies each month on its register and at least 100 to 200 applications will be received for each vacancy. The most likely opportunities in the public service will come through undertaking studies in teaching, nursing, agriculture, and the police service and gaining subsequent employment in those areas.

Consultations for the present report indicated that the private sector has potential to expand and will be able to offer some full-time employment opportunities to vocationally oriented school leavers. Currently, however, there is no shortage of skilled and qualified persons available for hire by the private sector (other than in the area of accounting). The private sector's ability to expand is reported to be hampered not by skill shortages, but by regulatory and cost constraints, and subsidized competition from PEs (see discussion in Chapters 4 and 5).

SPMS and KFS could each increase employment opportunities by 200–300 if they can maintain and improve the relevant standards (Box 6.3) and, in the case of tuna fishers, depending on tuna market and resource conditions.

Education for Livelihood

An education system is not designed only to prepare students for paid employment. It has a broader purpose and responsibility: to prepare students for life in the community in which they will live. There are warning signs in the experience of other Pacific island countries. Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands both have fast-growing young populations, small formal employment sectors, and big problems with law and order and security. Kiribati has these factors without the same level of law and order problems. There are indications, however, that this is changing, particularly in South Tarawa where house-breaking, alcohol abuse, and gang activity are increasing.

It is vitally important that the education system equip students and their families with fuller understanding of their future lives in Kiribati and prepare them better to manage their opportunities. This includes the opportunities for income and quality of life presented by own production of food, amenities, security, and shelter. Most people will spend their lives at least partly dependent on subsistence production. The ILCs, which provide livelihood education for outer island dwellers including adults, are based on the recognition that education is a life-long activity.

A livelihood is the combination of resources, relationships, and responsibilities that define the ability of individuals or households

to survive and improve their standard of living. A livelihood should not undermine the natural resource base, and should be able to recover from economic and environmental shocks. The scope of foreseeable livelihoods includes subsistence farming and fishing, and small business enterprises such as handicrafts, sewing, baking, carpentry, motor repair, plumbing, electrical work, thatching, and participation in community activities, the *maneaba*, church, dancing, sport, and village banking.

Education for livelihood in Kiribati needs to prepare people for participation in family and community activities, to be able to analyze and discuss issues, to take part in the decision making that takes place at all levels, and to display leadership. Young people need to absorb and apply health information about nutrition, causes of diseases, alcohol abuse, smoking, and family health; extension information about fishing and crop cultivation; and information about education and the environment. People will also need to be flexible and able to take up a variety of money-earning activities, including small-scale business enterprises.

The current education system orients young people to nonmanual employment, primarily in the Government and in an urban setting. Many young people know that the formal job market is overcrowded and realize that the education they have received has failed to equip them for the lives they are actually going to lead.

It would be sensible for the Government to strengthen the provision of education for livelihood as part of the compulsory and free basic education system, and to shift more of the cost of academic and tertiary education onto those families whose children receive it, through increases in fees and other cost recovery measures. The formal education system has to adapt to the changing needs of the people.

The planned focus on improving the quality of education is sound, but the content of the better-quality education to be delivered by the system should reflect the livelihood skill requirements of the next 10–20 years, rather than those of the past. Through careful planning, this can be done and still reflect the values of a Kiribati culture based on limited natural resources and sharing with others of less means. The policy challenge is great, but the alternative is an increasingly alienated population of young people who have not been well prepared for life.

Migration as an Economic Strategy

The Government has successfully employed internal migration to relieve population pressure, through its resettlement program in the Line Islands in the 1980s. Individual migration to Tabuaeran and Kiritimati is continuing (see Statistical Appendix), at rates that would place around half of the projected national population increment of 15,000 in the next 10 years in Kiritimati. Crucial questions of governance, land allocation, and economic management are already arising there, and will become increasingly urgent in the next two or three years.

Even as substantial internal migration occurs, an overall land shortage and limited domestic economic opportunities mean that some skilled and qualified I-Kiribati will want to move to other countries in search of employment and eventually to settle. Some have taken this path, mostly in New Zealand, as part of a family strategy to increase present income and gain access to future employment opportunities. This trend is likely to increase, albeit at a statistically insignificant level, even without any official encouragement.⁷⁸

Other Pacific island countries that have universal basic education and produce more skilled and qualified people than their economies can absorb have adopted emigration as a deliberate part of national economic strategy. Samoa, Tonga, and Cook Islands have contained their population growth through emigration, used remittance income to support domestic living standards, and now benefit from the capital, skills, and business acumen brought back by nationals who have lived overseas for many years.

There is nothing unusual or wrong about emigration in search of greater economic opportunity. It happens whether governments want it to or not. It is better that it be explicitly recognized in the social and economic plans of Kiribati as a legitimate aspect of economic and social change. This gives a better chance for the Government to influence the skills of the emigrants. Ways of facilitating orderly and successful emigration can then be sought in the context of Kiribati's relations with its neighbors.