



KIRIBATI SUSTAINABLE TOURISM POLICY

Including a 10-Point Policy Action Plan



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FOREWORD

On behalf of the Government of the Republic of Kiribati, it gives me great pleasure to present to you the Kiribati Sustainable Tourism Policy. This document signifies an important milestone in our tourism development journey, as it envisions growth that will enable our natural environments to flourish, our socio-cultural values to thrive and guarantee economic prosperity across our remote islands and communities.

Nestled in the centre of Pacific Ocean, straddling all four hemispheres of the globe, Kiribati's pristine beauty and rich cultural heritage have captured the hearts of travelers from around the world. Our islands are not just dots across the 3.5 million sq. kilometers of ocean that surrounds us but are a living ecosystem that have sustained our communities for generations and shall remain for the benefit of our children and grandchildren.

As the Minister of Tourism, Commerce, Industry and Cooperatives, I am aware of the delicate balance that must be maintained to ensure that our islands continue to fascinate visitors while safeguarding the very essence of what makes Kiribati special.

Through the Kiribati 20 Year Vision (KV20), we recognise that tourism has the power to bring economic prosperity to our island nation. However, the rapid growth of tourism, if not managed sustainably, can also pose threats to our environment, culture and traditional way of life. This policy charts a course toward sustainable tourism and shall be the foundation on which future tourism development will be guided.

In crafting this policy, we have engaged with a multitude of stakeholders within Government and across local business and host communities. We have also sought international expertise in sustainable tourism. The result is a blueprint that outlines our sustainable tourism policy needs, measurable policy responses and valuable policy partners that we will work with to minimize the negative impacts of tourism while maximizing its benefits.

I extend my gratitude to all those who contributed to the development of this policy. I am also convinced that by embracing sustainable tourism, we will ensure that our people and our visitors continue to enjoy a Kiribati that is as vibrant, diverse and captivating as it is today.



Kam bati n rabwa,

Hon Bootii Nauan
Minister of Tourism, Commerce, Industry and Cooperatives
Republic of Kiribati



LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CMD	Culture and Museums Division (of MIA)
CAAK	Civil Aviation Authority Kiribati
DBK	Development Bank of Kiribati
ECD	Environment and Conservation Division (of MELAD)
GGGI	Global Green Growth Institute
IPD	Investment Promotion Division (of MTCIC)
KCCI	Kiribati Chamber of Commerce and Industry
KIT	Kiribati Institute of Technology
KNSO	Kiribati National Statistics Office
KSTDPF	Kiribati Sustainable Tourism Development Policy Framework
KV20	Kiribati's 20 Year Vision (2016-2036)
LMD	Land Management Division (of MELAD)
MEHR	Ministry of Employment and Human Resources
MELAD	Ministry of Environment, Lands and Agricultural Development
MFAI	Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Immigration
MFED	Ministry of Finance and Economic Development
MFMRD	Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources Development
MHMS	Ministry of Health and Medical Services
MIA	Ministry of Internal Affairs
MICT	Ministry of Information, Communications and Transport
MISE	Ministry of Infrastructure and Sustainable Energy
MLPI	Ministry of Line and Phoenix Islands
MOE	Ministry of Education
MTCIC	Ministry of Tourism, Commerce, Industry and Cooperatives
MWYSSA	Ministry of Women, Youth, Sport and Social Affairs
NWSCC	National Water Sanitation Coordination Committee
NEPO	National Economic Planning Office
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
OB	Office of Te Beretitenti
PIPA	Phoenix Island Protected Area
PUB	Public Utilities Board
QCIO	Quality Control and Inspection Unit (of MISE)
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SPTO	Pacific Tourism Organisation
STSC	(Kiribati) Sustainable Tourism Steering Committee
TAK	Tourism Authority of Kiribati

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- In 2021 the Tourism Authority of Kiribati (TAK) developed a Sustainable Tourism Development Policy Framework (KSTDPF) through consultations with Government, private sector, community and non-governmental organisation (NGO) stakeholders.
- Stakeholder research and consultations undertaken in 2023 found that the Vision and Values for sustainable tourism featured in the KSTDPF remain relevant for the present and future.

Vision: Tourism will be a key driver for stimulating sustainable economic development, environmental conservation, cultural preservation and social wellbeing.

Values: **Te Mauri:** We yearn for the good health and safety of our people.

Te Raoi: We desire peace upon Kiribati and its visitors.

Te Tabomoa: We aspire for prosperity and success in all that we do.



- A recent review verified and refined the KSTDPF's seven Sustainable Tourism Goals (see page 6). It also determined that while progress has already been made across several priorities, others may not see progress until the longer-term. Furthermore, the review highlighted the need to progress the Framework from 'in principle' commitments and guidelines, to a national public policy response.
- As a result, this 'Kiribati Sustainable Tourism Policy' has been developed, representing a 'whole of Government' public policy on sustainable tourism for Kiribati. The Policy was convened by TAK and is based on inputs from partner Ministries and agencies, the private sector, host communities and NGOs.

Sustainable Tourism Policy Statement

As expressed in KV20 and the Kiribati Development Plan, the Government of Kiribati recognises the tourism sector as a source of sustainable economic development, a stimulus for conserving the country's natural and cultural heritage and a vehicle for ensuring positive social outcomes.

In line with the shared vision for sustainable tourism devised with stakeholders in 2021, we also acknowledge that to realise such benefits, tourism development in Kiribati must be done according to best practices in sustainable tourism development.

The Government of Kiribati will lead sustainable development of the sector according to the goals and values outlined in our Sustainable Tourism Policy. We will invest in infrastructure and services that support sustainable tourism. We will create enabling conditions for the private sector and community partners to engage with sustainable tourism and we will uphold measures to control development, as necessary for sustainable tourism.

Our public Policy lays the foundation for whole-of-nation sector planning; the next important step in realising Kiribati's sustainable tourism vision.

Sustainable Tourism Policy Goals and Policy Responses



GOAL 1: TOURISM WILL CONSERVE THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

- 1.1. Environmental protection controls for new constructions and ongoing monitoring will ensure tourism developments do not harm the surrounding environment.
- 1.2. Waste management regulations, investments and awareness will be strengthened to ensure waste generated by both residents and visitors is recycled or disposed of in a manner that does not negatively impact the environment.
- 1.3. Public investment in sustainable water resources infrastructure for communities and visitors alike will be accompanied by policies to enable tourism businesses to invest in more sustainable water management.
- 1.4. Environmental controls, visitor awareness programs, tourism industry standards and tour operator support will be enhanced to ensure visitor activity does not harm terrestrial or marine biodiversity.
- 1.5. Awareness of the environment through tourism activity will be increased and the direction of tourism revenues to support conservation and sustainable tourism efforts will be facilitated.



GOAL 2: TOURISM WILL PRESERVE CULTURAL AND HISTORICAL HERITAGE

- 2.1. Site planning and visitor controls, as well as awareness activities across communities, tourism operators and visitors, will ensure visitor activity does not harm artifacts or sites of cultural or historic significance.
- 2.2. Regulatory controls and awareness activity will be enhanced to prevent the exploitation of craftspeople and knowledge holders in commercial tourism activity.
- 2.3. Conditions will be enabled for tourism development that celebrates and promotes Kiribati's culture and historical heritage in a sustainable, authentic and sensitive manner.



GOAL 3: TOURISM WILL SUPPORT COMMUNITY AND SOCIAL WELL-BEING

- 3.1. Awareness and support programs will empower and equip communities to make informed decisions about engaging with tourism opportunities.
- 3.2. Workplace legislation and supporting tourism industry best practice guidance will provide non-discriminatory, non-exploitative, safe and accessible employment for tourism workers in Kiribati.
- 3.3. Visitor controls and associated community, industry and visitor awareness activities, will be enhanced to ensure tourism activity does not harm Kiribati's population and way of life.
- 3.4. Notwithstanding policies to ease border entry for visitors, controls will be used, where necessary, to protect the local population from harm.



GOAL 4: TOURISM WILL ENSURE VISITOR WELL-BEING AND SATISFACTION

- 4.1. The Mauri Mark program will be enhanced to be at the global forefront of tourism standards that ensure product quality, safety, accessibility and sustainability.
- 4.2. Visitor feedback and market research will inform destination planning and product development so that visitor satisfaction levels improve.
- 4.3. National infrastructure planning will prioritise investment in tourism-enabling infrastructure and services where there is evidence of national benefit.





GOAL 5: TOURISM WILL CONTRIBUTE TO SUSTAINABLE, INCLUSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

- 5.1. An evidence-based approach to destination marketing and development will be undertaken to attract high-yield, low-impact niche tourism markets.
- 5.2. Support programs will be enhanced for micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) and community enterprises operating in, or linked to, tourism, to enable them to build the skills, access the resources and secure the finance needed to start or improve a business.
- 5.3. Training and employment programs will develop a local tourism workforce with relevant vocational and management skills.
- 5.4. The value, costs and net benefit of tourism to the economy, environment and society will be determined and inform future tourism policy.



GOAL 6: TOURISM WILL DRIVE GREEN AND SUSTAINABLE PRIVATE SECTOR INVESTMENT

- 6.1. Information on green technologies and practices, and incentives to adopt them, will enable tourism enterprises to invest in sustainability.
- 6.2. Sustainable tourism investment opportunities that address supply gaps will be identified, promoted to prospective investors and enabled via targeted incentives and facilitation programs.



GOAL 7: TOURISM WILL INFLUENCE 'WHOLE OF NATION' LEADERSHIP IN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

- 7.1. A 'whole of nation' approach to tourism development will be enabled via a Sustainable Tourism Steering Committee (STSC) and regular community, private sector and government consultations.
- 7.2. The Tourism Industry will be encouraged to advocate for sustainable development in Kiribati, through the Mauri Way Ambassador program and promotional activities.



10-POINT ACTION PLAN

The Policy concludes with an Action Plan to guide the first 12 months

- 1 Establish a Kiribati Sustainable Tourism Steering Committee (STSC) comprising Government, tourism private sector and community representatives.
- 2 Form or expand working groups to progress tourism policy priorities identified by the STSC.
- 3 Undertake market analysis to support sustainable tourism positioning.
- 4 Develop a Kiribati Tourism Master Plan 2024-2034.
- 5 Schedule regular private sector and community consultations on tourism.
- 6 Include tourism-enabling accountabilities in policies and plans of key Ministries/Agencies.
- 7 Continue to strengthen and streamline awareness, training and support programs aimed at developing sustainable tourism enterprises.
- 8 Strengthen and expand the Mauri Mark Industry Standards and Mauri Way Customer Service programs.
- 9 Design a 'Sustainable Tourism Future' Visitor Levy.
- 10 Commence data collection and target setting for Sustainable Tourism Indicators.

1. INTRODUCTION



Background

THE KIRIBATI SUSTAINABLE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT POLICY FRAMEWORK

In 2020, the Tourist Authority of Kiribati (TAK) embarked on an important mission to reset the foundations for sustainable tourism development in Kiribati. One year later, after drawing on global lessons in sustainable tourism, sharing knowledge and experiences with regional tourism partners¹, reviewing Kiribati's prevailing policy and planning context, and conducting consultations with Government, private sector and NGO stakeholders in Kiribati, TAK launched Towards 2036, Kiribati's Sustainable Tourism Development Policy Framework (KSTDPF).

Over the past two years, the Framework's Vision, Values, Goals and Priorities have underpinned TAK's work plans and guided its collaboration with various stakeholders in sustainable tourism development. A 2023 review of the Framework found that progress has already been made across several priorities, while others are longer-term propositions. New research and consultations verified that the Vision, Values, Goals and Priorities set out in 2021 remain relevant for the present and into the future. However, there is a need and opportunity to progress the Framework from 'in principle' commitments and guidelines, to a national public policy for sustainable tourism. Therefore, TAK has convened the formalisation of this whole-of-Government Sustainable Tourism Policy, in close collaboration with partner Ministries and agencies.

As a result, this 'Kiribati Sustainable Tourism Policy' has been developed, representing a 'whole of Government' public policy on sustainable tourism for Kiribati. The Policy was convened by TAK and is based on inputs from partner Ministries and agencies, the private sector, host communities and NGOs.

Purpose

OF THE KIRIBATI SUSTAINABLE TOURISM POLICY (KSTP)

This policy has been developed to:

1. Formalise the long-term Vision, Values and Goals for sustainable tourism, as previously conceived with stakeholders under the KSTDPF.
2. Progress the Government of Kiribati's prioritisation of the tourism sector as expressed in the nation's 20 Year Vision (2016-2036) 'KV20', and the Kiribati Development Plan 2020-2023.
3. State the Government of Kiribati's position on tourism, specifically, its commitment to and requirements for sustainable tourism.
4. Identify the key public Policy Needs relevant to stated goals, assess the current situation and challenges for each, identify Policy partners and state the Government's public policy response.
5. Set the foundations for a subsequent, long-term 'whole of nation' Tourism Master Plan.
6. Fulfil Kiribati's obligations as signatory to the Pacific Leaders Sustainable Tourism Commitment.
7. Provide a pathway for tourism to support Kiribati to achieve United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).



¹ Via development of the Pacific Tourism Organisation's (SPTO) 'Pacific Sustainable Tourism Policy Framework'.

Aligning with the Global and Regional Context for Sustainable Tourism

This policy has been prepared with consideration of global and regional principles and practices in sustainable tourism, specifically:

➤ The United Nations World Tourism Organization's (UNWTO's) global 'Tourism4SDGs' agenda.

As recognised by the UNWTO, tourism has the potential to contribute, directly or indirectly, to all of the SDGs. It highlights tourism's direct relevance to Goals 8, 12 and 14 on inclusive and sustainable economic growth, sustainable consumption and production (SCP) and the sustainable use of oceans and marine resources, respectively². Kiribati's Sustainable Tourism Policy reflects these principles.

➤ The Pacific Tourism Organisation's (SPTO) Sustainable Tourism Policy Framework.

Released in 2021, SPTO's 'Pacific 2030' presents four regional goals:

1. Prosperous Economies.
2. Thriving and Inclusive Communities.
3. Visible and Valued Culture.
4. Healthy Oceans and Islands.

These goals, and the underpinning priorities, outcomes, policies and actions for sustainable tourism, were developed by all member countries, including Kiribati. They were subsequently endorsed by Kiribati and other member Governments through the 'Pacific Leaders Sustainable Tourism Commitment'. The SPTO framework and its various resources³, have guided the tailoring of Kiribati's own Sustainable Tourism Policy to suit the national context.

➤ Prevailing trends in sustainable tourism.

Expectations from both visitors and host communities for destinations to ensure tourism development is demonstrably sustainable were growing before the COVID-19 crisis and are being reinforced since. As the global tourism sector recovers from the pandemic's disruptions, evidence shows travellers are prioritising sustainability in travel decisions and seeking out destinations and products with sustainability credentials. In addition, local populations, having witnessed the negative and positive impacts of border closures on the economy and resources respectively, are demanding that future tourism development is legitimately sustainable. This is spurring efforts to strengthen community participation in tourism planning discussions and decisions, and improve how tourism's negative impacts are evaluated and managed. Within this context, the Sustainable Tourism Policy for Kiribati builds on the country's stated commitment to sustainable tourism, with specific policy measures.



2 <https://tourism4sdgs.org/tourism-for-sdgs/tourism-and-sdgs/>

3 The Framework's 'Action Plan for National Partners' (2021), the Pacific Sustainable Tourism Indicators (2022) and Pacific Sustainable Tourism Standard (2023).

Aligning with Relevant Policy, Planning and Legislation in Kiribati

While tourism requires public, private and community cooperation, this public Policy expresses Government-specific commitments to, and conditions for, developing the sector. In the national planning context, tourism is identified as a priority sector under Kiribati's 20 Year Vision (2016-2036) (KV20), and the Kiribati Development Plan 2020-2023, highlights tourism, alongside fisheries, as an industry to be developed in a sustainable manner to achieve economic and social benefits.

As developing tourism requires a broad range of interventions under the mandate of different Government Ministries, and as sustainable development is a cross-cutting Government priority, this Sustainable Tourism Policy has been prepared with consideration of many relevant policies, legislation and plans, including the following, categorised by tourism theme:

- **Tourism management.** *The Tourism Act, 2018.*
- **Transport.** *Kiribati Civil Aviation Act 2019; Ministry of Information, Communication and Transport (MICT) Strategic Plan 2021-2024.*
- **Private Sector Development/Investment.** *The National Investment Policy Framework 2018-2028; Foreign Investments Act 2018; Building Act 2006; National Building Code of Kiribati 2012; Business Names Act 2021.*
- **Environment.** *The National Integrated Environment Policy 2013; Environment Act 2021; Coastal Fisheries Act 2010; Coastal Fisheries Act Regulation 2019; National Fisheries Policy 2013-2025; Gilbert Islands Ordinance for Wildlife Conservation 1977; Phoenix Island Protected Area (PIPA) Conservation Trust Amendment Act 2019.*
- **Water, Sanitation and Hygiene.** *National Water Resources Policy and Implementation Plan 2008; National Sanitation Policy 2010; Tarawa Water Master Plan 2010-2030.*
- **Energy.** *National Energy Policy 2009; Kiribati Integrated Energy Roadmap 2017-2025.*
- **Culture.** *Te Umwanibong Act 2022; Copyright Act 2018.*
- **Community, Women and Youth.** *National Policy on Gender Equality and Women's Development 2019-2022; National Youth Policy and Action Plan 2018-2022; National Disability Policy and Action Plan 2018-2021; Children, Young People and Family Welfare Act 2013.*
- **Workforce Development.** *Employment and Industrial Relations Code 2015.*
- **Disaster Risk Management and Climate Change.** *Disaster Risk Management and Climate Change Act 2019.*
- **Industry Standards.** *National Quality Policy 2017-2023.*
- **Information and communications technology.** *National ICT Policy 2019.*
- **Border Entry.** *Kiribati Immigration Act 2019*

Although this list does not cover all policies, legislation and plans under the above themes, it highlights those most relevant to formulating policy responses to identified sustainable tourism Policy Needs. These are referenced in more detail in relevant topics under Section 3.

2. SUSTAINABLE TOURISM POLICY FOUNDATIONS



Sustainable Tourism Policy Statement

As expressed in KV20 and the Kiribati Development Plan, the Government of Kiribati recognises the tourism sector as a source of sustainable economic development, a stimulus for conserving the country's natural and cultural heritage and a vehicle for ensuring positive social outcomes. In line with the shared vision for sustainable tourism devised with stakeholders in 2021, we also acknowledge that to realise such benefits, tourism development in Kiribati must be done according to best practices in sustainable tourism development.

The Government of Kiribati will lead sustainable development of the sector according to the goals and values outlined in our Sustainable Tourism Policy. We will invest in infrastructure and services that support sustainable tourism. We will create enabling conditions for the private sector and community partners to engage with sustainable tourism, and we will uphold measures to control development as necessary for sustainable tourism.

Our public Policy lays the foundation for whole-of-nation sector planning – the next important step in realising Kiribati's sustainable tourism vision.

Sustainable Tourism Policy Vision

This Policy adopts the Vision for tourism formulated following stakeholder consultation for the KSTDPF in 2021 and re-validated in 2023: *“Tourism will be a key driver for stimulating sustainable economic development, environmental conservation, cultural preservation and social wellbeing”*.

Sustainable Tourism Policy Values

- Te Mauri:** We yearn for the good health and safety of our people.
- Te Raoi:** We desire peace upon Kiribati and its visitors
- Te Tabomoa:** We aspire for prosperity and success in all that we do.

Sustainable Tourism Policy Goals

This Policy adopts the seven Goals for sustainable tourism determined for the KSTDPF in 2021, with minor changes to language for clarification purposes following the 2023 review:

1. Tourism will **conserve the natural environment**.
2. Tourism will **preserve cultural and historical heritage**.
3. Tourism will **support community and social well-being**.
4. Tourism will **ensure visitor well-being and satisfaction**.
5. Tourism will **contribute to sustainable, inclusive economic development**.
6. Tourism will **drive green and sustainable private sector investment**.
7. Tourism will influence **‘whole of nation’ leadership in sustainable development**.



3. POLICY NEEDS: SITUATION ANALYSES AND POLICY RESPONSES

Section 3 presents the *Policy Needs* relevant to each goal (summarised in Table 1). It features:

1. *A brief situation analysis for each theme*, including challenges to be considered.
2. *Policy partners*, i.e. Government Ministries/agencies with accountabilities for this public policy. It also notes non-government collaboration partners, including the private sector, communities and NGOs.
3. *The Government's policy response*. For each policy need, a brief corresponding statement is presented as the policy response. Some are supported by specific short-term measures (i.e. for the next 12 months), but in most cases, medium to long-term policy measures will be determined as an outcome this policy. This will evolve through the proposed Sustainable Tourism Steering Committee (STSC) and during upcoming tourism master planning.

Table 1: Summary of Policy Needs Across the Seven Policy Goals

GOAL 1: Tourism will conserve the natural environment	
Policy Need 1.1	Safeguarding the environment from uncontrolled tourism developments
Policy Need 1.2	Managing waste generated by tourism
Policy Need 1.3	Managing tourism's impact on limited fresh water supply
Policy Need 1.4	Preventing negative impacts of visitor activity on marine and terrestrial biodiversity
Policy Need 1.5	Improving environmental conservation efforts through tourism
GOAL 2: Tourism will preserve cultural and historical heritage	
Policy Need 2.1	Avoiding negative impacts of tourism activity on cultural and historic artifacts or sites
Policy Need 2.2	Protecting craftspeople and knowledge holders from exploitation in tourism
Policy Need 2.3	Celebrating and promoting Kiribati's culture and historical heritage through tourism
GOAL 3: Tourism will support community and social well-being	
Policy Need 3.1	Enabling communities to make informed decisions about engaging with the tourism sector
Policy Need 3.2	Protecting tourism workers from discrimination, exploitation and unsafe working conditions
Policy Need 3.3	Avoiding negative impacts of visitor activity on communities
Policy Need 3.4	Protecting the local population, where necessary, with border controls
GOAL 4: Tourism will ensure visitor well-being and satisfaction	
Policy Need 4.1	Achieving global standards for tourism product quality, safety, accessibility and sustainability
Policy Need 4.2	Improving the destination offer in response to visitor feedback and market research
Policy Need 4.3	Investing in sustainable tourism-enabling public infrastructure and services
GOAL 5: Tourism will contribute to sustainable, inclusive economic development	
Policy Need 5.1	Attracting high-yield, low-impact niche tourism market segments
Policy Need 5.2	Enabling MSME and community enterprise development in the tourism economy
Policy Need 5.3	Developing a local, skilled tourism workforce
Policy Need 5.4	Understanding the net benefit of tourism to the economy, environment and society
GOAL 6: Tourism will drive green and sustainable private sector investment	
Policy Need 6.1	Enabling tourism business owners to invest in sustainability
Policy Need 6.2	Facilitating investment in new sustainable tourism products that address supply gaps
GOAL 7: Tourism will influence 'whole of nation' leadership in sustainable development	
Policy Need 7.1	Instilling 'whole of nation' sustainable tourism development coordination
Policy Need 7.2	Developing a tourism industry of sustainability champions



GOAL 1: Tourism will conserve the natural environment

POLICY NEED 1.1

SAFEGUARDING THE ENVIRONMENT FROM UNCONTROLLED TOURISM DEVELOPMENTS

Situational Analysis and Policy Challenges

As with any investment requiring site clearing and construction, the development of tourism infra-structure (e.g., a hotel) can have negative impacts on the surrounding environment unless adequate measures are in place to avoid damage. Kiribati's Environment Act 2021 provides such protection in its Environment License provisions for specified developments.

Developers of accommodation with more than 10 rooms are required to apply to the Ministry of Environment, Lands and Agricultural Development's (MELAD's) Environmental Conservation Division (ECD) for an Environment License before they can start building. The granting of this license is dependent upon clearances from the Ministry of Infrastructure and Sustainable Energy (MISE) (for design compliance with the Building Code), the Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources Development (MFMRD) (for shoreline mapping, design compliance and beach mining) and MELAD (for Land Development Application approval). In South Tarawa, a Public Utilities Board (PUB) check of any impacts on local water or power infrastructure is also required.

Where a development includes the construction of a jetty, sea wall or permanent overwater structures, or requires dredging for channels, separate environmental licenses must also be approved by ECD, following clearance by the Foreshore Management Committee,⁴ chaired by MELAD's Land Management Division (LMD).

In some cases, ECD may also require the submission of an Environmental Management Plan (EMP) or Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) before a license will be granted.

Environment Licenses are issued to accommodation developers with conditions or specified standards and are subject to monitoring by Environmental Inspectors pre, during and post construction, as well as during ongoing operations, thereby mitigating the risk of environmental damage for specified developments. It is noted however that accommodation operators with 10 or fewer free-standing structures or units (including rooms, restaurant and other facilities) are not currently required to obtain an Environment License, unless they have an investment value of AU\$100,000 or more. This may need to be reviewed if environmental risks emerge with the growth of such accommodation supply.

Other provisions in place to protect the environment relevant to tourism developments include ECD requirements for the storage of over 1000 litres of fuel. Where a development includes backup power generation, measures for the management of fuel will be included in the Environment License.

Furthermore, in providing regulations for building structures, Kiribati's Building Code (2007)⁵, which will soon be updated by MISE, helps prevent environmental damage from human waste through plumbing requirements. It also requires construction projects exceeding \$200,000 to provide a Sustainability Report covering waste, water and power management. (Note: environmental risks related to waste and water management are addressed in more detail under Policy Needs 1.2 and 1.3 respectively).

⁴ The Foreshore Management Committee is chaired by MELAD LMD with technical members comprising: MELAD ECD, MFMRD, MISE, Kiribati Police Service, Office of the Attorney General.

⁵ The Building Code does not cover Buia.

A tourism-specific but unlegislated check for environmental care is in place with TAK's Mauri Mark industry standards which includes some criteria for environmental sustainability practices. TAK intends to collaborate with MELAD and MISE to strengthen these criteria and roll the program out to other types of tourism operations. The opportunity to support Environment Inspectors with monitoring of tourism developments is currently being explored.

In terms of communication of environmental controls and requirements to the tourism industry, this is currently limited and reportedly does not provide the clarity developers need. TAK's collaboration with MISE and MELAD will also focus on providing tourism-specific information and guidance on development controls and requirements.

Notwithstanding the importance of having strict controls to address environmental impacts, a policy challenge for Kiribati lies in ensuring that unnecessary regulations or cumbersome processes do not deter sustainability-compliant investors. This is considered in more detail under Goal 6.

Policy Partners

MELAD (ECD, LMD), MISE (QCIU), MFRMD, TAK, MIA, Urban and Islands Councils.

In collaboration with private sector and environmental NGOs.

POLICY RESPONSE

Environmental protection controls for new constructions and ongoing monitoring will ensure tourism developments do not harm the surrounding environment.

Short-term measures:

- This policy topic to be the subject of cross-Government collaboration via a new Sustainable Tourism Steering Committee (STSC) and relevant working groups. (2023 and ongoing).
- MISE, with inputs from TAK and MELAD, to develop a Building Code for constructing Buias for accommodation purposes to prevent potential environmental damage. (2024). (See also 1.2).
- TAK to strengthen its support for environmental protection in tourism developments (both construction and operation) by working with ECD to: (i) enhance the Mauri Mark program with relevant criteria; (ii) enhance industry awareness with relevant information guidance; and (iii) provide new investors with clear guidance on relevant regulations and processes. (2023 and ongoing).

Medium to long-term policy measures to be determined via the STSC and relevant working groups, informed by insights from upcoming tourism master planning and/or as new policy issues emerge.



POLICY NEED 1.2

MANAGING WASTE GENERATED THROUGH TOURISM

Situational Analysis and Policy Challenges

Kiribati's tourism operators typically recognise the importance of waste management for tourism success and are reportedly proactive in adopting best practices in their own operations. However, in the context of Kiribati facing significant waste management challenges, it is recognised that waste generated by tourism places extra pressure on already-stretched resources. It is also recognised that policy solutions must address the needs facing the country overall, not just the tourism industry. In this context, some progress is already being made, although there are also ongoing challenges.

- *Measures to prevent waste at the source.* A ban on single use plastics was introduced in 2022.
- *Measures to reduce litter in public places.* The Environment Act's penalty for littering⁶, combined with the installation of bins by urban and islands councils and ECD's litter prevention awareness, works to address this issue. However, Kiribati, especially South Tarawa, still has a significant litter problem. This is due to a lack of community awareness and/or care, insufficient policing of the law, the limited number of rubbish bins and/or insufficient emptying of them and interference with rubbish by animals. As a remedial measure for the high volume of litter in public places, community clean-up campaigns are frequently arranged by TAK, ECD and NGOs, especially in advance of VIP and cruise ship visits.
- *Measures to avoid litter from cruise ship passengers.* To minimise litter produced by cruise visitors, they are advised it is necessary to take all rubbish back to the ship. (It should be noted however that there are anecdotal reports of this impacting the next destination).
- *Measures to help households and businesses manage waste sustainably.* There are some regulations and guidance for this relevant to tourism businesses. There are also investments in public infrastructure and services to support their waste disposal and recycling to some extent.

The state of play according to different forms of waste is summarised below.

- *Solid waste and residual waste.* Tourism businesses in a municipal area are required to dispose of solid waste as stipulated in the Environment Act.⁷ Whereas most tourism businesses separate food waste for animal feed or compost, the disposal of non-compostable waste varies. In Tarawa and Kiritimati, businesses can utilise the garbage collection services offered by councils and/or take their rubbish to one of three authorised landfill sites. However, tourism businesses report issues with being able to manage waste properly, due to, for example, inconsistent collection schedules, inadequate holding sites on the roadside, the issue of animal interference and difficulties disposing of dangerous materials and end of life goods⁸. Concerns are also expressed about the landfill sites being unsightly and a risk to community health and the environment. Tourism businesses in the outer islands where there are not waste collection/disposal services typically resort to burning or burying non-recyclable waste, and welcome more sustainable options.
- *Human Waste.* Whereas the Environment Act includes human faeces in its definition of waste, it does not stipulate specific measures for its management at commercial sites, such as a hotel. The Building Code manages the risk of human waste infiltrating the environment to a certain extent through its plumbing requirements at building design and construction stage. However, there is no ongoing monitoring of this and the Code does not cover Buias which are emerging as a tourism accommodation product.



⁶ Environment Act 2021, Part III, 13 stipulates that any person who litters will be liable upon conviction to a fine not exceeding \$5000 and a term of imprisonment not exceeding 12 months or both.

⁷ Ibid Part III, 12 stipulate that in a Municipal area, solid waste, litter and residual waste must be placed in a contained manner, separate from vegetation material and in a place where it will be collected for disposal.

⁸ Such as car batteries and large electronic items

➤ Currently, human waste at Kiribati's accommodation providers is managed using septic tanks, with the exception of one using a compostable system. Councils in Tarawa and Kiritimati provide septic collection, however, the disposal site in Kiritimati is an open site. No tourism businesses have access to the sewage system available to a small area under Betio Council. Within this context, there are concerns that human waste management practices for the industry are not adequate for a growing sustainable tourism destination. There are also concerns about untreated human waste from non-tourism sources infiltrating the coastline and water sources and risking Kiribati's tourism reputation. (See also Policy Area 1.3).

- *Recyclable plastics and cans.* In accordance with the Kaoki Mange System, tourism businesses are encouraged to recycle polyethylene terephthalate (PET) plastic bottles and cans. Bottles are either reused or sold to retail outlets for reuse, but concerns prevail amongst the tourism industry about inadequate infrastructure to dispose of PET bottles at end of life. Meanwhile cans are accepted at the recycling facilities in Tarawa and Kiritimati in exchange for a payment. For businesses in the outer islands where there is no recycling facility, transporting them back to Tarawa for recycling can be cost-prohibitive.
- *Other recyclable waste.* There is currently no provision or facility for recycling glass or paper in Kiribati.

This situation analysis highlights that while some progress is being made in waste management, tourism businesses face barriers to adopting best practices in managing tourism-generated waste, with many constraints being location-specific.

Policy solutions in the form of regulations, investments and awareness programs to address the noted issues are essential to Kiribati's future, irrespective of tourism. They are however especially critical to Kiribati's tourism future in terms of being able to (i) offer a clean destination as synonymous with sustainability and (ii) deal with the expected increase in tourism-generated waste management.

Policy Partners

MELAD (ECD), MISE, PUB, TAK, MIA, Urban and Islands Councils.

In collaboration with communities and the tourism private sector.

POLICY RESPONSE

Waste management regulations, investments and awareness will be strengthened to ensure waste generated by both residents and visitors is recycled or disposed of in a manner that does not negatively impact the environment.

Short-term measures:

- This policy topic to be the subject of cross-Government collaboration via a new Sustainable Tourism Steering Committee (STSC) and relevant working groups. (2023 and ongoing).
- TAK to strengthen its support for environmental protection through waste management in tourism operations by working with ECD to: (i) enhance the Mauri Mark program with relevant criteria, (ii) enhance industry awareness with information and guidance, and (iii) provide new investors with clear guidance on relevant regulations and processes. (2024).
- MISE, with inputs from TAK and MELAD, to develop a Building Code for Buia construction for accommodation purposes, including requirements for managing human waste in a sustainable and safe way. (2024). (See also 1.1).

Medium to long-term policy measures to be determined via the STSC and relevant working groups, informed by insights from upcoming tourism master planning and/or as new policy issues emerge.



POLICY NEED 1.3

MANAGING TOURISM'S IMPACT ON LIMITED FRESH WATER SUPPLY

Situational Analysis and Policy Challenges

As Kiribati faces ongoing issues with supply of fresh water, and as tourism businesses typically use a relatively large volume of water, there are concerns that the sector is putting pressure on available supply and that this will escalate as tourism grows. Efforts to redress this are currently being made by the public, private and NGO sectors.

- **Policy.** Kiribati's National Water Resources Policy (2008) under the purview of MISE, commits to:
 - “(i) Provide safe, socially equitable, financially, technically and environmentally sustainable water supplies to enhance the welfare and livelihood of I-Kiribati, and
 - (ii) Protect and conserve freshwater sources for public water supplies and (iii) Deliver freshwater efficiently and effectively”.⁹
- **Investments.** The most significant public investment in water supply in Kiribati will soon commence with the South Tarawa Water Supply Project. By supplementing existing water reserves with desalination plants, households and businesses in South Tarawa are expected to have access to a sufficient quantity of metered fresh water by 2030.
- **Community awareness.** MISE undertakes community awareness activity about harvesting and conserving water through rainwater catchment and water rationing. There are also various NGO-supported water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) projects with awareness components.
- **Other support.** There are a range of projects aimed at improving the availability of fresh water across Kiribati for the benefit of both communities and businesses. For example, water tanks are being distributed to communities and investments are being made in desalination units in the outer Gilberts Islands¹⁰.

Despite such progress, fresh water supply remains a critical concern across the nation. Supply issues, along with their solutions, vary according to location and weather conditions. Notwithstanding the financial and land area constraints to investing in 'the best' sustainable, fresh water supply infrastructure, it remains a national priority. Kiribati's National Water Sanitation Coordination Committee (NWSCC) plays a key role in advising all involved Ministries and NGOs on water supply and related sanitation policy.

At the tourism private sector level, most accommodation providers are investing in their own sustainable water collection infrastructure. While water can currently be purchased from the Public Utilities Board (PUB) in Tarawa, this is a cost burden on businesses and depletes supply for residents. Business owners face some challenges to investing in their own solutions with availability, knowledge and financial constraints hindering access to suitable equipment and technical advice. There are currently no fiscal incentives to support businesses to invest in this infrastructure, although loans are available through the Development Bank of Kiribati (DBK) for such purposes. (See Policy Need 6.)

Tourism operators and guests mostly practice sustainable water use (i.e., conserving and reusing) in accommodation properties, but there are calls for more advice and awareness.

Policy Partners

MISE (Water Unit), PUB, MHMS (laboratory), MELAD (ECD), TAK, MTCIC, MIA, Urban and Island Councils, NWSCC.

In collaboration with host communities, the tourism private sector and relevant NGOs.

POLICY RESPONSE

Public investment in sustainable water resources infrastructure for communities and visitors alike will be accompanied by policies to enable tourism businesses to invest in more sustainable water management.

Short-term measures:

- This policy topic to be the subject of cross-Government collaboration via a new Sustainable Tourism Steering Committee (STSC) and relevant working groups. (2023 and ongoing).
- TAK to strengthen its support for sustainable water management in tourism operations by working with ECD to: (i) enhance the Mauri Mark program with relevant criteria, (ii) enhance industry awareness with information and guidance, and (iii) provide new investors with clear guidance on relevant regulations and processes. (2024).

Medium to long-term policy measures to be determined via the STSC and relevant working groups, informed by insights from upcoming tourism master planning and/or as new policy issues emerge.

⁹ Kiribati National Water Resources Policy, 2008

¹⁰ Nonouti, Tamama, Arorai, Beru, Tabiteuea and Banaba

POLICY NEED 1.4

PREVENTING NEGATIVE IMPACTS OF VISITOR ACTIVITY ON MARINE AND TERRESTRIAL BIODIVERSITY

Situational Analysis and Policy Challenges

Beyond accommodation, sites visited by tourists can be negatively impacted by their footprint. For Kiribati's tourist attractions — including marine sites for diving, fishing and other water-based activities, and islands offering sites of natural beauty and birdlife — it is important to understand the risks of visitor activity to site biodiversity and put controls in place to manage them.

Kiribati has several policies, pieces of legislation and management plans that protect marine and terrestrial biodiversity across its 13 Protected Areas and other undesignated key biodiversity areas. Policies include the Integrated Environment Policy (2013) and National Fisheries Policy (2023-2025). Legislation and Regulations include the Environment Act (2021), Recreation Reserves Act (1996), Coastal Fisheries Act (2010), Coastal Fisheries Regulations (2019), PIPA Regulations 2008, PIPA Conservation Trust Amendment Act (2019) and Ordinance for Wildlife Conservation in Gilbert Islands (1977). New Acts for Protected Areas and Protected Species are currently being drafted. In addition, Community-based Fisheries Management Plans have been developed by communities and MFMRD across 14 of the Gilbert Islands. While PIPA has had Protected Area Management Plans in recent years, this is understood to be subject to review due to the Government's new position with regard to the Phoenix Islands.

- *Protecting biodiversity through visitor controls.* The following controls are used to manage visitation at sites of marine and terrestrial biodiversity:
 - Controls on tourists fishing in Kiritimati through the MFMRD's requirement for them to obtain a pleasure fishing licence and be accompanied by a fishing guide. The license has strict limits on the number of fish that a person can catch daily and the volume that can be taken out of the country, as well as provisions for no kill zones and no fishing in conservation areas. There is however no restriction on the number of licenses issued at any one time. In Kiritimati there are also bone fishing restrictions for all fishers, including the I-Kiribati population.
 - Controls on visitor activity in the Phoenix Islands Protected Area (PIPA) though permits in the past. However, the specific visitor restrictions were not clear at the time of writing due to the Government's change in approach to the Phoenix Islands.
 - Traditional protocols across the islands that require visitors to seek permission and be escorted by the island guide.
- *Protecting biodiversity through tourism awareness activity.* TAK and MFMRD also undertake awareness and training to help ensure tourism operators, host communities and visitors mitigate the risks of negative impacts in their tourism activities:
 - TAK's awareness and product development training and advice to communities and SME tourism operators includes advice on protecting the surrounding environment.
 - MFMRD's Community-based Fisheries Management (CBFM) project includes advice on how to avoid damage to the surrounding environment.
 - TAK's Visitor Guide provides general advice to tourists about 'dos and don'ts' of visiting sites.

Based on current visitor numbers, their direct impact on Kiribati's marine and terrestrial biodiversity sites is arguably relatively small compared to other human or economic activity. However, there are concerns that the high-volume traffic from large cruise ships, even though infrequent, may impact certain sites.





It is recognised that the tourism sector must actively prevent damage to Kiribati’s biodiversity. This calls for policy that enables:

- Ongoing monitoring of the effectiveness of regulatory controls in currently visited locations and adapting controls to evolving conditions.
- Identifying risks at current/new sites with growing visitor numbers. (To give special focus on places exposed to high volume cruise ship traffic).
- Developing and implementing tourism site management plans (TSMPs) for specific areas of significant biodiversity that attract tourists. (To be developed with interested custodians where land is not Government owned). Such TSMPs should define carrying capacities, direct how visitor facilities will be developed and managed in a way that does not harm the environment and guide how to interpret the site for visitors in a factual way. (This should go hand in hand with livelihood initiatives and enterprise development support – see Policy 5.2).
- Strengthening tourism industry standards, education and support to ensure tour operators visiting fragile sites adopt best practices.
- Strengthening visitor awareness about Kiribati-specific environmental threats and protection measures.

Such measures will support broader policies and activities to protect Kiribati’s precious marine and terrestrial biodiversity. It will also support Kiribati’s commitment to the International Convention on Biological Diversity.

Policy Partners

MELAD (ECD), MFMRD (CBFM), MELAD (PIPA), MIA, Urban & Islands Councils, TAK.

In collaboration with communities and the tourism private sector.

POLICY RESPONSE

Environmental controls, visitor awareness programs, tourism industry standards and tour operator support, will be enhanced to ensure visitor activity does not harm terrestrial or marine biodiversity.

Short-term measures:

- This policy topic to be the subject of cross-Government collaboration via a new Sustainable Tourism Steering Committee (STSC) and relevant working groups. (2023 and ongoing).
- TAK and policy partners to identify risks at current/new sites with growing visitor numbers and monitor the effectiveness of regulatory controls in protecting the environment in currently visited locations.
- TAK to enhance the Mauri Mark with more specific standards and accompanying guidance and support for tour operators that deliver visitor experiences in/around the natural environment. (2023 and ongoing).
- TAK to enhance visitor information programs that build awareness about Kiribati’s marine and terrestrial environments and the ‘dos and don’ts’ to protect it. (2023 and ongoing).
- ECD, MFMRD, CMD and TAK, to collaborate on the development of Tourism Site Management Plans for places of significant biodiversity that attract tourists. (To be developed with interested custodians where land is not Government owned). (2024 and ongoing)

Medium to long-term policy measures to be determined via the STSC and relevant working groups, informed by insights from upcoming tourism master planning and/or as new policy issues emerge.



POLICY NEED 1.5

IMPROVING ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION EFFORTS THROUGH TOURISM

Situational Analysis and Policy Challenges

The conservation of Kiribati's marine and terrestrial biodiversity is a priority for the country and its people first and foremost. It is also necessary for Kiribati to establish a reputation as a compelling, sustainable tourism destination. Whereas human and economic activity, including tourism, can pose a risk to the environment unless certain controls are in place, tourism can also play a critical role in strengthening conservation efforts. This is already happening in Kiribati to a limited extent via:

- TAK's tourism awareness activities which highlight the importance of protecting natural resources and adopting more sustainable practices. Through various TAK initiatives, tourism operators of all sizes are becoming more aware of this, making tourism a catalyst for positive behavioural change.
- Visitor fees and other revenues. Fees from PIPA visitor permits and MFMRD pleasure fishing licenses go into general government revenue, with some presumably directed to conservation priorities. It can also be presumed that visitor revenues to community-based or privately-owned nature-based tourism experiences support their conservation objectives. However, neither are tracked to evidence this.

In this context, there is a need and opportunity to:

- Strengthen awareness about Kiribati's environmental attributes and challenges amongst the tourism industry and visitors.
- Use tourism as a means of demonstrating to communities the value of Kiribati's marine and terrestrial biodiversity and the importance of preserving it.
- Direct revenues from nature-based tourism activities to conserving the environment in which they are based.
- Generate additional funds for conservation and/or sustainable tourism-specific initiatives, e.g., via a suitable visitor levy instrument. (The Tourism Act 2018, through the Tourism Marketing and Development Fund, provides for TAK to collect such levies).

Policy Partners

TAK, MFED, MTCIC, MFMRD, MELAD, MIA, Urban and Island Councils.

In collaboration with NGOs, host communities and the tourism private sector.



POLICY RESPONSE

Awareness of the environment through tourism activity will be increased and the direction of tourism revenues to support conservation and sustainable tourism efforts will be facilitated.

Short-term measures:

- This policy topic to be the subject of cross-Government collaboration via a new Sustainable Tourism Steering Committee (STSC) and relevant working groups. (2023 and ongoing).
- TAK and policy partners to enhance tourism industry and visitor awareness activity about Kiribati's environmental attributes and challenges, as well as community awareness activity about the value of Kiribati's marine and terrestrial biodiversity to tourism and the importance of preserving it.
- MTCIC and MFED, with input from TAK, to design and mobilise a new Sustainable Tourism Visitor Levy scheme. (2024)
- TAK to continue and enhance community, industry and visitor awareness programs which promote tourism as a catalyst for environmental conservation. (2023 and ongoing).

Medium to long-term policy measures to be determined via the STSC and relevant working groups, informed by insights from upcoming tourism master planning and/or as new policy issues emerge.



GOAL 2: Tourism will preserve cultural and historical heritage

POLICY NEED 2.1

AVOIDING NEGATIVE IMPACTS OF TOURISM ACTIVITY ON CULTURAL AND HISTORICAL ARTIFACTS OR SITES

Situational Analysis and Policy Challenges

The identification of sites of cultural and historical significance in Kiribati is currently underway by the Cultural and Museums Division (CMD) of MIA. Collaboration with TAK ensures sites that can be visited by tourists are identified in tourism materials.

As the environment and culture are intertwined for many tourism areas in Kiribati, the risk of unrestrained tourism activity negatively impacting such sites is addressed to a large extent under Goal 1. However, there are specific risks to tourist attractions of cultural or historic significance, for example, damage from installing structures, destruction from foot traffic, or interference with artifacts.

The new Te Umwanibong Act (2022) provides for the management of the Kiribati Museum and for the protection, preservation and promotion of cultural heritage. Although it does not reference tourism risks, it recognises important considerations relevant to managing tourism activity. This includes protecting both the museum collection and cultural heritage of Kiribati in general. It acknowledges this relates to tangible heritage (e.g., historic and cultural sites), as well as intangible heritage (see Policy Need 2.2). Regulations to follow this Act have yet to be drafted.

In the meantime, protecting cultural and historical artifacts and sites from visitor activity is limited to:

- Community awareness activities conducted by CMD, MFMRD and TAK, and visitor awareness of the 'dos and don'ts' information provided to tourists.
- Traditional protocols requiring visitors to seek permission and be escorted by the island guide.

In this context, there is a need for culture and tourism policies to manage any risk that continuing and increasing visitor activity might cause. As with sites of environmental significance, these should provide for:

- Preventing visitors from taking historic or cultural artifacts they find or are gifted out of the country without approval.
- Ongoing monitoring of the effectiveness of regulatory controls in existing visited locations and the adaptation of controls to suit evolving conditions.
- Identifying risks at current/new cultural and historical sites with growing visitor numbers in order to give special focus on places exposed to high volume cruise ship traffic.
- Developing and implementing tourism site management plans (TSMPs) for specific areas of significant cultural or historic heritage that attract tourists. (To be developed with interested custodians where land is not Government owned). Such TSMPs should define carrying capacities, direct how visitor facilities will be developed and managed in a way that does not harm the site/artifacts, and guide how to interpret the site for visitors in a factual, sensitive and authentic way. (This should go hand in hand with livelihood initiatives and enterprise development support – see Policy Need 5.2).
- Strengthening tourism industry standards, education and support to ensure tour operators visiting sites of cultural significance adopt best practices.

Such measures will support overarching Government policy for cultural preservation as well as Kiribati's commitment to International Convention on Biological Diversity and subsequent Nagoya Protocol of Access and Benefit Sharing.

Policy Partners

MIA (CMD), Urban and Island Councils, MWYSSA, MELAD (ECD), MFMRD, TAK.

In collaboration with communities, NGOs and the tourism private sector.



POLICY RESPONSE

Site planning and visitor controls, as well as awareness activities across communities, tourism operators and visitors, will ensure visitor activity does not harm artifacts or sites of cultural or historic significance.

Short-term measures:

- This policy topic to be the subject of cross-Government collaboration via a new Sustainable Tourism Steering Committee (STSC) and relevant working groups. (2023 and ongoing).
- TAK and policy partners to identify risks at current/new sites with growing visitor numbers and monitor the effectiveness of regulatory controls in protecting currently visited sites of cultural heritage significance.
- TAK to enhance the Mauri Mark with more specific standards and accompanying guidance and support for tour operators that deliver visitor experiences in and around sites of cultural and historical significance. (2023 and ongoing).
- TAK to enhance visitor information programs that build awareness about Kiribati's cultural and historical sites and 'dos don'ts' to protect it. (2023 and ongoing).
- CMD, TAK, MFMRD and ECD to collaborate on the development of Tourism Site Management Plans for specific areas of significant cultural or historic heritage that attract tourists. (To be developed with interested custodians where land is not Government owned). (2024 and ongoing)

Medium to long-term policy measures to be determined via the STSC and relevant working groups, informed by insights from upcoming tourism master planning and/or as new policy issues emerge.

POLICY NEED 2.2

PROTECTING CRAFTSPEOPLE AND KNOWLEDGE HOLDERS FROM EXPLOITATION IN TOURISM

Situational Analysis and Policy Challenges

In addition to the protection of cultural heritage sites, sustainable tourism calls for the protection of other forms of tangible and intangible cultural heritage from exploitation. Amongst other provisions, the Te Umwanibong Act enshrines the protection of intangible heritage (e.g., traditional and contemporary knowledge and skills, and unique stories), however, the Regulations have yet to be drafted. This Act is also expected to be followed by a Traditional Knowledge Act (currently in draft) and subsequent Regulations.

Currently, the prevention of misappropriation of artistic or architectural designs, photography, music and literature in Kiribati is provided for under the National Copyright Act (2018). This is important for a growing tourism destination. However, the reproduction of traditional 'ways' such as rituals, dances, attire, crafts, recipes etc for commercial tourism purposes is not subject to legislation. This means that even if there are recognised knowledge holders or custodians, re-representation of their intangible heritage can be commercialised by outsiders without recognition of, permission from, or compensation to, those individuals or groups. Furthermore, there is no provision for ensuring that such representations do not compromise cultural integrity. As these are issues commonly seen in destinations based on a cultural tourism offering, it is important to pre-empt the risk and consider the need for upcoming legislation and regulation drafting.

Determining rights to intangible cultural heritage is complex and needs to be navigated with caution. Current efforts by MIA's CMD to build a repository of recipes recognising knowledge holders and including intangible heritage in cultural site mapping are important steps in the process. Building on this with supporting policy will put Kiribati in good stead for growing tourism that is culturally sustainable.

Policy Partners

MIA (CMD), MTCIC (Trade, Quality & Copyright Divisions), MIA, Urban and Island Councils, MWYSSA, TAK.

In collaboration with knowledge holders, communities and the private sector.



POLICY RESPONSE

Regulatory controls and awareness activity will be enhanced to prevent the exploitation of craftspeople and knowledge holders in commercial tourism activity.

Short-term measures:

- This policy topic to be the subject of cross-Government collaboration via a new Sustainable Tourism Steering Committee (STSC) and relevant working groups. (2023 and ongoing).
- TAK to ensure that any representation of tangible and intangible culture used in tourism promotion has sought the appropriate permissions from, given appropriate recognition to and/or paid appropriate compensation to knowledge holders/custodians. (Ongoing)
- TAK to enhance the Mauri Mark with more specific standards and accompanying guidance for accommodation and tour operators to ensure they recognise craftspeople and knowledge holders in any representation. (2023 and ongoing).

Medium to long-term policy measures to be determined via the STSC and relevant working groups, informed by insights from upcoming tourism master planning and/or as new policy issues emerge.

POLICY NEED 2.3

CELEBRATING AND PROMOTING KIRIBATI'S CULTURE AND HISTORICAL HERITAGE THROUGH TOURISM

Situational Analysis and Policy Challenges

Tourism is playing a valuable role as a catalyst for the preservation of Kiribati culture and historical heritage. This is evident in several ways.

- *Reinvigorating community interest in Kiribati traditional culture.* Opportunities to showcase culture to visitors has reportedly created a sense of pride, a willingness to learn/relearn traditional ways and a passion for preserving cultural heritage amongst the local population.
- *Promoting cultural heritage.* Demand for traditional style handicrafts by tourists is perpetuating cultural skills and presentations and supporting livelihoods.
- *Mapping of tangible and intangible cultural sites, monuments and recipes.* Recording these is ensuring history is not forgotten.
- *Preserving artifacts and sites.* Developing tourist attractions such as the Betio War Memorial and Trail and outer island cultural sites and shrines, for both local and foreign visitors, ensures that these assets are preserved for the future.
- *Generating revenues that protect cultural heritage.* Although visitor entry fees are not currently charged for the Kiribati National Museum, this will soon happen under the new Te Umwanibong Act, with funds going directly to the Museum's work. Where fees are paid by tourists participating in community/private culture-based visitor experiences, it is assumed the funds are enabling those enterprises to preserve cultural heritage assets.
- *Documenting and sharing cultural and historical knowledge.* By developing cultural heritage attractions and experiences with interpretation of their significance for visitors, stories are being documented and preserved for future generations.

The value of culture to Kiribati's tourism offering is advocated by TAK, as is the benefit of tourism to preserving the nation's culture and heritage. TAK awareness and training activities amongst communities help craftspeople and entrepreneurs develop wares for the tourism market. This is complemented by CMD capacity building in arts and crafts across the community, including targeting youth.

For Kiribati to pursue its sustainable tourism vision, there is a need and an opportunity for support for developing cultural tourism experiences (e.g., tours based on participation in traditional activities or eating local foods) and representative products (e.g., handicrafts) to be strengthened.

Policy Partners

MIA (CMD), Urban and Island Councils, MWYSSA, MELAD (Agriculture), TAK.

In collaboration with knowledge holders, communities and the private sector.

POLICY RESPONSE

Conditions will be enabled for tourism development that celebrates and promotes Kiribati's culture and historical heritage in a sustainable, authentic and sensitive manner.

Short-term measures:

- This policy topic to be the subject of cross-Government collaboration via a new Sustainable Tourism Steering Committee (STSC) and relevant working groups. (2023 and ongoing).
- TAK to continue and enhance product development based on cultural tourism experiences.
- TAK to continue and enhance industry awareness programs which promote tourism as a catalyst for cultural preservation. (2023 and ongoing).

Medium to long-term policy measures to be determined via the STSC and relevant working groups, informed by insights from upcoming tourism master planning and/or as new policy issues emerge.





GOAL 3: Tourism will support community and social well-being

POLICY NEED 3.1

ENABLING COMMUNITIES TO MAKE INFORMED DECISIONS ABOUT ENGAGING WITH THE TOURISM SECTOR

Situational Analysis and Policy Challenges

Sustainable tourism requires that host communities have the information and agency to decide if/how they want to participate in tourism opportunities. TAK has been undertaking tourism awareness activities in key locations across Kiribati, ensuring women are actively engaged in consultations. TAK also recognises the need to extend its reach and strengthen content so that more communities gain an adequate understanding of: the benefits and risks of tourism to them, how the tourism industry works, what developing a tourism experience will require, their rights and obligations when dealing with commercial partners, their rights and obligations when dealing with tourists and what they can realistically expect financially.

Policy Partners

MWYSSA, MIA, Island Councils, MFMRD, TAK.

In collaboration with communities and NGOs.



POLICY RESPONSE

Awareness and support programs will empower and equip communities to make informed decisions about engaging with tourism opportunities.

Short-term measures:

- This policy topic to be the subject of cross-Government collaboration via a new Sustainable Tourism Steering Committee (STSC) and relevant working groups. (2023 and ongoing).
- TAK and policy partners to strengthen community consultations aimed at canvassing community perspectives about tourism, identifying concerns/risks to be addressed, and answering questions. To explore the adoption of a 'Destination Stewardship Council' type approach that ensures communities have a say in tourism planning, and that the views of both women and men are identified (2024 and ongoing).
- TAK to strengthen community tourism awareness activities to build understanding of the benefits and risks of tourism to them, how the tourism industry works, what developing a tourism experience will require, their rights and obligations when dealing with commercial partners, their rights and obligations when dealing with tourists and what they can realistically expect financially (2024 and ongoing).

Medium to long-term policy measures to be determined via the STSC and relevant working groups, informed by insights from upcoming tourism master planning and/or as new policy issues emerge.

POLICY NEED 3.2

PROTECTING TOURISM WORKERS FROM DISCRIMINATION, EXPLOITATION AND UNSAFE WORKING CONDITIONS

Situational Analysis and Policy Challenges

Kiribati's Employment and Industrial Relation Code 2015 serves to guarantee decent work to employees and safeguard the rights and reputation of employers.¹¹ It provides the legislation that ensures tourism employers, like all business owners:

- Do not discriminate in the provision of training, promotions, or wages (in terms of ethnic origin, race, colour, gender, national extraction, social origin/class, economic status, pregnancy, marital status, sexual orientation, family responsibilities, age, health, HIV/AIDS status or disability),
- Pay a minimum wage and adhere to maximum daily and weekly working hours,
- Do not force employment or employ under the minimum age of 14,
- Provide proper leave entitlements,
- Do not sexually harass workers,
- Follow prescribed grievance procedures, and more.

Furthermore, the Occupational Health and Safety Act 2015 sets out conditions of safe workplace.¹²

Through the Ministry of Employment and Human Resources' (MEHR's) Labour Division, both of the above pieces of legislation are subject to labour inspections and penalties apply for non-compliance.

Progressing equal opportunity employment in Kiribati is also prioritised under the National Disability Policy and Action Plan (2018-2021)¹³ which specifies objectives to improve access for people with a disability to education and vocational training, as well as employment and income generation.

Further demonstrating Kiribati's favourable conditions for workers is its Decent Work Advisory Board which makes recommendations on labour issues. It is tasked with promoting employment and industrial relations practices in accordance with the International Labour Organisation (ILO)

'Principles of Decent Work', and ensuring consultations on the development, adoption, implementation and regulation of International Labour Standards.

These pieces of legislation and governance structures support the Kiribati tourism industry's intention to be recognised as a leader in equal opportunity employment. However, there are aspects that have been identified for strengthening. These include:

- Government enabling of private sector compliance, via more awareness and checks, and private sector fulfilling of reporting obligations.
- Advancing the National Disability Policy's priority to "promote disability inclusive development as the shared responsibility of every government and non-government sector"¹⁴ through making training and workplaces more accessible. For public agencies like TAK and the Kiribati Institute of Technology (KIT), this requires tailoring staff and industry training and employment programs, and investing in accessible workplaces and training venues. Government also has a role to enable the tourism private sector to do the same. This requires raising awareness of employment and workplace laws as well as 'how to' be an accessible business for workers (and visitors) with a disability. Where this requires technical advice on construction or sources of finance to fund changes, there is a role for TAK to help connect business owners with providers. (See Policy Needs 4.1 and 5.2).
- Going beyond following workplace laws, to having the tourism industry lead in best practices for providing a fair, safe and accessible workplaces. TAK has recognised the opportunity to work with MEHR, the Kiribati Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KCCI) and industry to do more than follow workplace laws, and to promote best practices for providing a fair, safe and accessible tourism workplace.

Policy Partners

MEHR, MWYSSA, KCCI, TAK.

In collaboration with the private sector.



11 Kiribati's Employment And Industrial Relation Code 2015

12 Occupational Health and Safety Act 2015

13 National Disability Policy and Action Plan (2018-2021), p. 6.

14 Ibid



POLICY RESPONSE

Workplace legislation and supporting tourism industry best practice guidance will provide non-discriminatory, non-exploitative, safe and accessible employment for tourism workers in Kiribati.

Short-term measures:

- This policy topic to be the subject of cross-Government collaboration via a new Sustainable Tourism Steering Committee (STSC) and relevant working groups. (2023 and ongoing).
- TAK, MEHR and KCCI to develop a Best Practices for Tourism Industry supplementing employment and workplace laws with guidance on providing fair, safe and accessible workplaces. (2024)
- TAK to connect tourism business owners with source of technical advice and finance to make their operations more accessible to workers with a disability. (2024).

Medium to long-term policy measures to be determined via the STSC and relevant working groups, informed by insights from upcoming tourism master planning and/or as new policy issues emerge.

POLICY NEED 3.3

AVOIDING NEGATIVE IMPACTS OF VISITOR ACTIVITY ON COMMUNITIES

Situational Analysis and Policy Challenges

Beyond the risks of visitor activity to environmental and cultural/historical assets, it is important to mitigate other risks of visitor activity to a country's population. As tourism destinations develop, evidence of negative impacts on society can emerge, ranging from unintended but nonetheless disruptive effects (e.g., people unable to get to school/work due to traffic jams or unavailable buses on cruise ship days) to more sinister and harmful effects (e.g., women and children being exposed to predatory behaviour).

In terms of relevant policy and legislation, Kiribati has a National Policy on Gender Equality and Women's Development (2019-2022), a National Youth Policy and Action Plan (2018-2022) and a Children, Young People and Family Welfare Act (2013). While none of these specifically recognise the risks of tourism to Kiribati society, the latter provides for the protection of all citizens from harm, with specific provisions for children and women as especially vulnerable citizens.

There is a need to strengthen awareness across communities and tourism industry of the risks tourism might pose for I-Kiribati, but without undue alarm. There is also a need to instil preventative measures, monitor risks and ensure adequate regulation and/or processes are in place to manage them.

TAK's Outer Islands Perception Surveys are one way to identify community concerns and risks, and its community and school awareness activities can better help prevent people being exposed to harmful visitor behaviour. Looking to international practices in this area is also needed. For example, the Code of Conduct for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation in Travel and Tourism offers tools and support to tourism offices and businesses.

Policy Partners

MWYSSA, MoE, MIA, Urban and Island Councils, TAK.

In collaboration with communities and the tourism private sector.



POLICY RESPONSE

Visitor controls and associated community, industry and visitor awareness activities, will be enhanced to ensure tourism activity does not harm Kiribati's population and way of life.

Short-term measures:

- This policy topic to be the subject of cross-Government collaboration via a new Sustainable Tourism Steering Committee (STSC) and relevant working groups. (2023 and ongoing).
- TAK to strengthen host community consultation and awareness activities to hear any concerns about tourism's impact. (2023 and ongoing).
- TAK to enhance visitor information programs that build awareness about 'dos and don'ts' when interacting with host communities especially children. (2023 and ongoing).
- TAK to draw on international programs to enhance tourism industry and community training and tools on the prevention of exploitation of women and children in tourism activity. (2024 and ongoing).

Medium to long-term policy measures to be determined via the STSC and relevant working groups, informed by insights from upcoming tourism master planning and/or as new policy issues emerge.

POLICY NEED 3.4

PROTECTING THE LOCAL POPULATION, WHERE NECESSARY, WITH BORDER CONTROLS

Situational Analysis and Policy Challenges

Whereas the easing of border entry conditions supports destination development objectives, public policy must also consider border controls that might be necessary to protect the population from anyone posing a security or health risk to Kiribati.

Kiribati's Immigration Act 2019, administered by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Immigration (MFAI), saw the easing of border entry for visitors to support tourism and trade objectives. It provides free visa on arrival entry for travellers from Kiribati's tourism target markets.

However, as experienced during the extraordinary conditions presented by the COVID-19 pandemic, special measures to restrict the entry of visitors were introduced under the Infectious Diseases Regulation to protect the local population from the risk of infection. This experience highlighted the importance of collaboration between MHMS, MFAI and TAK during such crises, to discuss the implications for the tourism industry and learn as early as possible what decisions are being taken about travel restrictions. This is necessary to support the industry through a crisis, plan for the reopening of the border at a time deemed safe and communicate to tourism markets. Recognising that the population's well-being takes precedence, such collaboration minimises the damage to the tourism economy and Kiribati's tourism reputation.

As the MHMS and MFAI will continue to direct public policy on border closures for health concerns in the future, TAK recognises the need to strengthen ties to be better prepared for any future event.

Policy Partners

OB, MHMS, MFAI, TAK.

POLICY RESPONSE

Notwithstanding policies to ease border entry for visitors, controls will be used, where necessary, to protect the local population from harm.

Short-term measures:

- This policy topic to be the subject of cross-Government collaboration via a new Sustainable Tourism Steering Committee (STSC) and relevant working groups. (2023 and ongoing).

Medium to long-term policy measures to be determined via the STSC and relevant working groups, informed by insights from upcoming tourism master planning and/or as new policy issues emerge.





GOAL 4: Tourism will ensure visitor well-being and satisfaction

POLICY NEED 4.1

ACHIEVING GLOBAL STANDARDS IN TOURISM PRODUCT QUALITY, SAFETY, ACCESSIBILITY AND SUSTAINABILITY

Situational Analysis and Policy Challenges

Tourism standards have long been an important feature of established tourism destinations, and their role in supporting sustainable tourism is becoming increasingly evident. The adoption of tourism standards that align to global criteria, together with associated industry training, support, accreditation and regulation mechanisms, all help destinations offer tourism products that meet quality, safety, accessibility and sustainability benchmarks. This helps manage visitor expectations, maximise satisfaction levels and build a good reputation.

Following implementation of Kiribati's overarching National Quality Policy (2017), TAK has made significant progress with tourism standards via the Mauri Mark program. The program is now being extended from accommodation providers to other tourism establishments, including restaurants and bars, dive operators and marine pleasure crafts. The Mauri Mark assesses operators on standard criteria¹⁵, determined in consultation with relevant partners including MFMRD, MHMS, MTCIC and MICT. By assessing businesses according to set criteria, TAK determines a rating to indicate the standard of operation. This can prompt business owners to improve their rating by undertaking efforts to comply with more criteria, thereby improving Kiribati's overall destination offering and reputation.

Associated with the business-focused Mauri Mark is the Mauri Way, a customer service training and certification initiative for individuals. The initiative aims to build a cadre of Mauri Way Ambassadors across Kiribati's tourism industry.

Notwithstanding the progress made to date, TAK recognises that the program needs to be strengthened as global best practices in tourism standards evolve.

Priorities for improving the Mauri Mark include:

- *Strengthening sustainability criteria.* The launch of SPTO's Pacific Tourism Standard has highlighted gaps in the Mauri Mark's sustainability-related criteria¹⁶. This requires TAK's collaboration with MELAD to update criteria accordingly.
- *Strengthening resilience criteria.* Incorporating more specific site/building and operational resilience criteria for tourism operations will strengthen business and destination resilience. This requires working with communities to learn about traditional resiliency practices and understand how they can be adapted to emerging challenges (e.g., rising sea levels), and collaborating with MISE and KCCI to update criteria based on the best traditional and modern solutions.
- *Reflecting the Building Code in the criteria.* Incorporating a criterion that checks whether construction complies with the Building Code will provide reassurances around safety and managing environmental risks from human waste disposal. This will need to be tailored for Buias assuming a Building Code for them is developed (see Policy 1.1 and 1.2).
- *Maintaining relevant hygiene and health-related criteria.* COVID-19 was a catalyst for improving hygiene health practices in Kiribati's tourism businesses under the 'Kiribati Tourism Hospitality Protocols for the New Normal'. Whereas some of these measures are no longer necessary, some should be maintained under 'normal' circumstances as standard criteria. This requires TAK's collaboration with MHMS to revise criteria accordingly.
- *Maintaining/improving safety criteria.* Other criteria ensuring visitor safety, such as having adequate disaster preparedness plans/drills, and maintaining food safety rules, as well as the safety of staff on site and travelling to site, should continually be updated in line with best practice. This requires TAK's collaboration with MHMS and OB respectively to keep criteria up to date.
- *Maintaining/improving accessibility criteria.* Encouraging tourism businesses to cater for visitor and staff with a disability requires TAK's collaboration with MWYSSA and technical experts in adapting structures to make them more accessible.

¹⁵ For example, accommodation properties are evaluated on: business operations, fire safety procedures, health and hygiene standards, safety and maintenance, facilities and in-room amenities, environmental sustainability practices and guest support services.

¹⁶ SPTO's Pacific Sustainability Standard was launched in May 2023. Accredited by the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC), this is tool for mobilising the Pacific Sustainable Tourism Policy Framework.

- *Strengthening Mauri Mark training and support.* It is critical to ensure Mauri Mark training and support (e.g., tools, technical advice and help accessing finance to make improvements) is accessible to all businesses, so that adoption is enabled. (See also Policy Need 5.2).
- *Linking the Mauri Mark to issuing of business licenses.*

Policy Partners

MHMS, MELAD, MTCIC, MISE, OB, MICT, KCCI, TAK.

In collaboration with regional and international tourism agencies.

POLICY RESPONSE

The Mauri Mark program will be enhanced to be at the global forefront of tourism standards that ensure product quality, safety, accessibility, and sustainability.

Short-term measures:

- This policy topic to be the subject of cross-Government collaboration via a new Sustainable Tourism Steering Committee (STSC) and relevant working groups. (2023 and ongoing).
- TAK to collaborate with policy partners to enhance the Mauri Mark standards and associated support across quality, safety, accessibility, sustainability and resilience criteria. (2023 and ongoing).
- TAK to continue to roll out the Mauri Way customer service program to grow the number of Ambassadors with customer service competencies. (2023 and ongoing).

Medium to long-term policy measures to be determined via the STSC and relevant working groups, informed by insights from upcoming tourism master planning and/or as new policy issues emerge.



POLICY NEED 4.2

IMPROVING THE DESTINATION OFFER IN RESPONSE TO VISITOR FEEDBACK AND MARKET RESEARCH

Situational Analysis and Policy Challenges

Visitor feedback and market research is critical to improving tourism infrastructure, products and services and improving the destination’s reputation overall. Recognising this, TAK conducts the following:

- An International Visitor Survey (IVS). This was conducted in 2019 and included indicators of visitor satisfaction. It will be conducted again in 2024 and then annually.
- A Visitor Satisfaction Survey (VSS). This was introduced in 2022 to get visitor feedback on satisfaction, specifically on accommodation, and will continue.
- Market research to identify demand trend relevant to Kiribati. Insights from this inform TAK’s product development advice to industry and destination development planning.

It is important TAK continue to undertake these surveys and share insights with relevant public and private sector stakeholders to inform investment and product development that improves Kiribati’s tourism offering.

Policy Partners

MTCIC (KCCI), MICT, TAK.

In collaboration with the private sector.

POLICY RESPONSE

Visitor feedback and market research will inform destination planning and product development so that visitor satisfaction levels improve.

Short-term measures:

- This policy topic to be the subject of cross-Government collaboration via a new Sustainable Tourism Steering Committee (STSC) and relevant working groups. (2023 and ongoing).
- TAK to continue IVS and VSS, analyse findings and share with stakeholders. (2023 and ongoing).
- TAK to undertake a Market Analysis to inform future market development and destination/product development decisions. (2023).

Medium to long-term policy measures to be determined via the STSC and relevant working groups, informed by insights from upcoming tourism master planning and/or as new policy issues emerge.



POLICY NEED 4.3

INVESTING IN SUSTAINABLE TOURISM-ENABLING PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE AND SERVICES

Situational Analysis and Policy Challenges

Kiribati's tourism development has been limited by insufficient tourism-enabling public infrastructure, in particular transport and ICT connectivity. As KV20 and the Kiribati Development Plan both identify tourism as a sector for sustainable growth, this will require investment in the following tourism-enabling infrastructure and services which is critical to visitor satisfaction, as well as the needs of the population.

- **Air access.** Kiribati's wide expanse and long distances from source markets account for long and relatively infrequent flights, presenting a barrier to tourism. Growing the sector requires policies to increase airline services and capacities. The Ministry of Information Communications and Transport (MICT), through the Civil Aviation Authority (CAAK) is responsible for aviation regulation according to the Civil Aviation Act 2019. Collaboration between MICT and MTCIC/TAK is critical to tourism planning on aviation aspects.
- **Sea Access.** Apart from short transfers, longer (overnight) sea journeys are not commonly taken by tourists due to the duration, comfort levels and safety perception. Growing sustainable tourism will require investments and regulations to overcome this. This falls under the mandate of MICT's Marine Division. Meanwhile, port infrastructure falls under the remit of the Kiribati Ports Authority (KPA). As above, collaboration between MICT, KPA and MTCIC/TAK is critical to tourism planning on marine transport aspects.
- **Information and Communication Technology (ICT).** Unreliable internet service is also a barrier to tourism. However, the ICT Policy 2019 notes the importance of ICT to tourism and prioritises investments to support the sector.
- **Medical Services.** Kiribati's limited medical services also present a barrier to tourism, especially as this has become an important consideration for travellers since COVID. While the local population's needs come first and foremost, it will also be important to include health-related infrastructure and services in future tourism planning.

TAK's input to nation-building infrastructure planning will be important to identify high-priority tourism needs to maximise visitor satisfaction and grow a sustainable tourism sector. Where infrastructure identified as a high priority for tourism does not appear to meet local needs to the same extent, it will be important to conduct a cost-benefit analysis and develop a business case to evidence the benefit to the nation.

Policy Partners

MISE, TAK, MICT, CAAK, MHMS.

POLICY RESPONSE

National infrastructure planning will prioritise investment in tourism-enabling infrastructure and services where there is evidence of national benefit.

Short-term measures:

- This policy topic to be the subject of cross-Government collaboration via a new Sustainable Tourism Steering Committee (STSC) and relevant working groups. (2023 and ongoing).

Medium to long-term policy measures to be determined via the STSC and relevant working groups, informed by insights from upcoming tourism master planning and/or as new policy issues emerge.





GOAL 5: Tourism will contribute to sustainable, inclusive economic growth

POLICY NEED 5.1

ATTRACTING HIGH-YIELD, LOW-IMPACT TOURISM VIA NICHE MARKET SEGMENTS

Situational Analysis and Policy Challenges

According to the World Bank report *The Future of Pacific Tourism*¹⁷, niche tourism segments represent the best prospects for high-yield tourism for the Pacific Islands, so long as the product supply is of adequate quality. TAK has identified that Kiribati's niche fishing, diving and culture-based experiences have the most potential for attracting leisure travellers who value such experiences and are willing and able to pay for them. TAK has also identified the need to avoid high-volume/mass tourism, given it can deter high-value markets and cause more negative environmental and social impacts.

TAK recognises that a better understanding of demand trends for high-value niche markets in the post-COVID era is needed to inform destination planning and niche experience development, as well as more targeted marketing activity. Therefore, it has prioritised a market analysis and positioning study. This will be followed by a destination Master Plan to identify access and supply-side priorities for attracting and converting high-yield, low-volume niche tourism markets.

The proposed tourism master planning will need to reflect a 'whole of nation' shared vision for tourism; presumably a validation of the shared vision cited in this Policy and agreement to focus on high-yield, low impact niche markets.

Policy Partners

TAK with all of Government.

In collaboration with the private sector and host communities.



POLICY RESPONSE

An evidence-based approach to destination marketing and development will be undertaken to attract high-yield, low-impact niche tourism markets.

Short-term measures:

- This policy topic to be the subject of cross-Government collaboration via a new Sustainable Tourism Steering Committee (STSC) and relevant working groups. (2023 and ongoing).
- TAK to undertake a Market Analysis and Positioning study to inform future market development and destination/product development decisions. (2023).
- TAK to lead the development of a Tourism Master Plan in collaboration with the private sector, host communities and whole of Government policy partners. (2024).

Medium to long-term policy measures to be determined via the STSC and relevant working groups, informed by insights from upcoming tourism master planning and/or as new policy issues emerge.

17 World Bank (2023), 'Future of Pacific Tourism' pp. 42-43

POLICY NEED 5.2

ENABLING MSME AND COMMUNITY ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT IN THE TOURISM ECONOMY

Situational Analysis and Policy Challenges

Providing opportunities for the development of MSME and community-based tourism businesses in Kiribati is critical to sustainable tourism policy¹⁸. It supports inclusive economic development through enabling opportunities for local populations to participate in the tourism economy, including women and people outside of urban areas. It also supports 'high-yield tourism' objectives by contributing to the supply of authentic, local niche experiences that expand the destination's offer and give visitors more opportunities to spend.¹⁹

Beyond tourism-specific enterprises, tourism linkages to other sectors provide opportunities for even more enterprises to generate income. Kiribati's tourism industry already demonstrates such linkages, both formal and informal, with suppliers of fish, other seafood, crafts, fruit and vegetables to a limited extent, and other goods and services used by hotels, restaurants or tour operators.

Despite these entrepreneurship opportunities across the tourism economy, MSMEs and communities in Kiribati face a range of barriers to starting and/or improving an enterprise. While the nature and extent of impediments varies by business type, size, age, location and other factors, the constraints typically relate to: (i) business management skills, (ii) accessing affordable business advisory services, (iii) accessing markets and (iv) financial barriers.

➤ *Business management skills.* Many MSMEs lack the skills for financial management, business planning and other aspects of running a tourism business (such as marketing, human resources management, digital transformation and applying for a loan). Efforts to address this are currently undertaken by MTCIC, TAK, MWYSSA, KCCI, KIT and GGGI, via business development training and support programs. However, only TAK has tourism-specific content. There is a need to enhance collaboration across partners and streamline tourism business development programs (including training, advisory, mentoring and network development), tailored to different tourism or related business needs and delivered by the most accessible modes.

- For community-based enterprises that typically need only basic business skills, levels of understanding of how to start/run an enterprise are weak. This is being addressed in key locations though community-based awareness and training provided by TAK and partners including MFMRD, MIA and MELAD. Expanding this as new communities show interest is critical.
- Accessing affordable business advisory services. For businesses needing to engage specialised business advice (e.g., accounting, business planning, marketing and human resources), there is a limited pool of professional services in Kiribati. Where they do exist, the fees can be cost-prohibitive for small business owners. KCCI is currently delivering the Business Link Pacific (BLP) program to build a network of accredited local business advisors and link them to MSMEs in need. The program also provides subsidised services and can access a regional pool of advisors. This is starting to address the noted challenge for SMEs more than community businesses, but is a long-term prospect.



¹⁸ SPTO Pacific Sustainable Tourism Policy Framework

¹⁹ World Bank (2023), 'Future of Pacific Tourism' p. 51. This report highlights that the types of tourism products typically delivered by community enterprises and MSMEs are those that extend and distribute visitor spend.

➤ While community-based enterprises may not require the nature of assistance offered by professional business advisory services, there is nonetheless a need for technical advice. For tourism enterprises, this means product development advice, as provided by TAK in key locations. For linked industries, such as agritourism, this requires production advice as provided by MELAD and MFMRD.

- *Accessing markets.* For small enterprises with limited market knowledge and networks, especially those in remote locations, accessing customers is a challenge. For Kiribati's tourism enterprises, TAK fulfils the critical role of aggregating and promoting market-ready accommodation, tours and experiences. For suppliers in the tourism value chain, e.g., producers, support is needed with building networks and linkages. TAK has started developing such linkages through an agritourism (farm to table) initiative with MELAD, a 'reef to fork' concept with MFMRD and handicraft-making with MWYSSA and MTCIC.
- *Financial barriers.* For many Kiribati MSMEs, it is difficult to access credit to start or improve a tourism business. Despite the ANZ commercial bank and the Development Bank of Kiribati (DBK) having funds to lend, many applications for credit are not approved due to insufficient information (e.g., financial records or business case for the loan) and/or inadequate equity or collateral. The former can be addressed in part through strengthening business management skills/support. The latter requires innovative solutions, for example, identifying opportunities for joint ventures / equity investments where local proponents are matched to appropriate sources of capital or using grant programs as a source of equity. KCCI is also scoping the prospect of establishing a credit union to address this issue.

➤ Accessing funds for community-based commercial enterprises is also particularly challenging. While small grant programs have been available, there is no microfinance provider.

It should be noted that women entrepreneurs are likely to have additional challenges in each of these constraint areas due to a wide range of factors including lower levels of education and financial literacy as well as barriers caused by caring responsibilities, unpaid labour and socio-cultural norms that may restrict their entrepreneurship. Women are also less likely to be part of the formal banking system or have access to collateral such as land to secure loans.²⁰

Building on the progress made to date with community and MSME business opportunities in and linked to tourism, TAK recognises the need to strengthen collaboration with policy partners with similar objectives. This would need to be associated with business development support programs aimed at helping tourism entrepreneurs start and/or improve their business.

Policy Partners

TAK, KCCI, MWYSSA, MELAD, MFMRD, MIA (CMD), Urban and Island Councils.

In collaboration with communities, NGOs and the tourism private sector.

POLICY RESPONSE

Support programs will be enhanced for MSMEs and community enterprises in - or linked to - tourism, to enable them to build the skills, access the resources and secure the finance needed to start or improve a business.

Short-term measures:

- This policy topic to be the subject of cross-Government collaboration via a new Sustainable Tourism Steering Committee (STSC) and relevant working groups. (2023 and ongoing).
- TAK to collaborate with policy partners to streamline delivery of tourism enterprise development programs (including training, advisory, mentoring and network development) tailored to different tourism business needs and delivered by the most accessible modes.
- TAK, MELAD, MFMRD MWYSSA and MTCIC to strengthen tourism linkages programs (2024).
- TAK to collaborate with MTCIC, KCCI and financial institutions to determine ways to make loans more accessible to tourism businesses. (2024).
- TAK to collaborate with MTCIC and communities to explore opportunities for joint venture partners to invest with landowners. (2024).

Medium to long-term policy measures to be determined via the STSC and relevant working groups, informed by insights from upcoming tourism master planning and/or as new policy issues emerge.

20 UNCTAD (2020) 'Women producers in the economy of Kiribati and their participation in inter-island and international trade'

POLICY NEED 5.3

DEVELOPING A LOCAL, SKILLED WORKFORCE

Situational Analysis and Policy Challenges

A skilled tourism and hospitality workforce is essential for a quality tourism destination. In addition to soft skills such as customer service, a wide range of technical skills are needed for a tourism business in areas such as hotel management, front desk operations, food and beverage service, culinary techniques, housekeeping and tour guiding. For destinations seeking to grow niche segments, additional skills are required. For Kiribati this includes scuba diving instructor skills.

Kiribati, like its Pacific neighbours, is currently facing a shortage of skilled tourism workers. Although workers' concerns about tourism employment security in times of crises and attraction to better-paid overseas employment programs are contributing to labour supply issues across the region, Kiribati has the added challenge of a small population to draw on.

It is also reported that while tourism graduates returning from overseas study have formal qualifications, many lack sufficient practical experience. Furthermore, in Kiribati's small and emerging tourism industry, many local accommodation operators rely on family members to work in the business, but there is a need to strengthen their skills relevant to their roles or employ trained tourism staff to meet the needs of a contemporary tourism destination

In this context, the Government has been supporting the delivery of tourism-related training via:

- Kiribati Institute of Technology (KIT). After introducing a Certificate II course in hospitality in Tarawa in 2019 KIT is scheduled to roll out a broader tourism course in 2024 and expand both to Kiritimati. KIT and the Marine Training College (MTC) also offer short courses on select modules and customised training courses for staff of a particular hotel²¹
- TAK: In addition to industry training aimed at business owners (e.g., for product development), TAK has been delivering short training to tourism operations staff on a range of activities as needed (e.g., customer services, bakery, and housekeeping). The customer service training is being formalised in the Mauri Way Program, which will be available to tourism workers and other interested people. This curriculum will be aligned with KIT and MTC customer service training.

Beyond training, other Government support comes in the form of KIT's facilitation of job placements for students.

Building on these foundations, Kiribati's sustainable tourism future requires policies that support:

- Growing public investment in tourism and hospitality training, specifically courses that: (i) offer more content in response to industry needs, (ii) build both knowledge and practical skills, (iii) are available in relevant locations via accessible delivery modes and (iv) mainstream sustainability considerations.
- Strengthening training capacity to ensure all technical subjects are delivered by relevantly skilled trainers.
- Strengthening the destination development and marketing capacity of TAK staff.
- Innovating solutions to tourism labour issues. For example, whereas some tourism workers are lost to overseas employment, options for reintegration, entrepreneurship and/or skills transfer programs could be designed for their return. In addition, as I-Kiribati graduates from overseas tertiary institutions need more practical experience, programs could be scoped with international government and university partners for their extension abroad for short-term employment to gain practical experience before returning home.

Policy Partners

OB, MEHR, KIT, MOE, MFAI, TAK.

In collaboration with the private sector and overseas partners.



²¹ The customer service subjects are delivered by the Marine Training College which is equipped for ship stewards training.



POLICY RESPONSE

Training and employment programs will develop a local tourism workforce with relevant vocational and management skills.

Short-term measures:

- This policy topic to be the subject of cross-Government collaboration via a new Sustainable Tourism Steering Committee (STSC) and relevant working groups. (2023 and ongoing).
- TAK and KIT to collaborate on the identification of tourism training needs and the design of curriculum and investment programs. (From 2024)
- TAK to implement the Mauri Way customer service program and collaborate with KIT to align with course curriculum. (2024)
- TAK to collaborate with MEHR and overseas partners on employment programs for returning graduates and overseas tourism workers. (2024)

Medium to long-term policy measures to be determined via the STSC and relevant working groups, informed by insights from upcoming tourism master planning and/or as new policy issues emerge.

POLICY NEED 5.4

UNDERSTANDING THE NET BENEFIT OF TOURISM TO THE ECONOMY, ENVIRONMENT AND SOCIETY

Situational Analysis and Policy Challenges

To pursue sustainable tourism objectives, it is important for a destination to understand the value of tourism to the wider economy and specific beneficiaries, as well as the value in terms of the positive environmental impacts (e.g., generating revenue for conservation efforts) and social impacts (e.g., promoting culture). It is also important to understand the costs to the national economy, environment and society, in financial and non-financial terms.

Furthermore, for a destination intending to position itself as a 'sustainable tourism destination', but which depends on long travel distances, has a high use of non-renewable energy sources, and a high volume of imported goods, it is important to understand the carbon footprint of its tourism industry. Whereas Kiribati's carbon production is marginal in global terms, it would nonetheless be valuable to have a measure of the carbon footprint of its visitors, and consider a carbon offset program that gives Kiribati the credentials of a carbon neutral or carbon negative destination, while also contributing to a registered local carbon offset scheme.

Determining the net-benefit of tourism for a destination is a complex proposition, as is measuring a tourism industry's carbon footprint and designing a carbon offset program. However, it is an important one for a destination like Kiribati in pursuit of a sustainable tourism credentials. TAK has identified a study with these objectives as a priority, pending funding. Where such a study identifies negative impacts and costs, it will be necessary to identify remedial interventions and/or necessary changes to policy.

Policy Partners

OB, TAK, MFED, MELAD, MFMRD, MIA (CMD), Island Councils, MWYSSA.

In collaboration with NGOs, the tourism private sector and host communities.

POLICY RESPONSE

The value, costs and net benefit of tourism to the economy, environment and society will be determined and inform future tourism policy.

Short-term measures:

- This policy topic to be the subject of cross-Government collaboration via a new Sustainable Tourism Steering Committee (STSC) and relevant working groups. (2023 and ongoing).
- TAK to convene a study on the net benefits of tourism and carbon footprint of visitors in collaboration with policy partners. (2024).

Medium to long-term policy measures to be determined via the STSC and relevant working groups, informed by insights from upcoming tourism master planning and/or as new policy issues emerge.





GOAL 6: Tourism will drive green and sustainable private sector investment

POLICY NEED 6.1

ENABLING TOURISM ENTREPRENEURS TO INVEST IN SUSTAINABILITY

Situational Analysis and Policy Challenges

As noted under Policy need 5.2, Kiribati's tourism entrepreneurs face a range of barriers to starting or improving a business. They face additional constraints to making the business sustainable in terms of investing in 'green' (environmentally friendly) technology and practices, for example renewable energy equipment including solar or biogas, or water harvesting, storage and filtering equipment. The key barriers are:

- A lack of knowledge of / information on green technologies. While some tourism business owners are proactive in researching and adopting new green technologies and practices, many are not aware of what is happening in this constantly evolving field, and therefore do not know what a sustainable option for them might be to consider now, or in the future.
- Difficulties accessing affordable technical advisory services. Choosing and installing certain technologies can require a technical expertise tourism business owners may not have. The availability and affordability of such professional services in Kiribati is unclear.
- Difficulties sourcing/importing green technologies from suppliers. It can be difficult for a business owner to know where to source new technology from, if not available locally.
- High costs of adopting green technologies. Purchasing and importing green technology can be cost prohibitive for tourism businesses. Even if the investment will offer a cost-saving in the long term and it aligns with a business' sustainability values, cash flow shortages can prevent a business from making a 'non-urgent' purchase. There are currently no fiscal incentives to encourage businesses to adopt green technology, but DBK offers a loan product to support investments in energy efficiencies.

Overcoming these impediments to green investment requires government support. However, the policy challenge lies in determining interventions that do not distort the market as well as identifying fiscal instruments that the Government can afford.

Policy Partners

TAK, MFED, MTCIC, MISE, KCCI.

In collaboration with SPTO, SPC, SPREP, NGOs (e.g., GGGI), host communities and private sector.

POLICY RESPONSE

Information on green technologies and practices and incentives to adopt them will enable tourism enterprises to invest in sustainability.

Short-term measures:

- This policy topic to be the subject of cross-Government collaboration via a new Sustainable Tourism Steering Committee (STSC) and relevant working groups. (2023 and ongoing).
- MTCIC, MFED, MISE and TAK input to explore options for incentivising tourism enterprises to adopt green technologies. (2024)
- TAK to collaborate with MISE to develop information resources for tourism businesses about green technologies relevant to them. (2024)

Medium to long-term policy measures to be determined via the STSC and relevant working groups, informed by insights from upcoming tourism master planning and/or as new policy issues emerge.



POLICY NEED 6.2

FACILITATING INVESTMENT IN NEW SUSTAINABLE TOURISM PRODUCTS THAT ADDRESS SUPPLY GAPS

Situational Analysis and Policy Challenges

Tourism investment opportunities in Kiribati are currently promoted through the Investment Promotion Division (IPD) of MTCIC as per its mandate for investment generation, although such activity has been limited by the availability of projects. TAK plays an indirect role in tourism investment promotion, which according to the Tourism Act, is limited to serving as an advisory body to Government for tourism planning purposes. In this context, TAK and IPD have to date collaborated on tourism investment enquiry facilitation and preparing a Tourism Investment Guide. They are also currently collaborating with MFED on the development of investment incentives for tourism.

As Kiribati seeks to grow its tourism sector according to sustainable destination development principles, tourism and investment policies will need to support the following:

- The identification and profiling of opportunities for private sector investment in sustainable tourism infrastructure and products, specifically those that meet supply gaps for high-yield markets segments (as informed by research — see Policy Needs 4.2 and 5.1).
- The scoping of joint ventures matching landowners of sites with high potential for tourism, who do not have the capital or acceptable collateral for a loan, with interested investors in tourism who need access to land with tourism potential.
- The design of appropriate targeted tourism investment incentives for local and foreign investors in high-priority accommodation, transport and visitor experiences. (Recognising that the costs of incentives need to also be given careful consideration).
- Improving the businesses enabling environment, especially with respect to clarifying and streamlining the various steps and approvals required from investment inquiry stage, through project design and implementation and business operations.
- The development of an up-to-date Tourism Investment Guide featuring information on all of the above and giving specific guidance on sustainability requirements.
- The promotion and facilitation of tourism investment whereby TAK and IPD can leverage each other's resources.

Policy Partners

TAK, NEPO, MTCIC (IPD), MIA, Urban and Island Councils).

In collaboration with interested landowners.

POLICY RESPONSE

Sustainable tourism investment opportunities that address supply gaps will be identified, promoted to prospective investors and enabled via targeted incentive and facilitation programs.

Short-term measures:

- This policy topic to be the subject of cross-Government collaboration via a new Sustainable Tourism Steering Committee (STSC) and relevant working groups. (2023 and ongoing).
- MTCIC and MFED, with TAK input, to identify appropriate incentives for targeted, new tourism investments. (Q4 2023).
- TAK to collaborate with MTCIC and Island Councils to identify and profile opportunities for private sector investment in sustainable tourism infrastructure and products, specifically those that meet supply gaps for high-yield markets segments as informed by research. In doing so, to explore opportunities for joint venture partners to invest with landowners. (2024 and ongoing).
- TAK and IPD to develop a Tourism Investment Guide with (i) tourism investment opportunities, (ii) process mapping of the steps and approvals required in a tourism investment and (iii) guidance on sustainability requirements. (2023 and ongoing)
- TAK and IPD to determine a collaborative tourism investment promotion and facilitation approach. (2023 and ongoing).

Medium to long-term policy measures to be determined via the STSC and relevant working groups, informed by insights from upcoming tourism master planning and/or as new policy issues emerge.





GOAL 7: Tourism will influence ‘whole of nation’ leadership in sustainable development

POLICY NEED 7.1

INSTILLING ‘WHOLE OF NATION’ SUSTAINABLE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT COORDINATION

Situational Analysis and Policy Challenges

This public policy outlining the Government of Kiribati’s commitment to tourism sector development represents a whole of Government approach, with multiple ministries and agencies at national and subnational level recognising their respective roles. Beyond public policy however, tourism planning and development requires extensive private sector and community engagement to consult on the strategies that need to be undertaken to achieve the shared vision for tourism and agree on roles and responsibilities of various stakeholders. It requires a ‘whole of nation’ approach to sector development.

While TAK is proactive in engaging with Government partners, collaborating with tourism industry operators and consulting host community representatives, there is currently no single forum for sector-wide consultations. As the Government progresses the measures outline in this Policy, it is timely to establish a formal mechanism for sector coordination. A high-level Sustainable Tourism Steering Committee (STSC) is proposed as the platform for public, private and community representatives to advise on sector development. This would need to be informed by extensive community and private sector consultation, which requires a suitable mechanism to be devised with those stakeholders (e.g. a Destination Stewardship Council) to ensure views are accounted for in STSC decisions. The STSC would also need to be supported

by (i) the formation of policy issue-specific working groups where needed to progress particular priorities and (ii) the development of a Tourism Master Plan to identify all strategies and activities for the sector, including a monitoring and evaluation (M&E) framework to assess progress.

Policy Partners

TAK and whole of Government.

In collaboration with private sector, host communities and NGOs.

POLICY RESPONSE

A ‘whole of nation’ approach to tourism development will be enabled via a Sustainable Tourism Steering Committee (STSC), and regular community, private sector and government consultations.

Short-Term Measures:

- Establish a new Sustainable Tourism Steering Committee (STSC) comprising public, private and community representatives to ensure collaboration and accountability in ‘whole of nation’ sustainable tourism development. To allow for the formation of (i) a suitable dialogue mechanism (e.g. ‘Destination Stewardship Council/s’) so that industry and community have a voice on the STSC and (ii) policy issue-specific working groups where needed to progress particular priorities. (2023 and ongoing).



POLICY NEED 7.2

DEVELOPING A TOURISM INDUSTRY OF SUSTAINABILITY CHAMPIONS

Situational Analysis and Policy Challenges

The tourism sector's reliance on environmental and cultural attributes places it at the forefront of promoting environmental and cultural sustainability. Through training, visitor feedback and practice, tourism entrepreneurs and workers can build a good understanding of the importance of sustainability and be advocates for the adoption of more sustainable practices.

There is a need for the tourism workforce to learn as much as possible about environmental and cultural sustainability, in order to fulfil the important role they can play in championing the why and how of sustainability. This learning can be supported by incorporating more sustainability into TAK and KIT tourism training. TAK's intention to include such content into the Mauri Way Program can help Kiribati build a community of Ambassadors in both customer service and sustainability – critical aspects of the Kiribati destination brand.

There is also a need for tourism businesses to adopt sustainable practices, in order to demonstrate sustainability in operations. This can be supported by making the adoption of sustainable equipment and practices easier (see Policy 6.2).

Finally, there is an opportunity to profile tourism business and worker sustainability champions in national media and promotion to extend the message across the country.

Policy Partners

TAK and whole of Government.

In collaboration with private sector, host communities and NGOs.

POLICY RESPONSE

The Tourism Industry will be encouraged to advocate for sustainable development in Kiribati, through the Mauri Way Ambassador program and promotional activities.

Short-term measures:

- This policy topic to be the subject of cross-Government collaboration via a new Sustainable Tourism Steering Committee (STSC) and relevant working groups. (2023 and ongoing).



4. 10-POINT ACTION PLAN

The Government of Kiribati is committed to taking immediate action to achieve the Sustainable Tourism Policy's seven goals through the stated 23 policy responses. This commitment will be mobilised in the short term through the following 10-Point Action Plan featuring the most critical next steps for making progress across all goals over the next 12 months.

1 Establish a Kiribati Sustainable Tourism Steering Committee (STSC).

MTCIC will establish a STSC, comprising policy partner representatives from Government, the tourism private and host communities. To specifically include MELAD, MFMRD, MLPID, MISE, MIA, MHMS, MWYSSA, MFAI, MEHR, MICT, MFED, NEPO and OB, and/or their key agencies, as well as KCCI. To welcome wider industry and community representation via a suitable formal mechanism (e.g. a 'Destination Stewardship Council/s'). MTCIC will serve as the STSC Chair and TAK as Secretariat. The STSC's Terms of Reference (ToR) will define its role in enabling collaboration and leadership in implementing the Whole of Government Tourism Policy. (From Q4 2023).

2 Form or expand working groups to progress tourism policy priorities identified by the STSC.

Under the direction of the STSC, issue-specific working groups will be created to progress tourism policy priorities, and/or existing working groups will be identified for TAK to join. (From Q3 2023).

3 Undertake market analysis to support sustainable tourism positioning.

TAK will undertake market analysis and brand development to underpin the future direction for marketing Kiribati as a sustainable tourism destination. (From Q4 2023).

4 Develop a Kiribati Tourism Master Plan 2024-2034.

A long-term plan for the tourism sector will be led by TAK, in consultation with public, private and community stakeholders, as a 'whole of nation' roadmap for sustainable destination development. It will build on this public Policy with specific strategies and activities to improve tourism access and infrastructure, develop products, experiences and sites, improve the enabling environment and strengthen the tourism workforce. The Master Plan will include respective stakeholders' roles and responsibilities, timeframes and KPIs, to be agreed via the STSC. (From Q2 2024).

5 Schedule regular private sector and community consultations on tourism.

TAK will enhance its delivery of workshops and facilitation of discussions with the tourism industry and host communities on tourism matters to maximise reach and optimise two-way communications that (a) seek private sector and host community inputs to tourism development and (b) deliver tourism updates and awareness. In doing so, it will support the establishment of a 'Destination Stewardship Council' type model, so that industry and community views inform STSC and TAK decisions and Tourism Master Planning. (From Q3 2023).

6 Include tourism-enabling accountabilities in policies and plans of key Ministries/Agencies.

All Government Ministries and agencies with roles and responsibilities in supporting tourism development (as identified in this Sustainable Tourism Policy and to be specified in the upcoming Tourism Master Plan) will reference such functions in their future policies and plans. (From Q4 2023).

7 Continue to strengthen and streamline awareness, training and support programs aimed at developing sustainable tourism enterprises.

TAK will undertake an audit of the various Government and NGO programs currently available to community-based tourism enterprises and tourism MSMEs. Focusing on those programs aimed at (i) starting or improving an enterprise and/or (ii) helping businesses adopt green technology and practices, the audit will identify overlaps and gaps in information provision and related support. Following the audit, TAK will recommend opportunities for partners to integrate and/or collaborate on existing awareness/ training activities, and note the need to create additional awareness content, training courses and support programs. (The post-audit design may end up falling under the Masterplan). (From Q3 2023).

8 Strengthen and expand the Mauri Mark Industry Standards and Mauri Way Customer Service programs.

TAK will continue its current efforts to strengthen the Mauri Mark standards for tourism businesses with more quality, sustainability, accessibility and safety measures, and roll it out to all tourism operations. At the same time, the Mauri Way Ambassador program will be enhanced with customer service and sustainability content and rolled out to more individuals. (From Q3 2023).

9 Design a 'Sustainable Tourism Future' Visitor Levy.

MTCIC and MFED, with TAK input, will design a visitor levy scheme to enable collection of funds dedicated to sustainable tourism efforts. In accordance with the Tourism Act 2019, the scheme will be administered by TAK. (From Q4 2023).

10 Commence data collection and target setting for Sustainable Tourism Indicators.

TAK will work with partners to collect baseline data for the Sustainable Tourism Indicators and establish a plan for ongoing reporting. (From Q3 2023).

5. MONITORING & REVIEW



Monitoring Policy Outputs

Tracking the outputs of this Policy will be conducted via:

- A review of the 10-Point Action Plan after 12 months (at the end of 2024).
- A review of the Sustainable Tourism Steering Committee (STSC) Workplan which will be prepared as the first step after its formation.

Monitoring Policy Outcomes

Monitoring the outcomes of this Policy will be supported by the following mechanisms:

- The upcoming Tourism Master Plan M&E Framework. The intended outcomes identified in this Policy will be reflected in the 'whole of nation' plan for tourism. The Government-specific actions identified herein, will be complemented by those for which the private sector and community are responsible, leading to shared Implementation Schedule and a sector-wide M&E Framework.
- Sustainable Tourism Indicators. A suite of tourism indicators has been developed with consideration to existing and collected data in Kiribati to measure tourism more holistically, beyond visitor arrivals numbers and total expenditure. Designed to align with the Sustainable Tourism Policy Goals, they include measuring the impact of tourism on the environment and the positive or negative impacts experienced by different groups within the tourism sector, including women, youth and communities. (See Table 2). Baseline data is being collected as of Q3 2023, and annual monitoring will commence at the end of 2023. It is anticipated that it will take a few years to obtain sufficient data for robust analysis. The indicators may be refined over time, based on lessons learned in Kiribati and globally. The STSC will be the focal point for any review.

Table 2. Kiribati Sustainable Tourism Indicators (KSTI)

Goal 1: Tourism will conserve the natural environment	
a. Energy Use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Percentage of tourism accommodation establishments using renewable energy Percentage of tourism accommodation establishments adopting energy saving practices
b. Water Use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Percentage of tourism accommodation establishments adopting water saving practices
c. Solid Waste and Waste Water	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Percentage of tourism accommodation establishments adopting waste reduction practices
d. Ecosystem Condition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extent of Protected Areas Sea water quality
Goal 2: Tourism to preserve cultural and historical heritage	
a. Cultural and Heritage Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ministry of Internal Affairs Budget
b. Cultural and Heritage Visitation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Percentage of international visitors that undertake cultural activities and/ or visit heritage sites
Goal 3: Tourism will support community and social well-being	
a. Equal Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Percentage of employees in tourism accommodation establishments by gender, employment status and disability status
b. Tourism Intensity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of International Visitors per 100 residents
c. Tourism Seasonality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> International Visitors Seasonality Ratio
d. Community Support for Tourism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Percentage of local population supportive of tourism activities
Goal 4: Tourism will ensure visitor well-being and satisfaction	
a. Visitor Satisfaction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Percentage of international visitors satisfied with overall experience at destination Percentage of international visitors wanting to return Percentage of international visitors who would recommend destination Availability of accommodation for international visitors
Goal 5: Tourism will contribute to sustainable and inclusive economic growth	
a. Economic Contribution of Tourism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Percentage change in international visitor arrivals Average length of stay of international visitors Average international visitor expenditure Tourism Direct Contribution to GDP
b. Tourism Businesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Percentage of tourism accommodation establishments to total registered businesses
c. Tourism Data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Percentage of Pacific Sustainable Tourism Indicators (PSTI) data available
Goal 6: Tourism will drive green and sustainable private investment	
a. Sustainable Tourism Kiribati Label	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Percentage of tourism accommodation establishments obtaining Mauri Mark over 50% and 75% for Sustainability
Goal 7: Tourism will influence 'whole of nation' leadership in sustainable development	
a. Tourism Employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Percentage of tourism employment to total employment Percentage of employed people in tourism accommodation establishments with formal training
b. Government Expenditure on Tourism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Funding for Tourism Authority of Kiribati (TAK) per international visitor



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MTCIC also expresses appreciation to the representatives of partner Ministries and agencies, who generously gave their time during consultations for this policy, shared ideas for collaborating and made commitments to ensure a sustainable tourism future for Kiribati. In particular:

- The Secretary of MTCIC and team (Business Regulatory Centre, Business Promotion Centre)
- The Secretary of MISE, Admin, and team (Water Unit, Energy Planning Unit, Quality Control and Inspection Unit)
- The Secretary of OB and team (Climate Change Division and Disaster Risk Management Division)
- The Secretary of MFAI, Admin and team (Asia Pacific Division and Immigration Division)
- The Secretary of MIA and team (Culture Museum Division and Local Government Division)
- The Secretary of MEHR and team (Labour Market Unit, OHS Unit)
- The Secretary of MWYSSA and team (Youth, Women's and People with special needs Unit)
- The Secretary of MFEP and team (NEPO)
- The Secretary of MELAD and team (ECD, Lands and Agriculture Divisions)
- The Secretary of MHMS and team (Public Health Department)
- The Secretary of MFMRD and team (Fisheries Conservation Division)
- The Secretary, MLPID and Branch Ministries on Kiritimati
- The President and Executive team, KCCI,
- The General Manager PUB and team,
- The Director of KIT, Executive Office and team from School of Business
- The CEO, DBK and team
- The Country Manager and team, Live and Learn
- The Senior Program Officer, GGGI;
- Tourism Business operations, Kiribati.

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