



# **Kiribati Sustainable Tourism Development Policy Framework Towards 2036**



This policy framework has been produced by the Tourism Authority Kiribati (TAK).

# Table of Contents

	Page
Glossary .....	i
Executive Summary .....	1
Tourism & the UN Sustainable Development Goals .....	2
Tourism links with the Sustainable Development Goals .....	3
Transforming tourism in Kiribati .....	5
Our Vision .....	7
Our Values .....	7
Our Goals .....	7
Our Priorities .....	8
<b>GOAL 1 – Tourism must protect natural environment .....</b>	<b>10</b>
1.1 Establish a tourism waste disposal and recycling program based on the Kiribati Waste Management and Resource Recovery Strategy (KWMRRS) 2020 – 2030. ....	11
1.2 Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) must be applied to all new tourism development. ....	11
1.3 Encourage a water use and conservation system for all tourism business operations based on the Kiribati National Water Resources Policy (KNWRP) .....	12
1.4 Support the conservation of marine life and resources within areas of operation. ....	12
1.5 Promote ‘farm and/or ocean to table’ concept for all tourism accommodation and restaurant operations. ....	13
1.6 Protect vulnerable birds and wildlife .....	13
<b>GOAL 2 – Tourism to preserve cultural and historical heritage .....</b>	<b>14</b>
2.1 Map (digital), preserve and document all cultural sites and monuments. ....	15
2.2 Mandatory sustainable visitor behavior guide for all cultural sites and monuments. ....	15
2.3 Implement a guideline for the production, sale, and gifting of traditional artifacts. ....	16
2.4 Develop a central WWII memorial site in Betio. ....	16
2.5 Documentation and cataloging of all WWII relics in Kiribati. ....	16
2.6 Advocate for the development of regulations to protect WWII relics in Kiribati .....	17
<b>GOAL 3 – Tourism will promote community &amp; social well-being. ....</b>	<b>18</b>
3.1 Create awareness on sustainable tourism development across all communities in Kiribati. ....	19
3.2 Tourism will provide equal opportunities for all and will not discriminate against gender, sexual orientation, marginalized members of community and people of different religious beliefs and opinions. ....	19
<b>GOAL 4 – TOURISM GUARANTEES VISITOR SATISFACTION, HEALTH AND SAFETY .....</b>	<b>20</b>
4.1 Implement the national tourism and hospitality customer service standards program. ....	21
4.2 Implement Kiribati Tourism & Hospitality Protocols for the New Normal .....	21
4.3 Capture and act on visitor feedback .....	22
4.4 Address quality issues in the tourism value chain. ....	22
4.5 Promote accessible tourism across Kiribati. ....	23
4.6 Establish a minimum building standards guideline for traditional tourist buias and overwater bungalows. ....	23
<b>Goal 5 – Tourism will contribute to national economic prosperity. ....</b>	<b>24</b>
5.1 Adopt a high yield (value) low volume approach to tourism development. ....	25
5.2 Improved tourism economic data collection and analysis .....	25
5.3 Develop and implement a structured tourism licensing, fees, and visitor environment levy program. ....	26
5.4 Embrace innovation, technology, and digitization of all tourism opportunities. ....	26
5.5 Encourage support for the development of niche markets across Kiribati. ....	26
5.6 Technical support to Tourism SME’s .....	27
<b>Goal 6 – Tourism should Inspire Green Entrepreneurship. ....</b>	<b>28</b>
6.1 Incorporate a Sustainable Tourism Kiribati label into the Mauri Mark Program. ....	29
6.2 Develop a Kiribati Green Tourism Business Toolkit. ....	30
6.3 Establishment a Green Tourism Incentive Programme .....	30
6.4 Development a Kiribati Sustainable Tourism Investment guide .....	30
6.5 Encourage circular economy inspired practices across tourism business operations. ....	30
<b>GOAL 7 – Tourism will influence effective leadership. ....</b>	<b>31</b>
7.1 Strengthen human recourse in the tourism sector. ....	32
7.2 Foster an integrated whole-of government approach to tourism policy development. ....	33
Conclusion .....	34

# Acronyms

BRC	————	Business Regulatory Centre
CMD	————	Culture and Museum Division
ECD	————	Environment Conservation Division
EIA	————	Environment Impact Assessment
GDP	————	Gross Domestic Product
GGGI	————	Global Green Growth Institute
GoK	————	Government of Kiribati
KCCI	————	Kiribati Chamber of Commerce and Industries
KNWRP	————	Kiribati National Water Resource Policy
KNQP	————	Kiribati National Quality Policy
KSTDPF	————	Kiribati Sustainable Tourism Development Policy Framework
KSTPS	————	Kiribati Sustainable Tourism Policy and Strategy
KV20	————	Kiribati 20-Years Vision
KWMRRS	————	Kiribati Waste Management & Resource Recovery Strategy
MCIC	————	Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Cooperatives
MEHR	————	Ministry of Employment and Human Resources
MELAD	————	Ministry of Environment, Lands and Agricultural Development
MFMRD	————	Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resource Development
MHMS	————	Ministry of Health and Medical Services
MIA	————	Ministry of Internal Affairs
MOE	————	Ministry of Education
MOJ	————	Ministry of Justice
MWYSSA	————	Ministry of Women, Youth, Sport & Social Affairs
NGO	————	Non-Governmental Organisation
NSO	————	National Statistics Office
PIPA	————	Phoenix Islands Protected Area
PSTPF	————	Pacific Sustainable Tourism Policy Framework
TAK	————	Tourism Authority Kiribati
TBIS	————	Tourism Business Inventory Survey
SDG	————	Sustainable Development Goals
SME	————	Small to Medium Enterprise
UN	————	United Nations
UNDP	————	United Nations Development Program
UNWTO	————	United Nations World Tourism Organisation
WWII	————	World War 2

# Executive Summary

Sustainable Tourism takes full account of its current and future economic, social, and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment, and host communities.<sup>1</sup> Environmental, economic, and socio-cultural aspects of tourism development must be core to the principles of sustainable tourism development in Kiribati.

The Kiribati Sustainable Tourism Development Policy Framework (KSTDPF) frames Kiribati's sustainable tourism goals with the aim to achieve a suitable balance between the environmental, economic, and socio-cultural impacts of tourism to guarantee the long-term sustainability of tourism in Kiribati.

This framework draws from the aspirations of the Kiribati 20 Year Vision (KV20), the recommendations of the Pacific Sustainability Tourism Policy Framework 2021 (PSTPF), and the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO)/United Nations Development Program (UNDP), Tourism and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) – Journey to 2030.

The KSTDPF is based on the following seven (7) sustainable tourism goals:

- Goal 1: Tourism must protect natural environment.
- Goal 2: Tourism to preserve cultural and historical heritage.
- Goal 3: Tourism will promote community & social well-being.
- Goal 4: Tourism guarantees visitor satisfaction, health, and safety.
- Goal 5: Tourism will contribute to national economic prosperity.
- Goal 6: Tourism should Inspire Green Entrepreneurship
- Goal 7: Tourism will influence effective leadership.

This policy framework is integrated across other policy areas and discusses a set of priorities required to achieve each of these seven goals. It recommends that these priorities utilise Kiribati's existing policies and legislations that address the core principles of environmental, socio-cultural, and economic development and to guide the ongoing development and management of tourism post COVID-19.

The policy interventions outlined in this framework is consistent with existing relevant international, regional, and national policies, strategies, and targets and is a result of extensive consultation and collaboration with key public and private sector partners in Kiribati.

The goals and priorities of the KSTDPF are fluid may be modified based on changes in the national, regional, and global environment, social-cultural and economic conditions.

Tourism Authority of Kiribati (TAK) will use the goals and priorities of this framework to develop the Kiribati Sustainable Tourism Policy and Strategy to guide the industry to fulfil the KV20 obligation of achieving sustainable tourism development by 2036

<sup>1</sup> United Nations Environment Programme and World Tourism Organization (2005), Making tourism more sustainable: A guide for policy makers (online)

# Tourism & The UN Sustainable Development Goals

Tourism is recognised as one of the fastest growing economic sectors in the world, contributing to job and wealth creation, economic growth, environmental protection, and poverty alleviation. In 2019, global travel and tourism directly contributed an approximate US \$2.9 trillion dollars to Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

However, the increasing number of people travelling each year, particularly in the pre COVID-19 period, are producing pressures on the natural environment, economic leakages, cultural assets, local communities, and resource management in general.

In recognising this, the UNWTO, UNDP developed the Tourism and the Sustainable Development Goals – Journey to 2030. This commitment aims to build knowledge and empower and inspire tourism stakeholders to take necessary action to accelerate the shift towards a more sustainable tourism sector by aligning policies, business operations and investments with the SDG's.<sup>2</sup>










<sup>2</sup>Tourism and the Sustainable Development Goals – Journey to 2030, UNWTO - UNDP report. pg. 10.

# Tourism links with the Sustainable Development Goals

Public Policy		Companies and CSR actions		
<p><b>SDG 1 – End poverty in all its forms everywhere</b>  <b>Tourism provides income through job creation at local and community levels.</b></p> <p>It can be linked with national poverty reduction strategies and entrepreneurship. Low skills requirement and local recruitment can empower less favoured groups, particularly youth and women.</p>		<p>On-going staff training; Partnerships for education; Diversity management; Complementary benefits; In-kind donations for education, Poverty, and human rights; Responsible investment and local recruitment; Local purchases and fair-trade</p>		<p>New equipment and technologies; Prevention programs for security and health; Standards and certifications; Community involvement</p>
<p><b>SDG 2 – End hunger, achieve food security and nutrition, promote sustainable agriculture</b></p> <p>Tourism can spur sustainable agricultural by promoting the production and supplies to hotels, and sales of local products to tourists. Agro tourism can generate additional income while enhancing the value of the tourism experience.</p>		<p>Local and green purchase (food/ agriculture); Local supplies and fair trade; Host community involvement; Wildlife and ecosystem protection; Offsetting actions</p>		<p>New equipment and technologies; Prevention programs for security and health; Standards and certifications; Community involvement</p>
<p><b>SDG 3 – Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages</b></p> <p>Tax income generated from tourism can be reinvested in health care and services, improving maternal health, reduce child mortality and preventing diseases. Visitors' fees collected in protected areas can as well contribute to health services.</p>		<p>Health prevention programs; Fight against sex tourism, health and disasters awareness and donations; Customer security and health – prevention and facilities</p>		<p>Training for professional development; Diversity management and local recruitment; Performance incentives complementary benefits; Responsible investment and local purchases; community involvement</p>
<p><b>SDG 4 – Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning for all</b></p> <p>Tourism has the potential to promote inclusiveness. A skilful workforce is crucial for tourism to prosper. The tourism sector provides opportunities for direct and indirect jobs for youth, women, and those with special needs, who should benefit through educational means.</p>		<p>Professional development and training; Partnerships for education; Diversity management; Education for culture and heritage; In-kind donations for education; On-going staff training, information, facilities; Host community involvement</p>		<p>Eco-design; New equipment and technologies in energy and water resources; Renewable energies; Equipment and materials for recycling and waste; On-going staff training</p>
<p><b>SDG 5 – Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls</b></p> <p>Tourism can empower women, particularly through the provision of direct jobs and income-generation from MMEs in tourism and hospitality related enterprises. Tourism can be a tool for women to become fully engaged and lead in every aspect of society</p>		<p>Diversity management; Awareness campaigns and in-kind donations towards fight against sex tourism and human rights; Non-discrimination values in staff recruitment and training</p>		<p>Diversity management; Local enterprise investment; Responsible purchases; Non-discrimination values in staff recruitment and training; Community involvement</p>
			<p><b>SDG 6 – Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all</b></p> <p>Tourism investment requirement for providing utilities can play a critical role in achieving water access and security, as well as hygiene and sanitation for all. The efficient use of water in tourism, pollution control and technology efficiency can be key to safeguarding our most precious resource.</p>	
			<p><b>SDG 7 – Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable, and modern energy for all</b></p> <p>As a sector, which is energy intensive, tourism can accelerate the shift towards increased renewable energy shares in the global energy mix. By promoting investments in clean energy sources, tourism can help to reduce greenhouse gases, mitigate climate change, and contribute to access of energy for all.</p>	
			<p><b>SDG 8 – Promote sustained, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth, employment, and decent work for all</b></p> <p>Tourism, as services trade, is one of the top four export earners globally, currently providing one in ten jobs worldwide. Decent work opportunities in tourism, particularly for youth and women, and policies that favour better diversification through tourism value chains can enhance tourism positive socio-economic impacts.</p>	
			<p><b>SDG 9 – Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation</b></p> <p>Tourism development relies on good public and private infrastructure. The sector can influence public policy for infrastructure upgrade and retrofit, making them more sustainable, innovative, and resource-efficient and moving towards low carbon growth, thus attracting tourists and other sources of foreign investment.</p>	
			<p><b>SDG 10 – Reduce inequality within and among countries</b></p> <p>Tourism can be a powerful tool for reducing inequalities if it engages local populations and all key stakeholders in its development. Tourism can contribute to urban renewal and rural development by giving people the opportunity to prosper in their place of origin. Tourism is an effective means for economic integration and diversification.</p>	

# Tourism & The UN Sustainable Development Goals

<p><b>SDG 11 – Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable</b> Tourism can advance urban infrastructure and accessibility, promote regeneration, and preserve cultural and natural heritage, assets on which tourism depends. Investment in green infrastructure (more efficient transport, reduced air pollution) should result in smarter and greener cities for, not only residents but also tourists.</p>		<p>Certifications; Partnerships; Awareness campaigns, in-kind donations for culture and heritage sites; Host community involvement; Clean energy; Resource efficiency; Biodiversity conservation initiatives</p>
<p><b>SDG 12 – Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns</b> The tourism sector needs to adopt sustainable consumption and production (SCP) modes, accelerating the shift towards sustainability. Tools to monitor sustainable development impacts for tourism including for energy, water, waste, biodiversity, and job creation will result in enhanced economic, social, and environmental outcomes.</p>		<p>Efficiency technologies for energy and water; Renewable energies; Recycling – waste treatment; Pollution reduction; Local purchase and enterprises; Local supplier; Community involvement; Responsible investment; Guest involvement</p>
<p><b>SDG 13 – Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts</b> Tourism contributes to and is affected by climate change. Tourism stakeholders should play a leading role in the global response to climate change. By reducing its carbon footprint, in the transport and accommodation sector, tourism can benefit from low carbon growth and help tackle one of the most pressing challenges of our time</p>		<p>Eco-design; New equipment and technologies; Renewable energies; Recycling and waste; Wildlife and ecosystems – landscape protection; Pollution reduction; Offsetting actions; Awareness campaign and in-kind donations for disasters</p>
<p><b>SDG 14 – Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas, and marine resources for sustainable development</b> Coastal and maritime tourism rely on healthy marine ecosystems. Tourism development must be a part of Integrated Coastal Zone Management to help conserve and preserve fragile marine ecosystems and serve as a vehicle to promote a blue economy, contributing to the sustainable use of marine resources.</p>		<p>Wildlife and ecosystems animal protection; Pollution reduction; Waste treatment; Offsetting actions; Green purchases; Information for customers and staff; Community involvement</p>
<p><b>SDG 15 – Protect, restore, and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems and halt biodiversity loss</b> Rich biodiversity and natural heritage are often the main reasons why tourists visit a destination. Tourism can play a major role if sustainably managed in fragile zones, not only in conserving and preserving biodiversity, but also in generating revenue as an alternative livelihood to local communities.</p>		<p>Wildlife and ecosystems animal protection; Pollution reduction; Waste treatment; Offsetting actions; Green purchases; Information for customers and staff; Community involvement</p>
<p><b>SDG 16 – Promote peaceful and inclusive societies, provide access to justice for all and build inclusive institutions</b> As tourism revolves around billions of encounters between people of diverse cultural backgrounds, the sector can foster multicultural and inter-faith tolerance and understanding, laying the foundation for more peaceful societies. Tourism, which benefits and engages local communities, can also consolidate peace in post-conflict societies.</p>		<p>Human rights awareness; In-kind donations; Local enterprises – responsible investment; Local recruitment and purchases; Diversity and respect policy; Anti-corruption money laundering; Client relationships; Host community involvement.</p>
<p><b>SDG 17 – Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development</b> Due to its cross-sectoral nature, tourism has the ability to strengthen private/public partnerships and engage multiple stakeholders – international, national, regional, and local – to work together to achieve the SDGs and other common goals. Public policy and innovative financing are at the core for achieving the 2030 Agenda.</p>		<p>Professional development; Partnerships for education; Wildlife and ecosystems animal protection; Offsetting actions; Supplier and Customer involvement; Client relationships; Staff involvement and relationships; Community involvement</p>



# Transforming Tourism In Kiribati

Kiribati is in the process of transforming its tourism industry to become sustainable and remain viable for generations to come. This commitment was made when the government of Kiribati, in its 20-year Vision (KV20) recognised the potential contribution of tourism towards stimulating economic development, providing employment, income generation as well as supporting the retention of cultural traditions, sustainable management of national environmental assets and wider contribution towards social-economic benefits.

The COVID -19 pandemic however brought the Kiribati tourism industry to a standstill with zero international visitors recorded from April 2020. However, this pause in international arrivals into Kiribati also presented the destination with an excellent opportunity to re-evaluate itself and its real contribution to the economy, community, and environment.

On the back of the international climate change agenda, of which Kiribati is a strong advocate of, the Kiribati tourism sector must play an active role in reducing the industry's negative impact on the environment, community, and economy. The tourism sector must therefore commit to adopting internationally accepted sustainable operational standards for tourism operators and this KSTDPF will be the guide to achieving this.

Kiribati's small tourism industry with minimal infrastructure and relatively low impact on the natural environment places the destination in a favourable position to effectively plan and implement its sustainable tourism initiatives.

The country's COVID-19 free status, its China destination approval status and the growing global demand for experiential and meaningful travel presents Kiribati with the opportunity for growth it post COVID-19. The KSTDPF therefore will help Kiribati prepare for a smart restart to tourism where value over volume will be a priority and where tourism businesses will operate along international sustainable standards and guidelines.

Sustainable tourism therefore is no longer an option for Kiribati but a necessary means to fulfilling our national commitment to a more responsible way of managing the tourism sector.

# Transforming Tourism In Kiribati

## Kiribati Sustainable Tourism Inspiration

Kiribati  
20-Year  
Vision  
  
KV20

Pacific  
Sustainable  
Tourism  
Policy  
  
SPTO

UNWTO/UNDP  
SDG - 2030  
Agenda

## Considerations



Environmental  
Considerations



Economic  
Considerations



Social  
Considerations

## Vision for 2036

**Tourism to be a key driver for stimulating sustainable economic development, environmental conservation, cultural preservation and social wellbeing for Kiribati by 2036**

## Goals

Tourism  
must protect  
natural  
environment

Tourism to  
preserve  
cultural and  
historical  
heritage

Tourism will  
promote  
community  
& social  
wellbeing

Tourism  
guarantees  
visitor  
satisfaction,  
health and  
safety

Tourism will  
contribute to  
national  
economic  
prosperity

Tourism  
should  
inspire green  
entre-  
preneurship

Tourism will  
influence  
effective  
leadership



Sustainable  
TOURISM-KIRIBATI

# Our Vision

Tourism to be a key driver for stimulating sustainable economic development, environmental conservation, cultural preservation, and social well-being for Kiribati by 2036.

# Our Values

Te Mauri – We yearn for the good health and safety for 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.

# Our Goals

The goals of the KSTDPF reflect the aspirations of the government and people of Kiribati for tourism as outlined in the KV20. It is guided by the UNWTO SDG's and how tourism can contribute to Kiribati's fulfilment of these goals.

Goal 1: Tourism must protect natural environment.

Goal 2: Tourism to preserve cultural and historical heritage.

Goal 3: Tourism will promote community & social well-being.

Goal 4: Tourism guarantees visitor satisfaction, health, and safety.

Goal 5: Tourism will contribute to national economic prosperity.

Goal 6: Tourism should Inspire Green Entrepreneurship

Goal 7: Tourism will influence effective leadership.

# Our Priorities

The priorities of the KSTDPF outline key policy guidelines that will assist Kiribati achieve its Sustainable Tourism Development goals by 2036.

## GOAL 1 – TOURISM MUST PROTECT THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

- i. Establish a tourism waste disposal and recycling program based on the Kiribati Waste Management and Resource Recovery Strategy 2020 – 2030.
- ii. Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) must be applied to all new tourism development.
- iii. Encourage a water used and conservation system for all tourism business operations based on the Kiribati National Water Resources Policy.
- iv. Support the conservation of marine life and resources within areas of operation.
- v. Promote farm and/or ocean to table concept for all tourism accommodation and restaurant operations.
- vi. Protect vulnerable birds and wildlife.

## GOAL 2 – TOURISM TO PRESERVE CULTURAL & HISTORICAL HERITAGE

- i. Map (digital), preserve and document all cultural sites and monuments.
- ii. Mandatory sustainable visitor behavior guide and traditional island protocols for cultural sites and monuments.
- iii. Implement a guideline for the production, sale, and gifting of traditional artifacts.
- iv. Develop a central WWII memorial site in Betio.
- v. Document and catalogue of all WWII relics in Kiribati.
- vi. Advocate for the development of regulations to protect WWII relics in Kiribati.

## GOAL 3 – TOURISM WILL PROMOTE COMMUNITY & SOCIAL WELL-BEING

- i. Create awareness on sustainable tourism development across Kiribati.
- ii. Tourism will provide equal opportunities for all and will not discriminate against gender, sexual orientation, marginalized members of community and people of different religious beliefs and opinions.

# Our Priorities

## GOAL 4 – TOURISM GUARANTEES VISITOR SATISFACTION, HEALTH AND SAFETY

- i. Implement the national tourism and hospitality customer service standards program.
- ii. Implement Kiribati Tourism & Hospitality Protocols for the New Normal.
- iii. Capture and act on visitor feedback.
- iv. Address quality issues in the tourism value chain.
- v. Promote accessibility for mobility impaired travellers across Kiribati.
- vi. Establish a minimum building standards guideline for traditional tourist Buias and overwater bungalows.

## GOAL 5 – TOURISM WILL CONTRIBUTE TO NATIONAL ECONOMIC PROSPERITY

- i. Adopt a high yield (value) low volume approach to tourism development.
- ii. Improved tourism economic data collection and analysis.
- iii. Develop and implement a structured tourism licensing, fees, and visitor environment levy program.
- iv. Embrace innovation, technology, and digitization of all tourism opportunities.
- v. Encourage support for the development of niche markets across Kiribati.
- vi. Technical support to Tourism SME's.

## GOAL 6 – TOURISM SHOULD INSPIRE GREEN ENTREPRENEURSHIP

- i. Incorporate a Sustainable Tourism Kiribati label into the Mauri Mark Accreditation Program.
- ii. Develop a Kiribati Green Tourism Business Toolkit.
- iii. Establish a Green Tourism Incentive Program.
- iv. Develop a Kiribati Sustainable Tourism Investment guide.
- v. Encourage circular economy-inspired practices across tourism business operations.

## GOAL 7 – TOURISM WILL INFLUENCE STRONG LEADERSHIP

- i. Strengthen human resources in the tourism sector.
- ii. Foster an integrated whole-of-government approach to tourism policy development.



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## Protection of the Natural Environment



**GOAL 1**

The Kiribati tourism industry has a special relationship with the natural environment and the success of the industry depends on health and sustainability of such an environment. However, on the back of the global warming and climate change crisis, Kiribati's natural environment faces continued threat to these elements, and this is why its protection must take precedence in tourism policies and strategies. These can be achieved through the adoption of the following priorities:

## **1.1 Establish a tourism waste disposal and recycling program based on the Kiribati Waste Management and Resource Recovery Strategy (KWMRRS) 2020 – 2030.**

The Kiribati tourism operators are responsible for a fair share of waste that end up in our pristine environment. These include non-biodegradable plastics, food, water, and human waste. While some operators are taking the lead in adequately disposing their waste in the most sustainable manner, most tourism operators are falling short of achieving this. In 2020, the Environment Conservation Division (ECD) launched The Kiribati Waste Management and Resource Recovery Strategy (KWMRRS 2020 – 2030) as a 'key national document that governs the management of solid, chemical, and hazardous waste, and replaces the old National Solid Waste Management Strategy (NSWMS 2007–2009).<sup>3</sup>Based on this strategy, a program must be developed to guide tourism business operators towards adopting sustainable practices recommended in the KWMRRS. A working group made of representatives from the ECD, MCIC MOJ, Local Councils, Tourism Operators and TAK must be formed to develop, implement, and monitor compliance and address challenges.

## **1.2 Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) must be applied to all new tourism development.**

All proposed and new tourism development projects must complete an environment impact assessment by the Environment and Conservation Division (ECD). The outcomes of the assessment will determine whether or not the developer secures the appropriate permits and licenses for the project.

<sup>3</sup> Kiribati Waste Management & Resource Recovery Strategy 2020–2030 FOREWORD

## 1.3 Encourage a water use and conservation system for all tourism business operations based on the Kiribati National Water Resources Policy (KNWRP)

I-Kiribati have always recognised that freshwater is a precious and finite resource. Droughts are common and freshwater is often scarce, so water resources had to be protected and used carefully.<sup>4</sup> Tourism business operators are some of the largest consumers of fresh treated water in Kiribati and hence have a responsibility to conserve and recycle this precious resource as much as it possibly can. Guided by the KNWRP, a working group must be established to develop guidelines for tourism operators in water conservation strategies protection of freshwater courses within their premises, efficient delivery, and consumption of water by guests and in operational areas and wastewater recycling.

## 1.4 Support the conservation of marine life and ocean resources within areas of operation.

Kiribati is home to the Phoenix Islands Protected Area (PIPA), one of the world's last intact archipelago ecosystems and the largest marine protected area under the World Heritage list and the second in the world. The Gilbert and Line islands share equally vibrant natural marine life that have captivated travellers for years. As such, Kiribati's marine ecosystem plays a vital role in influencing tourism and visitor experiences and hence will need to be protected from human exploitation and natural phenomenon. Using current policies and legislations such as the Kiribati National Fisheries Policy, Coastal Fisheries Regulation and the Coastal Fisheries Roadmap, tourism operators (private or community) will commit to adhere to all marine protection and conservation measures. A working group made up of representatives of PIPA, Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources Development (MFMRD), Ministry of Justice (MOJ) Marine conservationists, Island councils and tourism operators to develop a tourism marine conservation best practice and carrying capacity guidelines and to monitor compliance to these guidelines.

<sup>4</sup> National Water Resource Policy, Background. Pg.3



## 1.5 Promote 'farm and/or ocean to table' concept for all tourism accommodation and restaurant operations.

The abundant seafood and limited yet unique selection of local produce provides an opportunity for Kiribati to provide exceptional dining experiences for its visitors through the farm and/or ocean to table concept. This approach encourages creativity can enhance food security in the context of climate change and resilience particularly in the outer islands. TAK will collaborate with MELAD, MFMRD, MCIC, MHMS, MEHR, MIA (Island Councils & CMD), Non-Governmental Organisations (NGO's), registered communities and tourism operators to develop a guideline to safe and sustainable food practices in the tourism and hospitality industry.

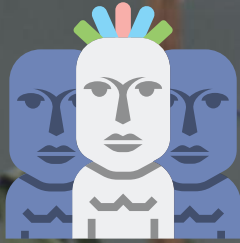
## 1.6 Protect vulnerable birds and wildlife

Kiritimati is a breeding ground and sanctuary for seabirds. With very little land in any direction from the island, Kiritimati is home to 18 species of birds including the endemic Christmas Island Warbler. It is also home to the endangered Phoenix Petrel and the white throated Storm Petrel. PIPA also supports extensive bird colony and nesting habitat. The global birdwatching market contributes to wildlife conservation and for this reason, TAK Kiritimati through the Environment Act 2021 will support the Wildlife Conservation Units work and develop tourism best practices for the visiting birdwatchers and eradication of invasive species to protect vulnerable wildlife.



Sustainable

TOURISM-KIRIBATI



Tourism to preserve cultural and historical heritage

11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES



KANURINGA

KEUEA PEOPLE MOURN THE DEATHS OF  
THEIR BELOVED ONES WHO DIED 16.8.1942

WORLD WAR II

KEUEA AREIETA MA NGKAMI

GOAL 2

Cultural heritage refers to monuments, groups of buildings and sites with historical, aesthetic, archaeological, scientific, ethnological, or anthropological value. Cultural heritage can also be intangible, including traditions or living expressions inherited from our ancestors and passed on to our descendants.<sup>5</sup> Historical heritage refers to the history and heritage of a place. Both these are equally important in the Kiribati visitor experience. The 2019 Kiribati International Visitor Survey (IVS) identified history and culture as key motivating factors for travel to Kiribati. In view of this, it is imperative that the tourism industry takes a proactive stand on the preservation of Kiribati's cultural and historical heritage and this can be achieved by addressing the following priority areas:

## **2.1 Map (digital), preserve and document all cultural sites and monuments.**

The mapping of cultural sites and monuments involves the identification of sites and monuments for the purpose of conservation. Preservation and documentation provide a lasting record for cultural sites and monuments. Through these processes, the traditional owners will be able to provide an integrated picture of the cultural character, history and significance of these sites and monuments. TAK will work with CMD to ensure that all existing and potential cultural sites and monuments are mapped, preserved, and documented in accordance to any cultural and heritage acts and policies.

## **2.2 Mandatory sustainable visitor behavior guide and traditional island protocols for villages, cultural sites and monuments.**

Visitors to any cultural site and monument must be aware of what the value and significance of each site is to its traditional owners. They must therefore be guided through a set of sustainable behaviour guidelines. Through a sustainable visitor guide, visitors must be made aware about the historical and natural importance of cultural heritage as these do have an influence on visitor's commitment to contribute to heritage preservation efforts, and their actions undertaken to protect cultural heritage for the present and future generations. TAK will work with CMD to develop and deliver training on a Sustainable Visitor Behavior Guide for villages, cultural sites, and monuments.

<sup>5</sup> European Commission Sustainable Tourism for Development, UNWTO, page. 110

## 2.3 Implement a guideline for the production, sale, and gifting of traditional artifacts.

Traditional artifacts are a unique expression of a place and genuine artistic style of its people. Unfortunately, global mass tourism has increased demand beyond what the traditional craftsmen and women can supply, and these have opened an alternative market for cheaper, non-authentic replicas of traditional artifacts. In Kiribati, this threat is addressed through the Kiribati Copyrights Act, 2018, Copyright Regulations 2021 and the Kiribati National Quality Policy 2017–2023 (KNQP). These legislations and policies protect against the production of counterfeit Kiribati cultural artifacts, raise the quality and safety standards of products and services, protect consumers, and help achieve better social and environmental protection whilst improving livelihoods. To this effect, TAK will work with the Business Regulatory Centre (BRC) of the Ministry of Commerce and Industries (MCIC) and other related ministries and stakeholders to ensure that traditional handicraft producers are assisted. These assistance may include the appropriate tools, vocational training and to ensure that traditional Kiribati artifacts are patented, produced based on traditional guidelines, and adequately priced.

## 2.4 Develop a central WWII memorial site in Betio.

The remains of the Battle of Tarawa in 1942 scattered through the island of Betio, South Tarawa serve as a stark reminder of one of the most horrific events in Kiribati's history. Over the past 75 years, these relics have attracted interest from anthropological societies, historians, military servicemen and women organisations and battlefield tourism enthusiasts. Despite this, not much has been achieved to preserve them hence TAK will take the lead role to develop a central WWII memorial site on Betio where all relics can be brought to for preservation and the display for visitors.

## 2.5 Document and catalogue all WWII relics in Kiribati.

On 28 December 2019, Cabinet endorsed that Tourism Authority Kiribati (TAK) takes ownership and guardianship of all World War II (WWII) Relics. In noting the establishment of the WWII Relics Working Committee, Cabinet tasked the committee to ensure that they work closely with the Lands Division responsible for zoning the areas. Through the WWII Relics Working Committee, TAK will document and catalogue all WWII relics in Kiribati and the develop a relics conservation program.

## 2.6 Advocate for the development of regulations to protect WWII relics in Kiribati.

WWII relics across Kiribati face the continued threat of erosion and deterioration due to natural and human activities. Whilst TAK has been tasked by cabinet with the responsibility to protect them, there are currently no legislations in place to empower TAK to enforce protections protocols for these relics. The KSTDPF therefore recommends that the WWII Relics Working Group collaborate with MOJ, CMD, MIA and other relevant to develop adequate legislations for the protection and preservations of these all relics.



Sustainable  
TOURISM-KIRIBATI



Tourism will promote  
community & social wellbeing



**GOAL 3**

Tourism development in island communities across the Pacific have proven to support and enhance their well-being. “However, traditional tourism planning processes rarely consider the specific needs of tropical destination communities, and instead approach destinations as collection of resources that can be marketed to attract visitors. This approach, however, does not often deliver the tourism benefits expected by communities”.<sup>6</sup>Through such lessons, tourism development in Kiribati will be designed to reflect each community’s capacity to host visitors responsibly with a clear intention for tourism to add value to their livelihood and well-being through the employment of women, youth and people with disabilities. This will be achieved by addressing the following priorities:

### **3.1 Create awareness on sustainable tourism development across Kiribati.**

Sustainable tourism can only be achieved if communities are aware and embrace it as the new normal in tourism development. To achieve this, effective sustainable tourism awareness and training programs will be implemented across Kiribati through schools, religious and community-based organisations. Central to this will be the emphasis on the notion that sustainability in tourism is not an option but core to tourism development in Kiribati. A working group for an Understanding Sustainable Tourism training must be established to drive this initiative and membership will include representatives of MoE, MWYSAA and MIA.

### **3.2 Tourism will provide equal opportunities for all and will not discriminate against gender, sexual orientation, marginalized members of community and people of different religious beliefs and opinions.**

The Kiribati tourism sector employed 449 staffs in 2019 in the accommodation sector, 164 of whom were women (36.5%). Whilst this number has dropped by 25% in 2020 and 2021 due to COVID-19, projected tourism growth forecasts resurgence in employment opportunities across the tourism industry. Post COVID-19, the tourism industry in Kiribati will take the lead role in promoting equal opportunities for employment from all sectors of the community in particular women, youths, people with disabilities and the LGBTQI+. Guided by National Policy on Gender Equality and Women’s Development 2019 – 2022 and the Kiribati Employment and Industrial Relation Code 2015, a Kiribati Tourism Equal Employment Opportunities committee will be set up to draft fair tourism employment guidelines for the tourism industry.

<sup>6</sup> Tourism & community well-being: social impacts of tourism in Australian tropical communities. Kononov, Elena (2016), PhD thesis, James Cook University.



Sustainable

TOURISM-KIRIBATI



Tourism guarantees visitor satisfaction, health, and safety

3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING



GOAL 4



Visitor satisfaction, their health and safety are critical to sustainable tourism development in Kiribati. It is important that an environment conducive to achieving this goal is created, managed, and monitored. Fulfilling this goal therefore requires a multi-sector approach where each private and public sector partner acknowledges that they play an equally important role in meeting visitor expectation, satisfy the health and safety needs of each traveler. Actioned to be considered to help achieve this this goal includes:

## **4.1 Implement the national tourism and hospitality customer service standards program.**

Sustainability generally is continuity of a business now and in the future. Customer satisfaction is a key component in ensuring sustainability of a tourism enterprise. Customer satisfaction is also a measure of how the products/ services of a tourism operator meets or surpasses a customer's expectations. Kiribati currently does not have a standard hospitality customer service system or program that each tourism business operator can benchmark against. As such the framework recommends for the development of a Kiribati National Tourism & Hospitality Standards Programme. Such a program must develop minimum acceptable services standards that promotes customer satisfaction and guarantee tourism business sustainability. This will also include food & safety management system, safe water usage, and personal hygiene in the workplace.

## **4.2 Implement Kiribati Tourism & Hospitality Protocols for the New Normal**

The outbreak of COVID-19 and its subsequent declaration as global pandemic brought tourism to a standstill by early 2020 and Kiribati declared total restriction on international flights from 20 March 2020. The Government of Kiribati (GoK) has confirmed that these restrictions will remain until further notice. When international border reopens, Kiribati can expect the inflow of a different type of traveler – one that will expect a globally acceptable level of health and hygiene through every aspect of their visitor experience. Tourism experts refer to this as the new normal in travel and tourism .It is for this reason that a Kiribati Tourism & Hospitality Protocols for the New Normal must be developed to guide tourism business operators in adopting globally acceptable COVID-19 safety standards and protocols.

## 4.3 Capture and act on visitor feedback

A new National Geographic survey of 3,500 adults in the U.S. reveals strong support for sustainability. Among travellers who understand the sustainable travel concept, 56% of them realize travel has an impact on local communities and that it's important to protect natural sites and cultural places.<sup>7</sup> To develop and consistently deliver sustainable tourism practices, it will be important that there is continued engagement with visitors and understanding their perception on tourism in Kiribati. Such feedback will provide information in any gaps that exist and allow stakeholders to work out ways to improve sustainability in their operations. TAK will work with the National Statistics Office, Immigration Department, Customs and Tourism Services Operators to carry out ongoing international visitor surveys that will capture traveller perception on sustainable tourism practices in Kiribati.

## 4.4 Address quality issues in the tourism value chain.

The tourism sector is estimated to be responsible for around five percent of global greenhouse gas emissions. Strongly dependent on fossil energy and food imports, this sector creates value chains that make inefficient use of resources and are susceptible to climate change impacts.<sup>8</sup> Whilst Kiribati tourism industry is relatively small, the sector's contribution to global greenhouse emissions should not be discounted. To be sustainable, the Kiribati tourism industry will need to look at integrated measures for mitigating emissions and improving resource efficiency in key segments such as accommodation, transport, and restaurants. It therefore recommended that technical expertise is sought to undertake tourism value chain mapping to enable government, operators, and communities to fully understand tourism's negative impact on Kiribati's economic, environmental, and social value and to develop systemic solutions.

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/travel/article/what-sustainable-tourism-means>

<sup>8</sup> Transforming the tourism value chain in developing countries and SIDS <https://www.international-climate-initiative.com/>

## 4.5 Promote access for mobility impaired travellers across Kiribati.

Sustainable in tourism also includes caring for the needs of disabled travellers. The United Nations (UN) terms this as Accessible Tourism which is an ongoing endeavor to ensure tourist tourism destinations, products, and services are accessible to all people, regardless of their physical limitations, disabilities, or age. This includes publicly and privately owned tourist locations, facilities & services.<sup>9</sup>In this regard, a Kiribati National Committee for Accessible Tourism must be established to identify the barriers to sustainable tourism in Kiribati and develop strategies for mitigating these barriers by 2036. The committee will be made up of relevant local stakeholders, tour-operators, and representatives of persons with disabilities and their organizations. The committee will draw from provisions for access for mobility impaired travellers as provided for in the 2016 Kiribati Building Code.

## 4.6 Establish a minimum building standards guideline for traditional tourist biua's and overwater bungalows.

Buias are a unique representation of the Kiribati culture particularly when offered as accommodation for travellers. Different islands have their unique traditional ways of constructing biua's. However, in the tourism accommodation contexts, TAK's Tourism Business Inventory Surveys (TBIS) have identified inconsistencies in the level of comfort, ease of movement, and practicality of certain biua's and overwater bungalows, particularly in the outer islands. The KSTDPF therefore recommends the development of minimum building standard guideline for biua's and bungalows used as tourism accommodation. These guidelines are to be consistent with with existing building codes, traditional building practices, and offer directions for water and sanitation standards for such tourism class buildings. It must also guide outer island developers on occupancy rate per m<sup>2</sup>, mini guide outer island developers on occupancy rate per m<sup>2</sup>. TAK will work with MISE, Islands Councils, tourism operators to manage and monitor the implementation of the guideline by all application accommodation providers.

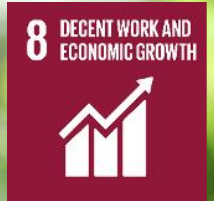
<sup>9</sup><https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/issues/promoting-accessible-tourism-for-all.html>



Sustainable  
TOURISM-KIRIBATI



TOURISM WILL CONTRIBUTE TO  
NATIONAL ECONOMIC PROSPERITY



**GOAL 5**

Economic prosperity is a primary goal of tourism development in any destination. The global economy is influenced by tourism and the industry's contribution to national gross domestic products (GDP) is greater for nations that have a greater dependence on tourism. GoK, through the KV20 recognises the potential contribution of tourism through stimulating economic development. To achieve tourism's economic potential and increase its contribution to GDP, focus must be invested in the following areas:

## 5.1 Adopt a high yield (value) low volume approach to tourism development.

Sustainable tourism growth requires a shift away from the use of international visitor arrivals as the only measure of tourism success. Industry leaders around the world are adopting a high value, low volume approach and are focusing more on the dollar spent by each visitor and its reach throughout communities. As a destination challenged with limited natural resources, Kiribati must make a commitment towards such a sustainable approach to tourism growth. This can be achieved with tourism enterprises firstly embracing sustainable guidelines which will strengthen the perceived value of their product and subsequently attract the responsible travellers who will be willing to pay more for a sustainable experience.

## 5.2 Improved tourism economic data collection and analysis

Capturing relevant and accurate data is vital to measuring and understanding tourism's real contribution to economic prosperity in Kiribati. It is therefore recommended that a national working group made up of representatives from the National Statistics Office (NSO), Taxation Department, Immigration Department, Customs Department, KCCI and TAK be formed to develop strategies for effective tourism data collection and analysis. A primary goal of the committee is to review data and statistics definitions based on a regional and universal classifications and to map out a system that will encourage the consistent flow of tourism data between relevant stakeholders.

## **5.3 Develop and implement a structured tourism licensing, fees, and visitor environment levy program.**

Kiribati authorities currently charge a variety of fees and levies to both visitors and tourism operators. Rates usually differ across different island councils and ministries and the full potential of revenue through this streams may not be fully realised. The KSTDPF therefore recommends that all relevant government ministries collaborate to develop the appropriate licensing, fees, and levy structures that that is adequate for the purposes that they serve.

## **5.4 Embrace innovation, technology, and digitization of all tourism opportunities.**

The digital revolution has completely changed how businesses operate today and the tourism industry is no exception. It (digitalization) has revolutionized the travel industry as advances in technology are now spurring innovation, growth, and globalization in the tourism industry. Digitalization is in fact redefining travel and tourism and destinations that have fully embraced this evolution have been successful in achieving growth and profitability.

Through the KSTDPF, TAK is tasked to lead Kiribati's tourism industry in this transformative process to allow the destination to compete in this very competitive and digitized global tourism market. This will need to be a collective effort across government and private sector agencies as its success will heavily depend on the valuable contributions and participation of these stakeholders.

## **5.5 Encourage and support the development of niche markets across Kiribati.**

Kiribati is an experiential destination driven by a its unique niche segments, some of which have gained global recognition over the years. Its remote location, limited infrastructure, natural beauty with authentic and unique culture sets Kiribati apart from its neighbouring Pacific Island destinations.

The KSTDPF therefore recommends that TAK focus on what makes Kiribati different and to assist in the development of niche products that showcase the uniqueness of the destination.

## 5.6 Technical support to Tourism SME's

The tourism industry in Kiribati is driven by the private sector, most of whom are local and community-based operators with limited experience in tourism and hospitality business management and capital. Their survival however is vital to the sustainable growth of tourism in Kiribati and therefore must be supported with adequate technical assistance and business management support. The KSTDPF recommends therefore that TAK work with the MCIC, MEHR, KIT, USP and other training institutions to identify gaps that exist in the areas of management and to develop appropriate training and support programs to mitigate them.



# Sustainable

TOURISM - KIRIBATI



## TOURISM SHOULD INSPIRE GREEN ENTREPRENEURSHIP

6 CLEAN WATER  
AND SANITATION



7 AFFORDABLE AND  
CLEAN ENERGY



9 INDUSTRY, INNOVATION  
AND INFRASTRUCTURE



11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES  
AND COMMUNITIES



# GOAL 6



Kiribati is vulnerable to environmental challenges. As a small atoll island nation with limited land space and a growing population, environmental challenges inhibit tourism investment potential for the country. The most prominent environmental challenges faced by Kiribati are attributed to global warming and climate change impact. However, there are some of the environmental challenges caused by human activity in Kiribati and these include ocean and coral reef pollution from wastewater discharge, plastic pollution in both land and ocean, and greenhouse emissions due to our heavy reliance on fossil fuel. Tourism is a contributor to these environmental challenges and hence must take a more proactive role to reduce them if the industry is to be completely sustainable. To achieve this, the KSTDPF encourages green entrepreneurship in the industry both with existing tourism enterprises and potential tourism investors. The Institute of Entrepreneurship Development defines Green Entrepreneurship as “the activity of consciously addressing environmental and social problems and needs and coming up with brilliant innovative entrepreneurial ideas that will bring a solution to them”.<sup>10</sup> To encourage the shift to green entrepreneurship by tourism SME’s, the following actions are recommended:

## 6.1 Incorporate a Sustainable Tourism Kiribati label into the Mauri Mark Program.

The Mauri Mark Accreditation Program is the national tourism business quality accreditation program for Kiribati. This program rates accommodation, restaurant and bars, tourism leisure crafts and dive operators based on minimum safety standard compliance and service delivery standards. Similar global star rating programmes, the Mauri Mark assigns coconuts instead of stars to operators, with those that score more points from the assessment earning more coconuts. The KSTDPF recommends that TAK incorporate sustainability standards in the current Mauri Mark assessment. Alternatively, the KSTDPF also recommends the development of a separate sustainability assessment program to be managed alongside the Mauri Mark program.

<sup>10</sup> Green Entrepreneurship: Sustainable development for business. iED Team ,15 July 2020. (<https://ied.eu/blog/green-entrepreneurship-sustainable-development-for-business/>)

## 6.2 Develop a Kiribati Green Tourism Business Toolkit.

There is no single definition of a green business, but generally, it' is a business whose core business model addresses an environmental or social issue – this is, it improves energy or resource efficiency, reduces greenhouse gas emissions, decreases waste or pollution, protects, or restores ecosystems, promotes local culture, or supports communities.<sup>11</sup> The KSTDPF recommends that a Green Tourism Business Toolkit be developed to guide existing and potential tourism enterprises to develop and adopt green business models. The toolkit must be designed to provide practical guidance, improve operational models, and identify international best practices that Kiribati tourism business operators can benchmark against. Potential partners for the development of the Kiribati Green Tourism Business Toolkit may include ECD, GGGI, and KCCI.

## 6.3 Establish a Green Tourism Incentive Programme.

TAK will establish a working group that will develop and manage a resource efficiency-based program to encourage tourism SME's to migrate to the sustainable management of their resources and waste. The KSTDPF recommends that the working group work with development partners to fund incentive programs and to collaborate with local financial institutions to develop low interest loan packages for Tourism SME's that comply or will comply with approved green business practices. The program must also include collaboration with partners like GGGI for their incentives for the use of green alternatives such as using natural materials like banana or coconut leaves for packaging, upcycling rubbish and the importing biodegradable plastics.

## 6.4 Development a Kiribati Sustainable Tourism Investment guide.

The KSTDPF recommends that TAK, through the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Cooperatives (MCIC) develop a Sustainable Tourism Investment guide to complement existing tourism investment promotion program for local and foreign investors. The guide must outline mandatory sustainability requirements for tourism development to comply with.

## 6.5 Encourage circular economy-inspired practices across tourism business operations.

TAK and ECD must take on the lead role in developing circular economy inspired ideas and practices to guide a more sustainable, resilient, and future-proof development of the Kiribati tourism industry. This is to include the continued delivery of programs such as the plastic repurposing training for tourism operators and its communities and linking them to MCIC for business support unit for access to market assistance and support.

<sup>11</sup> What is Green Business. GGGI Guide to Green Entrepreneurship in Kiribati, page 5. 2018



Sustainable

TOURISM-KIRIBATI



TOURISM WILL INFLUENCE  
STRONG LEADERSHIP

17 PARTNERSHIPS  
FOR THE GOALS



GOAL 7

Sustainable tourism development requires the informed participation of all relevant stakeholders, as well as strong political leadership to ensure wide participation and consensus building. Achieving sustainable tourism is a continuous process and it requires constant monitoring of impacts, introducing the necessary preventive and/or corrective measures whenever necessary!<sup>12</sup>The will to achieve sustainability in tourism and the continuous process of constant monitoring will influence the emergence of a new type of leadership, one that that responsible and impact conscious.

It will be the responsibility therefore of tourism stakeholders to create an enabling environment that will influence strong leadership. These may be achieved through the following means:

## 7.1 Strengthen human resources in the tourism sector.

Efficient human resources are essential to the growth of tourism in Kiribati. The role of an effective human resources management in Kiribati's tourism industry will be to ensure high quality labour motivated through ongoing skills training and education, career path, and job security. TAK will collaborate with the Ministry of Employment and Human Resources (MEHR) and training institutions to match industry skill needs with training programs and promote clear career pathways in tourism for employees. Data collection through continued training needs analysis and assessment of the industry will also be a vital part of strengthening human resources in the sector.

TAK will also collaborate with MEHR to look at programs for the integration of returning hospitality workers from Australia into the tourism sector as well as hospitality sector work attachment programs in other Pacific Island destinations.

<sup>12</sup><http://www.greentourism.eu/en/Post/Name/SustainableTourism>

## 7.2 Foster an integrated whole-of government approach to tourism policy development.

An integrated whole-of government approach will include steps to improve horizontal and vertical coordination within and between levels of government, private sector engagement, and how stakeholders can work together to ensure that long-term tourism strategies support sustainable and inclusive growth and are successfully implemented.<sup>13</sup>

One way to achieve this is to continue to link with the government's broader policy agenda such as that in the KV20. Ministerial policy development must be encouraged to include tourism in their agenda as tourism is a multi-faceted industry and cuts across all government ministries, civil society, and the private sector. This could include the promotion the strengthening of public-private partnership in Kiribati's public sector driven economy.

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<sup>13</sup>Fostering a Whole-of-Government Approach in Tourism, OECD Tourism Committee 2017

# Conclusion

The future of tourism in Kiribati must be based on the values of Sustainability. However sustainable tourism should not be misconstrued to mean minimising tourism's environmental impact only. Sustainable tourism is about maintaining a balance on tourism's environmental, economic, and socio-cultural impact.

Sustainable tourism development requires the informed participation of all relevant stakeholders, as well as strong political leadership to ensure wide participation and consensus building. Achieving this will be a continuous process that requires constant monitoring of impacts and introducing the necessary preventive and/or corrective measures whenever necessary.

The KSTDPF should therefore be used as the basis for the development of a comprehensive and achievable 2021 – 2036 Kiribati Sustainable Tourism Policy and Strategy (KSTPS) with a clear monitoring, evaluation and learning framework and well-defined key performance indicators for each goal.

Completed, the 15 – years KSTPS will guide the Kiribati tourism sector's towards realising its contribution to the 2030 agenda and fulfil government's 20-years vision for tourism as enshrined in the KV20 by 2036.

TAK will lead the implementation development and implementation of the KSTPS and understands that the active joint participation of government, private sector, civil society, host communities and guests will be vital for sustainable tourism to be achieved in Kiribati.



Sustainable

TOURISM - KIRIBATI

