



COORDINATION OF THE WATER AND SANITATION SECTOR:

BACKGROUND TO THE KIRIBATI NATIONAL WATER AND SANITATION COORDINATION COMMITTEE

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Acknowledgements

This background paper was developed under the EU Pacific Water Governance Project, coordinated by SOPAC. It was written by Ian White, Australian National University in collaboration with:

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The accompanying document on the Kiribati National Water and Sanitation Coordination Committee, and Terms of Reference set out the advantages of such a committee and suggests its possible mission, main aims, terms of reference, coordination and composition.

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Introduction

Water is a vital, strategic resource that underpins human well-being, health, cultural and spiritual values, and provides development opportunities. The nature of coral islands and atolls, demographic trends, climatic variation and change and the impacts of human activities all combine to impose significant risks to water supplies for island communities and their environments. The challenges faced in the water and sanitation sector in small island states are amongst the most difficult in the world. Good water governance is necessary for achieving sustainable, economic, social and environmental outcomes. It includes participation, accountability, inclusiveness, transparency, responsiveness and supply and use of appropriate information. One strategy for improving water governance is to enhance coordination between government agencies with responsibilities in water and to foster community partnerships with government in the conservation, management and use of water and sanitation services.

This background document summarises the global and Pacific regional priorities in water then examines the experiences in the Republic of Kiribati in coordinated approaches to the national water and sanitation sector.

Global Goals for Water and Sanitation

The UN General Assembly, in its Millennium Declaration in 2000, resolved “*to halve by the year 2015 the proportion of the world’s population who are unable to reach or afford safe drinking water*” and “*to stop the unsustainable exploitation of water resources*”. The World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg in 2002 also set a new target of “*halving the proportion of people who do not have access to basic sanitation by 2015*”. These global goals are particularly relevant to small island nations in the Pacific.

Regional Imperatives

Freshwater resources in small island nations in the Pacific are amongst the most vulnerable in the world to human and climate influences. This is particularly so in low-

lying atolls, which rely on shallow groundwater. Limited quantities of safe groundwater, increasing demands, seawater intrusion, pollution from human and animal wastes, high rates of infant mortality due to water-borne diseases, social and economic costs of gastroenteritis, over-extraction, and limited resources and capacity are typical of the problems faced. Urbanisation and the impacts of climate change impose additional threats to the resilience of island populations in coping with these challenges. In these countries, water is a fragile, strategic resource on which communities and economic growth depend, and whose security needs to be assured.

As a precursor to the Third World Water Forum (3rdWWF) in Kyoto in 2003, the Pacific Dialogue on Water and Climate concluded that in many small island communities significant deficiencies in monitoring and assessment of water resources prevent small island nations from properly planning, developing and sustainably managing their limited and vulnerable water resources and that there was no systematic, coordinated approach to address these deficiencies.

The *Pacific Regional Action Plan on Sustainable Water Management*, endorsed by all Pacific Island Nations Heads of State during the Pacific Island Leaders meeting in Auckland in 2003, and presented at the 3rdWWF, called for broadly-based national water visions, design of capable institutions, national water action agenda and plans, empowerment of communities, and integrated investment plans. It recognised that both behavioural change and long term collaboration were essential for improvement. At the Fourth WWF in Mexico in 2006, considerable progress was reported towards these objectives in the Pacific Position Paper, however, major challenges remain in Kiribati.

Republic of Kiribati

In the Republic of Kiribati, numerous Government of Kiribati (GOK) supported projects have emphasised the major and continuing challenges in ensuring that island communities have access to safe and adequate freshwater and opportunities for economic development. Mortality rates for children under the age of 5 years in Kiribati are amongst the highest in Pacific Island Nations (Table 1). While analysis of present data on the cause of under-five mortality is not complete in Kiribati, indications are that pneumonia, and diarrhea are among the leading causes of sickness and death among children. Both have a strong relation to hygiene and water.

Table 1. Mortality rates in 2005 for children under the age of 5 years in Pacific island countries (Source Country Health Information Profiles, 2005-WHO).

Country	Mortality Rate (Deaths/1000)
Papua New Guinea	64
Kiribati	43
Tuvalu	21.6
Samoa	19.3
Fiji	17.76

These vital challenges involve sometimes island-specific, health, technical, economic, social and cultural issues that are interrelated and cut across traditional sectoral administrative divisions. The GOK decided in 1985 that a strategic, whole-of-government approach involving all sectors with responsibilities and interests in water was required. Even to-day, infant mortality rates in Kiribati due to water-borne diseases and lack of hygiene are amongst the worst in the Pacific.

Previous Whole-of-Government Water and Sanitation Committees

Following the Cholera outbreak in the 1977, the British Gilbert Islands Administration recognised the need for better coordination of water and sanitation sector. The Public Utilities Board (PUB) was established in July 1977 under the then Ministry of Works and Energy (MWE), to coordinate and manage water supply and sewage disposal on South Tarawa. About the same time, an interdepartmental committee was set up mainly to review the Australian International Development Assistance Bureau's (AIDAB) Tarawa Sewerage Project which ran from 1978 to 1982 in the densely populated areas of Bikenibeu, Bairiki and Betio. A reticulated freshwater system was installed in South Tarawa between 1983 and 1987 and upgraded in 1989 that extracted water from fresh groundwater lenses in the then sparsely populated islands of Bonriki and Buota.

Continuing health, water supply and waste disposal issues in South Tarawa, outer island needs and the recognition of the further need for better coordination led the GOK to formalise in 1985 the *Kiribati Water Supply and Sanitation Coordinating Committee* (KWSSCC). It was chaired by the then Ministry of Health, Family Planning and Social Welfare (MHFPSW) with deputy chair from the then Ministry of Works and Energy and

secretarial support from MHFPSW. The Committee was to address the critical water and sanitation issues facing the country.

The planned role of the Committee was to monitor water quality in the country, to review and consider future water and sanitation projects before presentation to Cabinet, and to act as an advisory body to Government Ministries and non-Government organizations on water and sanitation related matters. The Committee members were to be senior officers in MHFPSW, the PUB, the Public Works Department of the MWE, the Ministry of Home Affairs and Rural Development, Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning, and a representative of the non-government organisation (NGO) Karikirakean Maaun te I-Kiribati (formerly - Save the Children Federation). In late 1989, the committee prepared a project proposal for the improvement of sanitation on South Tarawa for submission to AIDAB.

AIDAB Pacific Regional Team Report, 1993

The very high incidence of diarrhoeal diseases, particularly amongst young children (see Fig. 1), led to the GOK requesting Australian assistance in upgrading the sanitation and water supply systems on South Tarawa. AIDAB's Pacific Regional Team conducted a field appraisal of the proposal in 1993. It concluded that the problem in South Tarawa was critical and that it should be addressed in as comprehensive manner as possible if sustainable and effective development is to be achieved. It recommended a multi-disciplinary, coordinated, long term (at least 10 years) program with multiple components being conducted in parallel rather than by implementing individual components and with annual budgets of several million (1990) dollars.

The main issues were water supply systems, sewerage systems, sewerage disposal in non-sewered areas, solid waste disposal and population aspects including population density, resettlement and education programs. The Team recommended that community health, education, water supply, sanitation, appropriate technology, institutional strengthening and management aspects needed to be considered in a coordinated approach and that the GOK develop suitable strategies and policies for addressing the issues.

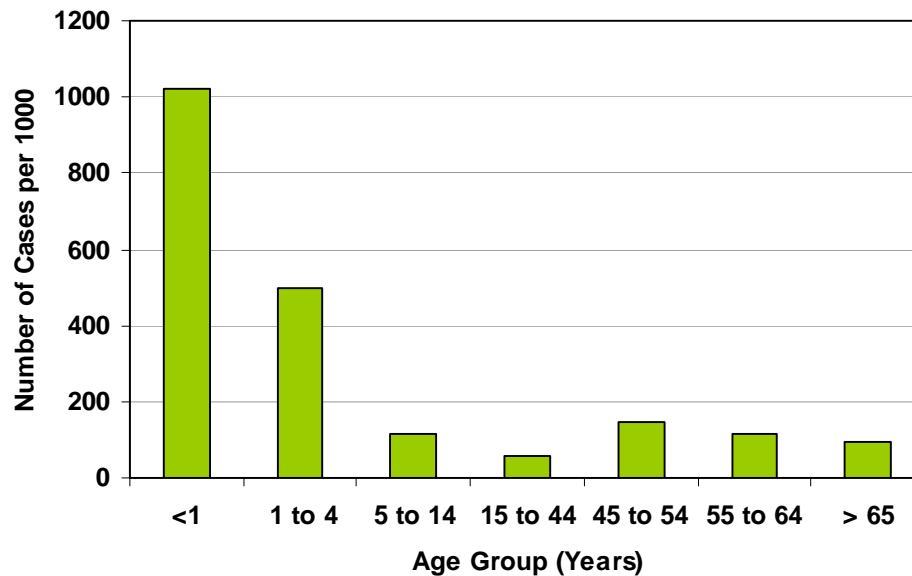


Fig. 1. Incident rate of diarrhoea disease in South Tarawa in 1990 as a function of age group.

The sanitation project proposed by the KWSSCC eventually evolved into the Sanitation, Public Health and Environment Improvement (SAPHE) Project which was funded through the Asian Development Bank from July 2000 to December 2005. The main objective of this project was to improve the development potential and well being of communities in South Tarawa through improvements to water supply, sewerage, solid waste disposal and environmental conservation.

The Demise of KWSSCC and the Draft Water Master Plan

Unfortunately the Kiribati Water Supply and Sanitation Coordinating Committee has been defunct for some time. Some of the issues cited for its demise are loss of initial enthusiasm after project initiation; disputes over what Government Ministry should be the lead Ministry, and a lack of clear definitions of responsibilities and terms of reference. Instead project-specific steering committees have been formed, but these lack continuity and strategic direction.

The updated Draft Water Master Plan (2000), initially developed through the UNDP in 1992, identified some of the urgent national issues in water management that needed to be addressed. The most important were the need for national policy guidelines in order to develop priorities and to coordinate the water sector and the fact that authority for overall water resources management had not had been vested in any Government authority and

that competence for water resources management and conservation was not identified in any of the then directions assigning Ministerial responsibilities. Since that time, the *Directions Assigning Ministerial Responsibility*, dated 5 August 2003, assigned the following responsibilities:

- Minister for Public Works and Utilities – water management; sewerage systems
- Minister for the Environment, Lands and Agricultural Development – environment and conservation; waste and pollution management
- Minister for Health and Medical Services – health inspectorate services and environmental health.

The following, however, documents the ongoing need for improved coordination.

Kiribati National Consultation on Sustainable Water Management

The Kiribati National Consultation on Sustainable Water Management, conducted as a lead up to the Pacific Regional Consultation on Water in Small Island Countries in 2002, clearly identified the continuing need for adequate supplies of safe drinking water and for better coordination of the water sector.

Kiribati Water Sector Road Map

In an effort to improve coordination, the Kiribati Water Sector Road Map, developed under the ADB Technical Assistance Project *Promotion of Effective Water Management Policies and Practices* proposed the establishment of a National Water and Sanitation Committee (or a number of committees) to advise the Government on all aspects of water supply and sanitation for all of Kiribati. Some of the functions envisaged for these committees were providing a forum for the community and NGOs to express their opinions; to review performance of the supply and sanitation systems across the nation and to review the performance of groundwater protection measures.

National Development Strategy, 2004-2007

The National Development Strategy 2004-2007 contains a number of goals relating to water and sanitation.

- Under 'Economic Growth', Strategy 7.2 is: *"Ensure reliable power and water supplies in existing urban areas, eliminate subsidies to urban services and require public enterprises to meet performance standards, .*
- Under 'Equitable distribution', Strategy 1.2 is: *"Devise cost-effective maintenance methodology for outer islands water supplies, wharves, roads, etc".*

- Under 'Equipping people to manage change – Health', Strategies 6.1 to 6.3 are:
 - 1) *Strengthen public health education services to educate households on sanitation and human waste disposal;*
 - 2) *improve enforcement of Environment Act and public health legislation; and*
 - 3) *Identify cost-effective improvements to existing sanitation systems in South Tarawa and design projects for implementation over NDS period.*
- In Section 4: 'Development Strategies 2004-2007', there is a reference to health strategies: *"Health strategies include ... attention to the public health threat posed by inadequate standards of sanitation in urban areas."*

These strategies clearly cross ministerial boundaries and require a coordinated approach.

National Consultation under the Kiribati Adaptation Program, Phase I

The extensive consultations carried out throughout the Gilbert Group for the National Adaptation Program of Action, Kiribati Adaptation Project Phase I in 2004 identified 50 priority adaptation strategies. Seven out of the top ten priorities were water and sanitation related and require a coordinate government-community approach.

Kiribati Adaptation Program, Phase II (KAPII)

The Development of National Water Policy is a keystone Technical Assistance Activity in the Water Component of the *Kiribati Adaptation Program, Phase II* (KAPII). Planning for this activity assumes that a Water Resources Steering Committee will be in place to oversee and review the development of National Water Policy and other water activities in KAPII.

SAPHE Project Completion Report March 2006

The Government of Kiribati Project Completion Report on the ADB SAPHE Project reviewed the benefits and lessons of SAPHE. It concluded that: *"There is still quite a lot of overlap in the regulatory duties of the different government departments, especially in the area of water, and there have been several instances where the departments could not agree to one common solution over the development of additional water resources. There is need for these departments to sit together and draw a proper line on their scope of duties."*

The Ministry of Health and Medical Services has drafted a letter to the Office of the

President (OB) requesting OB to reform a National Water and Sanitation Committee. In addition, the WHO Kiribati Office has allocated a part of its budget to revitalise a national water committee.

The accompanying discussion document suggests a way forward in the process. It describes the advantages, and possible mission, aims, coordination and membership of a ***National Water and Sanitation Coordination Committee***.

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