

Action Plan for Implementing the Convention on Biological Diversity's
Programme of Work on Protected Areas



(Kiribati)

Protected area information:

PoWPA Focal Point:

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Lead implementing agency:

- Environment and Conservation Division under Ministry of Environment, Lands and Agricultural Division (MELAD)

Multi-stakeholder committee:

- Lands and Management Division – Ministry of Environment, Lands and Agricultural Development
- Agriculture and Livestock Division – Ministry of Environment, Lands and Agricultural Development
- Fisheries Division - Ministry of Fisheries and Natural Resource Development (MFNRD)
- Kiribati National Tourism Office – Ministry of Communication, Transport and Tourism Development
- Theco-Care (Consultancy Firm)
- Aia Mwaea Ainen Kiribati (AMAK) – Women Association - Ministry of Internal and Social Affairs (MISA)
- Kiribati Association of Non-Government Organization – KANGO
- Culture Division – Ministry of Internal and Social Affairs
- Nutrition Division – Ministry of Health and Medical Services (MHMS)
- Health Promotion Unit – Ministry of Health and Medical Services (MHMS)

- Environmental Health Unit – Ministry of Health and Medical Services (MHMS)
- National Economic Planning Office – Ministry of Finance and Economic Development (MFED)
- Curriculum and Development Resource
- Kiribati Chamber of Commerce - Ministry of Commerce and Industrial Cooperatives
- Industry Promotion Division – Ministry of Commerce and Industrial Cooperatives
- Foreign Affairs Division - Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Immigration (MFAI)
- Ministry of Public Works and Utilities (MPWU)
- Kiribati Adaptation Project Phase II
- Office of the Attorney General
- Foundation for the People of the South Pacific in Kiribati (FSPK)

Description of protected area system

National Targets and Vision for Protected Areas

The current national target for protected areas (which is inclusive of both marine and terrestrial) is 10% for each of the 3 island groups that make up Kiribati – ie 10% Gilbert Group, 10% Line Group, and 10% the Phoenix group.

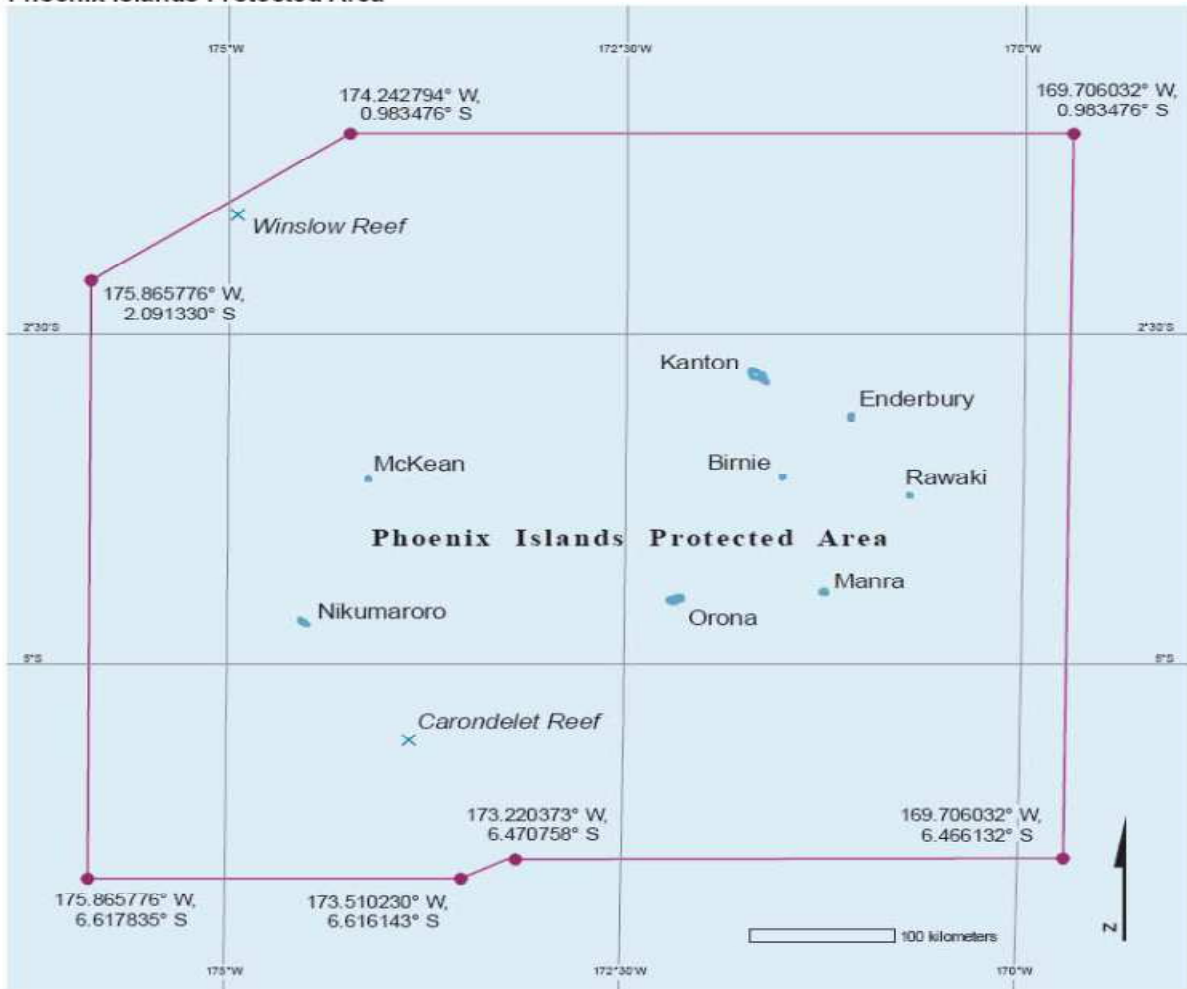
Site based conservation is one of the most important and successful tactics for reducing global biodiversity loss. Governmental commitments to site conservation include Kiribati’s Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (K-NBSAP), which commits Kiribati to meeting the Convention on Biodiversity (CBD) Aichi goals of 10% land and marine conservation by 2020. Government of Kiribati is a CBD signatory which enjoins Parties to establish “a system of protected areas or areas where special measures need to be taken to conserve biological diversity”.

Kiribati’s only protected area – the Phoenix Islands Protected Area (PIPA) constitutes of 408,250 square kilometers covering more than 11% of Kiribati’s Economic Exclusive Zone (EEZ). This coverage alone exceeds the current 10% national target for Protected Areas.

Coverage

According to World data base on Protected Areas, as on 2010, 22.0% of Kiribati’s terrestrial surface and 20.2 territorial Waters are protected. It is envisaged that this percentage will increase with the implementation of the identified Key Biodiveristy Area to be produced in this phase of the Project.

Phoenix Islands Protected Area



-  PIPA boundary
-  PIPA coordinate
-  atoll
-  submerged reef



scale: 1/5,000,000
 projection: Sinusoidal
 central meridian: 180°
 datum: WGS84

data:
 Conservation International - Pacific Islands
 VMap0, National Geospatial Intelligence Agency

acknowledgements:
 New England Aquarium

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PHOENIX ISLANDS PROTECTED AREA

Description and background

The 408,250km² Phoenix Islands Protected Area, covering about 11% of Kiribati's EEZ, holds some of the world's most pristine coral reefs as well as a great abundance and diversity of tropical marine life. PIPA is one of the Earth's last intact oceanic coral archipelago ecosystems and the largest marine protected area under the World Heritage List and the second in the world. It is also the first reserve to place such a large area of open - ocean off-limits to commercial fishing. The reserve is one of the planet's ecological bright spots, the boldest, most dramatic effort to save the oceans' coral reefs, the richest habitat in the seas. This marine reserve is uniquely unspoiled, largely untouched by man and is a center for marine science, recreational diving and eco -tourism. Though coral reefs cover less than half a percent of the oceans' area, they host more than 25% of its known fish species. The PIPA represents a marine wilderness area that has had very limited human exploitation due to their extremely remote location.

Information on PIPA revealed that the coral reefs and bird populations of these islands are unique, virtually untouched by man —a true wilderness of natural beauty. In protecting the pristine nature of the islands, Government of Kiribati decided that it would not only fulfill its commitment under the Convention on Biological Diversity but the protection would also:

- help deter illegal fishing activities;
- serve as an insurance against loss or decline of marine & terrestrial species in the Gilberts & Line group of islands;
- ensure conservation of some important economic species that have declined elsewhere in Kiribati especially in densely populated areas;
- make a MPA contribution to the urgently needed measures for conservation of tuna and seamounts;
- foster the development of ecotourism and importantly for our developing nation; and
- ensure that Kiribati will be compensated for the loss of fishing revenue when closing off these islands as Protected Areas.

Governance types

Safeguarding key biodiversity areas require a variety of governance approaches, including protected areas, community conservation areas (CCAs), co-managed sites and large multi-ecosystem areas like the Phoenix Island Protected Area (PIPA). The best approach will vary from place to place depending on the context and community needs. A network of such sites, coupled with species-specific actions and anchored within a matrix of compatible land uses,

provides the best way to ensure the conservation of locally and globally important biodiversity (Key Biodiversity Area Report Kiribati).

The Key Biodiversity Areas (KBA) approach presents an appropriate framework for pinpointing site-level conservation targets and priorities in Kiribati. The KBA approach builds on and complements the conservation priority setting approaches completed for Kiribati including the National Biodiversity Strategic Action Plan (NBSAP) and the current conserved areas of PIPA and motus on Kiritimati Island. KBAs target identified sites that contain species most at risk of extinction, and thus are priority sites for conservation at a global as well as a national level (Key Biodiversity Area Report Kiribati)

Key threats

Threats to the protected areas

This section outlines threats to designated protected areas and potential key biodiversity areas that are yet to be designated as Protected Areas. These threats are also identified and highlighted in the Initial POWPA Analysis report and are summarized as follows:

- Overpopulation and urban-rural drift (from the outer rural islands to the two urban centres in Kiribati – South Tarawa and Kiritimati Island)
- Predominant ‘tragedy of the commons’ approach over natural resources and Government owned properties (State lands, public spaces)
- Destruction associated with urban development and constructions (ie causeways, channels etc) of coral reefs and associated ecological habitat and species
- Over exploitation of marine and terrestrial species including unregulated exportation of natural resources, particularly marine resources (ie sea cucumber etc)
- The use and practicing of unsustainable fishing methods – e.g. use of undersized mesh fishing nets; ‘te ororo’, to name a few
- Loss of traditional enthno-biological knowledge
- Change of lifestyle into a money-dependent
- Introduction of new and additional invasive alien species (including agricultural pests and diseases)
- Limited knowledge on the importance of biodiversity conservation and the actions and measures that should be avoided, reduced or strengthened to enhance and sustain biodiversity for the future and its generations.

Barriers for effective implementation

Barrier 1: Geographical isolation and fragmentation

The geographical setting of the Kiribati Islands and its groups are located so far apart. This entails extremely high travel costs to travel from one island or group to another. This situation is one of the main challenges to effective implementation of all implementation works, let alone this project.

Barrier 1. Limited information and knowledge

Currently, knowledge is lacking on the biodiversity of both the terrestrial and marine zones. The studies have so far focused on certain islands, particularly those in the Phoenix Groups. However, both the terrestrial and marine zones that are particularly interesting and that may be possible candidates for classification are already identified.

Barrier 2. Institutional and financial gaps

- Inadequate scientific baseline biological information on the status of biodiversity limits management scheme with respect to monitoring and adaptive management
- Insufficient skilled human resources impede the sustainability of natural resource management
- Insufficient biodiversity legislation hinders enforcement and compliance
- Insufficient and unsustainable funding which impacts the sustainability and management of biodiversity conservation

Barrier 3. Limited understanding of the options to involve current customary right users in biodiversity conservation

Customary rights of the natural resources, particularly terrestrial resources are very strong in Kiribati just like other Pacific Island nations. Customary rights have helped people to traditionally manage their natural resources and land since time immemorial. This traditional customary tenure is varied according to each island.

The people of Kiribati have depended very much on their traditional knowledge system (traditional skills of cultivation and fishing, traditional herbal medicine, to name a few) for

survival in the atolls. Much of these knowledge systems are sustainable and can certainly, without clash, contribute to traditional natural resources management which have allowed people to live harmoniously with nature. Further, in Kiribati, no person is allowed to access or utilize natural resources found within land plots or areas that do not belong to him/her, unless he/she is family. There are exceptions where there is pre-existing arrangement (based on special request by non-family member to enter family land plots/areas to utilize natural resources available) or understanding made by elders of different families.

The problem is that the role of traditional customary rights to natural resources and the environment existing in Kiribati has not been fully explored and tested on how these can be used towards better biodiversity conservation. Currently, there is minimal dialogue and measures undertaken at grassroots level, to learn about customary rights and discuss how traditional land owners (and natural resources owners of the commons) can play a role in protected areas.

Barrier 4 Limited awareness raising and education

- There is limited and ineffective awareness to the general public on the importance of biodiversity conservation.
- Minimal integration of biodiversity conservation into the national school curricular
- Lack of local communities participation and supports towards biodiversity conservation initiatives

Status, priority and timeline for key actions of the Programme of Work on Protected Areas

Status of key actions of the Programme of Work on Protected Areas

Status of key actions of the Programme of Work on Protected Areas	Status
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Progress on assessing gaps in the protected area network (1.1) 	3 Started in 2010, Priority is High, Timeline is February 2012.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Progress in assessing protected area integration (1.2) 	2 Started 2010, Priority is medium.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Progress in establishing transboundary protected areas and regional networks (1.3) 	1 , Priority is Low.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Progress in developing site-level management plans (1.4) 	4 Completed for PIPA in 2010 Priority is High.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Progress in assessing threats and opportunities for restoration (1.5) 	3 Nearly complete, Priority is High. To be completed by February 2012
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Progress in assessing equitable sharing of benefits (2.1) ✓ Progress in assessing protected area governance (2.1) 	1 Barely started, Priority is medium. 2 Partially complete, Priority is High. To be completed by February 2012
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Progress in assessing the participation of indigenous and local communities in key protected area decisions (2.2) 	2 Priority is High.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Progress in assessing the policy environment for establishing and managing protected areas (3.1) 	3 Priority is High. To be completed by early

✓ Progress in assessing the values of protected areas (3.1)	2012 1 Partially completed, Priority is High.
✓ Progress in assessing protected area capacity needs (3.2)	3 Priority is High. To be completed by February 2012
✓ Progress in assessing the appropriate technology needs (3.3)	1 Priority is low
✓ Progress in assessing protected area sustainable finance needs (3.4)	2 Partially complete for PIPA. Priority is High.
✓ Progress in conducting public awareness campaigns (3.5)	3 Priority is High,
✓ Progress in developing best practices and minimum standards (4.1)	2 Partially complete, Priority is medium
✓ Progress in assessing management effectiveness (4.2)	1 Because our protected area is quite young this phase is in its premature stage. Priority is high.
✓ Progress in establishing an effective PA monitoring system (4.3)	1 Priority is High
✓ Progress in developing a research program for protected areas (4.4)	1 Barely started, Priority is low.
✓ Progress in assessing opportunities for marine protection	3 Priority is High.
✓ Progress in incorporating climate change aspects into protected areas	2 Just started, Priority is Medium

Status: 0 = no work, 1 = just started, 2 = partially complete, 3 = nearly complete, 4 = complete
(Insert notes as appropriate)

Priority actions for fully implementing the Programme of Work on Protected Areas:

1. Finalization of Draft Key Biodiversity Areas and Ecological Gap Assessment
2. Endorsement of Draft Protected Areas and Protected Species Regulations
3. Implementation of conservation measures on sites identified in the Key Biodiversity Areas Report

Timeline for completion of key actions

Priority actions 1 – 3 are expected to be completed by February 2012. Priority Action 4 is scheduled for 1st Quarter of 2012 (ie between Jan – March) whilst Priority Action 5 is expected to initiate around 2nd Half 2012 (April – June) but subjected to funding availability.

Action Plans for completing priority actions of the Programme of Work on Protected Areas

Action 1: Finalization of Draft Key Biodiversity Areas and Ecological Gap Assessment

Key steps	Timeline	Responsible parties	Indicative budget
1) Surveys, consultations and data collection and analysis	2012	ECD, Fisheries Division, Lands Management Division, Agriculture and Livestock Division, SPREP, CI	\$100,000.00
2) Translation of Report into Kiribati language	2012	✓	\$1,500.00
3) National Validation Workshop	2012	✓	\$20,000.00
4) Printing of Final Report			\$5,000.00

Action 2: Endorsement of Draft Protected Areas and Draft Protected Species Regulations

Key steps	Timeline	Responsible parties	Indicative budget
Drafting of Protected Areas and Protected Species Regulations	2011	ECD, FD, LMD, ALD, SPREP, CI, MFED,	\$3,000.00
Cabinet endorsement of Regulations	2012	MELAD	

Action 3: Implementation of Conservation Measures on sites identified in the Key Biodiversity Areas Report

Key steps	Timeline	Responsible parties	Indicative budget
Community Consultation and PA promotion	Commencing from 2 nd Quarter 2012	ECD, Fisheries, Agriculture, Tourism, SPREP, CI etc	\$100,000.00

Ecological gap assessment

The Ecological gap assessment that was undertaken under this project showed that there is only one protected area in Kiribati that is formally gazette and recognized and 9 motus or wildlife sanctuaries located in Kiritimati island of the Line Groups. The formally recognized protected area is the Phoenix Islands Protected Area (PIPA). However, this one protected area covers an area of 408,250 square kilometers comprising of 8 atoll islands and spanning throughout more than 11% of the 3.5million square kilometers of the nation's territorial waters.

It is important to note that the PIPA in general covers one of the 3 island group (Phoenix Islands) of Kiribati. The 8 islands in this group are uninhabited with the exception of one which is Kanton Island occupied by 50 government officials acting as caretakers for the Phoenix Islands. The remaining island groups – the Gilbert and Lines are in need of some form of protection and management to the different types of habitats, ecosystems and species that derive in these locations.

The 2010 population census estimated that 90% of the population is located in the Gilbert Group with an estimated 10% in the Line Islands. With these statistics, the pressure on the environment and biodiversity is exacerbated in the Gilbert group which is comprised of 15 atoll islands and one raised coral island.

The draft Key Biodiversity Area Report provides recommendations on the list of islands that have high potential for protection and management based on the occurrence of the IUCN Redlist species and other species and habitats of cultural significance.

Management effectiveness assessment

With exception of PIPA, this is still too early to assess. Once the recommendations provided in the Kiribati KBA Report are implemented, this step will be undertaken.

Sustainable finance assessment

PIPA as the nation's prominent protected area has established an endowment/trust fund and is working to sustain this fund to support the management and operations of PIPA. The other 9 known wildlife sanctuaries and motus of Kiritimati island do not have one in place.

Capacity needs assessment

According to the Kiribati National Capacity Self-Assessment, the main constraints related to limited capacity required for biodiversity management and protection include:

1. Lack of appropriate legal instruments to support designated conservation areas for the environment and biodiversity
2. Limited scientific research and studies (feasibility, implementation and monitoring) being undertaken on the biodiversity in Kiribati.
3. In sufficient incentives for local communities to rehabilitate land – replanting programs.
4. Scatter and isolation of islands coupled with high cost of travel and communication
5. Insufficient support and motivation by responsible officers and ministries
6. Weak enforcement of environment act and policing/control of activities that have adverse impacts on the environment
7. Inadequate capacity building in managing protected areas.
8. Low priority status in the current National Development Strategy (NDS)
9. Inadequate capacity in resource mobilization, project management and report writing

Policy environment assessment

Environment was integrated into the Kiribati Development Plan (KDP) - the national planning policy for the first time in 2008. This Plan is assessed and revised every 4 years and currently end of 2011 to early 2012 is the revision period for the current KDP 2008-2011 series. This revision will produce for the first time the 4 year assessment of environment as one of the key policy areas under the KDP.

Within 2011, the Environment and Conservation Division in collaboration with SPREP started developing the National Integrated Environment Policy (NIEP). The policy has 4 thematic areas, one of which is biodiversity and ecosystem management. However, the NIEP is currently in drafting stages and needs to undergo several procedures before it becomes a formal instrument.

Protected area integration and mainstreaming assessment

When Environment was recognized for the first time and integrated as one of the Key Policy Area (KPA) under the KDP 2008-2011, the subsequent areas/issues of environment were also recognized and integrated into the national planning policy. One of these areas/issues include the protection and replenishment of endangered species and traditional plants. Relevant government ministries are assigned to the relevant activities/issues under the Environment KPA.

Similarly, the Kiribati NBSAP recognizes Protected Areas as one of its key targets and again a number of ministries are assigned to partake in the achievement of this target. Though there is mainstreaming of PA into sectoral plans and policies at the national level, this is very minimal and there is a need to expand this mainstreaming and to ensure that they are actually implemented. This is again a constraint of limited capacity.

Protected area valuation assessment

Protected area valuation is a measure that has not been carried out extensively and scientifically in Kiribati. This is an important aspect to address some of the gaps the Environment and Conservation Division in Kiribati is encountering such as low profile of biodiversity/PA etc. Kiribati is very keen to seek assistance in this area.

Climate change resilience and adaptation assessment

There have been a number of adaptation assessments undertaken through Vulnerability and Adaptation Assessments purposely to identify adaptation programs or projects to increase island resilience to the adverse effects of climate change. In 2000, the World Bank undertook an economic and environmental assessment and found potential significant losses Kiribati would face to its land and economic resources due to climate change and sea level rise. There were also sector-specific vulnerability assessments (e.g. water, coastal zone) conducted on South Tarawa and some outer islands through various initiatives and projects. The result of these assessments informs the design of adaptation projects/programs implemented in Kiribati thus far (e.g. Kiribati Adaptation Project). Some of the key adaptation areas covered by adaptation initiatives in Kiribati include seawall infrastructures, mangrove planting, ecosystem monitoring, water services rehabilitation, and so on. Assessment on adaptation has been undertaken to inform future efforts. This adaptation assessment acknowledged that several institutional capacity gaps as well as vulnerable sectors that require strengthening and addressing through more effective adaptation approaches. Some of the emerging areas include ecosystem-based approach to adaptation, health and integrated coastal management zone approach to adaptation. This implies that adaptation is still required to increase the resilience of Kiribati to the effects of climate change.