

Part V: South Pacific

Chapter 13: Kiribati

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Population (1988): 67,000

Population Growth Rate (1980-88): 1.9% per annum

Land Area: 710 square kilometres

Capital: Tarawa

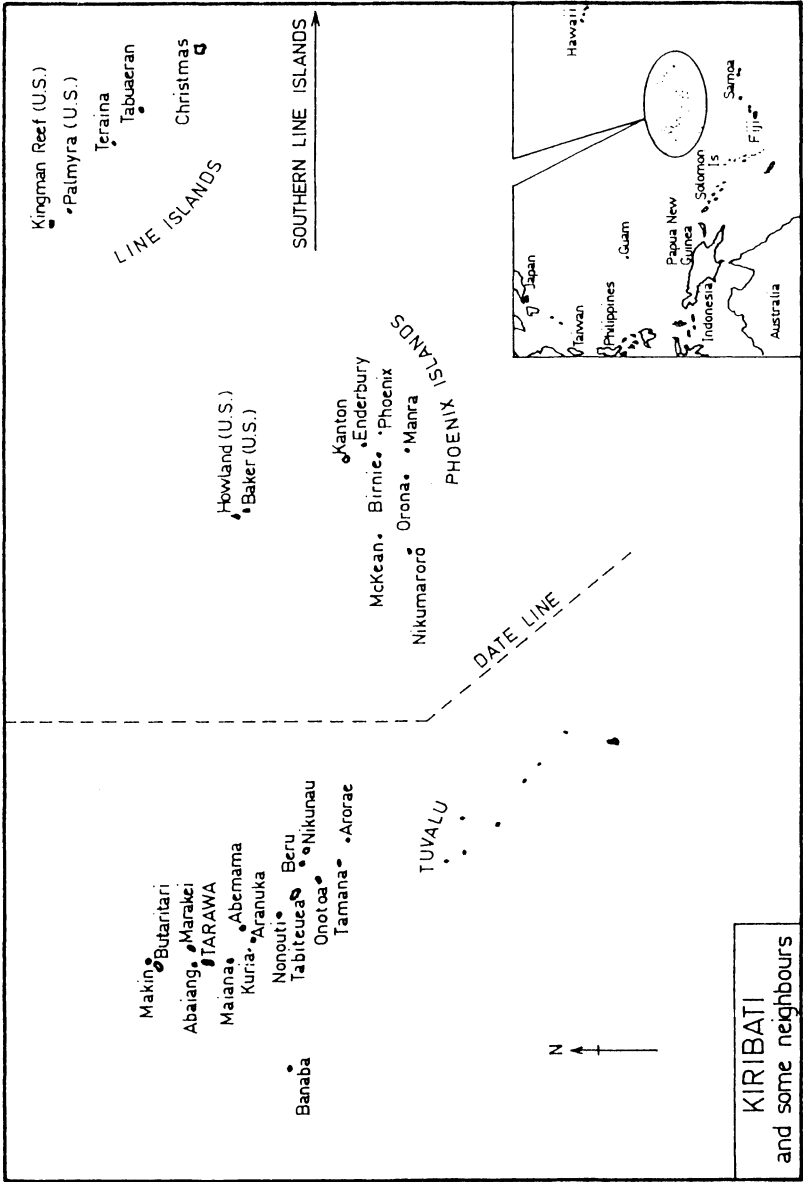
GNP per Capita (1988): US\$650

Year of Independence: 1979

Primary School Enrolment Rate (1989): 84%

Kiribati comprises 33 islands, located in the Central Pacific Ocean and straddling the equator and the international date line. It is subdivided into three main groups: (a) the Gilberts Group, a chain of 17 atolls which includes Tarawa, the seat of Government; (b) the Phoenix Group, a cluster of eight atolls; and (c) the Line Group, a chain of eight atolls spread over 2,000 kilometres and located some 3,000 kilometres east of the Gilberts on the other side of the international date line. The Line Islands include Kiritimati (otherwise known as Christmas Island) which accounts for half the country's land area.

With the exception of Banaba (otherwise known as Ocean Island) which is an upraised atoll, all the islands are low-lying coral atolls few of which are more than five metres above sea level. Kiritimati in the east is 3,870 kilometres from Banaba in the west; and Teraina in the north is 2,050 kilometres from Vostok Island in the south. The three exclusive economic zones cover more than three million square kilometres of ocean. However, the total land area of the islands is only 810 square kilometres.



1. Politics, Economics and Society

Kiribati gained independence from the United Kingdom in 1979. Prior to that it had been ruled jointly with the Ellice Islands as the Gilbert & Ellice Islands Colony. The Ellice Islands broke away in 1975, and are now the independent state of Tuvalu.

The constitution provides for a single tier of government headed by an Executive President known as the Beretitenti. The Beretitenti is elected by universal suffrage from among candidates selected by the Maneaba ni Maungatabu (Parliament). The Beretitenti in turn appoints a cabinet with executive authority. The single chamber of legislature has 39 elected members, plus the Attorney-General and a member nominated by the Banaba community. The central government is located on South Tarawa. The number of ministries is limited by the constitution to 10 plus the Office of the President.

The country also has a local government administration, consisting of 17 island councils and two town councils. The Councils have elected representatives, and are responsible for local administration, construction and maintenance of roads, and other local activities. Geographical isolation, lack of effective communications and lack of skilled staff have at times reduced the effectiveness of these Councils.

The coral reefs offer very limited resource bases for development. The northern Gilberts and the Line Islands have a maritime equatorial climate with frequent rainfall. However, drought conditions lasting up to three years have been experienced on most other islands. Agricultural production is severely limited by the atoll environment. The combination of a thin and porous layer of top soil, a high level of salinity, and lack of surface water restricts flora and fauna to those adapted to these rigorous conditions.

Until the 1970s, significant phosphate deposits were exploited on Banaba and contributed significantly to the economy. However, phosphate mining ceased in 1979 and brought a period of economic adjustment. The country has no other known viable and immediately exploitable mineral resources.

The majority of the population is Micronesian. Over the years mixing with Chinese, Europeans and Polynesians, particularly from Tuvalu, has taken place. The 1985 census recorded a de facto population of 63,883 with 2,227 I-Kiribati known to be working overseas in Nauru, aboard vessels of the South Pacific Marine Services or studying overseas. The population distribution is skewed towards the Gilberts, and South Tarawa in particular. The latter had a 1985 population of 21,393.

2. Education

Prior to the Second World War, government activity in education was confined to a boarding school for boys at Tarawa and to a primary day school on Banaba. Most education was in the hands of Christian missions.

The immediate post-war period brought growth of government responsibility and participation. In 1948 a system of grants-in-aid was introduced as a practical measure of cooperation with the missions. At this time a small Department of Education was established on Tarawa.

A Ministerial system of government was established in 1974. The Ministry of Education now consists of central administration, primary education, secondary education, teacher training, technical training, library and archives. This chapter focuses mainly on the central administration sector.

Education consumes about 18 per cent of the total government recurrent budget. Finance is shared between the sectors as follows:

Central Administration	19%
Primary Education	50%
Secondary Education	16%
Teacher Training	7%
Technical Training	5%
Library & Archives	3%

The government places priority on the promotion and development of formal education, particularly the provision of primary education for all children of school age.

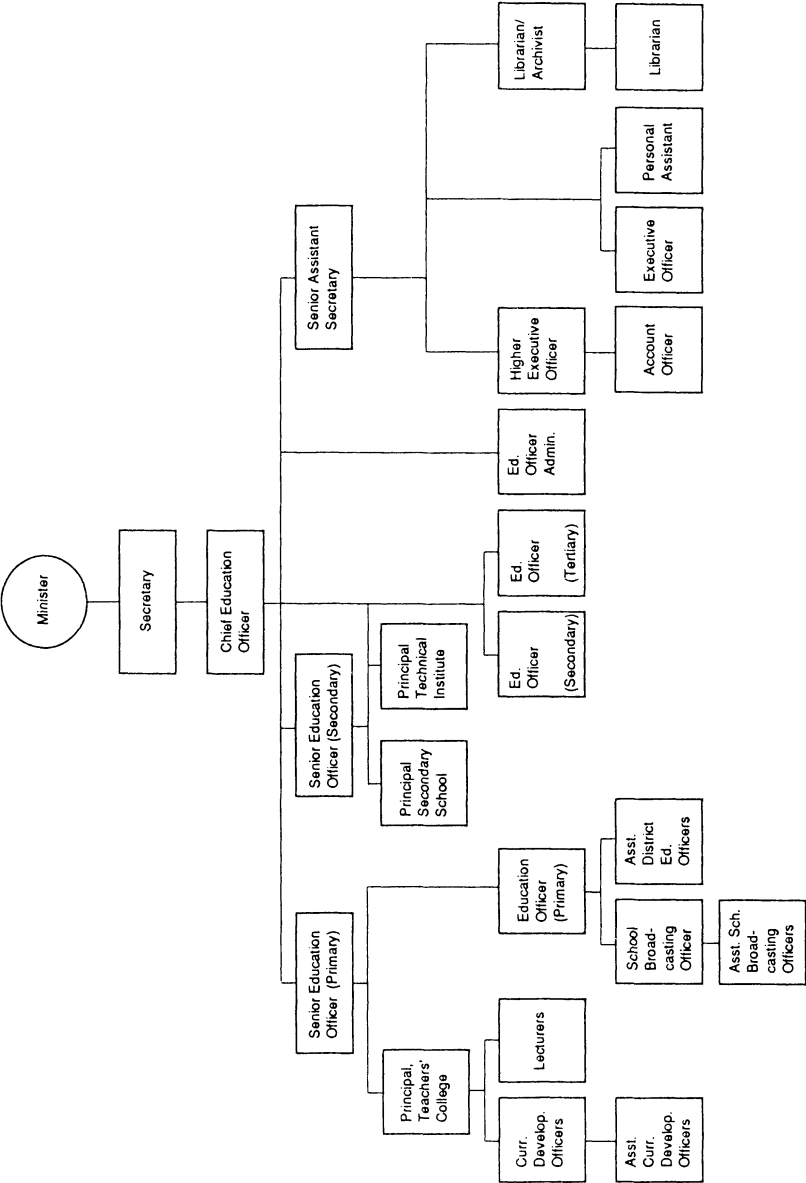
3. The Ministry of Education

The organisation chart of the Ministry of Education is shown in Figure 13.1. It was adopted in 1987.

The Secretary for Education is normally appointed from amongst Senior Assistant Secretaries in the administration cadre by straight recommendation of the Secretary to the Cabinet, who is head of the Public Service. The Public Service Commission (PSC) checks and confirms the recommendation before it is announced by the Beretitenti. Appointment to the Senior Assistant Secretary and Deputy Secretary posts is done similarly.

Appointment to the other posts is normally through an interview system. In theory, all senior posts are open to applicants from below.

Figure 13.1: The Ministry of Education, Kiribati (1990)



However, an application from the Senior Assistant Secretary (SAS) to become Chief Education Officer (CEO) would be unlikely to be successful because the SAS is an administrator rather than a professional.

The post of CEO was created for the promotion of the Senior Education Officer (Planning), who used to be in the same line with the other two Senior Education Officers and the SAS. Although selection was done through the interview system, the SEO (Planning) was the only candidate and the objective of creating the post was easily met. The main reason for creating a CEO post and earmarking the SEO (Planning) to it was to ease planning responsibilities. It was very difficult before for the SEO (Planning) to seek the cooperation of the other senior officers, particularly in the task of data collection and plan implementation. Now the CEO, who is also the head of the planning unit, has authority which is respected and can be refused only by the Secretary and the Minister. Planning since then has been carried out smoothly. The planning unit is currently staffed by the CEO and the Education Officer (Administration) who conducts research and prepares statistics.

The SEO (Primary) had been a teacher and headteacher of many primary schools in Kiribati before becoming a District Education Officer and then an Education Officer. He had once been employed as Curriculum Officer and EO (Administration) working under the then SEO (Planning). He is responsible for the Tarawa Teachers' College (TTC) and for the development of primary education throughout the country. He is assisted by the Principal of the TTC, the EO (Primary), the District Education Officers (DEOs), and the School Broadcasting Officer (SBO).

The SEO (Secondary) is a former teacher and principal of the government secondary school, the King George V & Elaine Bernacchi School (KGV/EBS). He is responsible for secondary education, technical training and pre-service scholarships. As the TTC is under the SEO (Primary) because of its role in training primary school teachers, the Tarawa Technical Institute (TTI) is put under the SEO (Secondary) because it is a direct outlet to secondary school leavers who wish to join the public service as clerical officers, accounting officers, typists or apprentices. The SEO (Secondary) is assisted by the Principal KGV/EBS, the Principal TTI, the EO (Secondary), and the EO (Tertiary). Mission schools are directly controlled and supervised by their respective church authorities, but are also under the general care of the SEO (Secondary).

The Senior Assistant Secretary looks after the Ministry's support services. He is assisted by a Higher Executive Officer who looks after

the Accounts section, an Executive Officer who looks after the Registry section, a personal assistant to the Minister and Secretary, and the Librarian/Archivist.

The TTC, KGV/EBS, TTI and Library/Archives have a certain amount of autonomy. This is part of the effort of the Ministry to decentralise control, and the four institutions are now self-accounting. Primary schools will be given to the Island Councils as soon as they are ready to take up the responsibility. Island Councils are now looking after the maintenance of school buildings. An independent Educational Advisory Committee (EAC) is used by the Minister when he is in doubt about policy issues and innovations initiated by his professional officers. The Committee has an advisory role, and only meets when the Minister desires.

The organisation structure works well, except that very often the Principal TTC, Principal KGV/EBS and Principal TTI use their salary level status to by-pass their immediate supervising SEOs. The salary scale of SEOs (L6-5) is lower than that of the Principals (L5), although they have the same maximum point. This anomaly could be corrected by reversing the salary scale to be in line with seniority and the level of accountability as reflected in the organisation chart. However, it is not easy to do this. The same problem arises between the District Education Officers (L13-10) and the primary school Headteachers (L10).

Job specialisation only exists in the curriculum, school broadcasting, inspection and support services units. The other posts in the organisation chart are general. This permits some flexibility, e.g. in horizontal and vertical movement of staff between the institutions and sections of the central administration. Jobs are grouped in the way shown in the organisation chart to ease team work and to ensure efficient management.

Because of the scarcity of resources, the government cannot afford to get involved in all aspects of education and training. The question of 'choice' has to be employed carefully, and it is for this reason that the Ministry concentrates on formal education, sharing the responsibility for secondary education with the churches. Pre-schooling is entirely the responsibility of mothers and such private organisations as the Save the Children Federation and the Kiribati Pre-School Association. Non-formal education is shared with other ministries. An example is the canoe-building training project by the Fisheries Division of the Ministry of Natural Resources Development.

4. Ministry Personnel

(a) Appointments and Briefing

All posts in the Central Administration were localised in 1984. TTC is also localised, but KGV/EBS and TTI still rely on overseas recruitment for teachers of mathematics, science and electronics.

The National Conditions of Service specify that appointments and promotions should be based on merit through an interview system. The only exceptions are promotions to the SAS and Secretary posts. However because the Ministry of Education is small, everybody knows everybody and neutrality cannot be 100 per cent achieved. Thus while the interview system reduces subjectivity and favouritism in selection, these aspects cannot be eliminated. The type of complexity that may arise may be illustrated by the selection interview for the SEO (Secondary). Three of the four initial panelists had to pull out because they were closely related to one of the candidates, and another panel had to be appointed to do the job.

Once people have been appointed and placed in their jobs, it is the responsibility of the employing Ministry or Department to define their jobs. But there have been cases where jobs have been defined poorly or not defined at all. One example concerned two new curriculum officers. The supervising officer assumed that the appointees were quite conversant with the content of the consultancy report which recommended the establishment of a curriculum unit. The report clearly stated the job descriptions and the functions of the unit. Unfortunately the two officers had never seen the report, and without proper briefing by the supervising officer they spent one week doing virtually nothing.

When the Secretary for Education found out about this and related problems he called a meeting of supervising officers and stressed that every effort should be made to brief new and old subordinates face to face in order to encourage questions and ensure understanding. This, he suggested, should be done at least once a month, with dates set well in advance. The Secretary also introduced briefing folders which should be available for inspection at any time. This new system has improved staff management. Even in a small system it may be necessary to formalise such operations.

(b) Appraisal and Training

The work of individuals is appraised each year in an annual confidential report. Certain criteria are listed against which a rating can be given on

a graduated scale. Supervising officers are required to inform subordinates of their poor performance face to face. Specialist officers are not exempted from this system.

However, the merit rating system has two major disadvantages. First, the criteria are subjective and difficult to measure. Second, experience shows that most supervisors tick the boxes in the middle of the scale, therefore showing most subordinates as 'average'. This happens because, especially in a small society, supervisors wish to avoid confrontation.

The Tarawa Technical Institute provides training for executive officers, clerical officers, accounts officers, typists and personal secretaries. The Tarawa Teachers' College caters for the training and upgrading of primary school teachers. Secondary school teachers are trained overseas, mostly in Fiji and Papua New Guinea. As part of the professional development programme, teachers, trainers, lecturers, supervisors and senior supervisors are nominated for suitable short courses advertised by overseas educational and training institutions.

Some critics assert that Kiribati still suffers from a British colonial hangover reflected in the materials used in schools, the choice of study and training venues, and the bureaucratic system of management. However, it is fair to say that not all curriculum materials from the past are irrelevant and unsuitable, and many courses in metropolitan institutions suit the needs of the country. In many cases, mature courses of the types required are not available in regional institutions. Individual bureaucratic systems have their own pros and cons; but one good thing about the system which Kiribati has maintained is that people know where they are and where they will be in the future. If clear lines of authority are specified and coordination is maximised, efficient management can be achieved.

(c) Promotion Prospects

The information in Figure 13.2 has been extracted from the organisation chart in Figure 13.1 to illustrate promotion prospects within the structure. The number of personnel per title indicates promotion probabilities. For example five officers could compete for the CEO post, i.e. Principal TTC, SEO (Primary), Principal KGV/EBS, SEO (Secondary) and Principal TTI. Although the Deputy Principal KGV/EBS would have a better chance of promotion to Principal levels in the three institutions, the officers in line E could also compete.

Promotion opportunities become scarcer as one moves up the hierarchy, and the problem is exacerbated by the fact that posts A to

C will soon be occupied by young officers (average age of 37 years). The compulsory retirement age in Kiribati is 50 years. Consequently many employees in the E to I levels have been lost to other sectors where promotion opportunities are brighter.

The post of Senior Assistant Secretary is not shown on Figure 13.2 because it is purely administrative. It therefore has a rather different career structure from that of the professionals.

Figure 13.2: Promotion Lines within the Ministry of Education, Kiribati

	Primary Teachers & Teacher Trainers	Secondary Teachers	Technical Institute Trainers
A	- Secretary	- Secretary	- Secretary
B	- CEO	- CEO	- CEO
C	- Pr TTC, SEO (Primary)	- Pr KGV/EBS, SEO (Sec)	- Principal TTI
D	-	- Deputy Pr KGV/EBS	-
E	- EO (Pr), Lecturers, CDOs 1 12 2	EO (S), EO (T), Teachers 1 1 38	Trainers 17
F	- District Ed. Officers 4		
G	- Grade 1 Teachers 30		
H	- Grade 2 Teachers 160		
I	- Grade 3 Teachers 310		

The salaries of staff in the E to I categories are reviewed annually to improve conditions and raise morale. Staff are also sent on courses or short attachments overseas as part of the professional development programme and as another means to raise morale. Within the organisation itself, delegation of responsibilities by senior officers to subordinate staff is encouraged for job enrichment and motivation. To some extent, these methods are effective means of reducing staff turn over

especially amongst the less qualified employees. However, the mobility of young graduates remains high.

(d) External Commitments

Some functions in other ministries require the involvement of officers in the Ministry of Education. Examples are the Nutrition Committee of the Ministry of Health & Family Planning, the Manpower Planning Committee of the Office of the President, and the Development Co-ordinating Committee based at the Ministry of Finance & Economic Planning.

The advantage of these external links is that they give officers a broad and up-to-date view of the various activities of government. However, meetings often occupy a whole day or more. With their own work waiting, officers who are involved in the work of external bodies often find that they have to work outside official hours to get everything done. If they fail to do this, there is a considerable hold up of other officers' work. Proper time management is lacking amongst some officers, with the result that problems often arise.

5. International Linkages

(a) Aid

The aim of the Kiribati government is gradually to achieve self-reliance. Overseas aid has been viewed as one method to facilitate this. Kiribati is not rich, and its revenue is not large enough to cater for its many development objectives. Aid therefore plays a major role in funding development projects.

Nevertheless, even when aid is given and received for the best reasons and under the best conditions, problems can arise from dependence on it as a source of funding. Firstly, conditions and procedures required by the donors can be difficult and unnecessarily cumbersome. These requirements may involve reporting, acquittals, etc.. While it is understood that some requirements are necessary for the donors to be able to account for the use of aid funds to their own people, the task for a small administration trying to fulfil all the different requirements of different donors can become very difficult, especially when planning skills are scarce. Because of the large amount of work that goes with the programming, appraisal, approval and follow-up on projects, donors with efficient and sensitive administrative

structures can provide much more useful assistance.

Sometimes donors dominate priorities and specify sectors. Recipients know that donors have their own reasons for giving aid. When there are other than developmental reasons, the donor agendas can distort the recipients' own objectives, especially in small states. Even when assistance is given for developmental reasons, the conditions and priorities of the donors may over-ride those of the recipients.

It is best if donors do not come with pre-conceived ideas about priorities. Rather, they should try to maintain as flexible an approach as possible. They should consult closely with the recipients in determining the priorities for the overall programme of assistance. This makes aid programming for the recipients much easier.

Donors often tie their aid because they wish to help their own economies. Sometimes they tie it to specific sectors because of their own ideas of what the recipients need. Aid that is tied in any way is less useful than aid that is untied. Aid tied to specific sources of equipment supply makes it difficult to standardise equipment, and ultimately makes maintenance and the holding of spares more difficult. Aid tied to specific sectors makes planning and allocation of overall aid more difficult. Often one finds several donors willing to fund the same sectors, such as fisheries, while none are willing to fund other sectors that also need assistance.

For a small country with severe budget constraints, an unwillingness to fund local costs places a very high burden on an already stretched budget. The danger is that equipment will be accepted without the necessary local funds being available, in which case the projects may fail.

Along with equipment, many small countries particularly require a range of technical skills which are not available domestically. Finding expatriates with the necessary skills and aptitudes can be difficult. Donors that provide fully-funded experts sometimes only provide one candidate for each post, thus restricting the choice of the recipient. The recruitment procedures of some donors can also create long gaps between the completion of one officer's contract and the commencement of another.

(b) Regional Organisations

Kiribati is a member of the regional University of the South Pacific (USP), which plays a very important role for the Ministry of Education. Apart from being an outlet for the country's secondary school leavers, it also provides consultancy services and short attachment programmes

for Ministry personnel. The university also operates an upgrading programme for Kiribati teachers.

The South Pacific Board for Educational Assessment (SPBEA) assists the Ministry's planning unit to improve examination papers and procedures. Currently, work is being undertaken on a national examination to replace the New Zealand School Certificate of Education. The SPBEA is also helping to establish a standardised achievement test, train personnel involved with assessment, and establish a regional Pacific School Senior Examination equivalent to the New Zealand University Entrance Examination taken at the end of Form 6.

Although Kiribati only joined Unesco in 1990, the Ministry of Education has long benefitted from the work programme of this organisation. Kiribati has participated in almost all Unesco's training programmes for the South Pacific region. This has included workshops in science teaching, use of micro-computers, and educational management for school inspectors.

The South Pacific Commission (SPC) through the South Pacific Regional Environment Program (SPREP) is sponsoring a regional curriculum workshop on environmental science. This programme was initiated by Kiribati for introduction in primary schools, particularly at the upper classes to link science content in upper primary and junior secondary schools.

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) supports literacy programmes at primary level. Currently, this organisation is providing funds for our 'Ready to Read' project as well as various consultancy services.

Liaison with these organisations is the responsibility of the Ministry's planning unit. All projects should pass through the Development Coordinating Committee, which appraises, screens and prioritises projects for Cabinet approval. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs then informs overseas donors of the needs.

While a regional approach to the funnelling of aid can be useful, the actual distribution, in most cases, is not done on a country-by-country basis. Implementation of regional projects can be very difficult. They can easily end up not really fulfilling anyone's needs properly.

Although the Ministry of Education uses the advice and professional services of the USP, SPBEA and other regional bodies, it has its own small pool of professional officers who can give advice and technical services on the spot. The USP and SPBEA are often used to give second opinions on educational issues and policies, but the final decisions rest with the Ministry of Education.

(c) Management of International Linkages

The Ministry of Education receives requests for information from many international organisations, including Unesco, the Commonwealth Secretariat, UNDP and SPC, as well as from university institutions which are undertaking research in Kiribati. The requests from Unesco are annual, and are often in the form of statistical questionnaires. Information requested by the Commonwealth Secretariat may be either general or specific. One example of the latter concerns tracer studies of students that have been sponsored by the Commonwealth. Normally organisations like SPC and UNDP request information on the projects which they fund in the country.

Unesco's questionnaires and requests on the progress of projects are often particularly time-consuming. However, with the establishment of an education data bank requests can now be dealt with speedily. The planning unit of the Ministry handles all these matters, including reports from international bodies.

Another management problem arises from the absences of individuals to attend international meetings. Such absences often bring confusion to management, particularly in the allocation of personnel and readjustment of responsibilities. International meetings are of course not the only reasons for absence. Other reasons include annual leave, sick leave, maternity leave, funerals, birthday party preparations, sick children, etc..

Leave absences are monitored through a leave roster for every member of the Ministry. The problem of replacement is reduced by having at least two officers in each section who have linked responsibilities. The Ministry also has a good record-keeping system, and officers who expect to be absent are required to prepare hand-over notes and to brief the officers who will look after their responsibilities. The Secretary should be sent copies of these hand-over notes. When absences exceed nine days, charge allowances may be claimed. This provides an incentive for replacement officers, and makes movements smoother.

6. The Culture of the Ministry

(a) Close Interpersonal Relationships

The objective of building up an effective team can be easily achieved by establishing first a happy and friendly relationship among the members of the work force. This task is easier to accomplish in an organisation

with a small number of personnel.

In the Kiribati Ministry of Education, all members of the work force know each other by name and character. In some cases employees are related to other employees, or at least come from the same island. For example the Minister of Education, the Secretary for Education and the DEO (Urban) all come from the same family tree. Also, the wife of the Secretary is Principal of the only government secondary school in the country.

These organisational placements are coincidental rather than manipulated, but have several advantages. Among the benefits are that:

- cooperation is encouraged;
- debates are often open, and decisions are reached more quickly and by consensus;
- trust and respect are observed more closely, and the problem of wrong reporting on people is minimised;
- obedience is maximised;
- complaints and grievances can be solved more quickly, and with the understanding of both parties;
- people are more ready to share problems; and
- there is often a happy and understanding workforce.

However, the closeness of interpersonal relations can also create disadvantages:

- impartiality in decision-making may be difficult to achieve;
- external pressure in criticising the management cannot be avoided;
- interpersonal relations may create a situation in which superiors do not promote family members for fear of criticism;
- a situation will also be created in which managers find it awkward to support their subordinates, particularly relatives, when in danger of unjustified disciplinary action, even when the managers are the only people who can save the subordinates from bad judgement; and
- cases where a member of the organisation often escapes disciplinary action will be criticised by others as favouritism if the officers concerned and the managers are related.

The most profound theory of decision-making is 'objectivity' or 'impartiality'. However, this theory is not practicable if members of the organisation do not know what it really implies. They should be made to understand that decisions are based on merit and certain accepted

criteria, not that one person is related to another, and not because one is bribed to reach a certain decision. A good starting point for this understanding is to train all members of the organisation in decision-making skills.

(b) Personal Impact

Being small, the Ministry of Education is full of professional officers who are eager to make reforms to the existing system or to part of it. Chances may arise during periods of deputising. However, these periods are normally limited to 30 working days each year, which is not long enough for proper planning of changes. In many cases changes are forced on the system, and create problems.

In one example the Secretary for Education, the CEO and the two SEOs were all overseas on official duties, leaving the SAS to look after the Ministry. This gave the SAS an opportunity to process promotion recommendations for four teachers who had approached him for assistance of this nature. The move would have been successful if the PSC had not found that the annual confidential report enclosed with the SAS's letter omitted the comment of the immediate supervising officer, who in this case was the SEO (Primary). The SAS failed to achieve his objective because things like promotion cannot be done in haste. There are standard procedures to be followed.

However, personal impact can also have a positive effect. For example when one education officer came back from a personnel management course in Australia he initiated a reform of the Ministry of Education structure. He proposed the creation of the CEO post to bridge the gap between the Secretary who is a pure administrator and the professional Education Officers. After a long debate at both Ministry and Cabinet levels, the proposal was approved. The new post became a promotion outlet for the SEOs.

Yet the plan also had a problematic aspect in the small system. When the vacancy was advertised, not surprisingly the officer who had proposed the change was one of the candidates. Being well conversant with the reason behind the change, he won the post and was appointed. This dismayed the SEOs, one of whom resigned even before the post was advertised.

(c) Information Flows

There are three basic ways through which information flows in the

Ministry of Education. The first is through the circulation folder system. All mail, except secret and confidential letters, is opened by the Registry and circulated for sighting first by the Secretary and then by the CEO, SAS and SEOs. Secret and confidential letters are opened by the Personal Secretary and circulated only to the Minister, the Secretary and the CEO. Involving a limited number of officers to see the circulation folder allows for a speedy action. It is the responsibility of SEOs to inform other officers what goes on not only in their respective sections but also in other sections. This is commonly done in formal or informal meetings.

The second method of information dissemination is by a system of 'flimsy' circulation of non-restricted correspondence to all members of the office. This refers only to copies of outward correspondence. From this system members will know or at least guess what goes on within and without the Ministry.

The third method of informing is through meetings. The SEO (Primary) uses this method a lot as there are many people in his section to be informed, and informing them through a meeting is more expedient and cost-effective. The other senior officers depend very much on the other methods of communication. The problem that sometimes arises is that they assume that information has flowed easily when in fact it has not. Subordinate officers may not have time to read the flimsy folder or to inquire about events related to outward letters from senior officers.

One example illustrates this lack of information flow. It is the practice for the secondary school section of the Ministry to arrange transport for new and terminating students from church secondary schools at the beginning and end of each year. The SEO (Secondary) considered this task cumbersome, and sent a circular to church authorities to indicate that from the following year they should organise their own transport with the Ministry paying for it. The subordinate officer who used to do the job did not see the flimsy copy of the circular and was therefore unaware of the change. She continued to make advance arrangements without realising that the church authorities were doing the same thing. This caused considerable confusion for the Shipping Authority, and the Ministry was asked to make double payments.

When the problem was investigated, the subordinate officer claimed that she was not aware of the change. The senior officer admitted that he had not informed her of the change face-to-face, having assumed that she would read the flimsy copy of the circular letter. The senior officer learned from this event the necessity for following up circular letters with face-to-face briefing of subordinates.

7. Conclusions

Administration in Kiribati is made especially difficult by the vast distances between the islands. This imposes additional strains on a ministry which is already small. Further problems have been caused by the lack of skilled manpower. However, the Ministry has now localised all its posts, and it is gradually maturing.

To maximise use of limited personnel, many officers are asked to be multi-functional and generalist. For example, there is no officer specifically designated as an education planner. The planning is done by the CEO in conjunction with the EO (Administration), and the so-called planning unit must also undertake work on examinations, liaison with donors, preparation of statistics, and answering of questionnaires from international bodies. Job specialisation only exists in the curriculum, school broadcasting, inspection and support services units. On the other hand, the mere existence of some of these units is an achievement in such a small system.

The chapter has also highlighted some features of Kiribati's international relations. The country depends on foreign aid for many development projects, but finds the bureaucratic procedures of many donor agencies and international bodies a heavy strain on the small organisation. Kiribati is also a member of several regional organisations, among which are the University of the South Pacific and the South Pacific Board for Educational Assessment. These bodies also have problematic aspects, but on balance they are strongly beneficial to the Ministry.

Finally, on the positive side, the Ministry benefits from close inter-personal relationships in which everybody knows everybody else and may even be related. However, it has been pointed out that this also has a negative side. One way in which Ministry officers try to avoid the negative side is by paying close attention to public service procedures.