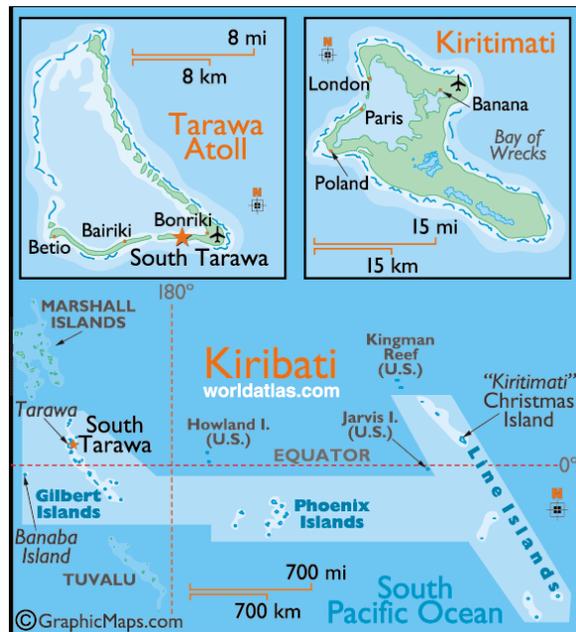


Kiribati



The Republic of Kiribati (pronounced KIRR-ee-bas) is an island nation located in the central tropical Pacific Ocean. Its name comes from the local pronunciation of “Gilberts” which is the main chain of islands that make up the nations land mass. The others are the Line Islands and the



An aerial view of the largest inhabited island in the country.

Phoenix Islands. While its actual land area is about three-quarters the size of the state of Rhode Island (the smallest in the US), the islands, atolls, and coral reefs that make up Kiribati are spread across 1,351,000 square miles. It straddles the equator and touches the International dateline to

the east. It is the only country in the world to have claim land in all four hemispheres. The capital city is Tarawa.

The young country of Kiribati declared its independence from the United Kingdom on July 12, 1979. It has been a member of the United Nations since 1999. Citizens of the country are called I-Kiribati, both singular and plural. I-Kiribati is also the name of the common language of the country, though English is the official language.

Kiribati is one of the poorest and least developed countries in Oceania. It has few natural resources and depends heavily on outside financial aid and assistance. Copra—the meat of coconuts used to make oil—and fish are the country’s main products.

Most I-Kiribati are Christian (about 90%). The Christian faith was introduced by missionaries in the late 19th century. About 56% of the country’s Christians are Roman Catholic.

I-Kiribati generally live a subsistence life-style:

MCA in Kiribati

they must grow or catch what they need to eat. Only about 10% of them have paid employment. For those who work, perhaps in the local biscuit factory, wages are very low, approximately \$2 an hour.



Extended families live together in village settings on the 21 inhabited coral atolls (out of 33 that make up the county's land mass). They get much of what they eat from the sea—fish, octopus, worms, and tortoises. Coconut trees are also vital to the livelihood of I-Kiribati, giving them another food source as well as coconut meat and oil to sell. Rice is a staple of their diet.

Almost 60% of the people on the islands have access to electricity; while only 1% of the population have landline telephones, close to 40% now have cell phone coverage making communication across the vast area a bit easier. Only 13% of I-Kiribati have internet access.

A third of the population does not have clean running water in their homes and two thirds do not have improved sanitary facilities in

their homes leading to many water borne illnesses. Because I-Kiribati also eat a lot of raw or under cooked seafood, bacterial infections are common. The recent arrival of doctors from Cuba has had a dramatic impact on the decrease in the infant mortality rates.

A common local type of meeting house is called a maneaba. It is the center of any I-Kiribati village. The whole community comes together to build this structure which is made of slabs of coral, coconut wood, and are held together with coconut string. Traditionally, the roof was made from the leaves of a local plant called pandanus or breadfruit. More modern ones have rooves of corrugated plastic or metal.

At last report, Missionary Childhood members worldwide sacrificed \$21,000 for their I-Kiribati brothers and sisters in the Diocese of Tarawa-Nauruto. The funds were used to build a maneaba like the one pictured here.



They also contributed another \$16,000 so that faith formation workshops could be run for the children of the diocese to learn more about our Catholic faith.

Missionary Childhood Association

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