



Mandate Spotlight: 044 Kiribati MEHR

Maximising Employment Opportunities Locally and Abroad

Location: Kiribati

Beneficiaries: Ministry of Employment and Human Resources (MEHR)

Consultant: Desloges Law Group (DLG)

Start: Mar. 2021

End: Mar. 2022

CTIF Contribution: CAD \$101,630

Context

The Government of Kiribati recognized the important role of international labour migration in addressing a deficit in local employment opportunities, alleviating poverty and promoting nationals' economic and social well-being. One of the most significant challenges facing Kiribati today is the lack of employment opportunities for its growing youth population and other job seekers. According to the most recent statistics, Kiribati's total unemployment rate is approximately 30.6%, while the youth unemployment rate stands at 54%.

The migration of I-Kiribati women and men is not perceived as a negative phenomenon but rather an opportunity to fill labour shortages in a foreign country, gain foreign education, send remittances back home and develop new skills that could help stimulate Kiribati's economy and private sector upon their return. I-Kiribati has been seeking employment opportunities abroad for its citizens, including women and youth, as there is an overall incentive to raise domestic qualifications and training. Kiribati is currently engaged in several labour mobility programs with neighbouring countries, Australia and New Zealand. While simultaneously, the Government of Kiribati is seeking to expand its labour mobility programs with other countries, including Canada.

This strategy aims to address the issue of unemployment while expanding labour opportunities available to I-Kiribati participants abroad, which also fosters additional remittances sent back to Kiribati by its citizens. This approach is reflected in the Kiribati 20-Year Vision 2016-2036 (KV20), as well as the Kiribati Development Plan (KDP), which seeks to address issues regarding market access for I-Kiribati workers in overseas markets, and Kiribati's Trade Policy Framework with respect to international worker mobility for Kiribati nationals, where Canada is amongst the targeted labor markets.

Brief Description of the Mandate

The mandate, delivered by CTIF's consultant Desloges Law Group (DLG), provided technical assistance to explore and expand the labour opportunities available to I-Kiribati in Canada. This was done to increase the employment rates among Kiribati citizens, especially women and youth, and to foster additional remittances sent back to Kiribati by its citizens abroad.

Further, this technical assistance included the implementation of a Strategic Plan by securing new agreements with Canadian institutions that could facilitate the labour migration of I-Kiribati to Canada, including coordinating with over 80 business organizations and government officials in Canada.

Selected Key Findings and Recommendations

- **A Strategic Plan** was prepared to highlight Canadian labour mobility programs available to I-Kiribati, which identified capacity building needs of Kiribati stakeholders and recommended strategies to formalize new mobility partnerships and institutional arrangements between relevant parties in Kiribati and Canada.
- **MEHR is now ready to carry out the implementation of the Strategic Plan** developed under this mandate, including reaching out to key contacts of major employers and stakeholders in Canada, preparing CVs with the guidance provided, and recommending training and certification credentials needed for various industries in Canada and making use of presentations for employers and employees on Canadian immigration requirements.

- A **Memorandum of Understanding was signed** between the Government of Kiribati and the British Columbia Food and Beverage Association to promote cooperation in information exchange job sourcing and placement for I-Kiribati in Canada.
- Through this mandate, the CV of one I-Kiribati was sent to a Canadian general contracting company, which led to the **successful placement of one I-Kiribati** in a carpentry position in Ontario.

Environment & Climate Change

Kiribati is one of the world's most climate-vulnerable countries. It sits at an average elevation above sea level of only 1.8 metres, and it experiences constant erosion of coastal and inland areas that often displace the country's most vulnerable inhabitants.

Overseas work experience increases the skills and employability of I-Kiribati workers and provides opportunities to send remittances home. Such remittances can be used to build domestic resilience and support climate change adaptation efforts when funds and augmented adaptive skills from abroad are channelled into reinforcing homes, building rainwater tanks, or contributing to projects led by community groups or island councils such as the construction of seawalls. To this end, the mandate identified construction-related occupations (log home builder, exterior cladder, fence erector, roofer helper, and construction labourer) as a priority sector in the Strategic Plan.

Follow-up Support

Following the conclusion of the mandate, a key recommendation from CTIF's consultant was to assign a liaison officer position to be created to continue efforts at successfully placing I-Kiribati in Canadian roles. This liaison officer, according to the consultant, should be a Canadian with Immigration experience as well as knowledge of the Temporary Foreign Worker Program (TFWP). Through the materials developed under this technical assistance, the Liaison Officer will have a solid understanding of I-Kiribati's goals, concerns, and realities in Canada.

Testimonials



Figure 1: Mr. Eria Maeriu and his family

Gender and Social Inclusion

In the Assessment Report, the data provided by the Government of Kiribati was not only disaggregated by sex, but the consultant applied a gender and social inclusion lens when reviewing prospective industries for I-Kiribati job seekers. In particular, industries with higher rates of women's employment were included in the scope and key Kiribati policies related to gender equality and women's economic empowerment. The resulting need to develop a labour market scheme incorporating the domestic understanding of women's economic empowerment was emphasized.

Insights from the Assessment Report were incorporated into the Strategic Plan to ensure women's economic empowerment and participation in future labour mobility schemes. For example, one recommendation was to have a female liaison officer to ensure female labour mobility program participants have a safe environment to disclose any rights violations.

"I was chosen to represent my country but most importantly is to be able to represent my family and my culture at such a diverse country... This move will also help me experience a much sophisticated and wide working environment that I had not experience throughout my career, which is important for me to acquire for my own development as a carpenter... I am grateful for this important [opportunity]."

- Mr. Eria Maeriu, carpenter from Kiribati that was successfully hired for a carpentry position in Ontario through this mandate
