

**KIRIBATI COUNTRY PROGRAM REPORT  
PACIFIC REVIEW OF ADVISER POSITIONS FUNDED BY THE AUSTRALIAN AID PROGRAM**

## Overview

[A Joint Adviser Review Report](#) was released on 15 February 2011, which provided a synthesis of the findings and key recommendations from individual country reviews, including country specific adviser figures and narrative.

Australia worked bilaterally with a large number of partner country governments to review each adviser position. While the underlying Review methodology and the core content of country-specific reports is consistent across programs, in each case the final country-specific Review Report reflects decisions made by the joint Review teams as appropriate for the specific cultural and language context. As a result there are some presentational differences between reports.

This report presents the findings and recommendations of the joint Review process undertaken between the Governments of Kiribati and Australia.

It is important to note that the Review process involved an assessment of the value and effectiveness of each adviser position – not the performance of individuals in those positions. The Review focused on the role of each position in meeting agreed country program objectives and development outcomes. On the basis of this assessment, the continued funding of adviser positions by AusAID was jointly considered and agreed with partner governments.

## 1. Executive Summary

Discussions with senior government officials re-confirmed strong support for the roles of the current technical assistance personnel or advisers (TA) provided to the Government of Kiribati (GOK) through the Australian aid program. During the discussions with the Government, it was clear that Australian TA is highly valued.

The issue of capacity building versus supplementation was discussed very openly. The GOK emphasised the existing dependency on the skills of international TA in areas where level of local expertise for effective planning and implementation of government programs and policy is severely limited. The Government views in-line advisers as vital to ensuring the effective delivery of key government functions by providing expertise not otherwise available in Kiribati.

However, the GOK also reaffirmed that it is looking for changes in the selection and monitoring of TA. It confirmed the need to utilise existing local expertise in relevant sectors and to improve the delivery of TA to ensure implementation and follow up is a key deliverable. The Government also emphasised changes need to be made to ensure; TA is accountable to the Ministry in which they are working; the GOK is consulted meaningfully on the choice and selection of TA; and, the choice and modality of TA is better targeted to the specific task.

## 2. Background

The Australia-Kiribati Partnership for Development was signed in January 2009. The Priority Outcomes under the Partnership are: improved basic education; workforce skills development; and improved growth and economic management. To deliver on these Priority Outcomes, Australia is:

- delivering the Kiribati Education Improvement Program (KEIP) - Phase 1: A\$8.2 million, 2010-12;
- delivering the Technical Vocation Education and Training Sector Strengthening Program (TVETSSP) - Phase 1: A\$6.14 million, 2010-12; and
- co-financing the ADB Economic Management Public Sector Reform Program - Phase 1: A\$2 million 2008-10, and Phase 2: A\$1 million, 2010-12.

In addition to the above programs, long-term TA is provided through the Pacific Technical Assistance Mechanism (PACTAM) managed by Australian Volunteers International. Australia also provides significant funding for other donor programs in health, gender and the environment, as well as for scholarships, including under Australian Development Scholarships (ADS), Australian Regional Development Scholarships (ARDS), Australian Leadership Awards (ALA), Pacific Executive Program, Australia Pacific Technical College Awards (APTC) and the Kiribati Australia Nursing Initiative.

### *Technical Assistance Personnel /Advisers in Kiribati*

There are ten international long-term TA currently funded under the aid program in 2010-11 – three in KEIP, five in TVETSSP and two through PACTAM. The total cost of TA is AUD1,972,650 and represents 8.6 per cent of the budget allocation for Kiribati. TA undertake a range of roles, including providing high-level strategic and policy advice to Ministry heads and senior managers, undertaking in-line roles in vocational education institutions, and

supporting corporate functions such as HR planning. Some positions also help to manage the implementation of aid programs.

In Kiribati, the Government relies on TA to bring current international experience and good practice to development work. With limited human resources, the Government also relies on TA to help bring about change at a reasonable pace and to fill skill gaps in the public sector. All TA provision is demand based from GOK and is consistent with the Priority Outcomes agreed under the Australia-Kiribati Partnership for Development.

The use of TA also highlights existing weaknesses in resource planning within Government. Within the public service, capacity in technical areas is limited and with requirements to participate in regional and international forums overseas, key individuals can be away for long periods of time, impacting significantly on the basic functions of their department. TA plays a pivotal role in ensuring the ongoing functions of government are supported and supplemented in this vacuum.

Notwithstanding the demand for TA from GOK, AusAID's own quality assessments and independent reviews of sectoral programs show that TA has had mixed results in bringing about sustainable development and in building local capacity. For example, an Independent Completion Report of an earlier program, the Targeted Public Sector Support Initiative, found little evidence that the key outcome 'service delivery' had improved across the country as result of the substantial TA provided under that program. This in part was because of a lack of congruence between intended outputs and Government commitment to the reforms proposed by the TA.

GOK have also expressed deep reservations about high levels of TA that have often been provided in the past, in particular, the sustainability of the benefits deriving from TA inputs. The key issue for GOK has been the extent to which high levels of TA make demands on very limited counterpart capacity, yet the input remains one of 'advice' rather than 'getting a job done' or capacity built and sustained. Too little attention has been paid to embedding new systems and approaches introduced by TA: a report and recommendations are produced, but capacity to implement changes effectively has not been developed.

In response to some of these issues, as well as efforts to reduce costs, improve responsiveness and attract the right people, AusAID established a local short-term TA register at the end of 2009. Kiribati has a small pool of able and experienced I-Kiribati (particularly from the public service where the retirement age is currently 50). Locally recruited TA is often more appropriate for some tasks. With the benefit of valuable networks and local knowledge, local advisors are often able to better navigate local change processes and achieve more sustainable outcomes than their international equivalents. This has also resulted in a shift in GOK's perspective in the value of retired government employees, particularly for advisory roles.

### *Methodology used to conduct review*

This review was conducted by a team consisting of officers from the AusAID Tarawa office, the Kiribati focal point in Canberra and the AusAID Pacific Economic adviser<sup>1</sup>. The review

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<sup>1</sup> The AusAID Pacific Economic adviser is an internal AusAID advisory position based in Canberra and engaged under Public Service employment conditions.

considered long term TA (at least six months input per year) that were in place in the 2010-11 (Australian) financial year.

The methodology used for the review included document and data analysis, and consultations with all current beneficiaries of TA through the aid program. Key steps in the process were:

- Initial data analysis gathered information on every TA in place or planned for the 2010-11 financial year
- AusAID made an initial assessment of the priority of each position, assessing their terms of reference, existing monitoring reports and the views of AusAID program staff. Each position was ranked as high (continue the position), medium (consider changes to the position) or low (phase out the position).
- Initial rankings were discussed by the review team with GOK (including in most cases the heads of the Ministries receiving the TA) and other Government Departments. Final rankings were determined in these consultations.

### 3. Review Findings

#### *Key issues related to Relevance, Effectiveness and Cost Effectiveness*

##### TA not linked to the main programs

As a major donor and provider of TA, Australia is often approached by GOK to provide TA or fill in-line positions in areas where the necessary knowledge or skills are not available in the GOK public service. In considering requests for TA that are not part of our main programs, we need to better assess how AusAID adds value – what we contribute other than funding and whether we are able to effectively manage the performance of the TA. Where we are not in a position to effectively manage the TA, we need to be proactive in seeking opportunities to collaborate with other donors or whole-of-government partners, especially in areas where they have more expertise to play a lead role. For example, in Kiribati, the ADB is the lead donor for assisting reforms in key economic areas, such as State Owned Enterprises and would normally be the best placed institution to provide TA support in this area.

Nevertheless, concentrating rather than expanding our focus should remain the aim of Australian support in Kiribati. As the aid program to Kiribati grows, and likely along with it the number of TA (given capacity and resource constraints in Kiribati), our ability to manage those positions will become increasingly important (as our resources will not grow by comparison). It will be important that Australia's aid is not exposed to reputational or other risks because we are not sufficiently informed about what TA are doing. The development of sector programs for basic education and for technical and vocational education and training (TVET) will enable us to maintain effective management of an increasing number of TA.

##### Assessing the effectiveness of TA to deliver real reforms

We recognise that initially TA in Kiribati has focused (appropriately) on delivering key short-term outputs required by Government. However, when considering the continuation of a position, we will need to determine whether the Government continues to be committed to the reforms the TA has been recruited to deliver. We will need to shift our focus from judging the effectiveness of TA on the processes they are delivering on (such as in the fisheries sector, initial legislation and guidelines for licensing and joint ventures), to their

ability to nurture and progress real reforms in the area of policy formulation and/or service delivery (such as increased prosecution of illegal fishing vessels, and increased revenue both from joint venture arrangements and from foreign fishing vessels). If evidence indicates government is not ready for reform, then we should consider more cost effective options for delivering outputs (eg. using volunteers, local or short-term positions).

#### Considering cost sharing arrangements for some TA

When considering requests for TA, particularly those not consistent with the above principles, we need to discuss with GOK the potential for cost-sharing arrangements (local salary with salary supplementation from Australia). This will help to determine whether the real value of the TA is in the position or in the extra budget (for equipment, conferences etc) they bring with them. As well it will indicate the level of ownership of the Government. Without cost sharing, TA are likely to be viewed as ‘free goods’ and the opportunity costs involved in funding them are usually not weighed up – partly because the costs involved are not transparent to the Government and partly because there is no requirement for counterpart funding. However, in Kiribati the feasibility of cost-sharing arrangements is constrained by GOK’s capacity to provide funding and the ongoing freeze on government positions.

## **4. Recommendations**

### *Future commitment to TA positions*

A summary of specific positions, their roles and priority rankings following assessment is at Attachment A.

Ten positions were reviewed. Of these, eight were identified as high priority and should continue to be supported. One was identified as medium priority. Whilst providing assistance in important areas, this was a position that needed to be re-designed or reassessed subject to particular issues being addressed. The other position was rated as being low priority. This position will be phased out over the next two years.

### *Process for managing future requests for TA*

Recommendation 1: Before any position is agreed to, the following issues must be considered at a minimum by the requesting Ministry. Decision-makers for existing programs (both in AusAID and from the managing contractor) should adopt these criteria as the basis for assessing future requests for TA.

- Requests for TA outside our main programs need to be assessed in terms of how AusAID adds value – what we contribute other than funding and whether we are able to effectively manage the performance of the TA.
- Requests for extensions need to be assessed in terms of whether the Government continues to be committed to the reforms the TA is helping deliver, and accordingly whether the TA can therefore deliver on the outcomes agreed in their Terms of Reference (TORs).
- When considering requests for TA, particularly those that are not consistent with the above principles, to discuss with GOK the possibility of cost-sharing arrangements.

Recommendation 2: The TORs for each TA assignment should clearly articulate the expected outputs, capacity development goals, proposed approach (direct/hands-on or

guiding/supporting), exit strategy, review processes, TA's lines of accountability, and responsibilities of all parties including Ministry Head, counterparts and TA. TORs must be reviewed on a regular basis to track progress and address any issues arising. Where progress is severely hampered by issues that have arisen in the course of the assignment, the Ministry Head (or senior delegate) is responsible for taking appropriate actions including ending the assignment where there is no prospect for successful achievement of outcomes.

Recommendation 3: Every two years, the use of TA across the aid program will be reviewed to ensure prioritisation based on agreed development priorities and ensures consistency of approach. AusAID's APPR process provides a good mechanism for regular review and re-assessment. A report on progress in implementing recommendations from the Adviser Reviews will be prepared for presentation at the Australia-Kiribati Partnership Talks in the following year.

Recommendation 4: AusAID's contracts with service providers (specifically PACTAM) supporting recruitment processes should ensure that the right candidate is found rather than simply filling the position at the expense of quality. If a suitable person cannot be identified, AusAID's decision to support the position may need to be reassessed.

## 5. Next Steps

### *Timeframe and process for implementing review recommendations*

All aid program activities in Kiribati will need to adjust their approaches to using TA in accordance with the recommendations in this report. Where new programs are being designed, this report's recommendations will provide guidance on the design of components related to TA. Where existing programs are being implemented, AusAID activity managers and their GOK counterparts will need to assess existing practices related to the use of TA and adjust them to incorporate this review's recommendations. The Senior Aid Officer will provide high-level oversight to ensure that all programs take necessary steps to implement this review's findings. The recommendations of the review will be implemented by April 2011, prior to the next Australia-Kiribati Partnership Talks.

For the position that has been rated as low priority, the program will develop an exit strategy. This will identify, in consultation with GOK, when the adviser's contract finishes, what tasks the adviser still needs to complete and what would be an appropriate way of phasing-out the position, including relevant handover processes. Wherever possible, the existing contractual commitment with the adviser will be fulfilled. The exit strategy for this position will be reviewed by the Senior Aid Officer, Kiribati.

The program will reassess the position that has been rated as medium priority in accordance with the issues identified during the consultations for this review, namely seeking further engagement from relevant whole-of-government partners (in Australia) or other donors in the selection and in monitoring the performance of the position to ensure its effectiveness. Changes made or recommended ways forward for this position will be reported to the Senior Aid Officer, Kiribati.

## 6. Conclusion

TA remains an important way of contributing to the skills, knowledge and expertise that is needed to support Kiribati's development. However, it is an expensive mode of assistance, costing on average AUD280,000 per annum per position<sup>2</sup>. It will only be effective in very specific situations, where the right conditions are in place. It should be used judiciously to ensure that it contributes to effective development outcomes and represents value-for-money for both Kiribati and Australia.

Both governments need to be cautious, realistic and disciplined in how TA is used, to ensure it will be effective and represents value-for-money. This report has identified a number of measures that can be taken to ensure TA is used more cost-effectively and to achieve development priorities. The ongoing commitment of both governments will be needed to ensure that these measures are implemented and TA is an effective way for the aid program to contribute to Kiribati's development.

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<sup>2</sup> This includes recruitment, deployment, allowances (such as hardship allowance) and repatriation over the course of one financial year.



## Attachment A

Rank	Position	Function	Initial Rating	Rationale for rating	GOK response	Final Rating
1	Kiribati Institute of Technology (KIT) Principal	To assist MLHRD to re-establish efficient and effective strategic planning, management and administrative systems at KIT.	High	This in-line position is fundamental to the achievement of outputs under Component 2 (KIT Strengthening) of the Technical and Vocational Education and Training Sector Strengthening Program (TVETSSP). This role will facilitate the transition to international competency based standards at the KIT and establishing efficient management and administrative practice at KIT. There is currently a lack of local TVET expertise and therefore this in-line position is required for both operational and capacity building purposes. It is anticipated that one of the local deputy principals who receive mentoring and internationally recognised qualifications under the TVETSSP may be able to take over the position in the next two to five years. This position is to be reassessed in 2012.	TVETSSP is a priority program under Priority Outcome 2: Workforce Skills Development of the Australia-Kiribati Partnership for Development. It has been agreed between AusAID and the Government of Kiribati that this position is high priority as Kiribati currently lacks qualified, experienced staff to fulfil this role. Objectives of the program demand international best practice management to lead KIT through a period of significant reform and change. This position has the strong support of the Ministry of Labour.	High
2	Senior Education Management Specialist	To provide technical and advisory support to the Ministry of Education (MOE) Senior Management Team, in support of: effective implementation of the Ministry's Strategic Plan; relevant policy and planning activities; KEIP Phase 1 roll-out and Phase 2 planning; DP coordination and improved aid effectiveness, and; sector monitoring and reviews.	High	This advisor is considered vital to achieving outcomes related to Priority Outcome 1: Improve Basic Education of the Australia-Kiribati Partnership for Development. This position is designed to strengthen the capacity of the MOE's Senior Management Team. It will support senior management to undertake research on access, retention and quality learning so that target setting can be established for strategic planning and accountability purposes within the Ministry and for the Partnership. This position will be reviewed in 2011 but it is expected that this position would be required for up to five years before it is able to transition to a local government counterpart.	MOE senior management (Secretary, Deputy Secretary and Director of Education) have all been in their positions for less than two years. The Government of Kiribati (GOK) has recognised that an experienced Senior Adviser is a high priority for the Ministry; in order to provide long-term professional support to the Secretary and the MOE Senior Management Team, and to help MOE to establish and lead the sector reform process.	High
3	Kiribati Education Improvement Program (KEIP) Team Leader	To coordinate and manage technical and other support to GOK, in support of: effective implementation of the Ministry's Strategic Plan; implementation and roll-out	High	This position is considered vital to ensuring donor coordination and harmonisation as it relates to Priority Outcome 1 of the Partnership. The position will support MOE senior management to coordinate technical assistance inputs provided by all KEIP donors (AusAID, UNESCO and UNICEF). The position will focus on developing a strategy for	MOE has requested this support to coordinate the technical assistance inputs provided by donors. Previous support to the education sector lacked organisation which resulted in high transaction costs for MOE in terms of resources. This position	High

# Attachment A

		of KEIP; donor coordination and improved aid effectiveness; and facilities rehabilitation.		increasing alignment, harmonisation and related aspects of aid effectiveness. This position will be reviewed in 2011 but it is expected that the position would be required for up to five years before responsibilities are able to be managed independently by MOE.	has been requested by MOE to ensure donor harmonisation is able to facilitate change consistent with the intended outcomes of KEIP.	
4	KIT Operations Manager	To support the KIT Principal in the implementation of an intensive change of program at KIT.	High	This in-line position is fundamental to the achievement of outputs under TVETSSP - Component 2. This role is needed to establish efficient management and administrative practice (to an international standard) at KIT. There is currently a lack of local TVET expertise and therefore this in-line position is required for both operational and capacity building purposes. It is anticipated that the other local deputy principal who is receiving mentoring and internationally recognised qualifications under the TVETSSP will take on this role by 2012.	It is agreed between AusAID and GOK that the position is high priority as Kiribati currently lacks qualified, experienced staff capable of leading operations within the KIT as it transitions from a local technical college to a vocational training centre offering Australian-standard qualifications.	High
5	Facilities Rehabilitation Manager, MOE	To provide technical and advisory assistance to the MOE, supporting them to put into practice a sustainable and robust school facilities improvement framework. The intended outcome is to ensure healthy and safe school buildings and facilities, with timely and appropriate provision of essential materials, resources and equipment for schools.	High	The advisory position will provide targeted support to the Facilities Management Unit in MOE. Support will focus on the effective planning and rehabilitation of all primary schools (91 in total) across the 23 islands of Kiribati. In addition, the advisor will deliver professional development to the staff of the Facilities Management Unit. This position is to be funded with a view to transition the position into local systems in subsequent phases of KEIP.	MOE has recognised this as a critical gap in existing programming, and it is therefore identified as an area of high priority. Despite the Facilities Management Unit's significant responsibilities, the capacity of the Unit is constrained and at risk. Both the Manager and Project Officer have no prior knowledge or experience with facilities, so targeted support to implement the Facilities Management Plan is essential. GOK has reasonably requested assistance in the form of technical assistance to ensure this is not an inhibitor to progress against Priority Outcome 1 of the Partnership.	High
6	KIT ESL (English as a Second Language) Education Manager	To work within the English Department in KIT to develop and implement strategies and courses that will achieve TVETSSP objectives and	High	This position is fundamental for the implementation of strategies and curriculum development for the achievement of TVETSSP targets to increase KIT staff and students English proficiency levels. It is anticipated that local English teaching staff will increase their skills and qualifications to take over	As a priority program under the Partnership, TVETSSP has strong GOK support. GOK consider this position essential to achieving Partnership outcomes through the redevelopment and	High

## Attachment A

		targets related to improving KIT students and staff level of proficiency in English.		this role in subsequent phases of the TVETSSP program.	upgrade of KIT. English language is a major issue for workforce skills development in Kiribati and is an essential area for development under TVETSSP. There is a lack of sufficiently qualified local staff to deliver this training to international standards. It is a high priority to build the capacity of local trainers and students at KIT.	
7	TVET Coordinator	Responsible for coordinating the efficient and effective performance of TVETSSP, including planning, implementation, financial management, monitoring and evaluation, reporting and communications.	High	This position will work with a local team to ensure the effective and efficient performance of TVETSSP and effective delivery of outputs from the Ministry of Labour including the Senior Management team. This is a necessary leadership position to coordinate and drive the delivery of milestones and progress as they relate to TVETSSP.	It is agreed with GOK that this position is high priority as the Ministry of Labour has limited resources. Ministry staff currently lack TVET specific expertise and it is essential to build the capacity in this area. The terms of reference for the position have been negotiated through a consultative design process with the Ministry of Labour.	High
8	Senior TVET Planning Officer	To provide policy and planning advice and develop the capacity of staff at the Ministry of Labour under the TVETSS Program	High	This role is fundamental to building the capacity of staff at the Ministry of Labour in the areas of TVET policy and planning including establishing a policy framework for the TVET sector, modernising the apprenticeship and trade testing systems, establishing linkages with national human resource planning and identifying opportunities for international labour mobility within the TVET sector. Through the provision of essential TVET expertise where such is currently lacking in the Ministry of Labour, this role will be essential to achievement of targets under TVETSSP - Component 1. AusAID intends to transition this position to an in-line Ministry official in subsequent phases of TVETSSP.	It is agreed with GOK that this position is high priority as the Ministry of Labour has limited resources. Ministry staff currently lack TVET specific expertise and it is essential to build the capacity in this area. The terms of reference for the position have been negotiated through a consultative design process with the Ministry of Labour.	High
9	Customs Advisor	To provide mentoring to the Comptroller of Customs and Senior Customs officers especially on Post Clearance Audit, WTO Valuation,	Low	This position is designed to provide vital senior policy advice to assist GOK safeguard and increase revenues from customs related activities. It is identified specifically in the Implementation Strategy for Outcome 3: Improved Growth and Economic Management of the Australia Kiribati	GOK (through the Ministry of Finance) have identified customs advice as an urgent priority; hence the reclassification of this position from low to medium level priority.	Medium

## Attachment A

		Intelligence and Investigations and on expected changes in legislation and technology with a view to strengthen internal controls and procedures of the Kiribati Customs Service.		Partnership for Development. This position has been identified as a medium priority as customs related work is not a 'core competency' for AusAID.		
10	Human Resources Planning Adviser	To improve the capacity of Public Service Office (PSO) in Human Resources Development planning, policy development and management.	Low	Contextualised in the broader Australian Aid program in Kiribati, this position is of the lowest importance. The objectives of this role are to build organisational and individual capacity of the PSO and its staff: to improve and develop public sector reform, planning and financial management policies. Whilst the role indirectly provides benefits across all GOK Ministries regarding improved HR practices, the position does not directly relate to any of the three priority areas under the Partnership for Development. This position will be phased out over the next two years.	The PSO Secretary has agreed that the position be phased out over the next two years following the implementation of reforms to legislation National Conditions of Service currently underway (and relevant across Australia-Kiribati Partnership Outcome areas).	Low