

COUNTRY REPORT: KIRIBATI
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by Ms Miriam Teitiroro,
School for the Disabled, KIRIBATI, December 2006

Question 1: Government

1. How much support does your government give to each of the following?

- UNESCO's Millennium Development Goals
- Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper – (International Monetary Fund, IMF and World Bank)
- UNESCO's "Education for All Children by 2015" campaign
- Blindness Prevention Programs, eg Vision2020

Response:

Kiribati Government Contribution

We have not been able to get any information from the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development on the level of financial contributions to the UNESCO Millennium Development Goals & Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (International Monetary Fund, and World Bank, UNESCO's Education for all children by 2015 campaign or Blindness Prevention Programs).

We are aware that our Ministry of Education received a grant from UNESCO for the Education for All Children by 2015 campaign. Sadly none of this money helped to support the School for the Disabled. The Blindness Prevention Program is also new to us. However there have been radio and newspaper programmes under the Ministry of Health and Medical Services Nutrition Centre which have been used to encourage and motivate people to grow and eat more vegetables and fruit and to help them overcome night blindness conditions.

Question 2a. What (a) government legislation, (b) policies, and (c) programs are in place to ensure access and full participation in education for children with vision impairments?

Response:

Government Legislation and Policies

We have compulsory education in our legislation but it has never been enforced with regards to the blind and low vision students. At the moment our Government does not recognise the need for children with Disabilities including the blind and low vision to fully participate in education.

This is why in 1990, the school for the Disabled was established under the local Red Cross Organisation. The increasing need to have a special school for the Disabled led to the renovation work to our old national hospital buildings for classrooms to Disabled children. The children's disabilities include blindness & low vision, deafness, spina bifida, mental retardation, Downs Syndrome, muscular dystrophy, hydrocephalus, and other physical disabilities – plus three children who are autistic. There are currently 75 students attending school, made up of the following:

Blind and Low Vision Division – 12
Intellectually Handicapped Children – 25

The local Red Cross no longer runs the school – a committee of parents have taken over the running of the school. This has been a very unsatisfactory situation – parents do not have the needed skills for such a task, and we await the Government's fulfilling of its commitment to take over the School.

Question 2b. What evaluation mechanisms exist for these government legislation, policies, and programs?

Response:

To the best of our knowledge – there has been no evaluation mechanisms put in place to monitor or start needed services for the Disabled Community by the Government.

Question 3. Does your country have a National Education Plan, and if so, does the Plan:

- (a) focus on inclusive education, and
- (b) include provision for children with disabilities, including children with vision impairments?

Response:

3a There is a national Education Plan but it is not inclusive education – its really only for children without special needs.

3b There is no formal provision for children with disabilities, even though the Ministry of Education has provisions for all normal schools. Government does not recognise the School for the Disabled and does not help with financial support.

In the past five years the Government has contributed AUD 35,000 to the parent's organisation, who in turn used it for school running costs and teachers' salaries.

Parents have had to fund-raise for basic costs such as salaries for teachers, power supply, maintenance work, school resources etc, etc. We feel that our children's special school should be fully funded by the Government and also supply teachers. It is so unfair that some children are supported by Government and others are not.

Country-wide data

Question 4. Are there national data on the number of children and adults with disabilities, including those with vision impairments?

A National Disability Survey was carried out in 2005 – a copy of the report has been included in this report. Here is a brief summary of the data provided for blindness:

There is a total of one thousand, one hundred and forty six blind people in Kiribati, and one hundred and ninety are between the ages of 0-30.

Please note that there is only one school for the Disabled based on the main or capital island. All other islands do not have this service.

Question 5. Are there national data on the number of pre-school and school-age children with vision impairments who:

- a. are enrolled in education settings (mainstream and special school) – full-time and part-time?
- b. are not enrolled in education settings?
- c. have “dropped-out” of schooling (retention rates)
- d. receive community-based rehabilitation (CBR) services in their communities?

Response:

The data –
Pre School = 28
Primary School = 62
Junior Secondary School = 34
Senior Secondary School = 21

All School enrolments begin when the child reaches preschool-age and primary school age. Junior secondary school stage is a carry-on from the Primary School enrolment, and the few who are lucky enough to pass Senior Secondary Education must all enrol at their new schools.

There are no schools or facilities for any of the disabled children to be educated. Even our local teachers college does not train teachers for special needs education. As mentioned earlier, the only establishment catering for disabled children is the School for the Disabled, which is currently run by the parents.

Services for the Disabled in Kiribati has been long overdue, but it is also an area that the Government has not funded nor shown great interest in supporting.

There have been intermittent courses carried out by organisations such as the Red Cross or Church Groups. Due to lack of funds, they too ceased to operate.

The parents of Disabled children have asked the Government to take over the school – it is only proper that the needs of our children are recognised and catered for by our Government.

Organisations providing support and services

Question 6. Is there an association of blind citizens? Is it an active group?

Response:

Organisations providing support and services:

There is no organization catering for just the blind and low vision community – but the School for the Disabled looks after the needs of all the students who attend the school, and Te Toamatoa is another organization which also looks after the Disabled adult community. They are active and an inspiration to many struggling groups.

Question 7a. What national and international government and non-government development organisations (NGDOs) provide support to your country in the area of vision impairment?

Question 7b. What types of support do they provide (please list)?

Response:

Below please find a list of all Donors who have assisted the school's development since the parents took over the running of the school and all expenses in 2000.

Australian High Commission Kiribati

Physiotherapy aides Funds Acquittal – Jan, 2000

British High Commission Kiribati

Clinic extension & the Deaf Classroom Funds Acquittal – 3 March 2003

Desks, chairs, cupboards and shelves Funds Acquittal – 23 March 2003

Parent Empowerment Workshop Funds Acquittal – October 2002

Classroom Extension for the Deaf Funds Acquittal – Not required
between UK High Commission & Contractor

Chinese Embassy Kiribati

Student resources books and educational toys Acquittal – Not required

New Zealand Aid

Sponsored Workshops for teaching staff. Funds paid direct to NZ Trainers – Acquittal not required
Costs include fees, fares and accommodation of facilitators

New Zealand High Commission Kiribati

Contribution to staffing costs Funds Acquittal – 2 Feb 2003

Provision of a person to design a survey to establish the number of persons with a disability in Kiribati (to include all islands in Kiribati)

Water Tank Project Funds Acquittal – April 2003

Travel & Per diems for 3 teachers for Special needs training in NZ Funds Acquittal – 19 Jan 2004

Spare parts and Maintenance of Photocopier Funds Acquittal – Mid March 2004

Question 8. What training and professional development opportunities currently exist for teachers and CBR workers in the area of disability and special education?

For example, national and international university and college courses, braille courses, O&M courses, etc. Please list organisations/agencies that provide training and other support.

Response:

There are really very few opportunities for those looking after the needs of the disabled, to develop. Firstly the Kiribati Teachers College does not offer special needs education, and without this foundation qualification – it is very difficult to find a Donor who is open minded enough and flexible to put their funds into overseas training – the lack of Government commitment is a significant factor in donor reluctance.

We are grateful to the Foundation for the Blind for including us in this conference.

Question 9. What are some examples of “best practice” in education of children with disabilities, including children with vision impairments, in your country? Please describe how these “best practices” came about.

Response:

The best practice in the education of children with disabilities, including children with vision impairments is what our former NZ Principal and Trainer taught us. That involves preparing programmes for each child according to their abilities and disability. Included in this program is learning through play, the use of a variety of teaching techniques, lots of songs and dance, and a variety of teaching aids.

Question 10. Can you identify any deficiencies in the current provision of education services for children and youth with vision impairments? For example, curriculum and class activities.

Question 11. What are your country’s priorities for improving access to schools, curriculum, and programs for children with vision impairments?

Response to Questions 10 and 11:

The main deficiencies for our country are the provision of trained staff and recurrent costs to run the school on a professional basis. This is the responsibility of our Government and it is only through the recognition of the rights of the Disabled that they may eventually be obliged to treat them fairly.

There are many deficiencies in the provision of education for children and youths with disabilities, but we need to have the support and commitment of our Government to take the very first step. In the past we have not had major problems with assistance from many donors, but for their confidence, and our own, we need to change the attitudes of our decision makers and Cabinet to support the disabled.

Another thing that does not sit well with parents is why we do have to beg donors to support our children while our non disabled children are being looked after by the Government. Discrimination against our children is not acceptable and against the spirit of the Convention for the Rights of the Child.

Resources

Question 12. What types of resources are needed to support (a) teachers, (b) children and adults with vision impairments, (c) their parents and carers, (d) volunteers, and (e) others working in the field of vision impairment? Please identify specific human, financial, and physical resources.

Response:

- 1 Teachers’ resources are a priority.
- 2 Trained teachers to help teach and train staff. The current partially trained teachers were originally taken on as volunteers – the training needs to be professional and on-going.
- 3 Canes for blind mobility, Braille books, slates etc. We are talking about the very basic resources for starters.

Top priority for the school is a commitment for trained teachers and a committed budget from our Government to support the educational and social needs of the disabled.

Question 13a. Is there a resource centre or facility for the provision of resources for (a) pre-school and (b) school-age children with vision impairments?

For example, centre for braille production, provision of low-tech and high-tech adaptive technology, including low vision aids.

Response:

There are no centres providing resources for blindness or low vision students.

Education services

Question 14. What educational options currently exist for (a) pre-school and (b) school-age children with vision impairments?

Please include regular school and special school options.

Response:

As mentioned earlier – there are no services outside the school, and the school is not fully equipped to attend to the real needs of the students.

Mainstream schools do not accept or teach blind and low vision students.

Question 15a. How many teachers and CBR workers provide services to children with vision impairments, including children with additional disabilities?

Response:

In our school – there are nine teachers with some training, and some volunteers with no training. The partially trained teachers lack formal qualifications but have attended overseas trainings for the different divisional needs. These include a six-week training of one teacher in NZ through the Terry Small Foundation and the Foundation for the Blind.

Two other teachers have had some on the job training, including our teacher for the blind and low vision students (who is attending this ICEVI Forum). Another is the senior teacher for the IHC and multiple disabilities.

Our first teacher for the blind and low vision also received training from NZ – she has since been dismissed.

We are carrying on with very little ability and lots of love and care for the students.

Question 15b. Where are these teachers and CBR workers located?

(eg regular school, special centre, special school)

Response:

As far as we know, the human resources available are all based on Tarawa at our special school.

Question 16. What is the background and level of training (qualifications) of these teachers working in the field of vision impairment?

Response:

No recognised qualifications, little/some Braille literacy and some training on mobility.

Question 17. What are the training/professional development needs of teachers, CBR workers, parents, and education volunteers?

Please include needs in the areas of vision impairment and additional disabilities.

Response:

Teaching qualifications as a stepping stone, then special courses on how to educate the blind and low vision students.

Two teachers will need to be formerly trained in the education of the blind and low vision students. To gain the respect of fellow teachers in the Government Schools, they will also need to undertake the two or three year training as a basic foundation.

Please note that one of our former teachers has just completed Teachers College and attained a diploma at the end of his three-year training last month. We are looking for a donor to help us send this new teacher abroad to undertake a one-year training on special needs education.

Question 18. Can you recommend ways of promoting the *Education for All Children with Vision Impairment* (EFA-VI) campaign in your country?

Response:

As parents we see some real needs – we would like to have our children be able to read and eventually get jobs – but we know that with the current situation of our lack of trained staff and no financial stability, it won't be easy.

Question 19. Can you suggest ways of increasing demand for education of children with vision impairments, including children with additional disabilities?

Response:

Perhaps a needs analysis could be carried out by a qualified blind and low vision teacher to assess the professional side.

There will always be a need for education for all students and their parents. The demand is there, but we lack the facilities, trained staff and funds to run the school and meet its everyday needs.

Basic education and vocational training for blind and vision impaired students is a priority and need for this sector of our disabled students.