

Quick facts

- Kiribati is a small island nation of just over 100,000 people and is regarded as one of the world's poorest countries with few natural resources, heavy reliance on overseas assistance, climate change issues and significant urban overcrowding⁵.
- In Kiribati the unemployment rate is 69.4 per cent of the labour force (total working age population aged 15 and over), with young people accounting for more than half of all unemployed people⁶. This high rate is exacerbated by the fact that 57 per cent of the nation's population is under 25 years (36 per cent is under 15 years).
- In 2011 the Kiribati Institute of Technology replaced its carpentry course with the Certificate II in Construction course to ensure a direct pathway for graduates to the Certificate III in Carpentry at APTC in Suva, Fiji.
- All 16 I-Kiribati students who graduated from the APTC Certificate III in Carpentry in 2013 have secured employment.

- The Technical Vocational Education and Training Sector Strengthening Program (TVETSSP), funded by the Australian Government for the next 5 years, is supporting the Certificate II in Construction at Kiribati Institute of Technology.
- Six of the 16 APTC graduates are employed with McConnell Dowell Corporation, contractors for the Kiribati Road Rehabilitation Project.
- Tuari Reuera, a recent I-Kiribati graduate from APTC Certificate III in Carpentry, is now working for McConnell Dowell Corporation as the Carpentry Foreman on the Kiribati Road Rehabilitation Project.

⁵New Zealand Aid Programme, data online: <http://www.aid.govt.nz/where-we-work/pacific/kiribati>

⁶Kiribati 2010 Census, Volume 2: Analytical Report, pages 58 & 61, Kiribati National Statistics Office and the SPC Statistics for Development Programme, Noumea, New Caledonia, 2012. Online: http://www.mfed.gov.ki/wp-content/uploads/2011/12/Kiribati-2010-Census-Report_VOL2.pdf



Australian Government
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

CREATING SKILLS FOR LIFE

IMPACT Case Study

Supporting a Younger Labour Force



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Improving youth employment in Kiribati

Australia-Pacific Technical College has partnered with local agencies in Kiribati to ensure that the latest carpentry graduates all have jobs - a significant achievement for a nation endeavoring to reduce unemployment rates.

Kiribati is a small island nation of just over 100,000 people and is regarded as one of the world's poorest countries¹ with few natural resources, heavy reliance on overseas assistance, climate change issues and significant urban overcrowding².

The unemployment rate in Kiribati is 69.4 per cent of the labour force (total working age population aged 15 and over), with young people accounting for more than half of all those who are unemployed³. This high rate has a direct influence on future growth of the local economy due to the fact that 57 per cent of the nation's population is under 25 years old (36 per cent is under 15 years).

To increase opportunities for local people to gain employment in Kiribati, Australia-Pacific Technical College (APTC) is partnering with local TVET institutes to provide carpentry training.

"Employment in countries such as Kiribati has a direct link to reducing poverty in a community where youth unemployment is very high and growing," says James Knynenburg, Director of APTC School of Trades and Technology in Suva.

The Technical Vocational Education and Training Sector Strengthening Program (TVETSSP), funded by the Australian Government for the next 5 years, is supporting the delivery of the Certificate II in Construction at Kiribati Institute of Technology (KIT). Students who graduate from this course can then complete the Certificate III in Carpentry at APTC in Fiji.

In 2011, KIT replaced its carpentry course with the certificate course to ensure a direct pathway for graduates to APTC. This also reduces the time needed for KIT graduates to complete their studies at APTC.

Sixteen I-Kiribati students received their Certificate III in Carpentry from APTC in 2013. The majority of these graduates are under 25 and all of them are now in paid employment.

This exceptional result is in part due to the TVETSSP, which aims to help graduates move into the workplace by connecting them with potential employers.

The TVETSSP Team Leader, Antoine Barnaart, says these 16 graduates are acknowledged by their APTC trainers in Fiji as being "some of the best to have studied at APTC".

"These special KIT graduates were set a very tough task and that was to go to APTC, work and study hard, and be good ambassadors for KIT and Kiribati," says Antoine.

The employment of just one person in Kiribati benefits many others, making this partnership between KIT, APTC and TVETSSP invaluable to local communities and as a means to help break the nation's cycle of youth unemployment.

"Most I-Kiribati who secure employment not only support their immediate family, but they also support their extended family," says James from APTC.

For example, within just one week of graduating from the carpentry course at APTC, Tuari Reuera began working for global engineering company McConnell Dowell Corporation - contractors for the Kiribati Road Rehabilitation Project. He is now Carpentry Foreman in charge of a team of nine staff, and is also regularly entrusted with the role of Supervisor.

"It was a great pressure for us to study at APTC but it gave us new adventures and international skills and we can get a job more easily," says Tuari.

Tuari now supports his family and pays school fees for his sisters.

"I would like to thank APTC very much for the opportunity they have given us," Tuari says.

Five other APTC graduates are also now working for McConnell Dowell Corporation and are already developing an excellent reputation as skilled tradesmen.

"Because of their work ethic, skills and teamwork, KIT and APTC graduates are now in demand and are the first option when this company recruits carpentry tradespeople," says Antoine.

The Kiribati Road Rehabilitation Project is one of a large number of infrastructure projects being implemented in Kiribati, offering local and international employment prospects.

James believes that "it is important that as many I-Kiribati as possible obtain employment on these projects" to ensure long term local employment, particularly at semi-skilled and skilled levels.

"The KIT-APTC partnership is a good role model in demonstrating that strong TVET course pathways can eventually lead to meaningful employment," James says.

The partnership also focuses on strengthening the planning and coordination of TVET by the Kiribati Ministry of Labour and Human Resources Development, while also supporting Kiribati Institute of Technology to improve the quality and quantity of its training.

¹ *Encyclopaedia Britannica*: www.britannica.com

² *New Zealand Aid Programme*, data online: <http://www.aid.govt.nz/where-we-work/pacific/kiribati>

³ *Kiribati 2010 Census, Volume 2: Analytical Report, pages 58 & 61, Kiribati National Statistics Office and the SPC Statistics for Development Program, Noumea, New Caledonia, 2012. Online: http://www.mfed.gov.ki/wp-content/uploads/2011/12/Kiribati-2010-Census-Report_VOL2.pdf*



APTC "KIT Graduate Class" with TVETSSP Team Leader and other dignitaries including HE Anote Tong, Kiribati President, Australian High Commissioner, Mr George Fraser and Mr Isikeli Tuituku of the ANZ Bank.



Tuari at work

Peer career inspiration

APTC graduates from Kiribati are inspiring other local young people to consider professional development and alternative careers.

Tuari Reuera, a recent I-Kiribati graduate from APTC Certificate III in Carpentry, now not only works as a carpenter, but is also using his new carpentry and leadership skills to head a team of nine local employees on the Kiribati Road Rehabilitation Project.

"I work with many boys who don't have skills like those I got from APTC," says Tuari. "They see what I can do with carpentry and so they want to do better and I don't think they thought that way before, it is new to them."

Tuari decided to enroll in the carpentry course after he heard an advertisement on the radio. He now enjoys mentoring and inspiring local young people to become carpenters.

In addition to creating role models for young people, the APTC training is also encouraging women to consider a career in carpentry. Even though there has only been one female graduate to date, this clearly demonstrates that women can also successfully complete a trade course and secure employment in this industry.

Antoine Barnaart, Team Leader of the Technical Vocational Education and Training Sector Strengthening Program, which is supporting the Certificate II in Construction at Kiribati Institute of Technology, believes the training has "dramatically increased the graduates' confidence and motivation to succeed, as well as their social standing and respect".

"This was reflected in the celebratory welcome-back function that was hosted by the Australian High Commissioner and the [Kiribati] President for them when they returned from APTC," Antoine says.

Career planning

Training is opening new opportunities for I-Kiribati youth and students, but they still rely on help to transition to paid employment, according to a survey of recent graduates conducted by Antoine Barnaart, Team Leader of the TVETSSP.

Local work for local people

Initial feedback from employers of KIT and APTC carpentry graduates indicates that they have already established a good reputation for their work ethic, skills and teamwork.

"One employer has reported that the graduates not only have good technical skills, but after the initial orientation into the workplace, were very quickly able to work as a strong team," says James Knynenburg, Director of APTC School of Trades and Technology in Suva. He says that the employers also highly value the "good, strong knowledge and awareness of occupational health and safety" that the graduates learnt as part of their APTC training.

Six of the 16 graduates are now employed with McConnell Dowell Corporation, contractors for the Kiribati Road Rehabilitation Project. Project Manager of the project, Mark Liersch, believes that the graduates are "very impressive and talented young tradespeople".

"What impressed us were their work-ready technical skills," says Mark. "Equally important is their understanding and commitment to occupational health and safety and their ability to immediately work within our existing teams."

APTC graduate and now Carpentry Foreman for the project, Tuari Reuera, says that employers appreciate them because of their skills and the fact that they are local people ready to work at a time when carpenters are highly sought after. "They need people for the job and what we did for them is very fast," says Tuari. "While we work with them I know that they trust me with what I do."

There are significant benefits for local companies and major infrastructure project contractors to hire highly skilled local people rather than to source workers from overseas. It saves time and money and they are also able to work more closely with communities to ensure projects meet local needs.

Tuari believes that employing local people in highly skilled roles for the roads project means that "the people of Kiribati are beginning to develop and follow the international standards. In the future I believe maybe the government will not rely on help from other contractors outside Kiribati and will rely on its people because they are capable of doing different work - this is a good thing [because] it will mean more jobs for the people."