

KIRIBATI



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NGO Submission to the United Nations Universal Periodic Review (UPR)

Kiribati Family Health Association (KFHA) 2014.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Kiribati Family Health Association (KFHA) is a leading NGO service provider in advocating for reproductive health care and in fostering the rights for all individuals in Kiribati. KFHA is a duly registered NGO working in close collaboration with the Government of Kiribati through its various agencies including the Ministry of Health and Medical Services, NGOs and other key stakeholders in addressing HIV&AIDs, STI and Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights including Family Planning issues.
- 1.2 KFHA under the guidance of its National Council is working towards creating an environment where women, men and young people have control over their own bodies, and are able to make right choices for their own lives. KFHA's work is around the rights to health, information, and freedom of expression, right to education and in raising awareness on a range of basic human rights.

2. VISION:

- 2.1 KFHA envisages a place in which all I-Kiribati have access to the information and services they need on reproductive health care (including Family Planning), HIV, AIDs and STI).

3. MISSION:

- 3.1 KFHA aims to improve the quality of life of individuals and Families by providing services and awareness programs on reproductive health care, family planning and the individual's rights, especially for the most marginalized women, men and young people. KFHA shall strive to eliminate sexually transmitted infections (STI) and to reduce the spread and impact of HIV & AIDs by ensuring that women and young girls are not put at unnecessary risks that could lead them to acute illness and ultimately death. Service provided includes: Voluntary Counseling Test (VCT), Pap smear Test, Family Planning Services, HIV/STI Test, and Circumcision, Antenatal bookings (PPTCT) for pregnant mothers, Domestic Violence Victims Counseling and referral services.
4. By this submission, KFHA acknowledges the Kiribati Government for considerable progresses towards the implementation of various recommendations from its first UPR experiences. Further we acknowledge the two NGOs from Kiribati (*K-WAN and Te Toa Matoa*) for their submission in the last review that has prompted NGO's like ours to contribute towards the dynamic UPR process and raise issues that go to our fundamental rights that the Government can address in this reporting cycle. KFHA recognizes the value of the UPR process in creating a strong human rights culture globally and especially in Kiribati.
5. KFHA recognizes that despite government's commitments and best efforts to improving the situation of human rights in Kiribati, there exist various challenges and gaps and through this report, KHFA would like to highlight some of these issues that exist and require further discussion for improvement by the Kiribati Government.

6. Key Issues:

Right to Health

- 6.1 According to quantitative reports, comments, observations and experiences of citizens in Kiribati, the provision of good and quality health by doctors and nurses continue be a pressing concern In some instances, doctors were not available when he/she was needed by patients. KFHA notices with concerns that often the care provided to patients also by nurses lacked the required professional and nursing care, where patients were often left to care for themselves. While we recognize the resource implications and challenges, the need for quality care is a basic need that we demand for our people. The quality of medical and nursing care provided in hospitals can only improve with strict health protocols, policies, stronger accountability and greater budget allocation towards the Ministry for Health. Continued up-skilling and training for medical personnel is important if not crucial, so that quality health care is provided to the people of Kiribati.

- A) Recommendation: Recommendation 72 requires the Government to *implement programs aimed at ensuring that its people have quality health services* and it is KFHA's position that this recommendation needs to be treated with outmost urgency by the government and continues further work and implementation particularly in ensuring quality health services is available.
- B) KFHA urges the Government to conduct a sampling assessment of doctors and nurses by sending questionnaires to the people of Kiribati on South Tarawa and on outer islands to identify the accurate evidences on this concern, and to ensure that practical solutions are identified for the purposes of improving medical and nursing care in Kiribati.
- C) KFHA urges that the Government ensures through an increased allocation of the national budget to the improvement of basic services at the main hospitals and;
- D) That government pursues funding options through donor partners and its bi-lateral arrangements with governments towards the general improvement of health services in Kiribati, especially the up-skilling and training of medical personnel, the hiring of more skilled medical and nursing personnel and general improvement of hospital standards.

6.2 Hospital Wards and toilets: The state of government hospitals is in urgent need of improvement and in most cases the general wards at the hospital are not well resourced or up to required health standard. Patients discomfort is visible in hospital wards, ad that there are often no mattresses or pillows for their beds, and due to lack of maintenance on the fans or cooling systems, the wards can be very hot. Often due to lack of beds, patients are also required to bring their own mats from home and due to the lack of resources, patients are expected to bring their own comforts to use in the ward and the challenge is that often people are not able to bring some of these necessities especially those who come in from the outer islands of Kiribati.

KFHA notes with concerns, the deteriorating conditions of the hospital toilets which are both unhealthy and a threat to public health in itself as they are often not cleaned.

Recommendation: KFHA urges the Government to;

- E) Increase budgetary allocation and if also to pursue external funding for the immediate upgrading and repair work on all hospital wards and toilets and conduct a general cleaning of all its hospitals.
- F) Purchase needed equipment such as x-ray machines or Pap smear tests etc. as well as purchase or seek donor support or donations for proper hospital beds, beddings, mattresses, and medicines in the hospitals and to ensure that proper health diagnosis are made by health professionals.
- G) Ensure that strict medical protocols and policies are enforced to ensure proper health standards are maintained such as use and cleanliness of wards, toilets and hospital surroundings.

6.3 Family planning issues: General family planning issues and sexual and reproductive health rights issues continue to be hindered if not prevent by various religious bodies in Kiribati. The high cost of living and often for practical reasons, the need for proper family planning is important and this information needs to be made available to the general population in Kiribati, however we recognize that cultural and religious taboo's often makes it difficult for people especially women to access let alone have autonomy of their bodies when it comes to family planning.

- H) **Recommendation:** KFHA urges that the Government to Coordinate and encourage Churches and Community leaders work collaboratively on this issue and identify

practical ways for women, men and young people have access to information around family planning according to their choices.

6.4 Increase Teenage pregnancies: Teenage pregnancies are contributing to a population expansion in Kiribati and increase in population is exhausting limited resources as well as contributing to overcrowding in Tarawa. One cause of increasing teenage pregnancy apart from limited access to information on family planning and safe sex is the high consumption of alcohol that is easily accessible by young people. This is fuelled by the increased consumption of alcohol in public areas and these are contributing to a lot of social issues especially teenage pregnancy.

H) Recommendation: KFHA urges the Government, Local councilors, community leaders and Churches to work collaboratively in enforcing or amending liquor laws to address under-age drinking and/or ensure that alcohol is not served to minors and young people.

6.5 Referral of patients to overseas countries for further treatment:

While efforts are being pursued by the Government to provide for health care, there is a need to develop and strengthen specialist health care for people in Kiribati, especially for treatment of diseases such as cervical cancer and liver and related organ diseases. For serious diseases that are cannot be treated in Kiribati, the government through the Ministry of Health operates an overseas referral systems. However the concern with this system is that often governments are do not send patients especially those with cervical cancer and liver problems for overseas treatment. Also there needs to be clarity and accountability of the referral systems as often some patients are denied the opportunity for overseas treatment without any real clarification from the authorities.

I) Recommendation: KFHA urges the Government to request for more funding from donors and to ensure that all patients needing immediate evacuations are provided that opportunity.

J) Further Government should seek international assistance for the provisions of specialist medical services especially organ and other non-communicable diseases experts to conduct clinics in Kiribati.

6.6 Patient's Food Ration at hospital

KHFA notes with concerns the quality of food provided in national hospitals which needs to be reviewed and more balanced meals need to be served to patients in hospital. While the right to health includes accessing medical services, the quality and nutritional values of the meals served in government hospitals is often below standards. There is an urgent need for improve standards and nutritional value of foods in hospitals urgently.

Recommendation:

K) As a matter of urgency, the Government should review the food served to patients in government hospitals and ensure that all meals are nutritious and healthy as they contribute to recovery and patient wellbeing.

L) Government should increase funding towards hospitals meals and if possible charge a minimum fee to ensure that quality is maintained in all foods served at hospitals.

7. Right to Education

7.1 Teachers and Education Curriculum

When studying dropout rate of students from primary and secondary schools, most of children drop outs are a result of the teaching methods and often the curriculum used by teachers' often does not suit the learning needs of the children. The Education Curriculum is in need of urgent review and must be suited to internally accepted modules to ensure that all Kiribati children have access to quality education. In some cases teachers have gained certificates, Diploma and Degree but never do refresher training in order to refresh ideas on new teaching methods and new changes to the current situations and therefore there is a need to further train or up-skill teaching qualifications to ensure that they are responding to the changing

educational needs of children and other international best practices. Further there is a need to ensure that classrooms and school facilities are upgraded.

Recommendation:

- M) Recommendation: KFHA urges the Government to Review Education Act and implement needed changes to ensure the improvement to the right to education
- N) A training need analysis could be conducted to improve the Education Curriculum including the establishment of a monitoring body that will provide oversight and control of Examination papers and contents of education syllabus to ensure gender balance and relevant and fair systems of exams etc.
- O) Ensure that teacher's pays are reviewed and adjustments made to attract and retain qualified and experienced teachers in Kiribati.

7.2 School Children to access to toilet facilities:

The right to education is an important right in Kiribati and KFHA notes with concerns that often government run schools especially in Tarawa do not have proper toilet facilities in schools and if they do, often the toilets are not working. This often means that students use alternative means to relieve themselves and not only does this affect their learning experiences but also not conducive to proper hygiene and health standards. Government schools ought to be upgraded and government must ensure that proper inspections are made on its schools to ensure that facilities are in a working condition.

- P) **Recommendation:** KFHA urges the Government to assess all schools established on Tarawa and on the outer islands to make sure toilet facilities are in good working conditions and that schools facilities are upgraded and improved to ensure children are in an environment that protects and safeguards their rights, especially to education and health rights.

7.3 Comprehensive Sexual Education:

It has been requested that Comprehensive Sexual Education should be included in the Education Curriculum which is children oriented as to lesson learned by teenage on sexual abuse issues and to be aware of the bad impact of this issue (refer to Training Manual "ALL IN ALL" produced by KFHA to Ministry of Education as a guideline on how to develop training program on Sexual and Reproductive Health.

Recommendation:

- Q) KFHA urges Government to review Education Act and to ensure sexual education is included for implementation at all schools.

8. Rights to employment

8.1 We acknowledge and recommend the Government for implementing recommendation number --- related to work benefits that are discriminatory to women at work place especially on maternity leave and leave grants. Further we acknowledge the increasing number of civil servants position being held by women in Kiribati. There are women holding key positions including an as government Secretaries, Ministers, MPs and Ambassadors.

In accordance to that, there are new issues on rights to employment would like to include in this submission, and to make sure is considered for implementation. While we recognize that government is promoting gender equality through appointments in key positions, there is a need to further strengthen this recruitment process and access to employment through proper recruitment processes that are open and accountable.

Recommendation:

- R) KFHA urges the Government to establish proper recruitment process that will allow all persons to equally access employment opportunities.

9. Domestic Violence and Violence against Children

The increasing nature of violence against women and children has been concerning and is clearly documented in Kiribati. These acts of violence and particularly sex abuse of children

continues to be an issue of concern and requires a coordinated approach by government, civil society and the religious bodies in Kiribati to properly address and ensure that tougher penalties are in place to protect women and children. While KFHA congratulates the Government of Kiribati for the successful passing of the Family Peace Act and its efforts to address the worrying trends of violence against women, the government must begin the process of educating the communities in Kiribati about the new law as well as ensure that other laws especially the very old Penal Code must be reviewed.

Recommendation:

10. KFHA urges Government to immediately implement *Te Rau Nte Mwenga Act 2014*, *Children, Young People and Family Welfare Act 2013* for further strengthen the protection of women and children in Kiribati
11. Government must as a matter of urgency create awareness of the new laws and ensure that all police officers and responsible agencies receive proper training and awareness of the new law.
12. Government must with urgency review existing criminal laws and strengthen penalties for sexual abuse and crimes against children, sex crimes generally and also stricter penalties for those found guilty of committing violence against women.