

Situation Report Template

Situation Report 3 Coronavirus – Kiribati 7 April 2020

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Part 1: The Overall Situation

- **Areas that have been affected?**

To date, there have been no cases of COVID-19 confirmed in Kiribati. Communities throughout the country, however, are aware of the threat of this virus and are starting to think about ways they can prevent the spread, when and if it arrives in their country.

ChildFund Kiribati works with communities in Betio, located in the country's capital, South Tarawa. These communities have been participating in awareness-raising activities delivered by Betio City Council, ChildFund Kiribati, and Red Cross. In addition, ChildFund Kiribati has been visiting households throughout Betio to distribute information and provide guidance on COVID-19 prevention and improved hygiene and handwashing practices. Each household is also provided with a supply of soap. The team aim to visit 2,200 households (17,600 people) by Easter.

- **What services or infrastructure have been affected?**

The Government of Kiribati has now placed the country on Alert Level 2. This level is issued when a person is under investigation (person meets symptoms and travel history). The response actions are: (1) Awareness to all levels of the public at large; (2) Gatherings are not encouraged (at this time the number of people that constitute a gathering has not been defined); (3) Physical spacing between people is 2 meters.

In addition to these response actions, the Government has closed schools and education institutions. Domestic flights have also been curtailed to some Outer Islands.

- **Any relevant background information about areas affected?**

The Government of Kiribati has implemented strict border controls, whereby no person can enter Kiribati if they have been in a country with a confirmed case of COVID-19 in the past 14 days. To date, there has not been one confirmed case of COVID-19 in the country and the government's key prevention strategy has been to stop people from affected countries entering Kiribati.

Disease outbreak has always been a major risk to Kiribati's communities. For families in South Tarawa, cramped living conditions, poor access to healthy food, water, and sanitation, and limited healthcare facilities means that disease can spread quickly. With a lack of resources and an over-

burdened health system, as well as high rates of non-communicable diseases (diabetes, heart disease, and lung disease), Kiribati is not equipped to cope with a major epidemic.

Recent statistics show that approximately 22 percent of Kiribati's population lives beneath the "basic needs" poverty line. Many I-Kiribati people live in unregulated housing without access to clean water, sanitation or other basic hygiene utilities.

Kiribati also has a high rate of tuberculosis (TB) and diabetes. The country had an estimated TB incidence of 349 per 100,000, in 2018, and an estimated prevalence of diabetes in adults aged 25–64 years of 29%.

At this time, Kiribati does not have the equipment required to test for COVID-19.

- **Total number of people impacted: number of adults? Children? and women? Disabled people?**

There are no confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Kiribati, at this stage. Airline passengers from the last international flight arrived 19 days ago are still being monitored. These individuals have displayed no symptoms but specimens for testing have been sent to Australia on a flight that brought urgent medical supplies into the country.

As schools and educational facilities are now closed, families and children are starting to feel the impacts of COVID-19 restrictions. At this time, there is no at-home education support and it will be challenging for many caregivers to support their children's education in the home. With children being out of school, this means that they will often be unsupervised, which raises a number of child protection issues that must be monitored.

- **What actions have the government taken?**

- To date, the border remains closed to international services. There has been no announcement as to when flights will resume. With borders closed, supplies brought in by air will be limited.
- The Government has been broadcasting messages about hygiene, handwashing, and social distancing via radio and text messages. This Government is also planning to erect billboards but has not announced the locations yet.
- Communication materials have now been approved by the Government, which the ChildFund Kiribati team have been distributing in the Betio communities.
- The Ministry of Health and Medical Services (MHMS) are investigating reports that local people have been going out to fishing boats, which is not allowed under the current restrictions.

Part 2: The Situation in Areas Where ChildFund Kiribati Works

- **What issues are children, families and communities in these areas facing? (closed schools, home confinement / isolation, food shortages, safety concerns, health issues, etc.)**

Schools and educational facilities were closed from Monday 30 March onwards. At this time, there is no at-home educational support and it is often difficult for parents and caregivers to support their children's education in the home. Not only will children miss out on learning and progressing their education during this time, but there are also a number of child protection

issues that arise. For instance, with no schools open children are largely unsupervised, which can place them in vulnerable or dangerous situations.

Kiribati also has one of the highest rates of intimate partner violence in the Asia Pacific Region (Asia and the Pacific SDG Progress Report 2020). Therefore, as the situation intensifies in Kiribati it is likely that rates of gender-based violence will increase, which puts women and children at risk.

ChildFund Kiribati actively shares information about child safeguarding and child protection with the Betio communities, and has included this in their awareness raising activities.

- **Child protection risks caused by coronavirus? (for example mental health problems, psychological distress, domestic violence, elder care, child labor)**

In stakeholder coordination meetings, ChildFund Kiribati continues to raise awareness around the risks that COVID-19 restrictions place children particularly in relation to neglect, distress and family disruption. As discussed above, there is concern that as children are now out of school, they will be largely unsupervised, which will mean they will miss out on their education and may be put into dangerous situations. Also, with the added stress on families caused by COVID-19 restriction, it is likely that intimate partner violence will increase, which could add to their children's psychological distress.

As this situation evolves in Kiribati, ChildFund will work within government coordination mechanisms to ensure children's psychosocial needs are considered in any COVID-19 response activities.

- **How many of our household beneficiaries are affected?**

No households have been infected by COVID-19 at this time.

Part 3: ChildFund Kiribati's Preparation, Response and/or Recovery action

- **Planned, desired or ongoing response action – inside or outside current operational areas?**

ChildFund Kiribati continues to coordinate with key stakeholders, including the Betio Town Council, Red Cross, UNICEF, Caritas, Ministry of Health and Medical Services, WHO, and community representatives.

At this time, the ChildFund team are focusing on awareness raising activities and the distribution of soap, hygiene and handwashing communication materials. Starting on 30 March, ChildFund Kiribati, Betio Town Council and Red Cross have been working together to deliver community information sessions. To date, these stakeholders have conducted 24 maroros (community meetings) across Betio.

The ChildFund Kiribati team have also commenced household visits throughout Betio. The team are providing guidance on COVID-19 prevention practices and distributing Ministry of Health and Medical Services communication materials on improved handwashing and hygiene. The

team are also providing each household with large cakes of soap that can be cut into smaller cakes, which will support the supply of soap within homes. It is planned that 2,200 household (approximately 17,600 people) will be visited before Easter.

To date, the number of people that have participated in these activities are as follows:

- Through the community awareness-raising activities (maroros): 436 adult males, 607 adult females, 132 boys, 154 girls (Total 1,329)
- Through the household visits: The ChildFund team have met with 1,510 Households, of which there were 1203 adult males, 1,917 adult females, 481 boys, 522 girls (Total 4,123).

Prior to the maroro events, on 27 March, ChildFund Kiribati team quickly mobilized to provide awareness to Kiribati Institute of Technology (KIT) students, just as the institution was closing. The number of attendees at this event was 144 (63 males/ 81 females).

ChildFund is also utilizing social media to share prevention and awareness raising messages. The ChildFund Kiribati team update the social media sites once a day and have a significant community following. The team are also considering the use of radio.

ChildFund Kiribati is also working with UNICEF, WHO and Ministry of Health and Ministry Service to discuss creating a cohort of volunteers to assist with awareness prevention in South Tarawa and the Outer Islands. Volunteers are to be recruited and then be given one day's training. Logistics are still to be determined.

Who are we partnering or collaborating with to provide our action?

As mentioned, ChildFund Kiribati's partners include Betio Town Council, Ministry of Health and Medical Services (MHMS), Office of the President, WHO, UNICEF, Caritas, Red Cross and ChildFund New Zealand.

- What kind of activities or interventions are being provided by Government, WHO, Red Cross, UNICEF, other?

The Government of Kiribati has raised the Alert Level to 2, the Ministry of Health and Medical services has issued a helpline number, should anyone suspect they or their family member has contracted COVID-19. The Government are also continuing to implement strict border controls.

Over the last week, the Government has printed IEC materials for distribution. They have also sent prevention messaging via the mobile phone network and through radio.

- What support does Government or communities need?

Considerable. In the event of an outbreak, the hospital in South Tarawa, the country's capital, is significantly short of equipment and supplies.

There is now a sense of urgency among stakeholders to educate communities on improved hygiene, handwashing and social distance practices before heavier restrictions are placed on people's movement. While Kiribati is still at Level 2 Alert, this provides an opportunity to disseminate information and hygiene kits, but needs it be done expeditiously.

- **How is ChildFund linked with coordination structures: NDMO? Office of the President? MoH? MoE? Other NGOs? Cluster groups? Other?**
 - The coordinated effort between stakeholders in Betio has resulted in the rollout of the awareness campaign, which started on Monday 30 March.
 - The Government has recently established a Health Emergency Operations Centre, which is led by Ministry of Health and Medical Services, UNICEF and WHO. This group meets three times a week. ChildFund has advocated that civil society organizations should also be included in meetings at appropriate times.
 - It is believed that the Office of the President will share a national COVID-19 plan soon.

- **Next steps**
 - ChildFund Kiribati will continue awareness raising activities in Betio. These activities started on Monday 30 March and will continue until Wednesday 8 April, eight days in total.
 - The ChildFund Kiribati team will continue the distribution of hygiene kits to 2200 households.
 - ChildFund will continue to support Betio City Council and work with Ministry of Health and Medical Services, WHO and Red Cross in the planning and rollout of the awareness campaign with a particular emphasis on prevention.
 - The ChildFund team are available to assist Teitoiningaina's (Catholic Women's Association) Health Champions, UNICEF and WHO on scaling up the awareness campaign in South Tarawa.

Part 4. Below Sections for Internal Use Only

- Give information about ChildFund’s current projects

Project N°	Not affected	Low/medium incidence (eg. activities in suspended schools/communities, with the possibility of extension)	High Incidence	Expected response (if relevant)
Positive Places to Live	N/A			ChildFund’s work is subject to Alert Levels. Lockdown (Level 3) will mean a suspension in activities.

- Are there any advocacy and communication actions being undertaken?

Refer to questions above. ChildFund Kiribati is being instrumental in advocating for action both in terms of coordination of key stakeholders in Betio and for the Government to respond with the dissemination of IEC materials

- Number of estimated cases of infection in the communities where we s have projects (if available)

None at this stage.

- Possible sources of funding

We are working of existing funding. The project can absorb COVID-19 activities within its current budget.

- Provide information about possible sources of funding for preparedness or response activities?

Donor	Projects	Amount (Euro)	Requested? (Y/N)	Confirmed? (Y/N)

- Budget

- Outline if there is any need of changes in project budgets? Or any extra budget needed?

Not necessary at this stage.

- Media/Communications

- Facebook? Social media? Government communications?

The team are utilizing Facebook and social media sites at this time to share prevention messaging with Kiribati communities. The Government mainly disseminates prevention messages via radio. The team, however, are currently considering if there is a role for them to play on radio.

- **Programme support needed or requested from HO – whether onsite or remote.**
Forwarding useful IEC materials; information about current responses and practices in under-resourced and poor countries.

- **Staffing and Security**
 - **Which staff are continuing working?**
All staff

 - **Who is managing the preparation activities and response?**
Country Director, Program Manager and Operations Manager

 - **Safety and security risks?**
The office premises are safe and secure.

 - **Safety and security mitigation plans?**
If there is civil unrest or Level 3 imposed, the office will be closed. The Management Group will communicate electronically and/or off-premises.