

State of the Media: Kiribati



State of the Media: Kiribati

This study was led and designed by ABC International Development (ABCID), informed by our Pacific partners. The University of Adelaide's (UoA) Stretton Institute were implementation partners across the 12 countries studied. Fieldwork and data analysis was conducted by Pacific researchers. We would like to thank all the expert advisers and study participants for their time and generous contributions.

The State of the Media: Kiribati study is delivered as part of the Pacific Media Assistance Scheme (PACMAS), an ABC International Development (ABCID) managed program funded by the Australian Government through the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT). Data was collected and initial findings distributed in 2024, but the reports are published in 2025.

Any opinions represented in this report are those of the authors and research participants and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Australian Government, the Australian Broadcasting Corporation or the University of Adelaide.

Photos in this report are from ABCID programs, ABC staff, and ABC archives, unless otherwise specified.

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Mangroves in a lagoon, South Tarawa. (Vicki Kerrigan)

ACRONYMS

4G	fourth generation of wireless internet services
ABC	Australian Broadcasting Corporation
AI	artificial intelligence
AM	amplitude modulation
ATHKL	Amalgamated Telecom Holdings Kiribati Limited
BIMBA	Boutokaan Inaomataia ao Mauriia Binabinaine Association
BPA	Broadcasting and Publications Authority
EMCS	East Micronesia Cable System
FM	frequency modulation
GEDSI	gender equality, disability and social inclusion
ICT	information and communications technology
IPTV	internet protocol television
KHz	kilohertz
LGBTIQ+	lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer and other sexually and gender diverse people
MW	medium wave
N/A	not applicable
PacLII	Pacific Islands Legal Information Institute
TTM	Te Toa Matoa



Bairiki, Tarawa. (Vicki Kerrigan)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report provides an up-to-date, national-level snapshot of the state of the media in Kiribati. It outlines Kiribati's media industry, which is small compared with similarly sized Pacific Island countries. It also looks at how access to media and communications remains challenging due to the geographical spread of its islands, which are dispersed across a vast area of the Pacific Ocean. The following themes were identified in the research.

Financial challenges threaten media sustainability

Kiribati's local media industry has faced diminished funding, with the state-owned Broadcasting and Publications Authority (BPA) relying on minimal government funding and advertising revenue to stay afloat. Further, BPA's Radio Kiribati has limited working equipment, which has led to periodic disruptions to transmission.

Unstable internet connectivity impacts online access

Internet connectivity has limited reach across Kiribati because the country's islands are so widely dispersed. Some outer islands have no internet access. Compounding this, the lack of 4G connections for non-Android phones limits the type of mobile content that can be consumed by users of other devices. Plans are afoot to improve nationwide connectivity, which is currently unreliable across most of the country, with the installation of a submarine cable system at the end of 2025.

Inclusion prioritised in local media reporting

There are various organisations advocating for gender equality, disability and social inclusion (GEDSI) issues in Kiribati. This has, according to media practitioner respondents, led to greater inclusivity in local media coverage. The media actively prioritise topics around inclusion as part of their daily news coverage and are engaged with GEDSI-related advocacy events. For example, Boutokaan Inaomataia ao Mauriia Binabinaine Association (BIMBA), an organisation empowering the LGBTIQ+ community through education and awareness raising in Kiribati, regularly engages with the media to raise public awareness of their initiatives.

1. INTRODUCTION

Kiribati is located in the central Pacific Ocean and consists of 33 islands, 21 of which are inhabited. These are spread across almost 3.5 million km² of ocean. Kiribati's population as of 2024 is 135,763. The country achieved independence from Britain in 1979 and is governed by a one-house parliament, with a president who is both head of government and head of state. Kiribati has a small media industry compared with similarly sized Pacific Island countries.¹

This report provides a detailed, up-to-date snapshot of the state of the media in Kiribati. It is part of the State of the Media project, which comprises 12 country reports and one regional report. These reports serve as an accessible resource for media, civil society, and government organisations in support of development goals in the region. In addition to Kiribati, the countries studied are: Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), Fiji, Republic of the Marshall Islands, Nauru, Niue, Palau, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu.

¹ [Save Kiribati - Economic Issues, Communication](#), accessed August 27, 2024.



Viewing content on a mobile phone, North Tarawa. (Vicki Kerrigan)

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2. METHODOLOGY

The study's methodology was guided by core research questions identified by the Australian Broadcasting Corporation's International Development unit (ABCID). It was designed to foreground the expertise of Pacific researchers and media professionals. Data collection, analysis, and report drafting were conducted by Pacific researchers.



The team from Kiri One and Wave TV welcome the New Year in 2022. (Facebook: Wave TV-Taotin Media)

The research team began with a desk-based review of relevant primary and secondary literature. Challenges were then faced by researchers in accessing media practitioners for interview. This was due to competing priorities in the newsroom, as most staff were involved in covering the build-up to the parliamentary elections in August 2024. This report is therefore informed by two detailed interviews with senior media practitioners in Kiribati, and input from the Kiribati media expert adviser, Akka Rimon. The adviser also cross-checked the accuracy of findings and co-authored this report. The research was approved by the University of Adelaide Human Research Ethics Committee and steps were taken to mitigate risks to all research participants, including maintaining their anonymity.

A more detailed discussion of the project methodology is contained in the regional report.²

² [ABCID International Development - Research.](#)

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3. MEDIA ORGANISATION FOOTPRINT

The government-owned Broadcasting and Publications Authority (BPA) is the primary media organisation in Kiribati. It runs a radio station and newspaper (Te Uekera) and produces television news that is uploaded on its website and on YouTube. The BPA also livestreams radio content on Facebook. Independent media comprises an FM radio station owned by the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Korobu, Tarawa; two television channels operated by Taotin Media, one free and one pay TV; and one online media organisation, the Kiribati Newsroom.

Print

BPA's Te Uekera, a weekly newspaper that is also published online, was first established in the early 1980s. Media practitioner respondents noted that the paper has an important cultural significance in connecting and informing local communities. The English-language version is no longer produced; it is now published only in I-Kiribati,³ with some regional and international advertisements in English.

Table 1. Print media

Platform	Organisation	Ownership/ Funding	Language	Website/Social media	Sector
Newspaper	Te Uekera	State	I-Kiribati	https://adp.bpa.org.ki/ Facebook	Government
Newsletter	RMTT (Rongorongo Man Te Tautaeka)	State	I-Kiribati	N/A	Government

Radio

The BPA operates Radio Kiribati, which broadcasts on MW 1440 kHz. It is also available online and via the BPA Radio Live mobile app. It is the only news channel that has almost nationwide coverage, with other radio, television, and print platforms primarily targeting audiences in the capital. The station broadcasts parliamentary sittings live.

Table 2. Radio

Organisation	Ownership/Funding	Language	Website/Social media	Sector
Radio Kiribati	State	I-Kiribati	https://adp.bpa.org.ki/ Facebook, YouTube	Government
Kiribati Hope Radio Station	Seventh-day Adventist Church	I-Kiribati	Facebook	Church

³ The people of Kiribati, as well as the country's Indigenous language, are referred to as I-Kiribati.



Radio broadcast at the Broadcasting and Publications Authority, Bairiki, Tarawa. (Vicki Kerrigan)

Television

There is one television station in Kiribati, which is privately owned by Taotin Media. The station runs a free channel, Kiri One TV, and a pay TV service, Wave TV. Kiri One TV is run by a small team of local I-Kiribati staff, with three reporters and three camera people, and edited by the editor of Kiribati Newstar (now defunct). The channel runs I-Kiribati language local news from Monday to Saturday. News content is also uploaded to its Facebook page, Kiri One TV - Kiribati TV Station.

Online

The Kiribati Newsroom operates as an independent online newsroom on Facebook that shares news and analysis related to Kiribati, covering global and local. It invites contributions from local Kiribati and regional journalists, as well as the general public, and it is managed by a local I-Kiribati journalist.

The Government of Kiribati has an online portal where it provides information about various government sectors and services.⁴ Most ministries also have a dedicated website that provides information about their activities and national development news. As the government pivots towards an all-digital government platform – with the goal of providing an array of public services online across administration, health, and commerce – more ministries are being officially encouraged to launch their own websites. This digital governance initiative is supported by the World Bank as part of the Digital Government Project.⁵

Social media is increasingly popular in Kiribati – particularly Facebook – despite limited internet connectivity across most of the country. Only Tarawa and Kiritimati islands have reliable internet connections and these have, according to media practitioner respondents, the highest rates of internet usage. The key media outlets in Kiribati use social media, especially Facebook, to engage with their audiences. Other social media platforms like YouTube and X are also used by the media to increase visibility of their content.

Government and civil society

Ministries and government organisations have their own public communication initiatives, as do civil society bodies such as NGOs, churches, sports organisations, and the tourism authority. In general, these initiatives – which include newsletters, radio shows, and related Facebook pages – revolve around dissemination of locally focused news and information to communities in Kiribati.

For example, each ministry has a weekly radio show and an awareness week that takes place in the capital. Awareness weeks typically build on topical media coverage around language or environmental issues such as sustainable fishing practices.

Media practitioner respondents highlighted Nimaua Akea – an interactive, government-sponsored public radio quiz – as a key feature of government communications. Quizzes cover a selection of topics on local culture, history, and current events. They are designed to be educational and entertaining, to foster greater community participation and knowledge sharing. Callers are also given free airtime for a shout-out or dedication if the questions are answered correctly.

⁴ [Government of Kiribati - web portal.](#)

⁵ [The World Bank - Digital Government Report.](#)

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4. MEDIA CONTENT COVERAGE

Media practitioner respondents confirmed that the majority of Kiribati media relays news and information in the I-Kiribati language. English-language news programs are also often translated into I-Kiribati to ensure these reach audiences outside the urban centre where English is less commonly spoken. The main target audience for news outlets is, according to respondents, the I-Kiribati population, emphasising the predominantly local (rather than regional) focus of media content.

Media practitioner respondents observed that international media coverage of Kiribati is typically framed through the lens of geopolitical competition between China and the US, since Kiribati switched its diplomatic allegiance from Taiwan to the One China Policy in 2019. These narratives are shared locally in Kiribati through social media rather than traditional media channels.

Gender equality, disability and social inclusion

The stakeholder interviews with media practitioners aimed to capture top-level themes including gender equality, disability and social inclusion (GEDSI) representation in media content coverage in Kiribati. The findings below should not be viewed as exhaustive due to a small sample size. Rather, these insights provide an indication of potential trends in media practitioner perceptions of GEDSI issues.

There are various bodies advocating for GEDSI issues in Kiribati. This has, according to media practitioner respondents, led to greater inclusivity in local media coverage. The media actively prioritise topics around inclusion as part of daily news coverage, with some media practitioners invited to cover specific advocacy events around GEDSI. Press releases for these events are circulated to the media who feature them as part of their regular publishing or programming.

Advocacy organisations that have an ongoing relationship with the media include the Boutokaan Inaomataia ao Mauriia Binabinaine Association (BIMBA), an organisation which aims to empower the LGBTIQ+ community through education and awareness raising in Kiribati. It has a Facebook presence and an established network with government and civil society bodies, including the Ministry of Health and Medical Services, Ministry of Justice, Kiribati Family Health Association, Pacific Sexual and Gender Diversity Network, and the international LGBTIQ+ community.⁶ The recognition and visibility of binabinaine,⁷ or people who identify as third gender role, is reported to have improved since BIMBA was established.⁸

Te Toa Matoi (TTM), which means “the strong giant” in I-Kiribati, is the peak advocacy organisation for people with disability in Kiribati. TTM is recognised by the government as a “strong and sustainable advocacy organisation”.⁹ Since its establishment in 1999, it has been the driving force behind the Kiribati National Disability Policy and Action Plan (KNDP) 2018–2021. KNDP priority areas for action include increasing “community awareness on disability” and promoting “inclusive development as the shared responsibility of every government and non-government sector”.¹⁰ According to media practitioner respondents, TTM has established relationships with the media, and its representatives are frequently featured in radio programs and newspapers to disseminate information and highlight disability rights issues.

6 [Pacific Sexual and Gender Diversity Network - Kiribati](#), accessed August 27, 2024.

7 *In I-Kiribati, Binabinaine (or Pinapinaine) refers to individuals who identify with a third-gender role. The term translates to “becoming a woman” in Kiribati and includes gay men, bisexual men, and transgender women. University of Hawai’i at Manoa - Gender Identity and Sexual Identity in the Pacific and Hawai’i*, last updated November 15, 2024.

8 [Tebeio Tamton, APCOM - Being LGBT in Kiribati: Tebeio’s Journey](#), accessed August 27, 2024.

9 [Ministry of Women, Youth, Sports and Social Affairs - Kiribati National Disability Policy and Action Plan PDF](#).

10 [Ministry of Social Affairs, National Disability Policy](#), 6.

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5. ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Media practitioner respondents highlighted that artificial intelligence (AI) is used to support certain basic tasks in media newsrooms, due to the government's endorsement of AI in the Kiribati National ICT Policy 2019. The policy notes that the use of AI for education, health, finance, and other sectors may help the country achieve its development goals.¹¹ Respondents mentioned that AI use is still largely ad hoc, and that as yet there is no sector-wide strategy for the implementation of AI in newsrooms.

¹¹ [Ministry of Information, Communication, Transport and Tourism Development - Kiribati National ICT Policy.](#)

BETEBEKE
E teimatoa te
Kang Aomata iaon
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TE WAREWARE BON KINGIN TE ATAIBWAI

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Te Uekera

Issue nambwa 3
Kanimabong 17 N TIANUARE 2025
\$1.00

Ngkai e tabe ni kakataura-raoi te aba ae Papua New Guinea nakon bukamaruan ana ka 50 n ririki ni inaomata ao e kamatoaki bwa e bon teimatoa naba n iai te mwakuri ni kang aomata are riki ni moan te ririki aio.

Te rongorongo aio are e riki bwa teuana te kakubanako ngkai e aki kakooaaki bwa e na manga oki te aekaki ni mwakuri aio.

REITANA N ITERANIBA 17

KAKAONGORAANA INANONA

- Teimatoa ikeikenakin te Butane kaeti?
- Tera aia kanganga taan maeka n autin te tautaeka?



Katabuan ana moan Berebitero Onotoa

Tabwanin Onotoa ni boutokaakin ala Moan Tama, akea te kakaokoroaki n taian Ekaretia ma Aaro - e kaota te bonnano iaon te abamwakoro aio

- KABWANINNA N ITERANIBA 2

E kuneaki ni mate n te Nei!

IROUN Rnaua Kaata

Te Kauabong ae nako ao e kuneaki rabwatan temanna te mwaane ni beibeiti ni mate n taian nei ake a mena n iteran te Anaanau Kootiweeci imwain rokom raoi n te marae ni

wanikiba i Bonriki.
Ni kabwaninakin te rongorongo iroun am beeba aio ao a taekinna bureitiman bwa ngke e moan kuneaki rabwatan teuaci ao e a bon buakaka rabwatana.
A kakooua bureitiman bwa e a tia n rangi ni maan ni beibeit rabwatan

teuaci inanon te nei ngkai e a bon rootaki rabwatana ao e a korakora boina.
E ngae n anne ao ni marooroon am beeba aio ma ana utu teuaci ao a taekinna bwa ngaia bon aia aomata ao arana

REITANA N ITERANIBA 3

Kabureaki te Beretitenti mai Korea maiaki

Rongorongon Aonnaba
Iteraniba 14



TIAMBION BARCELONA N TE SPANISH SUPERCUP

Wareka rongorongon te tiritiri iaon Amerika E tiringila 15 ao man kaikoakila 30 tabun Rongorongon Aonnaba - iteraniba 14

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6. MEDIA BUSINESS RESILIENCE

The Save Kiribati initiative outlines some of the key challenges that state-owned media are facing. It reports that Kiribati’s local media industry “has been contracting over the last few years, mainly due to diminished funding”. The BPA “has reduced the frequency of its newspaper (Te Uekera) from twice a week to once a week” and restricted its circulation to Tarawa due to the cost and logistical challenges of transporting it to the outer islands. Te Uekera relies heavily on sponsorship and advertising revenue to remain viable.¹²

¹² Save Kiribati, [Save Kiribati - Economic Issues, Communication](#).



The offices of Kiri One TV. (Facebook Kiri One TV - Kiribati TV Station)

The Save Kiribati initiative also details that Radio Kiribati has periodic operational issues, as the BPA has limited equipment and faces challenges maintaining it due to a lack of funding. Additionally, in the event of a power failure, it is unable to transmit, which is problematic in times of emergency as radio remains the primary platform for disseminating information during natural disasters. According to the Save Kiribati initiative, Radio Kiribati also relies “solely on sponsorship and advertising revenue to operate”.

Media practitioner respondents asserted that government financial support for media in Kiribati is minimal. This further highlights the importance of international development funding for the procurement of newer equipment and the upskilling of journalists. Respondents regarded these actions as crucial for ensuring a baseline level of financial viability for local media in the medium term.

Further, media practitioner respondents highlighted that most working journalists and media technicians do not have formal qualifications, and are often employed directly after graduating with limited on-the-job training. They regard this as having significantly hampered the media’s ability to adapt, survive, and thrive amid various economic challenges and disruptions.

The slow speed and unreliability of internet connectivity has also challenged the media sector’s ability to reach audiences effectively. Compounding this is the high cost of telephone and internet services, which media practitioner respondents noted is restricting growth. At the time of writing, Kiribati “does not have access to a submarine fibre optical cable so must rely on satellite for telecommunication and internet” connectivity.¹³

¹³ Save Kiribati, “Economic Issues: Communication.”

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7. MEDIA POLICY AND LEGISLATIVE ENVIRONMENT

Freedom of expression

Freedom of expression is protected under the Constitution of Kiribati, subject to laws made in the interest of national security, public safety, and defamation, however there is no specific provision for freedom of the media.¹⁴ Foreign journalists require a permit to report in the country.

¹⁴ [Constitution of Kiribati PDF.](#)



Broadcasting and Publications Authority (BPA) building, Bairiki, Tarawa. (Vicky Kerrigan).

Media practitioner respondents stated that, due to government regulation, local media face challenges in reporting independently and fulfilling their obligation to serve the public's interest. This has influenced how stories are reported, according to respondents, especially if they concern the government. Respondents mentioned that daily news bulletins are at times monitored by relevant institutional bodies to ensure the content does not contradict government messaging. Most respondents believe that journalism will be more balanced if greater freedom is afforded to the media in Kiribati.

Respondents also asserted that the roles and functions of government and media are not always differentiated or distinct; at times, dissemination of news and information is spearheaded by the government, with the news cycle defined by institutional priorities.

Accessing official information

The constitution does not expressly provide for the right to access information, but a Freedom of Information Bill was drafted in 2020.¹⁵ As of April 2024, however, there was no further development on the bill. Kiribati is also a party to the United Nations Convention against Corruption. This commits the government to releasing official information if it is in the public's interest and facilitating public and media access to obtain and publish information on corruption from decision-making authorities.¹⁶ However, media practitioner respondents noted that accessing government information remains a challenge, with the process deemed extensive and lengthy.

Kiribati has a Data Protection Policy that allows the government to keep citizens' personal data. This can be accessed by individuals, including journalists, by lodging a subject access request with the government.¹⁷ The Public Records Act 1983 also provides for public access to records held by the Archives, excepting government information required by law to be kept secret.¹⁸

Government broadcast and print media

Government radio broadcasts and print media are regulated by the Broadcasting and Publication Authority Ordinance and the Broadcasting and Publication Authority Act.¹⁹ The act emphasises that broadcast content must be decent, accurate, and impartial.²⁰ The minister for communication has the power to prohibit broadcasting of certain content at their own discretion, where it is considered necessary or expedient to do so, however this power has never been exercised.²¹ In addition, there are legal provisions for parliamentary opposition and other political groups to broadcast or advertise their political views and opinions to the extent that these are not in breach of the ordinance.²²

Media practitioner respondents stated that Kiribati's legislative framework allows private media organisations to provide politically balanced reporting. For example, the Kiribati Newstar (now defunct), a privately owned newspaper, was described by respondents as having significant freedom to publish content that may otherwise be restricted in government media outlets such as Te Uekera

¹⁵ [United Nations Pacific Regional Anti-Corruption Project- Status of the Right to Information in Pacific Island Countries PDF.](#)

¹⁶ [United Nations Convention Against Corruption PDF.](#)

¹⁷ [Government of Kiribati - Data Protection Policy PDF, accessed August 27, 2024.](#)

¹⁸ [Kiribati Sessional Legislation - Public Records Act.](#)

¹⁹ [Kiribati Consolidated Legislation - Broadcasting and Publications Authority Ordinance.](#)

²⁰ [Broadcasting and Publication Authority Act, art. 5.](#)

²¹ [Broadcasting and Publication Authority Act, art. 10.](#)

²² [Broadcasting and Publication Authority Act. 3.](#)

Print

The Newspaper Registration Act 1988 regulates printing and publishing of private newspapers.²³ To establish and operate a newspaper business in Kiribati, owners are required to register the business by way of affidavits.²⁴ In an amendment to the act (2002), media are legally obliged to provide accurate, impartial, and balanced content. Non-compliance is regarded as a criminal offence and may be subject to prosecution.²⁵ Articles published by the media that are deemed to be false or distorted are legally required to be corrected through a publicly released statement.²⁶

Telecommunications

Telecommunications systems and services in Kiribati are regulated by the Communications Act 2013. The act implements the government’s policy for reform of the ICT sector adopted in April 2011, and sets a new framework for regulation of communications in the country.²⁷ The act covers communications network services, radiocommunications, telecommunication services, computer misuse, obscene matters, and child pornography.

The Communications Commission of Kiribati is the regulator for this sector. Its core function is to regulate “communications service providers and the use of the radio spectrum”.²⁸ It also grants and manages “licenses, telephone numbers, radio spectrum assignments, selling and registration of the DOT KI (.ki) domain names” and approves the “type of electronic devices emitting analogue and digital signals”.²⁹

The Cybercrime Act 2021 implements the government’s ICT policy and is intended to strengthen the legislative framework for cyberspace.³⁰ A Cybercrime Unit was established within the Kiribati Police Service under the act, as a point of contact for international cooperation on cybercrime investigations. The act provides for computer-related offences and penalties. Section 18 makes it a criminal offence to use electronic means to harass people online.

23 [Kiribati Sessional Legislation Index - Newspaper Registration Act.](#)

24 [Newspaper Registration Act, art. 4.](#)

25 [Newspaper Registration Act 1988 PDF.](#)

26 [Newspaper Registration Act 1998-1997 Amendment PDF.](#)

27 [Kiribati Sessional Legislation - Communications Act 2013.](#)

28 [Government of Kiribati - Communication Commission of Kiribati website](#), accessed August 27, 2024.

29 [Government of Kiribati, “Information: Communication Commission.”](#)

30 [Kiribati Sessional Legislation - Cybercrime Act 2021.](#)

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8. MISINFORMATION AND DISINFORMATION

Mis/disinformation that originates outside of Kiribati does not typically have much impact on the local news agenda and tends not to reach many citizens due to connectivity limitations. Domestic media is produced in the I-Kiribati language and primarily discusses local issues. This means there is very little opportunity for externally driven mis/disinformation to influence local news.



Climate change event in the Bairiki town centre, Bairiki, Tarawa. (Vicki Kerrigan)

However, media practitioner respondents did note that misinformation emerged as a challenge during the global COVID-19 pandemic, and that potential disinformation has been observed during electoral periods or key political disputes. The presence of disinformation has also been noted by the government, and measures to address this were incorporated into the Kiribati National Cybersecurity Strategy 2020.³¹ However, at the time of writing, the impact of these plans has yet to be seen.

³¹ [Ministry of Information, Communication, Transport and Tourism Development - Kiribati National Cybersecurity Strategy 2020 PDF.](#)

9. MEDIA INFRASTRUCTURE

Telecommunications

The whole of Kiribati is expected to be connected to a submarine cable system at the end of 2025, when South Tarawa is connected to the East Micronesia Cable System (EMCS). The project, funded by the Asian Development Bank, will connect Kiribati to the Hantru-1 cable system, enabling access to global telecommunications networks. The EMCS project began in June 2023 and is expected to be completed in 2025. It promises to deliver cheaper, faster, higher quality, and more reliable internet connectivity.³²

³² "Investments: Connecting the Federated States of Micronesia, Kiribati and Nauru to the Internet Via Submarine Cable," Australian Infrastructure Financing Facility for the Pacific, accessed August 27, 2024, accessible via: <https://www.aifp.gov.au/investments/investment-list>.

Currently, the country is dependent on satellite connection, the high cost and slow speed of which hinder the uptake of economic and development opportunities.³³

The Kiribati National ICT Policy 2019 aims to develop the country's telecommunications to provide unserved and underserved remote areas with reliable and affordable services. In the policy, the government of Kiribati outlines how it aims to unlock innovation in other sectors, such as agriculture, tourism, and health.³⁴ The dispersed nature of Kiribati's islands is a challenge for making telecommunication infrastructure commercially viable. According to the International Telecommunications Union in a 2018 report, there are remote areas in Kiribati where telecommunications development has always been a challenge, however new fibreoptic submarine cables could bridge this digital gap.³⁵

There are two telecommunication and internet service providers in the country, Amalgamated Telecom Holdings Kiribati Ltd (ATHKL, also known as Vodafone Kiribati) and ATH Kiribati (OceanLink). ATHKL started operations in 2015, while OceanLink was established in 2017³⁶ before rolling out its mobile network on South Tarawa in November 2018. It expanded to Kiritimati Island in October 2019.³⁷

Officially there is 4G across the country, but only for Android phones. However, some outer islands are not able to access the network because of their dispersed and remote geography. Internet connectivity is mostly available on Tarawa and Kiritimati islands. The population of the outer islands may only access internet from within local government stations or island council offices.

Broadcast transmission

The national ICT policy acknowledges future possibilities for expanding the telecommunication network to the outer islands to enable public service broadcasting in these communities either over internet technology or via IPTV.³⁸ Currently, Radio Kiribati's AM transmission has nationwide reach and serves as an emergency broadcaster. Its FM transmission is only available in Tarawa.

33 [The World Bank - Kiribati Digital Government Project, Project information Document PDF](#), accessed August 27, 2024.

34 [Government of Kiribati - National ICT Policy 2019 PDF](#).

35 International Telecommunication Union, "Measuring the Information Society Report: Volume 2," (International Telecommunication Union, 2018.), 102, *Measuring the Information Society Report Volume 2. ICT Country Profiles (itu.int)*.

36 [International Telecommunication Union - Measuring the Information Society Report 2018 PDF](#).

37 [SAMENA Telecommunications Council - Ocean Link Kiribati Develops LTE services with IPLook](#), September 12, 2022.

38 [Government of Kiribati, National ICT Policy 2019](#), 14.

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10. RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations for strengthening the Kiribati media sector are informed by data collected from media practitioner respondents.

Sector-wide journalism training in line with regional quality benchmarks

Respondents emphasised the importance of building the capacity of journalists – particularly around fundamental skills such as writing, interviewing, and mobile journalism techniques – so that local practice will align with regional standards. They also expressed a strong preference for such training initiatives to provide professional accreditation, as most journalists in Kiribati have no formal qualifications in journalism.

Dedicated training for government officials on engaging with media

Respondents recommended that public officials undertake media engagement training, so that reasonable protocols, expectations, and standards can be set nationally for addressing media outlets' information queries. Respondents believe that the ad hoc manner in which media queries are addressed makes it hard for journalists to pursue story leads or fact-check information before publishing.



Telecommunications infrastructure, Bairiki, Tarawa. (Vicki Kerrigan)

Establishment of a national media association

Media practitioner respondents spoke about establishing an industry body, such as a national media association, to proactively manage government regulation of media operations and preserve a level of media independence. A representative industry body would, according to respondents, allow media to advocate for greater press freedom to enable them to do their job as journalists more effectively. Respondents also called for a media code of ethics to guide the sector's self-regulation. Currently, there is no specific legislation or policy regulating the public broadcaster, rather it is regulated by more general broadcasting and publishing legislation.

CONCLUSION

The findings in this report uncover some of the challenges faced by Kiribati's small media industry, both geographic and financial. Internet connectivity across the country's widely dispersed islands is limited, impacting access for audiences and reporters alike. The local media industry has faced diminished funding, with the state-owned Broadcasting and Publications Authority (BPA) relying on small government support and advertising revenue to stay afloat, while Radio Kiribati has experienced periodic disruptions to broadcast due to limited working equipment. More positively, the report highlighted the media's active prioritisation of stories representative of diverse communities across Kiribati, and the media sectors openness to engage with and explore the potential uses of AI in the newsroom.