Systematic Observations Financing Facility

Investment Phase:
Annual Narrative Report

Republic of Kiribati
Year 1

Systematic Observations
Financing Facility

Weather and climate data for resilience

General Information

Country	Republic of Kiribati	
Implementing Entity	United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)	
Agreement effectiveness date	03 April 2024	
Duration	60 months	
Anticipated end date	01 April 2029	
Reporting period	**From:** 03 April 2024	**To:** 31 March 2025
Approved amount	• Total: USD 11,155,102 • Implementing Entity (UNEP): USD 10,582,652 • World Meteorological Organization: USD 572,450	
Disbursed amount	• Total: USD 9,715,184 • Implementing Entity (UNEP): USD 9,524,387 • World Meteorological Organization: USD 190,798	
Signature of Implementing Entity	 Jochem Zoetelief, UNEP, 30.04.2025	

Summary

Highlights of key achievements

The SOFF Investment Phase in Kiribati officially commenced following the disbursement of funds from the UNMPTF SOFF in March 2024. The legal agreement between UNEP and the Government of Kiribati was prepared and finalized on December 23, 2024. UNEP serves as the Implementing Entity, while the Government of Kiribati (GoK)—the Office of Te Beretitenti—acts as the Executing Entity, with the Australian Bureau of Meteorology (BoM) serving in a dual role as both Technical Partner and Peer Advisor.

The legal instrument with BoM was finalized and the first tranche of funds were disbursed on 15 January 2025. A project coordination meeting was held on 23 January

2025. The meeting reviewed project objectives, implementation milestones, reporting and financial requirements, and initial planning for capacity-building and infrastructure components. Additional coordination meetings were scheduled for early 2025, including a joint UNEP–BoM mission to Tarawa in May.

KMS has indicated that the Terms of Reference (ToR) for the Project Manager position is still under development. Once the ToR is completed, the recruitment process is expected to take approximately 3 to 4 weeks. Following the appointment, KMS plans to establish the KMS-led Project Management Unit (PMU), prepare the project work plan, and proceed toward endorsement by the Project Steering Committee before the end of June 2025.

As part of Output 1.3, which focuses on developing human capacity within the NMHS to operate the GBON network, planning progressed for the Basic Instruction Package for Meteorological Technicians (BIP-MT)—a 9-week intensive training course to be delivered by the Bureau of Meteorology Training Centre (BMTC) in Australia. Although initially scheduled for 2024, the timing of the legal agreement and fund disbursement has shifted delivery to Q3 2025. BoM has developed a comprehensive support framework and delivery timeline for the training, including planning for KMS personnel travel and implementation milestones. Draft versions of the framework are under review by BMTC.

Under Output 2.2, which focuses on improved land-based stations and related equipment, ICT systems, data management systems, and standard operating practices in place, BoM is preparing for the procurement of parts and provision of installation support to upgrade five existing Automated Weather Stations (AWS) operated by KMS. This work is expected to enhance observational data quality and support GBON compliance. By the end of the reporting period, BoM and KMS had initiated alignment of workplans and identified dependencies that need to be addressed before specifications can be finalized and procurement launched.

Under Output 2.3, which focuses on new upper-air stations and related equipment, ICT systems, data management systems, and standard operating practices in place, BoM is also supporting early planning for the installation of an upper-air observation station on Kiritimati Island. While procurement has not yet started, BoM has developed a design for an upper-air station suitable for Pacific SIDS, which will be shared with the SOFF project team. Although KMS retains responsibility for land feasibility and design, BoM's technical inputs are expected to support implementation and help mitigate the risk of future delays.

BoM also scheduled a site visit to Kiritimati Island and Tarawa, taking advantage of travel by other project teams to conduct site assessments and provide preliminary advice for station installation. BoM maintained ongoing communication with KMS throughout the period, providing support across planning, training design, infrastructure sequencing, and system requirements.

While full-scale implementation of infrastructure and capacity-building activities have not yet begun, the reporting period focused on legal and institutional setup, alignment of partner workplans, and detailed planning.

Challenges and lessons learned

A key challenge reported by the Kiribati Meteorological Service (KMS) is the delay in finalizing the Terms of Reference for the recruitment of the Project Manager. This has impacted the establishment of the KMS-led Project Management Unit and the development of the detailed work plan. KMS has noted that recruitment is expected to move forward following the finalization of the ToR, with the goal of completing this process before the end of June 2025.

The Bureau of Meteorology (BoM), acting as both Technical Partner and Peer Advisor, also identified some coordination-related challenges. These include the need to align planning schedules and technical dependencies between BoM and KMS to ensure readiness for procurement and installation of AWS upgrades and the proposed upper-air station on Kiritimati Island. While BoM has initiated technical design and planning activities, further progress remains contingent on the completion of KMS-led preparatory steps. BoM emphasized the importance of early coordination to avoid sequencing issues and delays, particularly where infrastructure development and capacity building are interdependent.

An early lesson noted by BoM relates to the benefit of maintaining proactive communication and flexibility in technical planning. By scheduling an in-country mission to coincide with travel by other project teams, BoM aimed to optimize resources while ensuring timely support to KMS for site assessments and planning. This adaptive approach was viewed as useful in contexts with logistical and administrative constraints.

Next steps

During the next implementation period, the project will focus on completing the recruitment of the Project Manager, establishing the KMS-led Project Management Unit (PMU), and finalizing the project work plan for endorsement by the Project Steering Committee before the end of June 2025.

BoM, in coordination with KMS and UNEP, will proceed with the delivery of the Basic Instruction Package for Meteorological Technicians (BIP-MT) in Q3 2025. Planning and logistical arrangements will be finalized in collaboration with the Bureau of Meteorology Training Centre (BMTC).

In preparation for infrastructure activities, BoM will continue coordination with KMS on the procurement and upgrade of five land-based Automated Weather Stations (AWS),

as well as on the planned installation of an upper-air station on Kiritimati Island. BoM has scheduled an in-country technical mission to Tarawa and Kiritimati in April 2025 to conduct site assessments and support detailed infrastructure planning.
UNEP, KMS, and BoM will continue to coordinate through structured meetings to align procurement, technical delivery, and capacity-building components across the upcoming implementation phase.

Progress of implementation

Output	Indicator	Target					Actual					Status	Milestones achieved	Challenges and risks
		Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5			
1. GBON institutional and human capacity developed														
1.1 **National consultations**, including with CSOs and other relevant stakeholders conducted	# of inception workshops held	1	1	1	1	1						Not yet started	Once the recruitment of the project manager by the Government of Kiribati is in place, the next stage is to prepare for inception workshop, project steering committee inauguration, and stakeholder workshop in June 2025.	
	% female participation in the inception workshops	50	50	50	50	50						Not yet started		
	# of stakeholder workshops held		1	1	1	1						Not yet started	Once the recruitment of the project manager by the Government of Kiribati is in place, the next stage is to prepare for inception workshop, project steering committee inauguration, and stakeholder workshop in June 2025.	
	% female participation in the stakeholder workshops		50	50	50	50						Not yet started		
	Years in which stakeholder engagement plan will be drafted	X	X									Not yet started		
1.2 **NMHS institutional capacity** required to operate the GBON network developed	Years in which Gender Gap Analysis and Gender Action Plan will be drafted			X	X							Not yet started		
	Years in which participation in regional coordination initiatives	X	X	X	X	X						Not yet started		

Output	Indicator	Target					Actual					Status	Milestones achieved	Challenges and risks
		Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5			
	and forum are planned (tentatively)													
1.3 **NMHS human capacity** required to operate the GBON network developed	# of staff salaries paid	11	11	11	11	11						Not yet started	Budget to deliver the BIP-MT training was part of the first tranche of project funds transferred by UNEP and received on January 15 by the Bureau.	Originally scheduled for delivery in 2024, the training has been rescheduled to 2025 due to delays in signing the PCA. It is currently progressing as planned. Potential challenges with visa applications may occur, as has been experienced in several Pacific countries previously. There is a risk that visa applications could either be rejected or not processed within the required timeframe.
	Years in which trainings will be conducted	X	X	X	X	X						Not yet started		
2. GBON infrastructure in place														
2.1 **New land-based stations** and related equipment, ICT systems, data management systems and standard operating practices in place	# of new stations installed as per the GBON National Contribution Plan			4	5							Not yet started		
2.2 **Improved land-based stations** and related equipment, ICT systems, data management systems and standard operating practices in place	# of stations improved as per the GBON National Contribution Plan		5									Not yet started		Ensuring effective communication and holding regular project planning meetings with delivery partners are essential for aligning workplans and timelines.

Output	Indicator	Target					Actual					Status	Milestones achieved	Challenges and risks
		Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5			
														Extended timelines may arise due to ineffective coordination and execution of tasks, leading to overall project delays and impacting resource availability.
2.3 **New upper air stations** and related equipment, ICT systems, data management systems and standard operating practices in place	# of new stations installed as per the GBON National Contribution Plan		1	1								Not yet started		Challenge: Ensuring consistent communication and organizing regular project planning meetings with delivery partners to align workplans and timelines effectively. Delays in initiating the upper-air construction on Kanton due to the lack of essential facilities, including reliable power and adequate accessibility for delivering equipment and supplies to the island.
2.4 **Improved upper air stations** and related equipment, ICT systems, data management systems and standard operating practices in place	# of stations improved as per the GBON National Contribution Plan		1									Not yet started		
3. Sustained compliance with GBON														
3.1 **GBON land-based stations' commissioning period completed**, country-specific standard cost for operations and maintenance established, and data sharing verified by WMO Technical Authority	# of stations commissioned as per the GBON National Contribution Plan		5	9	14	14						Not yet started		

Output	Indicator	Target					Actual					Status	Milestones achieved	Challenges and risks
		Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5			
3.2 **GBON upper air stations' commissioning period completed**, country-specific standard cost for operations and maintenance established, and data sharing verified by WMO Technical Authority	# of stations commissioned as per the GBON National Contribution Plan		2	3	3	3						Not yet started		

Gender

UNEP, as the Implementing Entity for the SOFF Investment Phase in Kiribati, applies its institutional Gender Equality and Environment Policy to ensure that gender considerations are integrated throughout project implementation. The policy recognizes gender equality as essential to sustainable environmental outcomes and guides UNEP's oversight of project activities.

During the reporting period, the Bureau of Meteorology (BoM), acting as Technical Partner and Peer Advisor, confirmed that equal opportunity for participation in training is being ensured for both male and female KMS officers. BoM has also committed to applying gender-sensitive approaches in the delivery of the Basic Instruction Package for Meteorological Technicians (BIP-MT) and related capacity-building activities.

While formal training delivery has not yet commenced, UNEP and BoM will continue to monitor the participation of women in upcoming technical sessions and ensure that gender balance remains a cross-cutting consideration across implementation, reporting, and stakeholder engagement.

Social and environmental safeguards

UNEP, as the Implementing Entity, applies its Environmental and Social Sustainability Framework (ESSF) to ensure that all activities under the SOFF Investment Phase in Kiribati align with international safeguard standards and best practices. The framework promotes the identification and management of environmental and social risks throughout project design and implementation.

During the reporting period, no environmental or social risks were identified, as the project remained in the coordination and planning phase. Infrastructure-related activities—including the planned upgrade of Automated Weather Stations (AWS) and the installation of an upper-air observation station—are still in early design stages. Site-specific safeguard considerations will be reviewed during the upcoming technical assessments and procurement preparations.

The Bureau of Meteorology (BoM), in its role as Technical Partner and Peer Advisor, has committed to applying sustainable practices in its delivery of technical support and training. As implementation advances, UNEP will continue to monitor and oversee the application of safeguard measures across all partners and project activities, with particular attention to environmental integrity, inclusion, and community engagement.

Civil society and private sector participation

During the reporting period, formal engagement with civil society organizations and private sector actors had not yet been initiated, as the project remained in the coordination and planning phase. The Bureau of Meteorology (BoM) noted that future opportunities for collaboration will be explored to enhance project outcomes and leverage technical or logistical contributions during implementation.

Complementary financing and leverage

No complementary financing or co-financing arrangements have been reported during the reporting period.

Implementation of grievance redress mechanism

No formal grievances have been reported regarding SOFF implementation in Kiribati during the reporting period.

The grievance redress mechanism follows UNEP's sustainability framework, which provides stakeholders with an avenue to raise concerns related to project activities. This mechanism is structured under UNEP's Stakeholder Response Mechanism (SRM), managed by the Independent Office for Stakeholder Safeguard-related Response (IOSSR). Stakeholders adversely affected by the project can submit complaints through UNEP's online project concern form, by email, or by mail to the IOSSR.

UNEP will continue to ensure that all stakeholders have access to clear, confidential, and responsive mechanisms to raise any concerns that may arise during implementation.

Success stories

No success stories are available to report at this stage of implementation. The project remained in its coordination and planning phase during the reporting period, with full-scale delivery of capacity-building and infrastructure activities scheduled to begin in the next period.

Attachments:

- 2025 Semi-Annual Progress Update
- Country Peer Advisor Report