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SPARK! CHANGE

On the journey in Kiribati

A toolkit for gender and sexual diversity education





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The issues discussed in this book are of utmost importance and need to be communicated to the most number of people. Anyone therefore is free to make full use of this book in whatever legal manner and form.

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Youth Voices Count (YVC) is a regional network of young lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex individuals in Asia-Pacific working on SRHR, SOGIESC, Youth Empowerment, and Human Rights issues. Established in 2010, YVC engages in community mobilization, national, regional and global advocacy related to young people belonging to diverse sexual orientations, gender identities and sex characteristics. More information on YVC can be found at www.yvc-asiapacific.org.

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INTRODUCTION

SPARK CHANGE! On the Journey is a toolkit designed to help you provide gender and sexuality education to people who work in social services, health, education, and sport. This toolkit will be especially useful for people who work with, or who care for young people in Kiribati.

At first, gender and sexuality seem simple. But we understand now that gender and sex are complex. *SPARK CHANGE! On the Journey* is intended as an introduction, a first step, but not the only step, in understanding gender and sexuality in Kiribati. The change we wish to spark is in the attitudes and behaviour of people in Kiribati to people who are gender and sexually diverse.

WHAT YOU WILL NEED TO DELIVER THIS TOOLKIT

Essential

- You will need to read through and be very familiar with the material in this toolkit. Don't just read out the text; put the material into your own words.
- You will have your own questions: that's great, because the questions you have may also be questions your participants will have. You don't need to have all the answers, and you can encourage participants to explore their own questions in a group. If you have access to the Internet, even better because you can invite people to search out answers on the Internet during discussion times. However, the suggested resources should help you to find most of the answers you need to be able to deliver this workshop.

Optional

- You will need a video monitor or TV.
- You will need a good connection to the Internet to access the YouTube videos.
- You will need a projector and white screen or wall to show the PowerPoint.
- You may wish to have a whiteboard and markers or big sheets of paper and markers where you can write down people's ideas.

If you don't have these things you can still use this toolkit all by itself. The videos and PowerPoint slides are 'nice to have' but not essential. The really essential things to bring to this workshop are an open mind and an open heart, and a willingness to learn.

A key feature of this toolkit is flexibility. The toolkit does not put a timeframe on each section. You can spend more or less time on each topic. This means that you can use this toolkit in a half-day, a full day, or even over two days. The time you need will be determined by your local resources, the amount of discussion, whether you can show the videos, whether you have food available, and other local factors. You may even want to invite a local *binabinaine*, *binabinamwame*, or other appropriate speaker to be a part of your workshop. If you do ask someone you will need to make sure that the environment of the workshop is respectful and safe for the speaker, both during and after their presentation.



HOW THIS TOOLKIT IS ORGANISED

Each section addresses a different topic, and the purpose of each section is stated at the beginning of the section. After you open the workshop, you will find the following sections:

First there is a short section on **culture in Kiribati**. Gender and sexuality are individual experiences, but these individual experiences always occur in a cultural context. Understanding that cultural context—the long and rich Pacific history, and the cultural traditions and interactions that shape modern Kiribati—is important.

Then there are **two sections, one on gender, and one on sexuality**. Gender and sexuality are different, and we need to separate them in order to talk about each of them. Ideas about gender and sexuality are not 'foreign'. However, there are not easy or familiar words in i-Kiribati to use to discuss these ideas. Language is always evolving and changing (is there a traditional i-Kiribati word for 'computer'?) so perhaps new i-Kiribati terms and language will emerge that will help us talk about these topics more easily.

The next section is about the **human rights and legal frameworks** that are a part of talking about gender and sexuality in Kiribati. Some of these resources are from Kiribati, and some are from international organisations like the United Nations. As at January 2020, male homosexuality is still illegal in Kiribati. It is important to understand the reasons why this remains so, and whether this is consistent with Micronesian and Polynesian cultural traditions. As a part of this discussion we will also talk about the importance of **stigma and discrimination**.

Religion and faith are important in the lives of people in Kiribati. This toolkit will not attempt to change people's beliefs. However, when those beliefs result in violence, exclusion, or assault, or when those beliefs break up families it is time to think more critically about them. This section will help people to realise that within each religion or faith group there are in fact widely different opinions about gender and sexuality.

The section called **What you can do** does not tell participants what to do. It is a time for participants to reflect on what they have learned, and to think about how they can put this new information and these new attitudes into practice in their work, in their families and in their friendships. This section will invite people to come up with their own ideas.

There is a collection of **short real-life stories** in Annex 1 about the experiences of gender and sexually diverse people living in Kiribati which you can encourage people to act as a drama. These stories can be used throughout the training, and each section will suggest stories to use. These stories encourage everyone to see effects of stigma and discrimination from the point of view of aomatan nei wiirara/ people of the rainbow and their families.

There are **suggested videos** in each section of the toolkit. Those videos require an Internet connection. However, if you don't have access to the Internet, or your connection is very slow, you can still use *SPARK CHANGE! On the Journey* by itself. (The links in the PowerPoint presentation will only work in presentation mode, not editing mode.) If you use the videos be sure to include time for your group to discuss their reactions after you show them. You should view the videos before you present them, and prepare two or three questions that will get the discussion going. Sometimes people are anxious at first about speaking in a larger group, so breaking a larger group into smaller groups of two, three or four people will get the discussion going. Encourage the small groups to report back to the larger group.

At the end of this toolkit in Annex 2 there is a **list of resources** for you to use. Some of these resources are quite technical, and are intended for people who are very serious students of the topic. There are Facebook pages for groups in the Pacific region, and will be valuable for you to see (or for you to tell other people about) what is happening in gender and sexuality other Pacific Island nations and cultures. There are also some other websites of interest. There is also a **PowerPoint slideshow** that is available to go with this toolkit. If you don't have access to a computer or projector, or are not confident in using them, you can still use the document you have in your hand (or on your computer screen) all by itself.

A THREEFOLD BLESSING

A traditional i-Kiribati blessing wishes **health, peace, and prosperity for the journey**. We wish you these things as you prepare to use this toolkit. We also ask you to remember:

- **Health** is more than just physical health. Health is the physical, emotional and mental well-being of individuals, families, and the whole society. A healthy society means that everyone is safe and confident. It means that people know they are loved and welcome as part of families and societies, even when their families don't always understand them completely.
- **Peace** is more than absence of conflict. Peace is about justice, equality, and the inclusion of all people. Peace promotes social harmony and social responsibility. Social harmony doesn't mean that everyone sings the same note. That would be boring! Harmony occurs when everyone sings a note that fits with other notes, and so everyone makes beautiful music together. When we are making music together we are creating peace.
- **Prosperity** is more than individual profit or benefit. Prosperity is about creating opportunities for every person. A society cannot prosper if it leaves even one person out. If a child leaves school because she is being bullied, then everyone loses. Society will not benefit from the contribution she could have made if she were fully educated. She will not be able to care for her family as well. Society will have to take care of her.

We wish you health, peace, and prosperity for the journey.

OPENING

Arrive early and make sure the presentation space is set up the way you want it. The setting should be talanoa-style, with seats arranged in a circle (or half-circle) or square, not classroom-style. Remove any unnecessary furniture (tables, desks, etc.) to the side so that there is an open space in the room. Make sure you know where the toilets are so you can tell participants. If you are using a TV and Internet, check that these are connected and working, and that you can access the videos with sound; if you are using a projector and screen, make sure that they are connected and working. If you are planning food, create the space for food (which should be in a different room if possible—the smell of food in a workshop is very distracting!). Participants should come into an environment that is calm, prepared, and welcoming. If you are anxious and running around, that does not create a calm space. Starting on time is respectful to people who are present on time. Have Slide 1 (1) up on the screen as people arrive.

(2) **Open the workshop** in the way that is most appropriate for your local setting. This may include a blessing or opening greeting from a local elder. Review the structure of the day

(3) **Introduce yourself.** Say something about yourself that is more than just your name. Why is this workshop important to you?

Tell people the purpose of the workshop: To learn more about gender and sexuality in a Kiribati context, and to consider issues of stigma and discrimination that are related to gender and sexually diverse persons.

Invite people to introduce themselves. They should include not just their name, but something interesting about themselves that will help other people relate to them. For instance, they could say what their favourite food is, or favourite colour, or happiest memory, or something else appropriate to the circumstance. Try to stay away from things like how many children they have—announcing how many children you have can be a way of announcing your sexuality, and can leave some participants out.

Set ground rules for discussions. These ground rules can include anything that helps people participate openly in the discussions, but should include at least respect for each other, and a level of confidentiality about personal disclosures. You

will want to be prepared if someone in the group discloses that they are *binabinaire*, *binbinamwame*, gay, lesbian, bisexual, intersex, or trans*, or have children or other relatives who are. This kind of sharing is a gift of trust, and should be respected. It should never become a matter for community gossip.

Invite people to share what they expect from the day: what do they hope for, and what are they anxious about? You can do this in groups of two or three, since people are often reluctant to share in a large group until they feel comfortable.

Be prepared for what people share. Talking about gender and sexuality can bring up important experiences in people, and these experiences can include abuse and violence. If someone does disclose that they have been a victim of abuse or violence, talk with them quietly apart from the group and make sure that they are connected to appropriate support. Support can include a health care provider, a social services worker, or even the police. If a person feels they need to leave the workshop because of strong feelings, don't try to stop them, but make sure they have someone they can talk with later.

Depending on how long you have for the workshop you will want to **schedule 15-minute breaks for each half day**. For instance, if you meet from 9-12, for instance, you'll want one 15-minute break. Sometimes if people express strong feelings, having an unscheduled short break is a way to let people cool off.

If you have a budget for food, be sure to let people have time for food during your breaks or for lunch time. Another way to do this is to invite people to bring some food to share with the larger group during breaks.

If you have Internet access you may want to play the short YouTube video *This is me* before lunch or other break, or at the end of the workshop. It will send them out dancing.

At the end of the workshop give people time to provide feedback to you: What did they learn? Were their expectations met? What was good, and what could be better next time? Be sure to clear up after yourself, return the furniture you have moved, and leave a tidy space.

CULTURE IN KIRIBATI

(4) Purpose: To place gender and sexuality in a cultural context.

Chiefly oral histories suggest that the wide area of the Pacific now known as Kiribati (perhaps earlier known as Tungaru¹) was first inhabited by seafaring peoples from Melanesia. Tungaru/Kiribati has been inhabited by Austronesian peoples speaking more or less the same language since sometime between 3000 BCE² and 1300 CE³—that's between 4000 and 700 years ago. Despite its geographical remoteness, Tungaru/Kiribati was not isolated. Voyagers, invaders and settlers from Samoa, Tonga, and Fiji arrived in Tungaru/Kiribati and brought with them their own Polynesian and Melanesian cultures, beliefs, and traditions. As they settled and formed relationships and families with the people of Tungaru/Kiribati, cultural differences became blurred. The new culture and peoples were a blend of several different Polynesian and Melanesian cultural influences from a very wide geographical area.

Around 1300 CE, there was an exodus from Samoa which led to the addition of even more Polynesian ancestry into Tungaru/Kiribati. Samoans brought strong features of Samoan language and culture, and even created clans based on Samoan traditions. Gradually they also blended in with existing and indigenous clans in Tungaru/Kiribati. Different chiefly systems developed in different parts of the region, and disputes arose that continued until European visitation and colonisation in the later 19th century. In 1892, *uea* and *atun te boti* on each of the islands and atolls agreed that their islands would become parts of a British protectorate. It was at this time that British law was introduced, and confirmed when the islands became the crown colony of the Gilbert and Ellice Islands. The Line islands were added to the colony in 1919, and the Phoenix Islands in 1937. British colonisation, law and missionaries preaching a European-style Christianity further complicated the complex cultural mix that in 1979 became Kiribati.

(5) This short summary is, of course, not intended to be a complete history of thousands of years of cultural history of Kiribati. It is intended to highlight how rich and complex Kiribati culture and traditions are. Much of this cultural history has been lost because oral history only passes on some parts of history. There are, for instance, many different kinds of family, gender roles, romantic and sexual relationships between peoples of the Pacific, and some of these kinds of relationships existed long before the missionaries arrived. Some of these identities

¹BCE means 'Before the Common Era'; CE means 'Common Era'. These used to be written as 'BC' (Before Christ) and AD (Anno Domini). BCE and CE are more inclusive.

and relationships were not understood, or were suppressed by colonial powers and missionaries that arrived in the Pacific islands. One example of how suppression works is the (New Zealand) Māori story of Hinemoa, the daughter of a great chief, and Tutanekai also a high-born Māori man³. The dominant (post-colonial) tradition says that Hinemoa swam across a great lake to pursue a relationships with Tutanekai. However, when the scholar Ngahaia Te Awetokutu researched the original story in Māori, rather than in English, she discovered that this famous love story was not what it seemed: Tutanekai, was a warrior who had an intimate male companion (takatāpui tane), and Hinemoa had an intimate female friend (takatāpui wahine). In its original telling, this story was not about opposite-sex romantic love, but same-sex romantic love⁴. The same thing happened in many Pacific Islands. There are many different cultural traditions that have contributed to modern-day Kiribati: some may have been hidden; some may have been reconstructed to fit European and missionary values.

In some *aiga* (family group) in Samoa there male children who may take on tasks more usually associated with females, or who may be expected by their families to take up such tasks⁵. This does not mean that these young males preferred relationships with other men: that would confuse gender and sexuality. Rather these *fa'afafine* associated themselves—or were encouraged by their families—with feminine tasks and identities than with those more usually associated with men. However, today, *fa'afafine* have moved out of the villages and into more urban areas, and many have now taken on a more Westernised appearance of women (emphasised by dress, make-up and even *palagi* [European] female names). This evolution of an *identity* that was originally associated with tasks has now become one associated with appearance and public presentation. Schmidt argues that this transformation is due to the urbanisation of Samoan culture, and the adoption of Western forms of dress⁵.

(6) Show the YouTube video Fa'afafine (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F9xvkCa63Js&list=PLx45CBh2HjtI1WZVUhsdtPIRxUozA6No_)

Allow time for discussion. Discussion-starter questions (remember, discussions are often easier in smaller groups):

- Is this the first time you have seen *fa'afafine*? If not, when was the first time?
- What was your reaction to the video?
- Participants in the video said there are many different kinds of being *fa'afafine*. One of the participants (the one who played rugby league) said that he wasn't a *fa'afafine*, but was raised as one by his family, and this was very difficult for him. What do you think it would be like for someone who is *fa'afafine* to be raised in a family that did not allow them to be *fa'afafine*?
- This video raises the interesting question about whether gender is innate—that is, an essential part of us as individuals regardless of our culture or family—or whether it is constructed—that is, gender is imposed on us by our cultural or social context. What do you think? Is gender innate? Is it cultural? Is it both? Or is it different things for different peoples?

(7) When European missionaries and colonists arrived in the Pacific, a European way of having relationships was enforced. Christianity of the time required that the only acceptable way of living was for one man to formally marry one woman. Similarly, gender roles—proper tasks that only women do, or only men do, clothes that only women wear or only men wear, and so forth—that were acceptable to the Europeans were enforced by the missionaries and colonial powers. These missionary requirements became accepted as “traditional”, although these “traditions” were new to the Pacific region. Nowadays when Pasifika peoples talk about tradition, often what they are referring to is the last 150-200 years post colonisation, not the last 1500-2000 years. Some colonial powers even introduced and enforced laws that were familiar to the Europeans in the new colonies, even though these new laws may not have been familiar—or even made sense—to Pasifika peoples.

(8) As part of a 21st century movement to decolonise, many Pasifika nations and peoples are beginning to question colonial-era values that were imposed on them. Among these values are ways of understanding family and romantic relationships, and gender roles. This toolkit is about understanding how wonderfully diverse Kiribati societies are, and finding ways to include the whole i-Kiribati family.

Discussion questions:

- How do you describe Kiribati culture? What are the core elements of i-Kiribati culture?
- What is your own family history in Kiribati? Where was your great-grandmother born?
- What did you learn about gender and sexuality? From your family? Your church? Or did you learn not to talk about these things?
- What does the word *decolonise* mean to you?
- Do you think gender is innate? Or cultural? Or some mixture of both? Is the meaning of gender the same for men and women?



AOMATAN NEI WIIRARA: GENDER

(9) *Purpose: To understand the difference between gender and sexuality, and that transgenderism appears all over the world, throughout history, and in many different cultures.*

Gender seems like a simple idea. There are men, and women. That is enough. Right?

Well, actually no, that's not enough. This section will explore why gender is more complicated than just women and men, female and male.

How do we determine gender? Our gender is usually identified just after we are born by someone who looks at our sexual organs and says "It's a boy" or "It's a girl". That person—a midwife, or doctor, or someone else at our birth— determines our gender only by looking at our external sexual organs, and assigns us to a gender based on their experience. That brief moment stays with us for the rest of our lives. If we seem to have sexual organs similar to girls and women we are assigned to be female. If we seem to have sexual organs similar to boys and men we are assigned to be male.

No one chooses their gender at birth—we're too busy trying to breath and cope with all the light and noise outside the womb! But from that very moment other people start to treat us according to the gender we were assigned. The clothes we wear, the ways we express ourselves, the dances we do, the friends we make, the toys we play with, the way we help out around the home, the things we are encouraged to study, the tasks we do in our lives—our culture allocates the way we do these things according to our assigned gender.

Notice that gender is different from sexuality.

As we grow older we may start to have an awareness of what our gender means to us. We may have been assigned to be males, and we may feel like a male. Our body and our internal experience of our gender is the same. Likewise, we may have been assigned female and we feel like a female. (The common English term for this is *cisgender*. Just so you know.) Often we become most aware of our gender during puberty, when things like body hair and body shape begin to change as a result of all those new hormones in our bodies. When we are happy and satisfied with

the bodies we have, and our bodies conform to the way we feel about ourselves then we take on more of the social roles associated with our gender. Most people are cisgender; but just because something is more common doesn't make it right or wrong.

TRANSGENDER

(10) But what if (for example) we have been assigned as male at birth, but we don't feel male? In fact, we may experience ourselves as female. Or what if we were assigned as female at birth and experience ourselves as male? (The usual English term for this is *transgender*, although you may also hear terms like *gender dysphoric*, *gender dissonant*, and even *transsexual*. Just so you know.) Then things get a little more complicated. The young person may begin to identify themselves as *transgender*. 'Trans' is an English prefix that means 'across'. Someone who identifies as transgender is someone who is 'across genders'. Because of their bodies transgender persons (or *transpersons*) are treated by their society in one way, but inside their bodies their feelings are of a different gender. They can feel quite confused, like something is wrong but they can't quite name it. While their bodies may be one gender they may take on the behaviours of another gender. This can make things like adjusting to school and participating in sport difficult. A recent Canadian study found that transchildren strongly identify with their gender group (not the gender to which they were assigned at birth), and their gender identification is no different to a comparison group of cis-children; this means that if we consider only *how children experience their genders* there are no developmental differences between trans- and cis-gender children. The study authors suggest that early assignment to a gender and the way parents raise their children "do not always define how a child identifies or expresses gender later"⁶. However, transgender children and adults may feel quite isolated. Some may experience mental health challenges, or even want to harm themselves. It is not being transgender that is the problem: it is the way other people treat transgender persons that is the problem. We'll talk more about this in the section on stigma and discrimination.

(11) Someone who takes hormones and has surgery to align their physical bodies with their internal experience of their gender may identify themselves as transsexual. Not all transgender people choose, or wish, to be transsexual. An important practical and ethical dilemma occurs when a transgender child wants

to begin hormone therapies that delay or prevent the onset of puberty. It is much easier to align a body with an internal experience of gender before the body begins to develop the secondary sexual characteristics of the body-gender at puberty. But can a child make this important decision?

Show the YouTube video *Puberty and Transgender Youth*
(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f7VvJjKVbt7g>)

Allow time for questions. (This short video is an 'explainer', so discussion can wait until after the next video.)

Notice that transgender is different from transvestism, or cross-dressing. Cross-dressing, or wearing the clothing of the other sex, is something that a few cisgender, usually heterosexual, people do because they get sexual pleasure from it. They are not transgender. Also, people who perform in the clothes of the opposite gender (so-called 'drag queens' and 'drag kings') are not the same as transgender. Drag queens and kings exaggerate their performance gender in order to make fun of gender stereotypes and usually get paid for it.

(12) It seems like transgender persons are becoming more common. This is probably because we hear about transgender persons more in the media and Internet. The reality is that transgender persons have always existed in every culture, but have often remained hidden because of stigma and discrimination, or fear of violence. Some recent studies have put the prevalence (or proportion) of transgender persons in a population at between 0.53% and 1.2%.⁷ Certainly the number of people seeking gender alignment therapies like hormones has increased⁸. In many countries the rights of transgender persons are now protected by law, and gender diversity is legally recognised. In Aotearoa New Zealand, for instance, it is possible to have an 'X' (for 'Gender diverse') on your passport instead of 'M' for male or 'F' for female.

(13) **Read out Kiribati Story #1** (or show on a screen) and invite participants to create a drama presentation from this story. Discuss what it was like to play the various parts.

(14) While the idea of being transgender may seem unusual, in fact there are

many cultures around the world that recognise at least three genders, and some even have four (the Mohave of North America) or five (the Bugis of Indonesia). Some of these cultures include:

- North America: Navajo, Blackfoot, Lakota, Ktunaxa, Sioux, Zuni, and Zapotec (Mexico) Nations
- South America: Inca (Peru)
- Asia (including Russia): Chukchi, Koryak and Kamchadal peoples (Russia), Bugis tribe (Indonesia), India, Pakistan and Bangladesh (South Asia); Philippines, Thai and Burmese (Southeast Asia); Oman
- Africa: Benin (Benin); Bangala (Congo); Ethiopia; Kenya and Tanzania
- Europe: Saami (Arctic Circle)
- Pacific: Kanaka Maoli, Samoa, Tonga, Tahiti, Māori, Butaritari

(adapted from Erik, 2011)⁹

(15) The purpose in naming all these different cultural groups is to demonstrate that transgender persons appears all over the world, in many different places throughout history, and are recognised in many different cultural groups. Transgender persons have a long history in Pacific cultures. Transgender looks different in different cultures, and the different words for transgender persons in different languages and cultures do not mean exactly the same thing. In most of these cultural groups transpersons are recognised and valued. Some people get very anxious about people who do not conform exactly to their ideas about gender, gender roles, and gender behaviour. Such anxious people can stigmatise and become abusive and violent to gender diverse people. Yet the evidence is clear that gender diverse people exist in all times and places.

It is interesting that in many cultures around the world transgender or third-sex persons have an important spiritual or healing role to play. Many cultures believe that transpersons have special insight into spirituality because they are not limited by one gender, or one spirit. For instance, there are over 155 Native American societies that value two-spirit people, that is, male-female, or female-male people as people with particular spiritual insight.

(16) **Show the YouTube video** *Marquesan Transgender*
(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FKVcCbYsvo>)

Allow time for discussion. Discussion-starter questions:

- What is your reaction to the video?
- In the Marquesas Islands (in French Polynesia) third gender persons call themselves *raerae*. The *raerae* in the video refers to her feelings that although she was born a boy she wished to be a girl as “bizarre”. How would you respond to her?
- The film maker asks the question “On a remote island, how would it be for someone in the LGBT community to find true love?” How do you respond to this question?

(17) Read out Kiribati Story #2 (or show on a screen), and invite participants to create a drama presentation from this story. Discuss what it was like to play the various parts.

INTERSEX/TE AOMATA AE UOUA ANA BWAI (BON RIKINA)

(18) Nature is full of variety. Being intersex is one expression of that variety. ('Inter' is an English language prefix that means 'between'.) Intersex means having both female and male sexual characteristics in the same person. Some intersex persons are born with the sexual or reproductive organs of both males and females. Sometimes intersex people may have variations of both XX (female) and XY (male) chromosomes. They may have both ovaries and a penis, or no external genitalia, but internal testes (testes are the male reproductive sex organs). At puberty they may develop secondary sexual characteristics opposite to the gender they were assigned at birth. For instance, they may have both breasts and a beard, or a large 'Adam's apple' (larynx, more prominent in men in after puberty) and a vagina. In past years it was common for a surgeon to surgically alter intersex babies right after they were born to conform to a particular gender. We now know that such surgery was a mistake, and caused great damage to many intersex children when the wrong decision was made. Today it is much more common for parents and medical practitioners not to intervene in children, but to allow an intersex child to grow naturally, and for the intersex person to decide whether surgery is the right thing for them. In fact, the US state of California recently passed legislation protecting intersex infants from non-consensual surgery.

About 1.7% of the world's population is intersex, which makes being intersex about as common as red hair in the world. The 'I' in 'LGBTI' stands for 'Intersex'.

(19) Show the YouTube video *What it's like to be Intersex*
(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cAUDKEI4QKI>)

Allow time for discussion. Discussion-starter questions:

- What is your reaction to this video?
- Do you think intersex is a medical disorder or a natural biological variation of being human?
- What would you say to the parents of an intersex child?

OTHER GENDER DESIGNATIONS

(20) In the 21st century many people have decided that the historical gender designations of female and male do not fit how they understand themselves. They understand themselves as a mixture of male and female. They see gender as a continuum, ranging from female at one end to male at the other. If you think about it, many people do a mixture of 'traditional male' things and 'traditional female' things. People who understand their gender identities on a continuum sometimes call themselves 'gender fluid', or 'non-binary'. ('Bi' in English means 'two', so 'non-binary' means 'I am not limited by the two genders'.) There are other words for these fluid genders, and the language is always evolving. Don't be too anxious about getting it exactly right, but you'll recognise the words if you hear or read them.

All of the ways we talk about gender are often summarised in the expression 'gender identity' or 'gender expression' (GI or GE).

(21) Discussion questions:

- How easy is it for you to talk about gender and gender diversity? Why do you think that is?
- Thinking back to the first video (or first section) let's ask the question again: Do you think gender is innate? Or cultural? Or some mixture of both? Is gender the same for men and women?

AOMATAN NEI WIIRARA: SEXUALITY

(22) *Purpose: To understand what sexuality is, and to understand that human sexual expression includes physical and emotional attraction, and sexual behaviour.*

It can be hard to talk about sexuality. It is a topic that has many taboos around it.

I was unable to find much in the way of written material that seriously addressed [sexuality] in the Marshall Islands context. Curious about the deeper reasons behind this local silence or ethnographic ambivalence, I finally raised the issue frankly with a Marshallese elder, who thought about it for a moment and then, smiling wisely, retorted: "Maybe it's not that we don't want to talk about this stuff; it's that we don't need to. Maybe we just take it for granted, unlike you Americans. Maybe we've just gotten it all figured out!"⁹

(23) As we have seen, gender and sexuality are different. Gender has to do with how I live my male-ness or female-ness. Sexuality has been defined in many ways, but one way to think about it is the individual way people live out their sexual, intimate and emotional desires¹⁰.

Sexuality has at least three parts:

- Who I am physically attracted to (Who do I think is beautiful, handsome, or sexy?)
- Who I am emotionally attracted to (Who do I fall in love with?)
- Who I am sexually active with (What are my sexual behaviours?)

Often these three parts are the same, and sometimes they are different. I may be attracted to men, women, both men and women, or neither. I may fall in love with men, women, both men and women, or neither. I may be sexually attracted to men, women, both men and women, or neither. Aren't humans interesting!

(24) If we combine physical and emotional attraction with sexual behaviour then we can come up with something we call 'sexual orientation'. Notice how sexual orientation is different from gender identity. Attraction to another person is different from how I feel about myself.

Short discussion: How is sexual orientation different from gender identity? Sometimes international documents talk about 'SOGIE' or 'SOGIESC'. This acronym means Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, [Gender] Expression, and Sex Characteristics. It is important to remember that everyone has a SOGIESC, not just gender and sexually diverse persons.

Show the Facebook video SOGIESC

(<https://www.facebook.com/NZHumanRightsCommission/videos/sogisc-what-is-means-and-why-its-important/10155581701808843/>)

(25) Language can be complicated. If I am a man and I am emotionally and sexually attracted to women, I am 'opposite sex-attracted'. The casual English word for this is 'straight' (the scientific word is 'heterosexual'. Just so you know). Likewise, if I am a woman and am emotionally and sexually attracted to men, I am opposite sex-attracted, or 'straight'.

If I am a man and am emotionally and sexually attracted to men, then I am same-sex attracted. Sometimes same-sex attracted men call themselves 'gay' (*te mwana irekereke ma te mwane* or *binabinaine*). If I am a woman and am emotionally and sexually attracted to women, then I am also same-sex attracted. Sometimes same-sex attracted women call themselves 'lesbian' (*te aine irekereke ma te aine* or *binabinamuane*). The formal English scientific term for same-sex attracted people is 'homosexual', but that word is very old-fashioned, and we hardly use it any more. If I am both same and opposite sex attracted then I may be both sex attracted 'bisexual' (*te aomata ae e irekereke ma te mwane oa te aine naba*)—that is, having the ability to be attracted to and sexually active with either men or women.

(26) It is important to understand that sexual orientation and feelings can change at different times in our lives. We don't always have to be one thing or another. This can be confusing, especially if you are a young person. Some days it seems we might be opposite sex-attracted, some days we may be same sex-attracted, and other days attracted to both. It is all OK. Feelings give us permission to explore all of what we feel and all of who we are. It is important that family and friends support young people as they explore their identities and attractions, and not tease them too much, or make fun of them, or worst of all, bully them, or try

to force them into a particular choice. Feeling different is hard enough for a young person without other people telling them they are bad or wrong or sinful for feeling the way they do. Even if we are parents we need to respect that our children need to live their own lives, and not the lives we want for them.

Read out Kiribati Story #7 (or show on a screen). You may have a short discussion of this story here, or wait and include it after Story #10 below. Discussion question: How does the mother feel about her daughter?

International research, for example¹¹, has found that men tend to find their sexual orientation earlier in their lives than do women. Men also tend to stay with one sexual orientation over the course of their lives. Women more often experience their sexual orientation as fluid, or changing over their lives.

(28) Show the YouTube video *Men like us*
(https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FN4_j23hWkk)

Allow time for discussion. Discussion-starter questions:

- Todd did a lot to change his body (pulling his eyelashes, scarring himself, putting on weight) to fit in. Do you think he did the right thing?
- It was important for Todd to leave home to discover more about himself. It is always necessary to leave home? How do you think parents and teachers can create environments where young people can figure out who they are?

(29-30) Read out Kiribati Story #10 (or show on the screen) and invite people to create a drama presentation from it. What was it like to play these different roles?

- What do you think the mother in the story felt when the son told her he was gay?
- What do you think the son felt? What would you say to the young boy in this story? What do you think his mother's priest should tell him?

(31) Now here's where it can get complicated. Our genders and our sexualities are not necessarily related to each other. I can be a transgender woman attracted to other women. I can be a straight man attracted to transwomen. I can be a bisexual

transman. All of a sudden we discover that people are not defined by labels. It is people that are important, not the words or labels. When someone gives us a gift in a box, we are interested in what is what is in the box, not just in the label on the box. When words and labels stop being useful we should stop using them.

We also need to remember that there is a difference between our feelings and our behaviours. Just because I'm a man who has sex with another man doesn't always mean I'm gay. In fact, men have sex with other men in single-sex environments like prisons, or ships at sea. Behaviour does not define identity.

The question always comes up, how do people of the same sex have sex with each other? Well, how do opposite-sex attracted people have sex with each other? Human beings engage in lots of different kinds of sexual behaviours, and every person has their own desires and preferences. People who think there is only one way to have sex need to use their imaginations a little more!

(32) But equally, we are responsible for our behaviours. Just because we want to have sex with someone does not mean they want to have sex with us. It is irresponsible (and illegal) to force sex on someone without their full and voluntary consent. Someone who is too young, or too drunk, or who is asleep cannot give their voluntary consent for sex.

In the age of AIDS/HIV it is important that whenever we have sex we have safer sex. In a study published in 2018 that included the Marshall Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Vanuatu, Tonga, Samoa, Palau and Kiribati, Kiribati had the highest number of people living with HIV². However, much HIV and sexually transmitted infections in Kiribati appear to occur in young women who board fishing vessels for sex work³. Although there are new prevention drug therapies (such as Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis, sometimes called PrEP) that, when taken correctly, can prevent infection with HIV, PrEP is not widely available yet in smaller Pacific Island nations. So whenever two people are thinking about being sexually active with each other they need to consider being tested for HIV, and always to practice safer sex. Safer sex means using a condom for penetrative sex (vaginal, anal, or oral). Talk to your local health clinic, antenatal clinic, or family planning centre about how to obtain and store condoms in Kiribati, or to get tested for HIV.

In Betio and South Tarawa people can access information on HIV prevention at the HIV Project Unit and BIMBA Drop-In Center, which are adjacent to each other in Bikenibeu. At Teaoarake the Kiribati Family Health Association also provides important information on HIV Prevention. In addition, all clinics throughout Kiribati also have HIV prevention information on request.

Make people aware of these websites:

- <https://aidsinfo.nih.gov/understanding-hiv-aids/fact-sheets/19/45/hiv-aids--the-basics>
- <https://www.nzaf.org.nz/services-programmes/your-community/pacific/>

(33) Read out Kiribati Story #6 (or show on the screen) and invite people to create a drama presentation from it. What was it like to play these different roles?

- How do you think the mother felt?
- Were the brothers right to obey their mother in this case?
- How do you think the older girl felt when she saw her partner's brothers approaching? How did she feel when she saw her partner being taken away?
- How do you think the younger girl felt when she was taken by her brothers?

HUMAN RIGHTS & OTHER LEGAL FRAMEWORKS

(34) *Purpose: to understand the human rights and legal frameworks that shape Kiribati responses to sexual and gender diverse people.*

Kiribati is proud of its constitutional protection of human rights that came into force in 1979. There's even a Human Rights and Peace Day on 10 December every year to commemorate the adoption of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* at the United Nations in 1948.

Human and constitutional rights are at the core of the political, legislative, and social responses to gender and sexual diversity. If the human and legal rights of all people are not respected, then the human and legal rights of no one are safe.

The Republic of Kiribati, a member nation of the United Nations, has ratified the *UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women* (CEDAW), the *Convention on Rights of the Child* (CRC), the *Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment* (CAT), and the *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* (CRPD)¹⁴. However, Kiribati has not ratified the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* (ICCPR) or the *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights* (ICESCR). CEDAW, CRC, ICCPR, CAT, and ICESCR, together with the *International Convention on All Forms of Racial Discrimination* (ICERD) and the *International Convention on Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families* (ICMRW) form the core international human rights instruments¹⁵.

These conventions are international agreements on how vulnerable people should be protected and treated by the international community. Article 19 of the CRC, for instance, says that states "must take all appropriate legislative, administrative, social and education measures to protect the child from all forms of physical or mental violence". This would mean ensuring that gender non-conforming children are protected from stigma, discrimination, and violence. Anyone who bullies a transgender, *binabinaine*, or *binabinamwame* child is not conforming to Kiribati's commitment to that convention.

(35) Kiribati, of course, has its own laws and protections, and these are identified in the Constitution of Kiribati.

What does this have to do with gender and sexual diversity? At the time this toolkit was written, there are no protections in Kiribati for gender and sexually diverse people, and “buggery” (anal intercourse) or “permitting buggery” is a criminal offense¹⁶.

In fact, in a law with origins dating back to the British Protectorate era in 1892,

Kiribati Law Sections 153, 154, and 155 of the Penal Code outlaw anal intercourse regardless of sex. There are no reports of prosecutions directed against LGBT people under these laws.

153. Unnatural Offences

Any person who-

(a) commits buggery with another person or with an animal; or

(b) permits a male person to commit buggery with him or her, shall be guilty of a felony, and shall be liable to imprisonment for 14 years.

154. Attempts to commit unnatural offences and indecent assaults

Any person who attempts to commit any of the offences specified in the last preceding section, or who is guilty of any assault with intent to commit the same, or any indecent assault upon any male person shall be guilty of a felony, and shall be liable to imprisonment for 7 years.

155. Indecent practices between males

Any male person who, whether in public or private, commits any act of gross indecency with another male person, or procures another male person to commit any act of gross indecency with him, or attempts to procure the commission of any such act by any male person with himself or with another male person, whether in public or private, shall be guilty of a felony, and shall be liable to imprisonment for 5 years.¹⁷

So at the moment, it is possible, although unlikely, that *binabinaine* (but not *binabinamwame*) may be at risk if they attempt a romantic or sexual relationship, even with another *binabinaine*.

While the Kiribati government has tried to amend the Constitution to provide for

non-discrimination on the grounds of sex or gender, it did not achieve the required 2/3 majority.

(36) The International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual Trans and Intersex Association (ILGA),

Kiribati 'noted' (rejected) two recommendations to decriminalise, and four to include SOGI into its Constitutional provisions for non-discrimination in [an international review in] May 2010. However, the State did attempt to explain its position: "Concerning the issue of sexual orientation, the delegation appreciated the existence of homosexuality and the need to include it as a prohibited discriminatory ground in the Constitution. However, the delegation reiterated the high threshold required in order to adopt an amendment to the Bill of Rights. The same would apply to the issue of discrimination against women" (para. 61). Local organisations reported that a Private Member's Bill calling for such Constitutional inclusion was then rejected in the Parliament in 2014. In [an international review] in January 2015, Kiribati received recommendations from France, Slovenia, Chile, Canada and Uruguay to decriminalise same-sex sexual relations, and to ensure SOGI is a ground that is protected in anti-discrimination legislation. In the final Working Group report for Kiribati, there is no mention of the State's reasons for rejecting ('noted') all SOGI- related recommendations. It is notable that the State created a Gender Equality and Women's Development Policy in light of the problem it identified in its 2010 [review].¹⁸

(37) In other words, the Kiribati Parliament has decided that there is insufficient political will to change the law to protect everyone in Kiribati from discrimination.

What is the legal situation for *aomatan nei wiirara* in Kiribati? It is unclear. There is no legal protection for Kiribati citizens who experience discrimination based on their gender identity, sexual orientation, or sexual characteristics. Only strong public pressure will create the political will for parliamentarians to change the laws to protect all people in Kiribati.

In addition, according to a representative of the Ministry for Women, Youth, Sport and Social Affairs at the consultation meetings that created this toolkit, *binabinaine* are not included in the remit of that Ministry: *binabinaine* and transwomen are not considered 'real' women. The only place where government is currently working with representatives of BIMBA is the Ministry of Health as part

of HIV prevention. The people of Kiribati will need to decide if they wish to extend Constitutional protection to all people in Kiribati.

Show the YouTube videos:

Transgender Rights are Human Rights (UNAIDS)
(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5Y62Wr5rvsg>)

I'm a proud Pacific Islander
(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QX9gyAokQWw>)

Discuss these videos. Starter questions may include:

- Do gender and sexually diverse people in Kiribati need specific legal protections?
- Should the Kiribati Parliament change the law or Constitution to include specific protections based on gender and sexual orientation? Why or why not?

Read out Kiribati Story #4 (or show on a screen). Do not ask participants to act out this story. Instead invite them to discuss their responses to the story either in small groups or in the larger group.

Discussion starter questions:

- What is your reaction as you hear this story?
- How do you think the family felt when they heard she had been killed?
- What do you think was in the minds of her killers? What do you think the young binabinaine was thinking when she saw the group of killers approach?
- What do you think can be done to prevent such violence in the future in Kiribati?

This is a powerful story, so be prepared for strong reactions from participants. You may wish to schedule a break here.

RELIGION AND FAITH

Purpose: To understand that religion and faith are shaped by culture, and that there are many different religious understandings about gender and sexuality, and about people who are gender and sexually diverse.

It is unusual to consider religion and faith in a workshop on gender and sexuality, but religion is important in Kiribati. Roman Catholics are 56% of the population; 34% is Protestant (Uniting); 5.3% is Latter Day Saints; and 1.9% are Adventist. That means that about 96% of people in Kiribati identify themselves as some kind of Christian. The focus of this section, therefore, will be on Christianity. Protestant Christianity arrived in Kiribati in 1870, and the first permanent Roman Catholic structures were established in 1897. European religions were added to already long-existing civilisation in Tungaru/Kiribati. Bahá'ís, who arrived in 1954, account for about 2.1% of Kiribati's population.

(41) Read out a story from *Two Sea Turtles*:

It is a rainy afternoon in Jaluit Atoll in the Marshall Islands, and the lagoon's surface is textured with a fine turquoise upholstery of raindrops, the horizon obscured by gray mist. Under the aluminum awning of a small house next to a giant breadfruit tree, I sit with a small gathering of Marshall Islander men, drinking extra-sweetened instant coffee and enjoying bwebwenat, the Marshallese pastime of "talking story." A middle-aged man named "Billy" clears his throat, sips from his Styrofoam cup, leans back (in one of those ubiquitous white plastic lawn chairs that one finds even on the tiniest of Marshallese Islands) and begins to tell his tale.

Oh, it's been raining for weeks here this season. Just a couple weeks ago we were out fishing in this weather, a whole bunch of us. We were looking for the biggest sea turtle we could find, so we could have a big feast for a kemem [a first birthday party] for my nephew. We searched and searched in the rain, and we went out by that bird island where we go sometimes to find the bigger turtles or hunt for coconut crabs. Ah, we were just about to give up when, all of a sudden, this gigantic turtle comes up to the surface to breathe. So we surround it and the guys jump into the water to catch this big beast and bring it up onto one of the boats. But then I notice there's another turtle attached to it under the water, and it's holding on tightly to its shell, like they do when they mate. These turtles are totally locked on each other, totally in love, totally doing it with each other. But they've both got long tails—so it's obvious to everyone that they're both males! I sat there up on the boat scratching my head because I'd never seen two male turtles going at it like that with each other, but we saw it with our own eyes, and anyway we knew we

were gonna have a gigantic feast!

The next day when we started preparing the turtles to cook them, the priest came around. He looked at me very seriously and said, "So how did you catch two big male turtles like this at the same time?" And I told him, "well, it was easy—they were making love!" The priest, he gets upset and looks at me like I'm joking, and says, "That's impossible! That kind of thing's not supposed to happen and you know it—you must be making this up!" But I told him, "Hey Father, it looks like gay marriage has finally come to the Marshall Islands. It's about time we accept it!"

Billy winks at me after a long chuckle, looks out at the sea, and nods with a pleasant certainty as he turns back to the group, "Well, I guess the priest didn't like what I had to say, but hey, Marshallese turtles seem to have a different opinion!"

Religion and faith are deeply personal things, and talking about them can be quite difficult.

People's beliefs are strongly felt, and we often accept the authority of a church or religious institution without questions. Sometimes asking questions can help us deepen our faith and increase our understanding about what we believe. Most religions in the world (and certainly Christianity) have some version of 'Love your neighbour', or 'Treat other people like you want to be treated'. Those are good rules to live by. If we all lived that way the world would certainly be a better place! The prophet Micah in the First (or Old) Testament wrote: *What does God require of you? To do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with God* (Micah 6:8). When we are humble we remember that we don't know everything, and that we can't see things from God's point of view. But religions often come with rules. We are told that if we obey the rules good things will come to us, and if we disobey the rules then bad things will happen to us. (42) That is certainly what seems to happen in the First Testament of the Bible. Rules were set out, and people were expected to follow the rules. If they didn't follow, bad things happened. (In the First Testament, blessings from God were usually health, wealth, and many children; punishments were usually illness, poverty, and no children.)

However for Christians, the New Testament changed those rules. Jesus encouraged people to love one another as he loves us. He reminded his followers that God's love is bigger than we can imagine. Jesus didn't ask people to fill out an

application form, or put limits on his love. Jesus did not say that his love was limited to some people, and that other people were excluded from his love only because of some personal characteristic. In fact, the Gospels tell us that Jesus specifically reached out to people who were excluded or disadvantaged by society—women, children, the sick, the poor, the disabled, and so forth—and embraced them. Jesus only got angry at hypocrites: that is, people who showed one kind of religious behaviour on the street, and did something else in private. If we are Christian and we think about the kind of faith we want to have, then certainly we want to model our faith after Jesus.

(43) This is not a workshop where we have time to discuss theology in depth, but you may want to do that another time. The basic idea is pretty simple, and it is the same for all religions: Love one another. If we love one another then we don't judge one another. Love means wanting what is best for the other person. We don't have to decide who is acceptable and who is not: in fact in the Gospels, Jesus challenges his society's norms and reaches out to the socially unacceptable. We can relax and leave any judging to God. In one of the Apostle Paul's letters we read *There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus* (Galatians 3:28). Everyone is equal in the eyes of God. For Christians the differences are less important than the love.

(44) The formal rules of religions can change over time. There was a time when some Christian churches thought slavery was acceptable. There was a time when some churches said that only people with white skin could go to heaven, or even be a part of their church. There are many examples of such beliefs which seem unacceptable now. History is an excellent teacher. Some churches now teach that gender and sexual diversity is wrong or sinful. Some churches teach no such thing: they say that everyone is welcome in the house of God. Where you choose to go to church, what you choose to believe is up to you. But when we are talking about public behaviour, or the way we treat our children and young people, especially in schools and sport, there is no choice. No religion teaches that a parent should reject their child for any reason. No Christian scripture suggests that a parent should beat a child because the child is different from the parent. No religion advocates bullying people who are different.

(45) Show the YouTube video *Pacific Beat St: Gay minister*
(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-pboyhmE5OM>)

Allow time for discussion. Discussion-starter questions:

- Do you think it is possible for a Christian minister to be gay, lesbian or trans? Why or why not?
- Do you think it is possible for a Christian to be gay, lesbian or trans? Why or why not?
- What do you think Jesus would say to binabinaine or binabinamwame Christians? What do you say?

(46) Remember that Jesus said *I tell you the truth, when you did it to one of the least of these my brothers and sisters, you were doing it to me* (Matthew 25:40). If we offer even a cup of cool water to someone who is very different to us, then it is as if we are offering it to Jesus. Likewise, if we bully or stigmatise someone because they are different then it is as if we are doing it to Jesus.

A lot of us don't really sit down and read the Bible for ourselves. We rely on what other people tell us. Like everything, people only tell us what is important to them. For instance, did you know there were two completely different creation stories in Genesis? Some people only use the Bible to tell the stories that support their point of view. You may have heard that the Bible condemns homosexuality. Where? The word 'homosexual' was only invented (in English and German) in 1869, so it is unlikely that the Bible—written centuries ago—had anything to say about gender and sexuality the way we understand them today. The Bible also doesn't say anything about computers or automobiles or climate change! We avoid taking what is in the Bible exactly (or literally), but we can take it seriously. Taking the Bible seriously means understanding the important principles and ideas throughout the Bible and applying them in our lives. It means living our faith with an open mind and an open heart. One of the most consistent and important principles is that God loves human beings. Christians believe that God loves human beings so much that God was willing to take on human flesh and live and die as a human.

If God was willing to love human beings that much, can we try to do any less?

(47) Read out Kiribati Story #8 (or show on a screen). Invite people to create a drama presentation about this story. **(48)** Invite discussion about this story.

- Why do you think we are reading this story in a discussion of religion and faith?
- This is a story about healing and wholeness. It is very sad that the story has a difficult beginning. Why do you think the father changed his mind?
- Why do you think the *binabinaine* telling this story wept tears?

Ask participants to summarise what they will take away from this section. How will it change the way they feel about their church, their religion, or their faith?



STIGMA AND DISCRIMINATION

(49) *Purpose: to understand what stigma is, and to understand the effects of stigma and discrimination on gender and sexually diverse persons.*

Stigma has been described as devalued difference, or a mark of shame or social disapproval. Discrimination is unjust prejudice against different kinds of people because of an individual characteristic. By now it should be clear that stigma and discrimination against any person, including *aomatan nei wiirara—binabinaine, binabinamwame*, gay, lesbian, bi, intersex, or anyone who is gender or sexually diverse—has no place in Kiribati. Human rights and faith traditions make that clear. But still we have heard many Kiribati stories today from people who have experienced stigma and discrimination in school and from their families. Bullying, stigma and discrimination have no place in 21st century Kiribati. Rainbow people in many Pacific Island nations are now demanding a safer environment for gender and sexually diverse young people, although Kiribati, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Island, Tonga and Tuvalu retain British colonial-era anti-homosexuality laws. Isn't it ironic that although Pacific nations want to decolonise, they still retain colonial laws related to sexuality and gender?

(50) **Show the YouTube video *Loud & Proud Campaign (Fiji)***
(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PIbeaLYMjEg>)

Allow time for discussion. Discussion-starter questions:

- What do you think is creating the demand for legal change in the Pacific?
- Why did Sulique, Miki, Lionel and Atunaisa choose to speak out?
- Why were existing mental health services not useful to Sulique, Miki and Lionel?
- What was important in the lives of Sulique, Miki and Lionel to help them get through their difficult times?
- What did Lionel mean by “No support means death”?

(51) A UNICEF-sponsored report found that “Traditional gender roles support and facilitate violence against women and girls, and marginalized groups, including children with disabilities”¹⁹ and that 31% of school children aged 13 have attempted suicide¹⁹. These issues will be amplified among *aomatan nei wiirara*.

(52) There is very little formal data on gender and sexually diverse people in Kiribati, so we must rely on the relevant international literature to help fill in the picture of the situation in Kiribati. The effects of bullying, stigma and discrimination are clearly documented internationally. In one New Zealand study 65% of gay, lesbian and bisexual people reported that they had been bullied in school²⁰. We know the effects of bullying and stigma:

- Gender and sexually diverse youth account for 30% of successful suicides, and up to 60% of suicide attempts;
- In the U.S., 25-40% of homeless people are gender and sexually diverse young people²¹; either their parents had thrown them out of the house or they ran away because they felt their homes were dangerous;
- (53) Gender and sexually diverse young people are at increased risk for bullying, physical and verbal assault, health and mental health problems, problematic substance misuse (drinking and/or drug use), and eating disorders²².
- The risk for depression and anxiety disorders were at least 1.5 times greater in lesbian, gay and bisexual people, and the risk for alcohol and other substance dependence over 12 months was also 1.5 times greater than in cisgender heterosexuals²³.

A study from the US found that 41% of transgender persons in the U.S. have attempted suicide²⁴; in a Scottish study this number was 84%²⁵. A New Zealand study found that 28.6% of gay men had attempted suicide, compared with only 1.6% of heterosexual men. It also found that 76.4% of gay men had thought about suicide, compared with only 7.6% of heterosexual men²⁶. Suicidal thoughts were even higher among gay/lesbian persons for whom religion was very important²⁷.

(54) News stories from around the world tell us that same-sex couples are being torn apart by their families, fired from their jobs, subjected to so-called 'corrective rape', or murdered for being gender or sexuality non-conforming²⁸. There are 72 countries around the world where consensual adult same-sex relationships are punishable by whipping, imprisonment, or torture, and ten countries that retain the death penalty for same-sex relationships²⁸.

The American poet Adrienne Rich wrote that "Heterosexuality has had to be imposed, managed, organised, propagandized and maintained by force".²⁹ What

do you think this means in Kiribati?

(55) Gay and trans people are bullied, stigmatised, arrested, and murdered because they are seen as different or weak, but one study participant said “You have to be strong to be gay”²⁰.

(56) **Show the YouTube video** *Change the Clap*
(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IiJRICJlhu0>)

Discussion starter question:

- This video is from South Asia, where some kinds of clapping are meant to show contempt for *hijra* (transgender persons). What is motivating these *hijra* to make this video? What is their goal?

(56) When young gender and sexually diverse people are forced out of schools their futures become limited: they may not be able to get the jobs they want, the careers they want, and they cannot contribute to their families or their societies, and instead may become a financial burden. As we have seen, some may consider harming themselves. When young gender and sexually diverse people do not access health care because of stigma their health suffers, but so does the health of other people: diseases like HIV, hepatitis, syphilis, and gonorrhoea go untreated and can spread through a community. Girls and young women do not access preventive health services. The health of a whole community suffers. Until human and legal rights and protections are extended to all people in Kiribati and the Pacific, an environment of bullying, stigma, and discrimination will continue. Stigma and discrimination affect entire communities.

(57) **Read out Kiribati Story #5** (or show on a screen) and invite people to create a drama presentation from it. What was it like to play these different roles?

WHAT YOU CAN DO

(58) Purpose: To encourage participants to create an action plan about what to do next with what they have learned in this workshop.

Show the YouTube video *New Zealand's first gay Pacific Island wedding*
(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pA2lIUhBZmE>)

Allow time for discussion. Discussion-starter questions:

- What do you think the reaction would be in Kiribati to a same-sex wedding or commitment ceremony?
- Why do you think people would react that way?
- What do you think about same-sex marriage or commitment ceremonies?

Until now we have been learning by listening and watching. We have heard information, we have created short dramas, and we have seen what is happening in other parts of the Pacific. Now is the time for you to decide what happens next. What will you do with what you have learned from this workshop? What will change for you? What are your next steps? What things are you willing to do individually, in your family, school, workplace, community, island/atoll, or even at a national level?

Encourage the larger group to form small working groups. Ask each group to develop an 'action plan' that each person will take away from the day. Agree on how much time the small groups will have to work together. Give groups a five-minute warning and a one-minute warning before the end of the agreed time.

- Give each group a large piece of paper and a marking pen or two (or if someone in each group has an electronic device they can use, that's fine too!).
- Each group will first decide at what levels the participants want to make changes (for example, individually, in the family, school, etc.)
- Then develop an action plan for each level of change. This action plan might include things like 'tell other people about this workshop', 'challenge stigmatising language in my workplace', and things like that.
- Participants should write their plan on the large paper (or devices).

Then bring the smaller groups back together to the large group, and have each group report back on their plans. Other groups may add ideas to their plans as each

group reports. Participants may want to take a photograph of their final plan on their mobile phones.

If the group lives locally or sees each other regularly (such as in a common workplace, church or community) then they may want to structure a 'check in' date where they will meet again briefly to see how their plans are going.

EVALUATION

(60) At the end of the workshop thank participants and give them time to provide feedback to you. You might have an open discussion, or invite people to write their feedback to you on a sheet of paper or an email. If you ask for oral feedback you can ask:

- What did you learn?
- Were your expectations met?
- What was good about the workshop?
- What could be better next time?
- What is the most important thing you will take with you from the workshop?

If you have access to a photocopier you can distribute the following questions or put them up on a screen and invite people to respond on paper or via email:

- The thing I liked best about this workshop is _____.
- The thing I liked least about this workshop is _____.
- I would like to hear more about _____.
- Something new I learned is _____.
- Something I wish had been included is _____.
- What is one thing you will do as a result of attending this workshop?

(61) If participants would like additional resources you may show slide 61.

(62) Thank people for coming.

Be sure to clear up after yourself and leave a tidy space. Thank you for leading this workshop!



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Annex 1: Stories from Kiribati

1. When I was a child my family treated me like a boy, but in my inside I changed what I wanted. For my school, I felt shy, I lived and showed myself as a boy, but inside I felt different. I did this because I knew that's what I had to do. When I changed and began presenting as a girl, my brother and my sisters knew what I was, and they didn't like it. I tried to do what they wanted, but they didn't treat me well. They told me to leave the house. My parents also wanted me to be different. Finally, my parents passed away and I was able to do what I wanted—I could do any kind of job. When I became 21 I knew I had my own rights. I knew I could do whatever I wanted. Now they treat me with respect. I am now comfortable with them, to be with them. Now they say that they are OK with my doing what I do. Now I'm OK because my family treats me better, and I'm old enough to wear what I want. Except that they don't want me to have a boyfriend. If I have a boyfriend I will need to hide him from them. I will need to go far away from them. Maybe I will find a boyfriend here, but I will never talk about it.

2. When I was nine years old in my head I changed my life and wanted to live as a girl. My mother and father, they said I was a boy. I was very sad. In my heart I felt like a girl. Then when I was 20 years old I still felt like a female, my parents still treated me like a male in my family. Two years ago, I was still living and presenting as a male, and started a relationship with another man, but my parents didn't recognise him. He said he loved me. After a year he told me he was married, to a woman. I cried very hard and ended the relationship. For the last year I started to live as a woman.

3. I realised I was trans when I was just seven years old. I lived in an outer island. At first my parents hated that I was trans. They didn't like me to live as a girl. Finally, my father let me live as I am. I came to Tarawa for school. It was a boarding school and there was a dorm room for boys and a room for girls. The principal called me in and decided to expel me from school because of the way I presented as a girl. I felt very sad because I wanted to further my studies. I cannot accomplish my dreams because of what that principal did. I went to live with my biological sister who also was in Tarawa, but I went to functions with my BIMBA sisters. I stayed at home and helped my sister with her children. That's what I'm still doing. In my dreams I would like to live with my BIMBA sisters and to engage in some kind of work, like catering.

4. Some people came across a person lying on the beach. She was one of our *binabinaine* sisters. There was a broken bottle of soy sauce shoved into her rectum.

Some boys had assaulted her. They shoved the broken bottle into her and killed her, because of who she was. They killed her and just left her lying on the beach.

5. Bani left school at age 11. She was born a boy, but was mocked by her school mates because she came to school dressed as a girl. She couldn't take the hate, so she left school. I don't know what she is doing now. It is such a waste: she could have been educated well and contributed to our society. But that opportunity is now gone.

6. Recently there was an older girl in relationship with another younger girl, and they stayed together. The mother of the younger girl was looking for her, and could not find her. She told her sons to go and find the daughter; when they found her she just stood there. Her brothers grabbed her by her arms, but her partner held on. The brothers beat the older girl, but she fought back and beat the brothers because she was stronger, and maybe angrier. Meanwhile the police came, and said the mother was looking for the daughter. Finally the older girl let go of her partner. The older girl called after her partner, "I will find you!"

7. I am so worried about my daughter. She is strong, a 'tomboy'. She does what she wants. I am so worried about her. I tell her, "You are a girl, you should not behave like a boy!" I sent her away to study. Maybe I can protect her when she is not here. But still she behaves like a tomboy. I know it is important for her to be what she wants, not what I want. But I'm so worried.

8. When I was at primary my father used to drop me off at school dressed in my boy's school uniform, but after he left I changed into the girl's clothes I had in my book bag. I also left my book bag under the breadfruit tree and walked around school with a lady's bag. I was very proud of it. My older sister found out and smacked me, many times. My father saw her, and said "Why don't you leave him alone?" Then my sister told him why she was hitting me. It was very difficult for me. I felt that I did not belong to them. One day, two years later I was getting ready for a workshop, and I came down dressed nicely. My father said to me, "Why don't you wear the other dress, the one with the slit up the side? It looks much nicer on you." I was shocked. I was so surprised. Then the tears started down my cheeks. That was the way he showed that he accepted me. Since then, it has been much easier for me, and I am happy to live at home and care for my parents. All my nieces and nephews now call me auntie, and my sister even calls me "Sister". It is a family again.

9. My father's sister is a mayor of a village in Abemama. She dressed as a man, and lived with a woman as her wife. When the wife died the entire village came together for the funeral. It showed everyone that gender and sex didn't matter as much as everyone caring for each other at a difficult time. It was a way the village showed respect for the mayor.

10. I grew up in a very conservative and Roman Catholic family in the southern part of Kiribati so I struggled with my sexual orientation once I felt sexually attracted to boys. I found it easy to connect with girls in my class at high school. As a Catholic, to me it was natural to pray to God to help me be straight or be like the other boys. Apparently this never happened. So, as a closeted gay boy in a boarding school, I was subject to verbal, physical and mental abuse by other boys in the boys' dormitories. It rarely happened in the classroom, and I was able to complete my Form 7 with a scholarship offer for tertiary studies.

I travelled abroad to continue my tertiary education. Upon arriving in my new home for the next four years, I found that there were many people who were openly gay or transwoman at the university and around the town, although I refer to them all as *binabinaine* back then. Without my conservative, religious and strict family members around I enjoyed my new home, and I slowly came out of the closet. In my final year at the university I opened up to my closest friend about my sexual orientation. Coincidentally, I became part of the university's first rainbow community though, its establishment as a recognized and registered organization of the university was not successful at the time.

Fast forward to my return home after university and a work attachment. I was able to come out to my mother who was shocked to learn that I'm gay. She advised me to continue praying in the hope of becoming straight, but I told her that praying had not helped. It took a little time for her to think it through. Then I finally convinced her when I told her that I am still me but I'm not interested in women. Her worry was that she really wanted a grandchild from me. To me, this was huge, and it was her way of accepting my sexual orientation: her gay son who may not be able to provide her with a grandchild.

YOUTUBE VIDEOS

- Change the Clap (APTŊ) (1:29): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ij7RlCj1hu0>
- Fa'afafine (10:12): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F9xvkCa637s&list=PLx45CBh2HtI1WJZVUhsdtPIRxUozA6Ŋo_
- I'm a proud Pacific Islander (1:55): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QX9gyAokQWw>
- Loud & Proud Campaign (Fiji) (10:13): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PIbeaLYŊjEg>
- Marquesan Transgender (5:34): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fKVcCibYsvo>
- Men like us (4:25): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FN4_j23hWKK
- New Zealand's first gay Pacific Island wedding (6:54): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pA21UhbZmE>
- Pacific Beat St: Gay minister (6:27): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-pbouhmE5OM>
- Puberty and Transgender Youth (1:52): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f7VyJkVBi7g>
- This is me (3:49): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CixuguZCfw>
- Transgender rights are human rights (UNAIDS) (5:02): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5Y62Wj5rvsg>
- What it's like to be intersex (3:25): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cAUdKfE14QKI>
- What does intersex mean? (7:35): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n_5l2fwUWGo

OTHER VIDEO

- New Zealand Human Rights Commission, 'SOGIESC': <https://www.facebook.com/NZHumanRightsCommission/videos/sogisc-what-is-means-and-why-its-important/10155581701808843/>

FACEBOOK PAGES

- Diva 4 Equality
- Haus of Khameleons (Fiji)
- Oceania Pride
- Pacific Sexual and Gender Diversity Network (closed group)
- Rainbow Pride Foundation (Fiji)
- Samoan Fa'afafine Association Incorporated
- Te Tiare Association Inc. (Cook Islands)
- Tonga Leitis' Association
- Youth Voices Count

OTHER WEBSITES

- The International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual Trans and Intersex Association (ILGA) website for Oceania: <https://ilgaoceania.life/news>
- UNAIDS-Kiribati profile: <https://www.unaids.org/en/regionscountries/countries/kiribati>
- UNAIDS-Kiribati Progress Report 2014: <https://www.aidsdatahub.org/Kiribati-Global-AIDS-Response-Progress-Report-2014>
- <https://aidsinfo.nih.gov/understanding-hiv-aids/fact-sheets/19/45/hiv-aids--the-basics> <https://www.nzaf.org.nz/services-programmes/your-community/pacific/>

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