



Australian
Volunteers

**Supporting peer-based youth
volunteering in Kiribati**

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Developing and expanding peer-based youth volunteering to share health information with young people.

Complete

Mar 2021 - June 2023



Summary

The team in Kiribati identified an opportunity to support the development and expansion of peer-based youth volunteering, particularly around sexual and reproductive health issues among young people. This project built upon existing peer-based health education programs from Y-PEER, a program designed by young people, for young people in Kiribati.

Our objectives

- Provide real-world experiences for locally engaged volunteers in Kiribati to build skills and share health information using peer-based practices.
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- Understand how community leaders can support young people in volunteering programs and increase support for young people from their community.
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- Strengthen relationships with government ministries and organisations in Kiribati so that these relationships can be utilised in the delivery of the volunteering program.

Our approach

Approximately 400 young people in Kiribati are part of Y-PEER and have undergone the program's training around sexual and reproductive health and rights, however, they lack opportunities to share their knowledge in the wider community. The program was interested in developing further opportunities for the Y-PEER network to provide peer-to-peer education throughout Kiribati through the support of local volunteers.

This project took a co-design approach, with all stakeholders actively involved in design and testing, and learning feedback at each stage.

To start the project, we hosted a two-day workshop with young people to explore the opportunities and challenges in current peer-based volunteering models, the skills young people have that can be used in volunteering, and understand why young people participate in volunteering. Learn more about this workshop in Appendix 1.

Then, we worked with stakeholders to develop a youth peer health-and-skills volunteer model, gain feedback, and explore the conditions required for this idea to be successful. In partnership with YPEER, the program kicked off a third round of co-design sessions where participants developed a youth peer volunteer model perceived as having a high potential in the Kiribati community. Learn more about these

co-design sessions in Appendix 2.

Finally, in May 2023, YPEER was joined by volunteers from Tungaru Youth Agriculture (TYA) to deliver a small, low-cost test with young people from the Angaieta community. This activity helped us understand how much support the volunteers might need, what challenges in collaboration there might be for volunteers with different skills, and any further training volunteers may require. Learn more about the testing process in Appendix 3.

The model has now been handed over to YPEER and is available to any other organisations in Kiribati interested in getting involved.

What we learned

- Barriers to young people utilising their sexual reproductive health knowledge in peer-based volunteering include low-self esteem, associated costs, lack of community support, and the taboo nature of the topic.
- Youth programs led by various Ministries in Kiribati tend to have more community support, however, these programs can be less attractive to young people.

Appendix 1 - Exploring Volunteering for Development workshop held in Kiribati

The program collaborated with Kiribati youth organisation Y-PEER, to deliver a two-day design workshop with 14 young people who had previously undertaken sexual reproductive health and peer education training with Y-PEER.

The workshop explored the opportunities and challenges in current peer-based volunteering models, the skills young people have that can be used in volunteering, and why young people participate in volunteering. It sought to understand:

- opportunities and challenges young people see in participating in a volunteer program
- what they'd like to get out of a volunteer program
- the key skills and networks they have that could be built upon.

A key challenge highlighted during the workshop related to local cultures and attitudes towards young people talking about sexual and reproductive health, as well as their impact on community support for these activities.

Following this workshop, the program worked with Y-PEER to develop a concept for a new peer volunteering model that could be explored with community elders, whose support is critical to the success and sustainability of potential models.



Y PEER group with facilitator Tarawaniman Lamti



A group of innovators participate in a workshop

Appendix 2 - Co-designing youth peer health volunteer model in Kiribati

In partnership with Y-PEER, the program kicked off a third round of co-design sessions, attended by 40 participants, including young people, community leaders and representatives from the Australian High Commission. During the two-day workshops, participants embarked on co-shaping the youth peer volunteer model that is perceived as having a high potential in the Kiribati community.

Through this project, the program has engaged with community members to learn about their ongoing needs and co-design a peer-based youth volunteering model that could support sexual and reproductive health promotion. Based on the insights from previous workshops (see Appendix 1), the team developed a youth peer health-and-skills volunteer model, sought feedback, and explored the conditions required for this idea to be successful.

Workshop activities were designed to support understanding among young people and community leaders to address the disconnect between what young people felt they needed from their community and what community leaders believe is the role of young people in the community.

Both the community and the Australian High Commission representatives in Kiribati commented that the initiative, which brings youth and elders together, was unique and had strong potential to generate solutions to community-identified issues. Various Kiribati organisations expressed interest in taking ownership of the model to implement it locally.

Following the workshop, the project team tested parts of this health-and-skills based volunteering concept to learn more about its viability and scalability. Additionally, the program continued to engage project partners, including YoPEER, Agriculture Youth Club, the Ministry of Health, and the Ministry of Women, to strengthen sustainability and the impact of the Kiribati youth peer volunteering model.



Participants designing youth peer health and skills volunteer model

Appendix 3 - Testing parts of the Youth Peer Volunteer Model in Kiribati

We don't always get things right the first time. Usually, we have to try a few times to make it work. This is what a prototype is – a simple test of a proposed model we can run at low cost and low risk. It's a way of developing, testing, and improving an idea before inviting wider participation.

In Kiribati, we developed a youth peer-to-peer volunteering model (see Appendix 2) designed to bring young people with different skills together to share those skills with other young people in the community. We didn't know how much support the young people would need, so we tested it out by running a prototype.

In May 2023, volunteers from YPEER joined volunteers from Tungaru Youth Agriculture (TYA) to run an activity with young people from the Angaieta community in Tarawa, Kiribati – in a small, low-cost test run. This activity helped the program to understand how much support the volunteers might need, what challenges in collaboration there might be for volunteers with different skills, and any further training volunteers may require.

From this test, we clarified the support and training volunteers would need so the knowledge could be applied to the model design in preparation for handover to Y-PEER and any other Kiribati organisations interested in implementing.

What we learned

- There were no major barriers to collaboration for the volunteers from YPEER and TYA, although some facilitation from the Youth Officer at YPEER was required to ensure everyone understood the goals of the activity.
- Volunteers would benefit from having a workshop package or manual to follow, including both topics for the workshop.
- There was an opportunity for YPEER to adapt their sexual and reproductive health training to go beyond knowledge sharing and focus on attitudes and behavior change.



YPEER Youth Officer mapping what the prototype should include



Youth volunteers from YPEER and TYA planning their activities



Volunteers and youth participants



Volunteers and youth participants building agriculture skills



Soil regeneration



Preparing for planting