



TV

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UN IN ACTION

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KIRIBATI: PROTECTING THE CHILDREN

VIDEO

WOMEN AND CHILDREN AT
COMMUNITY HOUSE

CHILDREN RUN AT BEACH

BAS WITH ADOPTIVE FAMILY

SANA WITH FAMILY

BARA COOKS

AUDIO

NARRATION:

In many parts of the world, corporal punishment remains an acceptable way to discipline children. In Kiribati, one of the least developed Pacific island nations, children are often hit when they misbehave. (13")

This is Bas. Her biological parents abandoned her and she has no birth certificate. But her new adoptive mother Sana thinks Bas is about two years old. Despite her young age, she's been through a lot. (18")

SANA: (i-Kiribati) **F**

"When I took the girl her cheeks were bruised, and she was bleeding from the corner of her eye. Her mouth was cut up, and her back, legs and neck were severely scratched." (14")

NARRATION:

Sana's husband Bara witnessed the child being beaten by people who were clearly drunk. (6")

POLICE STATION

Sana and her husband called the police and took the baby to the hospital. Since Bas had no one to take care of her, the police told Sana to take her home, to join her family of seven children. (12.5")

FLOODED HOME

But Sana and her family have their own difficulties. After losing a house to the sea during a recent high tide, their second home was flooded, too. They took refuge at their community house called maneaba. This is where they cook, sleep, play and worship. And this is where Bas has found her new home. (26.5")

COMMUNITY HOUSE

SANA ON CAMERA

SANA: (i-Kiribati) **F**
"The first time she came to my family her thinking was different from other normal kids. She was scared of people, and she liked to stay alone without others touching her."
(12.5")

BAS WITH ADOPTIVE FAMILY

NARRATION:
Now Bas has a family that takes good care of her and wants to raise her as their own. (5")

CHILDREN AT COMMUNITY HOUSE

But the case is very complicated because Bas's birth has never been registered and her biological mother is very hard to trace. She had sold Bas to the abusive couple for fifty cents. (12")

João Mendes is UNICEF's Child Protection

Officer in Kiribati. (4")

MENDES ON CAMERA

JOÃO MENDES: (English) **M**

"Most of the people have never been registered – parents, including their child – so that means that we cannot move forward in terms of legal adoptions." (9")

CHILDREN

NARRATION:

But UNICEF and the government of Kiribati are working together to establish routine birth registration immediately after a child is born. (8")

But a more fundamental problem is the alcohol abuse in Kiribati. (4")

BAS WITH ADOPTIVE FAMILY

After Bas's case became public, the adoptive parents who had abused her fled. Not much is left at their house, except for empty bottles of home-brewed coconut toddy. (10.5")

RE-ENACTMENT – MAN AND WOMAN DRINK AND ARGUE

This is the kind of alcohol most people here drink. And because it is mostly done at home, the drinking is hard to control. (8")

CHILDREN PLAY

But alcohol exacerbates another problem that is plaguing Kiribati – an acceptance of corporal punishment. Even children are accustomed to being hit. (9.5")

MENDES ON CAMERA

JOÃO MENDES: (English) **M**

"Many of them say that it's good to be beaten

if they really have done something wrong. You know, this is a cultural traditional perception.” (5”)

NARRATION:

VILLAGE ELDERS / POLICE

But in a significant step forward, the village elders are working with the authorities to change the belief that physical punishment is an acceptable form of discipline. (9.5”)

POOR CHILDREN UNDERNEATH
CARDBOARD BOXES

And when children are subjected to violence, they are now encouraged to speak up. It’s customary in Kiribati for women to take in children in need. (11”)

BAS WITH SANA

Bas now lives in a violence-free environment with Sana and her family, but Bas’s legal adoption can only move forward once her biological mother is found. The couple that abused Bas are now in court. (13”)

SANA: (i-Kiribati) **F**

SANA ON CAMERA

“Bas and I are always together. If she sees me, she comes to me and talks. She asks when she wants to drink and eat. She doesn’t like to talk with people only me... Wherever I go, she’s with me all the time.” (14”)

SANA WITH BAS

NARRATION:

UN LOGO

This report was prepared by Sasa Gorisek for the United Nations.