Kiribati was represented at the IAAF World Championships in Doha in 2019.

After suitable trials held by the Kiribati Athletics Association on Tarawa, top sprinter Tirioro Kamoriki Willie was selected to travel to the heat of Doha, Qatar, for the 17th. IAAF World Championships. These were staged between September 27th. and October 6th. Travelling with Tirioro was the current KAA Treasurer, Tekua Reeu Tekua. The travel arrangements were arranged centrally by the Competitions Manager of Oceania AA. For this trip there were no complications with visas !

They left Tarawa on Thursday, September 19th., stayed a few days in Fiji, then flew on to Hong Kong for their transit to Doha. They arrived at 0445 on Tuesday, Sept. 24th. To satisfy the drug-testing requirements, Tirioro was due to have his test on arrival in Doha, it being currently impossible to do it in-country through the Ministry of Health and Medical Services at Nawerewere on Tarawa.

Having attended the Oceania AA Meeting later that day, while Tiroro recovered (!), Tekua had to be ready to attend the IAAF Congress.

They were both involved in the Opening Ceremony on the morning of Friday, September 27th., Tirioro marching in the athletes’ parade and Tekua watching on !

Amazingly, Tirioro had recovered enough by 16.35 that afternoon to take his place at the start of lane 7 in Race 2 (of 4) of the Mens’ 100m. Preliminary Round. *(The best of the athletes from these four races qualified to compete in the actual Heats later that evening.)*  The athletes and spectators in the renovated, 30,000-seat Khalifa International Stadium were protected against the desert heat of Doha by huge cool-air blowers at track level.

Having reacted very well (0.172 seconds) and started strongly, Tirioro stayed in contention for maybe 50m. but then the superior fitness and speed endurance of the other five enabled them to pull away. So he finished 6th. in 11.57. This was not far off his PB. For comparison, the winner of this race clocked 10.32 !) *The four images (taken from the live BBC TV broadcast) herewith show him (in red top and blue tights) soon after the start; during the race; nearing the finish; and with his name on the results display.*

They stayed a few days more, then Tirioro stopped off in Fiji while Tekua flew home.

This was an unforgettable experience but perhaps a little disappointing due to the low attendance for these races. He should be proud to have shown the (best !) flag !

*(David Little.) October 2019.*