



Economic and International Affairs Scrutiny Panel

Quarterly Review Hearing

Witness: The Minister for International Development

Thursday, 4th December 2025

Panel:

Deputy M. Tadier of St. Brelade (Chair)

Deputy K.M. Wilson of St. Clement

Deputy M.B. Andrews of St. Helier North

Witnesses:

Deputy C.F. Labey of Grouville and St. Martin, The Minister for International Development

Mr. E. Lewis, Executive Director, Jersey Overseas Aid.

[10:39]

Deputy M. Tadier of St. Brelade (Chair):

Thank you, Minister. Thank you for coming to join us. Mr. Lewis, thank you also. I am just going to present our side of the table. So this is a quarterly hearing with the Economic and International Affairs Scrutiny Panel. I am Montford Tadier, Deputy and Chair of the panel.

Deputy M.B. Andrews of St. Helier North:

Deputy Max Andrews.

Deputy K.M. Wilson of St. Clement:

Deputy Karen Wilson, Vice Chair.

The Minister for International Development:

I am Deputy Carolyn Labey, I am Minister for International Development.

Executive Director, Jersey Overseas Aid:

Edward Lewis, Executive Director of Jersey Overseas Aid.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Thank you. Thanks again for coming to see us. We will launch straight in. Minister, can you give us a general overview and an update on the current projects that are being delivered at the moment by Jersey Overseas Aid?

The Minister for International Development:

Yes, sure. Well, if I can start by saying at the minute we have got 35 active projects in 2025 and they equate to a value of £45 million, because some of them are multi-year. I am just talking now of the sustainable development projects. So we have got 35 active and we completed 7 this year. We have been considering new projects for next year and we put out 50 expressions of interest ... well, we received 50 expressions of interest from our partners that we deal with and out of those we have chosen 9 projects. Now they will be considered in way more depth next year and we would look to start them in about April, from April onwards. So that is the sustainable development projects. We have responded to 28 emergencies this year and that value is £7.9 million. We have actually completed 13 humanitarian responses. With our local charities, who we like to support, which would include the R.J.A. & H.S. (Royal Jersey Agriculture and Horticulture Society) and Durrell, so big local charities as well as smaller ones, we have 12 active projects and we have completed one in 2025. So in total in 2025 we have 72 active projects and we have completed 21.

Executive Director, Jersey Overseas Aid:

May I add just a little bit more on the assessment that goes into the partners that Deputy Labey talked about. I think we have presented this in the past, but the assessment that every project goes through before they are vetted and given the award is included in a very rigorous in-country assessment which goes through things like governance, financial oversight as well. So we are in the process of that from January in terms of the visits. From January to March, many of the team

will be going to visit these partners in-country to look under the bonnet and spend a day to make sure the due diligence is appropriately conducted before any award is given as well.

Deputy K.M. Wilson:

Has there been any change to that assessment framework since you last applied?

Executive Director, Jersey Overseas Aid:

Yes, we always update it. We always make sure that questions are looked at and added. What we are trying to do, because we have a whole set of self-assessments, questionnaires that we send in advance, where we know all about their governance structure, their policies, how they approach procurement, for example, which is always a big risk. So what we are trying to do is refine that so when we go there we are not duplicating. So we are really spending time with the partners to talk about the project because we have got a lot of the background information in advance of. So, yes, we always refine the questions and we always go over them and change them as necessary.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Are the projects that you take on ... so, for example, the 9 new ones, will they be entirely dependent on Jersey funding? Is there a mixed funding or are there projects where Jersey takes a bigger lead than other ones?

The Minister for International Development:

They are usually a mix.

Executive Director, Jersey Overseas Aid:

Yes, and that can range from some of the organisations themselves putting money in, obviously, to match funds, but all the way up until big co-financing with organisations like the European Commission as well, who put in sizable chunks. So it varies depending on the organisation and that.

Deputy M.B. Andrews:

Have there been any initiatives where you have seen the U.S. (United States) be involved, and then obviously with the U.S. now pulling out, have any of those initiatives that you have been part of been affected?

Executive Director, Jersey Overseas Aid:

In the development space, not so much, because the partners we use are mainly European focused or registered in the U.K. (United Kingdom), in the humanitarians sector, yes.

Deputy M. Tadier:

We will maybe go on to this question now. I mean, it was later on in our agenda but following on from Deputy Andrew's question, how is the international narrative, especially around asylum seekers and what we might call a move towards more nationalism from certain Governments around the world? Has that provided any challenges in the overseas aid space ultimately in support for projects?

[10:45]

The Minister for International Development:

Overseas aid as in our space or generally?

Deputy M. Tadier:

I think generally, so I mean if we look at the ... you have talked about emergency projects and humanitarian projects. Have either of those areas been affected?

The Minister for International Development:

Well, we get calls to support humanitarian projects that look after refugees, and we have direct funding with O.C.H.A. (United Nations Office for the Co-ordination of Humanitarian Affairs) which is U.N.O.C.H.A. and U.N.H.C.R. (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees), we support them, so we support refugees in situ, in the countries where they are, rather than encouraging them to come and make perilous sea journeys. But, you know, everybody is looking at their budgets now, the U.K. especially, their contribution to international development has dropped from initially 0.7 per cent, they reached the U.N. (United Nations) target, but that has dropped to 0.5 per cent and in 2027 will be dropping to 0.3 per cent. So that is quite concerning, I would say, and it is worthy to note that the U.K.'s budget in 2024, 20 per cent of it was spent in the U.K. with asylum seekers and refugees.

Deputy M. Tadier:

That counts as overseas aid. Are you seeing a change in public attitudes towards the willingness to help overseas, do you think? Either in Jersey or just globally, and is that presenting a problem?

The Minister for International Development:

Obviously, with the U.S. pulling out overnight, I think that shocked N.G.O.s (non-governmental organisations) and certainly the workers there. The U.K. reducing their budget, I think there is concern as to what is happening. What people actually think about that is a matter for them, really.

Deputy M. Tadier:

I am wondering if that has a knock-on effect on public policy. So if there is a perception that the electorate want people to focus on domestic matters, then that may give the green light for Governments to cut spending, as well as, I suppose, defence spending being a factor. Do you think that is correct?

The Minister for International Development:

Well, yes, we have seen defence budgets increased, like in the U.K., defence being increased and international development budgets being reduced. Now, it is a matter of opinion, whether that is the right way to go.

Executive Director, Jersey Overseas Aid:

May I add also the context, I mean, if we look at the majority of the European donors that have reduced their overseas aid commitments, they started from quite a high position in the first place. The majority of them were at least 0.5, if not easing towards 0.7. So them reducing it by 0.2 per cent or something, that still means that they are above the 0.3 and that is still a worthy contribution in terms of overseas development assistance.

Deputy M. Tadier:

But is there a black hole then in international funding, effectively, that we can talk about?

Executive Director, Jersey Overseas Aid:

In the humanitarian space, yes, absolutely.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Okay, thank you. Getting back to Jersey, I suppose, do you think the public is still supportive of the role and the work of Overseas Aid?

The Minister for International Development:

I believe so. We certainly get a lot of support for what we are doing and certainly if there are emergencies to respond to, the public do expect Jersey to be there in some form or another, especially the humanitarian space.

Executive Director, Jersey Overseas Aid:

I think that was visible in the liberation celebrations in May as well, I think there was a huge amount of pride in the role that Jersey is playing in the humanitarian space, learning lessons from the past and taking those forward and forging a really strong identity for the Island. We are

working hard to address and to encourage the youth, in particular, to take an interest in international and global affairs. Just this year alone, we have reached over 1,500 students going into their schools and talking about the role of Jersey Overseas Aid and what it achieves as well. I do believe there is a strong support for Jersey Overseas Aid and what it achieves, and I am very proud of what it does achieve.

Deputy M.B. Andrews:

Obviously, there is quite a lot of interest in terms of overseas aid, and obviously that is under your remit. But I was wondering, Minister, do you also think that under your remit there potentially could be work done when you are looking at, say, all the different nationalities who live in Jersey, where really it could be maybe under your remit, rather than, say, the Assistant Chief Minister's remit? So it is not just overseas aid alone.

The Minister for International Development:

In what respect? You mean the International Cultural Centre?

Deputy M.B. Andrews:

Yes, in terms of the International Cultural Centre and maybe other things as well that potentially could be incorporated under your brief.

The Minister for International Development:

So my budget, the clarification for ODA is Overseas Development Assistance, and it will only be considered as such if it is for overseas development. What Deputy Alves is doing with the International Cultural Centre is totally different work. It is to support people that come over here to live and work. It is not the same and my budget would not be ... it is not transferable. It would not be considered as O.D.A.

Deputy M.B. Andrews:

No, no, okay. Obviously you have mentioned in the past about the level of funding that you received. Obviously, there has been about 0.3 per cent of G.D.P. (Gross Domestic Product) and I just wanted to know if potentially that could reduce. What happens in those situations where you have maybe made commitments to try and support a number of different projects and then your funding happens to be reduced?

The Minister for International Development:

Well, I would very much hope it would not happen overnight, because we get the maximum amount of impact with our development projects on multi-year, rather than just sort of one-off payments. So I would hope it does not, but we would have to manage that. As I said, we had 50

expressions of interest and commissioners have decided on 9 projects to look at in more depth before we start them in April. So there is a lead in time. So we would have to reduce the amount of emergency support we give, reduce the amount of development assistance we give. So it would have a knock-on effect but, like I say, hopefully not overnight.

Deputy M.B. Andrews:

No. Obviously, you mentioned there has been about 13 humanitarian cases that you have obviously been involved in. What impact has that had on your overall budget when you are also providing sustainable grants as well for certain projects that you are assisting?

The Minister for International Development:

At the beginning of the year, we know what our budget is, and commissioners tend to decide to allocate 25 per cent for emergencies and humanitarian, about 50 per cent for sustainable development and the rest for local charities. As I said, a lot of that is R.J.A. & H.S. and Durrell, so sustainable development and smaller charities, and also our outreach work which Ed described as the sort of J.I.D.N (Jersey International Development Network) events we have, the support we give in bursaries, the support we give to the community work projects for sending volunteers to take part in things and the programme associate.

Deputy M.B. Andrews:

In terms of the humanitarian efforts that have been made, have you seen an increase in demand since you took office in those projects?

The Minister for International Development:

There is always way more demand than we have the budget for.

Deputy M.B. Andrews:

Yes, and so how do you go about assisting those in need when you have potentially excess people coming to you saying that we need help?

The Minister for International Development:

Well, we have got specific partners on our partner list and, as Ed said, we do a huge amount of due diligence on them. The emergency partners can sometimes differ to the development N.G.O.s but we receive expressions of interest from them and we consider each proposal. That is what the commissioners do. We consider each proposal in detail and make decisions on if we support them and, if so, how much.

Deputy M.B. Andrews:

In the instance, sorry, say if something is rejected, do you also have a role potentially in maybe recommending a certain project to maybe go somewhere else for assistance or do you just leave it to them to then initiate assistance themselves?

The Minister for International Development:

It is usually for them.

Executive Director, Jersey Overseas Aid:

Yes, it is usually for the organisation. I just wanted to go back to that point on where can we as a small donor - and we are relatively small in the global aid flow - make the maximum impact with the funding we have. A lot of it comes down to partnerships. As Deputy Labey said, we have some very strong partnerships with the best place actors when an emergency strikes, so the likes of U.N.H.C.R., O.C.H.A., the Red Cross, essentially they are very professional, well-drilled organisations who have an amazing reach, so they are the best place. But also we have issued our humanitarian strategy for the first time earlier this year, which gives us guidance in terms of the thematic priorities, where with the amount of money we have, we can have the biggest impact. So one of those areas is cash assistance. So rather than giving in-kind contributions, providing multiple cash grants to households or individuals who are affected by crisis is by far the most dignified and cost-effective way of delivering assistance, and that is one of our pillars in our humanitarian strategies. We have others, things like capacity building, so making sure the organisations have the professional skills to make sure that they are able to deliver the most effective assistance as well. Under the radar emergencies and pooled funding, which I think we have spoken about before, for an organisation of our size, contributing to those kinds of mechanisms, delivers the most cost-effective and the most impactful humanitarian assistance.

Deputy M.B. Andrews:

Thank you.

Deputy K.M. Wilson:

Can I just ask about the 9 projects? What kind of interest is there around these 9 areas?

The Minister for International Development:

I think we have explained before that we theme our projects. We have got 3 specific themes, which are conservation, livelihoods, dairy for development, and financial inclusion. I think going back to your point, Deputy Tadier, about the public support that we have, I think we have built up a rapport, if you like, with the Jersey public that these specific themes, I think, speak to Jersey and Jersey's identity quite strongly. So out of the 9 projects that the team will be looking at in detail at the beginning of next year, we have got 2 earmarked for conservation livelihoods in Ethiopia and

Nepal. We have 2½ actually, earmarked for dairy for development in Ethiopia and Nepal again, and we have 4½ - I will explain that one in a minute, the half - in financial inclusion. So we draw on the expertise that we have here for each of those themes.

Deputy M. Tadier:

I think 2 of those 3 themes that you use are fairly self-evident but what is the ... it is obviously an important area, conservation, but what is the immediate link with the sustainable development goals, for example? What is the economic benefit of conservation and your involvement with Overseas Aid? How does it work?

The Minister for International Development:

Well, we utilise Durrell a lot with the Conservation Livelihoods and other organisations.

Deputy M. Tadier:

So what would a typical project be that Durrell and Overseas Aid work on?

Executive Director, Jersey Overseas Aid:

I think on this theme it is 2-pillared essentially, we are trying to merge the 2, they have often been separate. The one pillar would be the human development, so addressing things like hunger, poverty, health issues, malnutrition, et cetera. But then on the other side, the conservation, how do you protect the species that are in danger? So often those are being separate. One organisation or a donor would be supporting the human development initiative and one would be supporting the conservation and the 2 necessarily would not converse or exchange or ... and that is not particularly productive because what we have identified, along with Durrell and our partners, is that you cannot have one without working about the other. So in order to address the human development issues you need to provide alternative livelihoods, you need to provide sustainable livelihoods that actually contribute to the well-being of the forest or the area of scientific interest or the endangered species.

[11:00]

So a lot of it is about working with communities - they are all very much community-driven - understanding their needs and then coming up with an array of alternative livelihoods that work with the nature-based solutions, so it could be things like alternative crops, it could be things like beekeeping, that generate an income but it also helps pollinate the forests. It could be using what we call non-timber forest items, so things like mushrooms or fungi that grow in these forests, which are actually a source of income for the communities, sustainably harvesting them and encouraging them to be used in markets and value chains. So you are not damaging the forest, you are using it

for the benefit of the community and, in doing so, protecting at the same time. So it addresses multiple S.D.G.s (Sustainable Development Goals) in the process. It is a theme we are really proud of because we are one of the first donors to really encourage this. In fact, we have a conference in Cambridge, in January next year, where we will bring all together the partners that we work with plus additional experts to see how this can be developed further and encourage other organisations to support it.

Deputy K.M. Wilson:

So would that involve conservation work that is about returning the land to use as well? You know, where there has been some sort of pollution or something like that. Do you also work with what I would call charitable commercial organisations like Free Trade? Could you just explain to us how that might work?

Executive Director, Jersey Overseas Aid:

Yes, land regeneration is absolutely something because over multiple years of poor farming techniques, some of the land has become unsustainable. So some of those areas will address how to get that land back into, you know, productive farming. So absolutely some of the projects would address that. We do work with the commercial sector on the value chains, because ultimately what we are trying to do is provide a sustainable income for these communities. Now, obviously, that needs to plug into commercial value chains. So we do often work with financial service providers and other co-operatives, for example, who source the produce and then take it on to market as well. So, yes, it is a blend of the 2, because I do not think you can have a sustainable model without incorporating a degree of a corporate commercial element.

Deputy M. Tadier:

So on the conservation side, for example, if there was a project going on about, say, we want to protect this area of forest, we want to stop certain animals being hunted, there would also be a wider piece of work going on about alternative economies that could then step in? So it is not seen as punitive to the people.

Executive Director, Jersey Overseas Aid:

Absolutely.

The Minister for International Development:

Yes.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Okay, that makes sense, thank you. Maybe if I could just turn then to the other U.N. Sustainable Development Goals. I think you have touched on one already, but could you maybe develop ... climate action is goal 13 of the 17, is that an area which you are seeing a lot of demand for as a ...

The Minister for International Development:

That particular area is not one of our themes at the minute but, as Ed alluded to, the conservation livelihoods touches of various other themes like life on land. The partnerships ...

Deputy M. Tadier:

So what are the main ones that you would focus on in terms of the S.D.G.s?

The Minister for International Development:

So the ones specific, I think, to our themes would be S.D.G. 1, no poverty; 5, gender equality; 8, decent work and economic growth with our financial inclusion and dairy for development; 2, zero hunger, 14, life below water; 9 is industry, innovation and infrastructure. So those we feel are strongly represented by our themes, but there are also other indicators like gender ... well I mentioned gender equality but education, resilience building. The climate action is something that we are considering and our strategic plan, our 5-year strategic plan was 2022 and will come to an end the end of next year, 2026. So we will be considering our themes again and our countries and indeed how we manage things but I am sure the climate resilience and climate action could very well feature either as a theme on its own or we will ensure that it runs through the other themes, the other projects that we have.

Deputy M. Tadier:

How important are women in developing countries in terms of being a key to the elimination of poverty and to economic growth, industry, all those things?

The Minister for International Development:

They are key because the women, especially single head of household women, we feel that they are the people who save money, they are the people who bring up the children and so their resilience and financial inclusion, awareness and education is absolutely key.

Deputy M. Tadier:

There are some projects which you have supported in that area. Can you just talk us through them?

The Minister for International Development:

Well, they would be in the themes, in our chosen themes. For example, the dairy for development when those projects were first considered, Rwanda was our first country to develop dairy for development. At the time, the President of the day felt that the firstborn calf would be given to a single head of household, female single head of household, and then she would have to pass on the new calf to another single head of household. That has worked and it has worked really, really well. We see it as our flagship project actually.

Executive Director, Jersey Overseas Aid:

I was just going to say that, you know, prioritising women and empowering women is fundamental to all of our development programmes. We prioritise that particular part of the community evidently in our thematic strategies. We insist that when our partners submit a proposal that the indicators address or target at least 50 per cent participants are women. So we absolutely see it as a key enabler of sustainable development throughout the countries and the context that we work in, absolutely.

Deputy K.M. Wilson:

Just picking up on the theme around the development. What you have done is you have built capacity and capability in local communities or in local families. How do you monitor the duration of that? How do you ensure that the sustainability principle is continuing based on the investment that you have made in these projects over time? At what point would you no longer be interested to know what is actually happening as a result of that?

Executive Director, Jersey Overseas Aid:

A lot of the programmes or the projects that we support are about building frameworks and a sustainable structure so that ultimately we are no longer needed at the end of the project. So if we are talking about conservation livelihoods, that could be participatory community forest protectors, let us say, something like that. You know, a community initiative, which is wholly owned by the community, where there are established roles among the community, so they have a sense of ownership. Demonstrating that works through the duration of the projects, which are typically 4 years or so, means that that is matured and well-established. So when we are no longer there, or the organisations we are supporting are no longer there, they function without that particular oversight. That is ultimately the dream. You know, that is the objective, is that we are there as a catalyst, then through the partners who work with the communities, over time, our role becomes less and less and less, and the community take on and oversee that important work.

Deputy K.M. Wilson:

Okay, thank you. Can I just build on the issue around partnerships? You did a partner perception survey recently. What were the 3 most critical areas for improvement identified from those survey results?

Executive Director, Jersey Overseas Aid:

So feedback was one, which I think is ... I felt was a bit unfair because we are one of the few donors that actually give feedback when there is a project or a partner not accepted. The majority of donors just close the door and say ... you know, we actually do give feedback. So I think that was one that we will take on board, absolutely. The second one was to do with ...

Deputy K.M. Wilson:

Is that something you might change if you thought it was ...

Executive Director, Jersey Overseas Aid:

Well, I think it is perhaps the time that we give them. I mean, again, we are looking at multiple applications. We have a small team, we have to be realistic about the time spent on giving feedback to an organisation that ultimately does not align with our objectives and whether that is a useful amount of time from our staff. We will look at it. We usually have a 20-minute call; we can look at perhaps extending that or perhaps adding some written feedback as well to support that. The second one was around our grant management system. Now, there are no surprises there because every single applicant - or every grantee - will find an issue with the grant management system, whether it is ours or whether it is the U.K.'s or someone else's. There will always be glitches because there is no universal system. That, in itself, we will take on board - the usability that they highlighted as perhaps not being as fluid as possible. But, ultimately, that is something that ...

Deputy K.M. Wilson:

Is that an administrative thing, is it?

Executive Director, Jersey Overseas Aid:

Yes.

Deputy K.M. Wilson:

Right.

Executive Director, Jersey Overseas Aid:

It is an electronic, cloud-based system where we receive our applications. They upload their necessary due diligence documents, accounts, everything else like that. It is just very efficient, very

streamlined, reduces the risk of human error, et cetera, when you are looking at certain things. Then the third, I think, would be maybe clearer guidance on visibility for both partners and ourselves. We have got a communication strategy and we do have visibility guidelines in our grant agreements, but I think they wanted a bit more in terms of how that could play going forward. I think those are the 3 main things from what I thought was a very positive analysis from our partners.

Deputy K.M. Wilson:

Yes. Is there anything within those areas for improvement that you think will stretch your budget or do you think you have got enough resources to be able to address that improvement agenda?

The Minister for International Development:

I think we can. There is always room for improvement, let us be honest. So I think it is something that, as commissioners, we would take on board and seek to improve within our budget.

Deputy K.M. Wilson:

Within it.

The Minister for International Development:

Yes.

Executive Director, Jersey Overseas Aid:

Yes.

Deputy K.M. Wilson:

Okay, thank you. In the July hearing, you mentioned that you were signing an M.O.U. (memorandum of understanding) with Zambia. Could you let us know where you are up to with that and any projects that have started as a result of that?

The Minister for International Development:

Yes. I was in Zambia in May. We took our new patron down there for 3 days to have a look at our dairy for development and financial inclusion projects, but we did not sign an M.O.U. at the time. The Agricultural Minister had recently changed and there was a certain amount of administration that they wanted to look into before we signed it. But I had signed one a couple of years ago, but this was a sort of update.

Executive Director, Jersey Overseas Aid:

This was an addendum rather than a separate M.O.U.

Deputy K.M. Wilson:

What was it going to reflect as an addendum?

The Minister for International Development:

Just the continuation of the dairy for development programmes and the financial inclusion.

Executive Director, Jersey Overseas Aid:

I think also it specified that we will support the Africa-Jersey Forum in Zambia next year as well; so, it was mainly just reinforcing that co-operation agreement with the Minister. Just to specify, we did have a very productive meeting with the Minister when we were in Zambia as well to discuss mutual areas of co-operation. But the signing of the addendum was not possible; it was held up with the Minister of Justice when we were there.

Deputy K.M. Wilson:

Do you have a timescale as to when you think it might be signed off?

The Minister for International Development:

I would like to sign it off as soon as possible.

Executive Director, Jersey Overseas Aid:

We are talking to the Zambian High Commission in London and I hope quarter one 2026 is a realistic timeframe.

Deputy K.M. Wilson:

Okay, thank you. In terms of the status of the aid that is entering Gaza, could you give us an update on what our ...

The Minister for International Development:

Sorry, what did you say?

Deputy K.M. Wilson:

An update on the aid entering Gaza.

The Minister for International Development:

The feedback that we have with our partners is positive and certainly there is peace there at the minute, but there is a 20-point plan, as you probably know. Aid is getting in. Certainly, the aid that we are responsible for has been getting in, is the feedback we are receiving. The Commission ... I think it was £400,000 ...

Executive Director, Jersey Overseas Aid:

In November.

The Minister for International Development:

We sent £400,000 to 3 of our N.G.O.s. Yes. I would describe Gaza at the minute as in a state of fragile peace but things are moving in the right direction, certainly with the W.F.P., the World Food Programme. We have had some positive feedback that they are setting up bakeries in Gaza.

[11:15]

With U.N.O.C.H.A., our aid is getting in to help with the delivering of protection, shelter, sanitation. Also, with the third partner, Medical Aid for Palestinians, we have supported over 4,000 patients in Gaza and indeed the West Bank now.

Deputy K.M. Wilson:

Could you just explain how the call on the aid is requested? Is it for specific things or is it that we just donate some financial support to the main aid agencies out there?

The Minister for International Development:

These particular N.G.O.s have got specific functions. Obviously, the World Food Programme deals with food, the Medical Aid for Palestinians is medical supplies and O.C.H.A. is general W.A.S.H. (water, sanitation and hygiene) programmes.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Who are your big partners in Gaza? Do you work with Red Cross or ...

Executive Director, Jersey Overseas Aid:

We have not supported the Red Cross in this particular emergency. The biggest recipient of our aid, I believe, is the World Food Programme and then O.C.H.A. We have another partner, International Health Partners, who are a fantastic organisation who essentially get hold of essential medicines. You will appreciate that there is a whole raft of non-communicable diseases which are rife in a population, which obviously are not often spoken about but are silent killers. They address that through getting hold of pharmaceutical drugs from big pharmaceutical companies - either donated or given at cost - and then they use their very sophisticated logistical arm to get that medicine in. From a Jersey taxpayer's point of view, for every, let us say, £10 that we are donating, it is the equivalent of about £70. It is a really cost-effective force multiplication model, and we have been supporting them in Gaza and elsewhere around the globe as well.

Deputy K.M. Wilson:

Minister, given the emphasis on improving the lives of children, is there any particular support that is channelled through those agencies that is targeted at children in particular?

The Minister for International Development:

I would not say that specifically to children; it is just those in need.

Deputy K.M. Wilson:

Is that something that you could advocate for or would need to consider?

The Minister for International Development:

We might have to reflect on which agencies we support, because obviously there are agencies like U.N.I.C.E.F. (United Nations Children's Fund) that specifically deal with children. We have chosen the humanitarian agencies based on who we consider work well in particular jurisdictions.

Deputy K.M. Wilson:

Okay, thank you. Finally for me, as the Assistant Minister for External Relations, can you tell us what joint initiatives have linked your projects with the External Relations work?

The Minister for International Development:

Jersey Overseas Aid work is not linked with External Relations, other than that we are both outward-facing departments, if you like, and represent Jersey on the world stage. But aid and trade are specifically kept separate for all kinds of very good reasons. You would not want to secure a particular commercial project based on the aid we are getting. Although, if we have given aid in a particular jurisdiction, I would like to think that we have built up a rapport and relationships with that country. If then external relations want to come in and do business there, then it can work that way round, but not the other.

Deputy K.M. Wilson:

Are there any countries that you have a presence in where you know that there is External Relations work going on?

The Minister for International Development:

Our target countries are not specific to External Relations. I know they have in the past visited Rwanda on various occasions, but our other countries are not ... we used to support Ghana, but we no longer do because they came up the humanitarian development index. They became a middle-

income country, so we did not feel that we should continue supporting there. But that is a country that External Relations are looking at as one of their target countries.

Deputy M. Tadier:

A question I have is in relation to the Jersey people who will go overseas to work on certain projects. Are those generally projects that are supported by J.O.A. (Jersey Overseas Aid), or would they be independent groups which go out, or is there any co-ordination that happens in that respect?

The Minister for International Development:

Do you mean our community work projects?

Deputy M. Tadier:

Yes, the Jersey volunteers.

The Minister for International Development:

Our volunteers, we had a launch in October, as we do most years. I think next year we will be sending ... we have had, I think, about 115 applicants. Was that right?

Executive Director, Jersey Overseas Aid:

Yes, the highest ever.

The Minister for International Development:

Yes, for 3 projects. We like to offer 3 different projects and next year we are going to Nepal, Malawi and Zambia.

Deputy M. Tadier:

What is the demographic makeup and background of the people who tend to volunteer? Are they corporates? Are they Jersey-born people? What do they look like?

The Minister for International Development:

We require that they have been here for 5 years. We have got an age range.

Deputy M. Tadier:

What is the basis of the 5 years? Is that because they are getting something? Are you paying for them to travel?

The Minister for International Development:

Yes, we subsidise their trip quite extensively. We ask for £500 per volunteer. We do offer a couple of bursaries per trip for students or those who feel that they cannot afford that. But we subsidise the trip, we pay for their flights, accommodation and inoculations.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Okay. Does that 5-year rule serve a purpose, do you think?

The Minister for International Development:

We feel that it is usually people who have contributed to our economy, to our tax take.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Okay.

The Minister for International Development:

We are oversubscribed, so we have to put certain criteria. They have got to be healthy, they have got to ... I do not know. We do interview people ...

Executive Director, Jersey Overseas Aid:

All of them.

The Minister for International Development:

... all of them, to make sure that they are a suitable fit and they team up. We offer a certain programme over here so that they can build relationships with one another and co-ordinate a team with a leader and advice.

Executive Director, Jersey Overseas Aid:

Your question on demographics, there has been a huge change, I would say, in the last 5 or 6 years. That is largely down to the fantastic work that the J.O.A. staff do in addressing that need. Going out into schools using the J.I.D.N. events example, talking about the opportunities that we provide has made the demographics change. I think, if I am right in saying, Deputy Labey, that maybe 10 years ago the majority might have been retirees perhaps, now we are definitely attracting more youth attendees, which is fantastic news.

The Minister for International Development:

Yes.

Executive Director, Jersey Overseas Aid:

It is not just about giving them a place and sending them on their way. There is a huge amount of work put into making sure they understand why and what they are doing when they are there, that they are representing the Island, that they are custodians of Jersey's reputation as well. There is a huge amount of that that goes on too.

Deputy M. Tadier:

I am just wondering, let us say that a bank over here wanted to send one of their workers over and they had only been here for 3 years, but they were willing to pay for that so that it did not actually cost Government, are there mechanisms by which a broader group ... because ultimately it is not them getting the benefit, is it? It is about people volunteering their time and energy, I suppose.

The Minister for International Development:

Yes, it is about volunteering time. We secured an agreement with the States, and we are hoping ... we do speak to professional organisations to allow their staff members, maybe if the project is for 2 weeks, that they contribute maybe a week of holiday time and then the organisation contributes a week. Because that employee will come back with a whole new skill set, a whole different perspective on life and can secure them in that place maybe longer than they would ordinarily. They have got satisfaction rather than having to move on.

Deputy K.M. Wilson:

When you talk about the importance of volunteering and how you can use that to upskill Islanders as well, when people have been to some of these international projects, what kind of feedback, what kind of sustainable interest do you feel is generated through that?

The Minister for International Development:

I think it is huge. I think the volunteers get certainly as much from the projects as the beneficiaries that they go out to assist. It gives them new perspectives. A lot of people that go on our community work projects reapply to come back. Some of them end up setting up their own charities. I think it makes a profound effect on most volunteers.

Deputy K.M. Wilson:

Could I just come to, again, an extension of the areas of reach? During the July hearing, you referred to a possible Ministerial visit to Syria and to the Ukraine. Are these still planned for or are there political situations there that perhaps prevent that from happening?

The Minister for International Development:

Ed and I did travel to Syria in October. We visited Aleppo and Damascus and then went on to Beirut. We were with the British Red Cross and La Croix-Rouge in Lebanon. We have been supporting

Red Cross and La Croix-Rouge for many years, so we went out there to see where our assistance has gone and to meet some of the staff that we have been dealing with.

Deputy K.M. Wilson:

What did you find?

The Minister for International Development:

In fact, we spoke to some of the beneficiaries that we are assisting, certainly with small grants, for example. We met one person who had received a grant to purchase 2 sewing machines so that she could start work. We found a lot of the areas in rubble and some of the living conditions were absolutely appalling, but the people were so resilient. They make the most of what they have got, but obviously our support is assisting them in making their homes better.

Deputy K.M. Wilson:

Could you remind us what support you have given to those communities, so that the public know what kind of targeted support you have given through the support from the Island, and where you saw that happening in real time?

The Minister for International Development:

A lot of the support, as Ed said earlier, is cash assistance because we find that can be the most beneficial, to allow people to seek what they need rather than giving them materials, if you like. It is helping them set up small businesses. It is helping them restore their homes or make homes or re-establish water tanks in their homes.

Deputy K.M. Wilson:

Can you link it directly to the aid and the support that we have given, so that people recognise that that enablement, that support, came from Jersey?

Executive Director, Jersey Overseas Aid:

Absolutely, yes. The British Red Cross, who are the organisation who deliver that assistance in Syria, are the organisation that we support. They have an office and a team in Syria because the British Red Cross are the national society that are recognised throughout the Red Cross movement of being the best at cash and voucher assistance, so we know that the money we are channelling through the British Red Cross is being utilised in Syria and meeting the needs of the individuals, as Deputy Labey talked about. I will just go back to that individual referenced; this is a lady who is a widow. Her house was devastated in the 2023 earthquake. All of her livelihood was destroyed. There was no social safety net because, obviously, it is a war zone. There was no ability for her to find any other means of generating income, so with this cash assistance she was able to invest in

these sewing machines. Now, it was not just her; that supports her severely disabled brother, her very elderly mother and her daughter who has 2 young children, who she employs as well, so there is another source of income there.

[11:30]

With those sewing machines, she was able to fabricate dresses that she then rented out to communities for weddings or other celebrations. It is multifaceted in terms of the support it delivers, not just in the cash and the ability for her to then support her household, but in terms of confidence, self-belief, all of those things that do not often get measured but are so important to build resilience.

Deputy K.M. Wilson:

I think the question is particularly so that the public can hear the real impact on an individual's life, rather than it just being donated to an agency.

The Minister for International Development:

Yes, we could certainly give very detailed examples of what we saw.

Executive Director, Jersey Overseas Aid:

Absolutely.

Deputy M. Tadier:

When is your next public outreach event? Have you got anything planned?

The Minister for International Development:

We have a J.I.D.N. event in March and that will be for young people, focused on young people.

Executive Director, Jersey Overseas Aid:

Youth-focused, yes. We will be inviting U.N.I.C.E.F., who have agreed to come over, and another organisation, Restless Development, which uses youth volunteering as a method of delivery. We have 2 of those coming over in March and we would be absolutely delighted to share the details after this hearing, because we do have the dates.

The Minister for International Development:

We also have the Conservation and Livelihoods Conference in January, but that is in the U.K. because there is a lot of people coming from overseas to it.

Deputy K.M. Wilson:

You mentioned Syria. Anything to update on Ukraine at all?

The Minister for International Development:

Not at the minute. Our support to the Ukraine has been steady. We still have a junior programme officer that we are supporting there, working in media with U.N.H.C.R.

Executive Director, Jersey Overseas Aid:

She has just written a blog for us, which I would highly recommend looking at on our website. It is a fantastic insight into her day-to-day life.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Do the changing front lines create a problem when trying to distribute aid and decide where to target aid?

Executive Director, Jersey Overseas Aid:

Our approach with Ukraine has been national, let us say, rather than regional. We provided support to U.N.H.C.R., for example, recently on their winterisation programme. They will, with their teams embedded throughout the country, prioritise where the needs will be the most. Yes, absolutely, front lines will cause a huge delivery impact for the organisations but we do not necessarily just target the Donbas or Kharkiv. We give it for them to be able to determine where they think best that support should be given.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Yes, thank you. Minister, I think we will leave it there. We have not necessarily asked all questions, but we may follow up in writing.

The Minister for International Development:

Yes, sure.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Thank you for attending today and I wish you all the best.

The Minister for International Development:

Thank you for the opportunity.

Executive Director, Jersey Overseas Aid:

Thank you very much.

[11:33]