



Economic and International Affairs Scrutiny Panel

Quarterly Public Hearing

Witness: The Minister for International Development

Tuesday, 3rd March 2026

Panel:

Deputy M. Tadier of St. Brelade (Chair)

Deputy K.M. Wilson of St. Clement (Vice-Chair)

Deputy B.B. de S.V.M. Porée of St. Helier South

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

[14:35]

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

Minister and Officer, welcome to this final hearing of this term for our quarterly hearing with the Economic and International Affairs Scrutiny Panel. I am just going to introduce ourselves. I am Deputy Montfort Tadier. I chair this panel.

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

Deputy Max Andrews.

Deputy B.B. de S.V.M. Porée of St. Helier South:

Deputy Beatriz Porée.

Deputy K.M. Wilson of St. Clement:

Deputy Karen Wilson, Vice-Chair.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Just introduce yourselves, please.

The Minister for International Development:

Deputy Carolyn Labey, and I am Chair and the Minister for International Development.

Executive Director, Jersey Overseas Aid:

Ed Lewis, Executive Director of Jersey Overseas Aid.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Thank you. Welcome. We are pleased to have you in. I am just going to hand over to my Vice-Chair for the first questions, please.

Deputy K.M. Wilson:

Thank you. Minister, can you advise when the last time a review of Jersey Overseas Aid took place, and to see if this is the best model for Jersey?

The Minister for International Development:

The review of the entire structure, do you mean? Well, I do not know if you are aware, but Jersey Overseas Aid Committee was set up in 1968. It then transformed into a commission when the States decided on Ministerial Government. So, instead of becoming a ministry, it then became a commission with 3 States Members and 3 non-States Members that formed the governance of the commission. In 2018, it was decided to make the chair also a Minister for International Development, because it was felt that our budget was in decline and we did not really have a voice around the Council of Ministers' table. In recognition of the importance of international development and the Island's standing, it was felt that the position merited a Minister to represent international development. So, those are the big events, if you like, since Jersey Overseas Aid was set up. In among all of that, we have done other things, like we have appointed an accountable officer in the form of the Executive Director. We have got our own chapter in the Public Finance Manual, and it is our own chapter because it recognises the fact that we do a lot of our work overseas.

Deputy K.M. Wilson:

Do you still think it is the best model for delivering aid in Jersey?

The Minister for International Development:

I think it is. We have made a lot of internal reforms in how we do things. We increased our internal audit scores from 2 out of 4, to 4 out of 4. We continue to evolve. We have a strategic plan, or we have had one for the last 5 years. The new one will be written for another 5 years, 2027 to 2031. The way things stand at the minute, yes, I do. I think we have representation in Government, but we are also independent of political decisions because it is the commissioners that decide where our monies go.

Deputy M.B. Andrews:

With the current strategic plan that you have just mentioned, has that been independently audited? If so, what were the results of that?

The Minister for International Development:

That has been going for just about 5 years. One of the proposals that we have, and we are going to start enacting now, it will be part of our legacy, is to have it independently evaluated and to have the projects independently evaluated. When the new strategic plan is written, we can take on board any recommendations that we are given.

Executive Director, Jersey Overseas Aid:

I could just add to that. Yes, we have completed the process of putting to tender the independent evaluation. We have now appointed 2 international development humanitarian experts who were referred to us by the F.C.D.O. (Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office). They currently have a workplan, which is due to conclude towards the end of the year, and in between now and then they will be looking at all of the projects that we support, all of our main funding streams, and coming up with recommendations, where the gaps are, where the strengths are, but building on really powerful narrative of value add, where can Jersey make a difference, being the size that it is, using what it already has, and using the dairy, using the finance sector, and using the conservation to promote Jersey's identity and increase economic and development outcomes as well. That process is in play. We are delighted to have contracted these 2 individuals, and we can update the scrutiny as it comes. But the objective is to have that concluded, ready to start the new strategy over the next year.

Deputy K.M. Wilson:

Can you just explain how often you do think Jersey Overseas Aid needs to be reviewed in terms of its fitness for purpose?

The Minister for International Development:

It is quite difficult to put timing on that. I think if something was not working, if it was obvious, if we got feedback from independent reports, from internal auditors, from the independent evaluations, we would obviously consider them, and if there was a structural change that was required, we are in a good position to change that with our governance structure, and also the fact that we are answerable to the States Assembly, and we give the States Assembly our accounts and report every year, rather than just being accountable to Government.

Deputy K.M. Wilson:

Can you just explain a little bit more why you think it is important to operate under a different structure from, for example, an A.L.O. (arm's length organisation)? Why is it important for it to operate on that basis?

The Minister for International Development:

I think it is quite important to be almost ... well, not almost, we are free from political interventions. For example, wars or need crop up all the time, as we have seen just this weekend. We have to hold ourselves out to operate on a needs basis. We are accountable to the taxpayers of Jersey, but our mission is obviously to help the poorest and most vulnerable in the poorest countries.

Deputy K.M. Wilson:

Yet you are currently developing a memorandum of understanding with Government, I understand, where you are going to be seeking administrative support from Government of Jersey.

The Minister for International Development:

Yes. We do have some Government support. We have support from the States Greffe with our minute writing. We have support from Treasury. We derive our funds from Treasury, and we get support from Treasury. So, we do get support because economically it makes more sense if we have services there, because our money is all derived from the taxpayer and the more we can save, if you like, the more monies we have to give to those in need.

Deputy K.M. Wilson:

You do not think that compromises your position around being independent and apolitical?

The Minister for International Development:

I do not, because the decisions on our programming, on our strategic plan, how we do things, what we fund, is independent of Government.

Executive Director, Jersey Overseas Aid:

I think it is also quite similar to other organisations that remain constitutionally independent. For example, the Office of the Lieutenant Governor, or the Bailiff, also get support from the Treasury and from the Law Officers' Department and other services as well to make sure they can run efficiently and effectively as well, but they clearly maintain their independence and are separate to.

Deputy K.M. Wilson:

Could you just give us some detail around what is going to be in the memorandum of understanding and why you are developing it?

[14:45]

Executive Director, Jersey Overseas Aid:

That has already been established and that was signed, I think, in 2019. So, this is not a new document. It is one that has been in existence for a number of years, and it just clearly sets out the roles and responsibilities of the 3 main arms of the commission and chair, of the Minister, and also the executive office as well and the support that it is afforded as an organisation by Government. As the Minister said, alongside the Treasury, the Law Officers' Department, some H.R. (human resources) support as well. It is non-binding, but it just clearly sets out the lines of support and who is largely responsible for what in those areas.

Deputy K.M. Wilson:

Just again for members of the public, could you just help us understand what the nature of that administrative support would be? What resources and funding are required?

Executive Director, Jersey Overseas Aid:

Treasury, for example, will help us with a monthly financial or expenditure report to make sure that all of our expenditure is categorised correctly and in alignment with the Government system. The Law Officers' Department will check any contracts. If we amend our grant agreements with our partners, for example, we will make sure that the Law Officers' Department has read those to make sure that we are in step and signing something which is legitimate. Other support would be H.R. From time to time we might ask for services. In the past we have asked for well-being support for the organisation. That has been forthcoming from the H.R. department as well, and additional resources. So, that is kind of the nature of that support. Light touch would be something I would say. It is essential, because certainly the Treasury support is central to our existence. Us being able to do all of that by ourselves would mean our resources in terms of staff base would have to be significantly higher. In some ways we are outsourcing that. Again, it is a service and a support that is afforded to many other organisations as well.

Deputy K.M. Wilson:

Does this memorandum of understanding present a cost neutral option for you, or do you think you require any additional resources or funding to enable that memorandum of understanding to be operationalised effectively?

Executive Director, Jersey Overseas Aid:

I think it is a cost efficiency for us. Having those resources is certainly something that helps us make sure that the money that we are getting, the highest proportion is going to address poverty and conflict, and that is exactly the mandate and therefore that is a really good working partnership.

Deputy K.M. Wilson:

In your accounts, as you have described them, will you reflect that in terms of what resource commitment there is to supporting J.O.A. (Jersey Overseas Aid) from Government?

Executive Director, Jersey Overseas Aid:

We currently do not account for, for example, the time of a finance manager in Treasury and what that might be, but they may.

The Minister for International Development:

It is a good point, I think. It is certainly something that we, as a commission, would be more than happy to consider.

Deputy K.M. Wilson:

Okay. Thank you.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Thank you, Vice-Chair. Any further questions on that area from the panel? Thank you. I am just going to turn our attention to an event that you held recently, which was the joint J.O.A. and Durrell Conservation Trust co-hosted event. So, that took place in Cambridge and we understand that the theme was biodiversity and livelihoods, which, I think, looked at the intersection between environmentalism and poverty. Is that correct? Can you talk to us about how that conference went, who attended it, and what the purpose was more widely?

The Minister for International Development:

It was hugely successful. It was a 2-day conference with Durrell. We decided to hold it in Cambridge because there is a conservation hub there, and also it was attended by 120 practitioners across 19 different countries. We just felt us going to the U.K. (United Kingdom) would save 120 people

coming over here. That might be a good thing to bring them all over here at some point, but we felt it would be better, more cost-effective for them anyway.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Where were delegates coming from, by the way? Were they mainly UK-based, or were they ...?

The Minister for International Development:

No. All over the world, 19 different countries. They were coming from as far as Madagascar, because obviously Durrell has a huge conservation hub.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Probably easier just to make one change potentially, or rather than having to change planes. Okay. Was it seen as successful?

The Minister for International Development:

Yes, it was. Certainly, a lot of the resources and feedback that we have got we have uploaded on to the J.O.A. website, and we have since had some very, very good feedback. I do not know if you want to go into details.

Executive Director, Jersey Overseas Aid:

Yes, absolutely. I think that this will be the third edition of the conference. So, we have had 2 previous editions. The first one was online. I think it was just after COVID, so for obvious reasons we could not convene face to face. The second one was held in London a couple of years ago. So, it is building on that momentum and the partners that have been established as a result of that, and it is really about addressing this really interesting but nascent theme in the development world, which is rather than having these 2 fortress subjects, conservation and human development, it is merging the 2 and using the 2 for each other to benefit their outcomes. It is really gaining traction. I think the fact that we had such a good amount of people come, and measuring on from the last edition where several projects have been established because of those partnerships that were forged at that conference. That is one of the really interesting and really important objectives of this endeavour is to put practitioners together, encourage them to talk about knowledge and skills, et cetera, and then form up projects. We are seeing that is happening as well. So, that is another really important role that a smallish donor like Jersey can play is convening organisations and connecting the dots. It is gaining a lot of momentum. It is great for us; it is really good for Durrell as well because it gets them to shine a light on their work programmes overseas as well, which not many islands are that aware of. Obviously, we know the zoo, but I think as a conservation organisation they are renowned as one of the best in the world overseas.

The Minister for International Development:

It raises their profile, raises our profile, and Jersey's profile. So, reputationally, it is good and demonstrates us to be multifaceted.

Deputy K.M. Wilson:

Did you identify any particular or potential areas for future collaboration with any particular countries at all?

Executive Director, Jersey Overseas Aid:

Not so much countries, but what we have done is since the last edition we added a component of financial inclusion. Originally, the first 2 editions were purely conservation and livelihood focused, but now we have put in another one of our key themes and that really generated a lot of interest, and you could see people thinking: "Yes, financial inclusion is something that we can embed within our programme." What we would like to do, if we do another edition - which I hope we will - is to perhaps add a dairy component as well. Then we have all of our development themes and people talking about that, and hopefully some cross-fertilisation that will generate some really interesting programmes, again with that Jersey identity added value as well.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Minister, the panel notes from the website that a consistent message emerged across the 2 days. This is a quote: "Sustainable conservation is only possible when communities have decision-making power and access to inclusive financial systems ...", which you have just mentioned: "... and viable, nature-friendly livelihoods." Can you advise how J.O.A. will be taking this forward with regards to future operations?

The Minister for International Development:

Conservation livelihoods has proved to be one of our themes, but I think this will be something that we seriously consider going forward to remain one of our themes. But as Ed says, maybe we can integrate it a bit more with financial inclusion, and certainly with the climate sensitivities.

Deputy M. Tadier:

You had a quote on your website, which says: "If we want conservation to work, we have to listen to the people living with the daily realities of environmental change." Could you just explain what you meant by that?

The Minister for International Development:

We used to say it is conservation livelihoods, because if the conservation that we see for a place is not going to work with the livelihoods, then it is not going to work. So, the 2, I feel, have to integrate

into one another. It has to work with people on the ground with their livelihoods, it has not got to impinge on their livelihoods and, if it does, then there has to be alternatives. So, it is essential to listen to the people on the ground.

Deputy M. Tadier:

You have covered off quite clearly why the conference was held in Cambridge on this occasion. Do you envisage that this kind of conference could at some point be held in Jersey? Would there be any benefit to it? How often do they happen, by the way? Is it every 2 years?

Executive Director, Jersey Overseas Aid:

Two years.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Would you envisage that, or is it something for which the practicalities are just ...?

The Minister for International Development:

It would very much be of benefit to Jersey, obviously, and we did quite a bit of work to look at different venues here and their prices. I am afraid to say Cambridge was the better option. Yes, it would be lovely to showcase Jersey in that regard but, like I say, the practicalities of 120 delegates who have already probably made a long journey, a lot of them. But J.O.A. does host conferences in Jersey. Last year we held the U.N. O.C.H.A. (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs) conference, and the Start Network, and the Red Cross.

Deputy M. Tadier:

So, it might depend on the theme as well. Yes, I get that. Lastly for this section, we have the poster in front of us, which you kindly brought in for us. There is an event taking place on 19th March called "Youth Driving Change". Could you provide us with an overview of that event?

The Minister for International Development:

Yes. I think it is a really exciting event, because next week I am hopefully going to be signing an M.O.U. (memorandum of understanding) with U.N.I.C.E.F. (United Nations Children's Fund). We are getting closer with U.N.I.C.E.F. and working with them. They have agreed to come over here to talk at our J.I.D.N. (Jersey International Development Network) event, which we have hosted quite a few of these every quarter now on different themes. But this particular one, we have agreed with them that they will go into the schools and talk to the schools during the day, and then hopefully there will be a lot of students in the evening at our event as well.

Executive Director, Jersey Overseas Aid:

The other organisations that are coming and delivering presentations that evening are Restless Development, who are an established international development partner. Their model is purely mobilising volunteers and youth as well. The Jersey Youth Assembly as well, who are also going to be there. So, it is important to capture views and aspirations of the youth and see where there are opportunities, but also where there are challenges. Having that kind of dialogue in an open forum is a really encouraging way to motivate and encourage youth to get involved with global issues.

Deputy M. Tadier:

What input at the moment do you get from young people in Jersey, either in terms of ideas or opportunities? How many young people are going away from Jersey on your programmes? Is that something that people do?

The Minister for International Development:

This is something that we are really quite proud of because we offer internships or programme associates. We are up to number 14 now. So, we engage usually young people. Sometimes they have been on one of our community work projects. You have to be 18 to go there. So, sometimes they have been. But we are up to number 14 that offered opportunities to young people with the N.G.O.s (non-governmental organisations) that we work with.

Deputy M. Tadier:

What capacity, are they voluntary positions; are they paid internships?

The Minister for International Development:

No, they are paid internships. The voluntary ones are on our community work projects, which is usually 2 weeks. But also, we have a fabulous opportunity with the U.N. Thus far, it has been with U.N.H.C.R. (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) for our junior programme officers. That is a 2-year placement with the U.N. We have sent 5 young people on the front line. At the moment we have one in Kiev, 2 in Bangladesh, one in Sudan.

Deputy M. Tadier:

How old are they and where are they in their career paths? Are they postgrads, undergrads? Are they not necessarily even related to that?

Executive Director, Jersey Overseas Aid:

They are all postgrads.

The Minister for International Development:

They are postgrads, and they are mostly all in their 20s, early 30s.

Executive Director, Jersey Overseas Aid:

I just want to touch on the Minister's point on the programme associated, because, yes, we have done 14 editions, which is great, and this is an 18-month paid placement for interns. But we designed it because we want to see what would be the best skillset they would have if they were going to the job market. So, it is about learning about the donor, it is about learning about the organisation, and then it is having boots on the ground field experience.

[15:00]

It is divided into 6 equal months. So, 6 months with us, 6 months in the U.K., and then 6 months overseas working on a field programme. The proof is in the pudding, because of those 14, every single one has gone on to work in the international development sector, which is notoriously difficult to get in, and 2 of those have gone on to work for the U.N. So, it is a really great stepping stone for Islanders who want to emerge into a career in international development. So, very proud of that scheme.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Brilliant. Thank you. No more questions for me. Any questions from the panel? Thank you. I will pass over to Deputy Porée then who is going to ask about future goals.

Deputy B.B. de S.V.M. Porée:

Future goals and planning of Jersey Overseas Aid. So, Minister, Jersey Overseas Aid was established and is governed by the Jersey Overseas Aid Commissioner from 2005. Can you advise the panel if you think the law needs to be updated and, if so, what areas do you feel are more likely to benefit from the update, if at all?

The Minister for International Development:

Well, it is similar questions to what I have answered from Deputy Wilson. I think it was made into a commission rather than continue as a committee because we could not do that then, because the whole of the Government had changed into Ministerial Government. But I think it is the right model, because we can operate without being influenced or told what to do. For example, I have always said aid and trades should be kept separate. If there is trade, if External Relations, for example, want to do business in a particular jurisdiction, we cannot be looked to, to go in and give aid there to soften the path, if you like. We offer aid purely on a needs basis. So, our decision-making in that respect ... and it should not just be a Minister, it should be a commission, a body of people that consider all the evidence, to consider our strategy, consider our criteria for giving aid, and then make the decision.

Deputy B.B. de S.V.M. Porée:

So, it is a good set-up?

The Minister for International Development:

I think it is, yes.

Deputy B.B. de S.V.M. Porée:

It should continue?

The Minister for International Development:

Yes.

Deputy B.B. de S.V.M. Porée:

Thank you. So, during the Assembly on 3rd February you did mention that you were in negotiations with U.N. Children's Fund. I know you have spoken a little bit about junior programme officers, so could you please maybe advise the panel on how the negotiations have gone with the United Nations Children's Fund, maybe a bit more on the negotiations rather than the programme?

The Minister for International Development:

They have gone very well, and I am hoping to sign the M.O.U. next week with them. Then we can further establish the junior programme officer with them, because thus far it has been with U.N.H.C.R., which is the refugee side of the U.N. But now we are hoping to develop a similar scheme with U.N.I.C.E.F.

Executive Director, Jersey Overseas Aid:

In the middle of negotiations that we found a little bit truncated because of the back and forth in terms of the M.O.U., the language that has to be used, and we had to get that approved by the Ministry of Justice in the U.K., so that is why it took a bit longer than we anticipated, but it has been cleared by both the Ministry of Justice and the Law Officers' Department here and it is ready for signature next week.

Deputy B.B. de S.V.M. Porée:

Thank you for that update.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Minister, can I just check under the current law, so is the constitution still that there is yourself as the chair, and are there 2 other States commissioners?

The Minister for International Development:

Yes.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Who are the 2 other States Members?

The Minister for International Development:

Deputy Steve Ahier and Constable Philip Le Sueur, Constable of Trinity.

Deputy M. Tadier:

What kind of interactions do they have with the commission in terms of operationally or politically?

The Minister for International Development:

They have a certain amount of input. We all meet at a commissioners' meeting. We have a full commissioners meeting tomorrow morning. We hold them monthly, and all commissioners turn up for that. We make decisions on what we are funding, what we are not funding, the strategic plans, and we discuss business, H.R. issues. We discuss how we do things, how we could do things better, all things. But I guess the daily liaison with Jersey Overseas Aid is through me and the Executive Director.

Deputy M.B. Andrews:

Can I just ask? You mentioned obviously that you have 2 political representatives who form part of that process. Do you believe there potentially could be a conflict, for instance, with, say, those Members potentially in being on the Scrutiny Panel and that then could be scrutinising you? So would you therefore maybe in future consider having no politicians involved?

The Minister for International Development:

No, our constitution requires 3 States Members and 3 non-States Members to be part of the commission. I would have to double check if it allows for more than but we think that works quite well. Yes, I will double check that.

Deputy M.B. Andrews:

Is that executive Members potentially who could also be part of that process, or is it non-executive Members only?

The Minister for International Development:

Yes, it is States Members ...

Deputy M.B. Andrews:

Just States Members.

The Minister for International Development:

... but I would not expect to see one of my commissioners questioning me as part of Scrutiny so that would be a matter for them.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Presumably this will just be reconstituted after the elections. We know that one of the Members is retiring so there would be at least one new Member in the new Assembly. Okay, thank you for that. I think that is all the questions on that area. Deputy Andrews, can I pass over to you?

Deputy M.B. Andrews:

Yes, indeed. Obviously we have touched on the strategic plan before. I just wanted to really get from you where you feel that maybe improvements potentially could be made following, say, feedback from your partner organisations during this term of office?

The Minister for International Development:

Well, there are tweaks and things and they might come back with different clauses in the agreements that we sign and they might question things, but I do not think there is anything radical that needs changing as part of our strategic plan thinking but that would be a matter for the new commission. We can put some ducks in a row, if you like, by having these independent evaluations, but then it will be for the new commission when they are writing the strategic plan - this new one will come into force 2027 - to decide on what themes, whether they are going to do the 3 themes that we have had. My recommendation would be to include a climate element, climate sensitivities throughout the themes with dairy for development. Like we say, conservation livelihoods has worked really well and financial inclusion, and by having those 3 themes I feel it plays to Jersey's strengths.

Deputy M.B. Andrews:

Obviously you are Minister for International Development but also Chair as well of J.O.A. and I was just wondering whether you are content with the way your budget is managed or do you think there are any changes that need to be made potentially in the next strategic plan to enable things more.

The Minister for International Development:

Commissioners decide at the beginning of the year when we have been allocated our budget whether to allocate the same percentages across the board like we normally do. For example, roughly speaking, although it is very difficult to predict these things especially with humanitarian

crisis, we normally allocate 25 per cent for emergencies humanitarian aid and 50 per cent for sustainable grants and a certain element will be for local charities. That is normally how we do it, but obviously we have to look at it throughout the year because if we are funding a lot of emergencies then we have to work out where that ...

Deputy M.B. Andrews:

Okay, and are those percentages similar to other jurisdictions?

Executive Director, Jersey Overseas Aid:

The 25 per cent is considered to be higher for humanitarian allocations. Most Government donors will allocate more to sustainable development and usually about 10 per cent to humanitarian response so we are quite above the average on that front.

Deputy M.B. Andrews:

Yes. What was the rationale behind having a higher percentage compared to comparative jurisdictions?

Executive Director, Jersey Overseas Aid:

I think the legacy and the narrative of Jersey receiving life-saving assistance, the partnerships we have with the likes of the Red Cross, other aid agencies I think warrants that percentage I would say. That would be my view and I do not want to speak on behalf of the commission but, yes, I think that was why.

The Minister for International Development:

To have an element in pooled funds in the beginning of the year so that if we allocate a certain amount of money to the pooled funds of Syria they have them on the ground and they are ready to go. If I could just blow our own trumpet, our overheads normally with N.G.O.s are about 7 per cent. Ours are 3.3 per cent but an element of that might be due to your point, Deputy Wilson, that we do look to Government as a cost saving if you like, so as not to duplicate services.

Deputy M.B. Andrews:

In terms of the emergencies that you have just spoken about as well, have you seen more cases where you are dealing with emergencies across your 4-year term in office, and if so, do you think that is potentially going to change the way things are handled in the next strategic plan?

The Minister for International Development:

There are always emergencies to fund and we could fund them 10 times over so I do not think things are going to change.

Deputy M.B. Andrews:

No, of course. Back to you, Chair.

Deputy M. Tadier:

This was not scripted as such but developments that we are seeing internationally, there are new wars that are occurring in the Middle East which I am sure are worrying you as a Minister and the commission. Is that an example of where your assistance might be needed, now or into the future, and are you able to respond quite quickly to those?

The Minister for International Development:

Well, the N.G.O.s that we deal with for emergencies and humanitarian like us because we do respond very quickly. As a commission we are all here and even email meetings are held to fund emergencies sometimes. What is happening currently in the Middle East is something that we have got to discuss as a commission. Like I say, we have a full commissioners meeting tomorrow and we will be looking at it. It is difficult to tell if it needs our support at this time. Obviously it needs humanitarian support but whether it needs Jersey's support at this time I do not know.

Executive Director, Jersey Overseas Aid:

Well, I think obviously the headlines being occupied by what is happening and the bombings that are happening around through the Gulf and elsewhere detract from the humanitarian needs that remain in places like Gaza and in Sudan and in the Central African Republic, so I think we have to do, I would say, is to maintain our commitments to those protracted crises and stick to the strategy that we have established in our humanitarian funding stream to ensure that our allocations are reaching as many people with the most efficient form of aid relief as possible.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Can I ask about how political considerations either effect you and your fellow N.G.O.s or how you insulate yourselves against that? So, for example, would there ever be pressure for a British overseas aid like ourselves not to assist in certain countries that are maybe having conflicts with allies of Britain?

The Minister for International Development:

Well, this is why we have the governance structure that we have so that we can discuss this in the most ... to focus on need and we also take into consideration the standing of the country. For example, there were floods in northern England a couple of years ago and people were questioning us: "Why are you not giving aid there?" That is a good question. Or: "Why are you not helping

Australia with all the fires?” The country themselves, we have to take into consideration their standing and where they fall on the H.D.I., Humanitarian Development Index.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Okay.

[15:15]

Executive Director, Jersey Overseas Aid:

Also I think you need to just draw back to the principles that we follow as an aid agency of impartiality, independence, neutrality and humanity as well, so that is our guidance so that should really mean that you are not looking at the country, you are looking at the needs as well. I think we can all say that that has been, over the last 2 years, something we have had to navigate very carefully and I think it is about informing members of the community that might have those questions about how we go about allocating funds and the partnerships that we establish as well.

Deputy K.M. Wilson:

I am just looking at your expenditure for 2026 and just for members of the public, your proportion of the splits of your budget is £12.085 million for international development grants, £5.179 million for humanitarian emergency grants and £3.045 million for Jersey charities. You have also talked about the fact that you are developing a memorandum of understanding with Government to drive some efficiencies in terms of your operations as well and it looks as though your operating expenses at the moment are £363,000, is that correct?

Executive Director, Jersey Overseas Aid:

Yes.

Deputy K.M. Wilson:

So, the question begs as to whether or not you feel the funding currently available for Jersey Overseas Aid will be sufficient to cover what you need to be doing from 2026 going forward and the fact that you, in 2024, received 0.29 per cent from the States of Jersey where the O.E.C.D. (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) average was 0.37 per cent. I think what we would want to understand is should you receive increased funding for 2027 to bring it in line with O.E.C.D. average, or is your approach to manage your efficiency better so that you are actually not requiring any additional investment for the work that you do?

The Minister for International Development:

O.E.C.D. average at the moment is 3.3 per cent. It has come down and it is coming down. The amount that we receive is 0.3 per cent so we are still out but we at least reached 0.3 per cent. Our aim had always been to reach the O.E.C.D. average, 0.33 per cent. Whether that comes down this year I do not know. We have said that we will stick with 0.3 per cent for the time being because other jurisdictions are doing quite a lot of things with their particular budgets. A lot of countries are now deciding to take funding out of their international development budget and put it to defence. Because our budget is fixed to G.V.A. (gross value added) it can fluctuate, so when our economy comes down, so does our budget and in actual fact our budget came down £300,000 for this year because we had a fall in G.V.A. We feel we can manage that because we make decisions at the beginning of the year, although we did not spend it all at the beginning of the year but we make strategic decisions then. We have got to operate within those means.

Deputy K.M. Wilson:

If a humanitarian crisis happened tomorrow, what would your approach be to make sure that your response was appropriately funded, given some of the financial constraint you have just talked about?

The Minister for International Development:

Well, we would evaluate what we are being asked for in whatever jurisdiction and we would allocate monies that we feel are appropriate.

Deputy K.M. Wilson:

Is there any other way that you could access any additional funding?

The Minister for International Development:

No. Not now.

Deputy K.M. Wilson:

Okay.

Deputy M. Tadier:

You talked about the average. Is it based on G.D.P. (gross domestic product) elsewhere or gross national income?

The Minister for International Development:

Yes. G.V.A.

Deputy M. Tadier:

So that is the average, but what is the aspiration of European Union countries? Is it ...?

The Minister for International Development:

Well the aspiration of the U.N. countries is 0.7 per cent and some countries make it. Scandinavian countries do tend to.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Do you think, given the fact that Jersey does not have a need to contribute to a defence budget as such - it does have maybe a small territorial army contribution but we do not need to invest in nuclear missiles or submarines - is there an argument to say that we should be increasing our overseas aid contribution while other countries are cutting it?

The Minister for International Development:

That could be an argument but how successful I would be around the Council of Ministers is another matter, or with the States Assembly is another matter.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Do you rely solely on Government funding for your income?

Executive Director, Jersey Overseas Aid:

Yes.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Do you think that is something which needs to be maintained or could there be a way for private individuals to top up funding? We had a debate about 2(1)(e)s, high net worth individuals. Is there a way for them to contribute to the work of overseas aid, either directly or indirectly?

The Minister for International Development:

They could certainly contribute but it would not be considered as our O.D.A. (Official Development Assistance), our giving.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Sure. Does that happen? Is there scope at the moment for that kind of giving to supplement?

The Minister for International Development:

Well, certainly some of the local charities that we fund we match fund them, pound for pound, and you have different mechanisms like that, and in actual fact we were exploring an initiative of possibly having a bond for dairy for development. Something like that, some financial vehicle to advance

dairy for development in Africa using some private monies but obviously some of our monies. But whatever we put in, regardless of who has given us money, our percentage is only on what we get from the Government.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Okay. That is fine, thank you.

Deputy K.M. Wilson:

In the letter to the panel on 7th November last year you note that: "During 2025 pause on new funding allocations to Rwanda has been in place. That decision will be reviewed again in 2026." Can you advise why the new funding allocations were paused and what will you look at when you review the decision this year?

The Minister for International Development:

Well, we review it virtually every single commissioners' meeting. We are minded ... well, we are going to continue with our existing projects there but at the moment we have decided not to embark on new projects and we are considering what is going on in the country with the Central African Republic.

Executive Director, Jersey Overseas Aid:

With the D.R.C. (Democratic Republic of Congo) and the M23 rebels it is very much in line with the F.C.D.O.'s approach as well to development assistance in Rwanda as well. It is exerting a degree of ... I would not say pressure because of the size that we are, but I think demonstrating that a clear contravention of international law and international maritime law is taking place in a jurisdiction where we have been supporting development initiatives for a number of years, and I think it was the right decision to demonstrate that we have our finger on the pulse and looking at what other donors are doing and are in step with those that have a similar approach to Rwanda as we do.

Deputy K.M. Wilson:

Just for the benefit of the public again, could you just remind us what you have actually put in place there now and will continue to support based on what you have just said?

Executive Director, Jersey Overseas Aid:

So, any new funding. Rwanda will be excluded from any new funding rounds that we would open. Last year obviously we started our applications for projects that would start this year. We would ordinarily open that to all of our 6 target countries, but on that occasion Rwanda was not on that list so none of our partners were able to submit a proposal that would have Rwanda as the focus of the target country. So that has been maintained and is reviewed, as the Minister said, on a regular

basis at our commissioners' meetings. But the existing programmes that we have there, the ones that were signed before the escalation of violence with the D.R.C. and the M23, remain operational.

Deputy K.M. Wilson:

Again, and it would be helpful to understand which ones do, but you mentioned in the same letter of 7th November that one grant, the financial inclusion for clean cooking access in Rwanda and Sierra Leone, was formally terminated.

Executive Director, Jersey Overseas Aid:

That is right.

Deputy K.M. Wilson:

Yes. So: "The decision allowed an extensive review of project performance and implementation challenges and the close-out period runs until September with final reporting and fund reconciliation under way." Can you let the panel know, with an overview of the project, why it was terminated, what the review showed and what lessons you learned from that which you are taking forward now?

Executive Director, Jersey Overseas Aid:

Yes, sure. The overview of the project was it was a project that spanned 2 countries with the objective of improving health and livelihood outcomes by establishing efficient cook stoves for communities. Instead of individuals - mainly women in these communities - cutting down trees, which is detrimental to the environment, of course, it is also a terrible health hazard because these are burnt indoors without any real ventilation so the impact on respiratory disease is quite significant. We had enacted that and by creating these cook stoves there was a financial incentive and the idea was to grow enterprises right within the women in the community as well. So it is multi-faceted in terms of its approach. We had become aware that the project was not meeting its targets before the mid-term evaluation so we put them on our ... we have a R.A.G. (red, amber, green) rating for all of our projects, so we elevated that to orange and we put additional controls in to see how they were performing, both financially but also in terms of their activities. So instead of a having 6-monthly report, which is what we usually do with standard projects, we would ask for monthly updates to see how they were going. So we had a period where they were not on notice but they knew that they were being looked at and had more scrutiny, and we got to the point where we thought we need to demonstrate that we have the appropriate oversight. There was still a significant amount of money left in the project budget so we thought being as responsible as possible with public finances we decided to terminate ... we presented our rationale to the commission who then approved for the project to be terminated and then there was an exit time after that where ... there has to be a degree of responsibility when you pull the plug on a project. If you do it straight away, overnight, then there are lots of people who suddenly do not have an income. All the gains that you

have made suddenly disappear, so there has to be a responsible way of exiting which we enacted in co-ordination with the 2 partners. So we have finished the project; we have terminated it. We are awaiting the final evaluation, which we should be getting in the next few weeks, which was conducted independently of them, so a third-party organisation are doing the review, and we are expecting to get the returned funds in the coming weeks as well.

Deputy K.M. Wilson:

Okay. You plan to reinvest those funds?

Executive Director, Jersey Overseas Aid:

Yes, they will come back into the J.O.A.'s budget and that will more than likely be allocated through the humanitarian pot because that is the one that fluctuates the most throughout the year.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Great, Minister, I think we are at time and we have asked most of the questions we would want to ask and you have covered quite a lot of ground in the space of an hour. We may follow up with some questions in writing but can I just ask, are there any points that you would like to convey to us before we conclude?

The Minister for International Development:

I think just to thank the panel for asking some really good questions and for allowing us to explain what we do. It is probably something that we do not do enough. We do not tell and inform the public because I think the work that J.O.A. does is something that the public should be incredibly proud of. We will continue representing Jersey on the world stage and in our particular lines of dairy for development, financial inclusion and conservation livelihoods. We are making some inroads into being with our fellow Channel Islanders. We have meetings with the President of Guernsey overseas aid so we have got a good relationship there. We have good relationships with the F.C.D.O. in London and the N.G.O.s that work in the U.K. and further afield. So I think, all in all, we represent the Island really well in a very positive way and thank you for allowing us to tell you about it.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Thank you for coming in. Thank you for being open to scrutiny also over the last term and for the part that we have played in those questions as well, so we do appreciate having you in today and in the past. We are going to terminate the ... I was going to say terminate the interview now but ...

[Laughter]

The Minister for International Development:

Have I got the job?

Deputy M. Tadier:

... there may well be people listening back and we certainly wish you all the best for the future.

The Minister for International Development:

Thank you very much.

[15:30]