



Economic and International Affairs Scrutiny Panel

Quarterly Public Hearing

Witness: The Minister for International Development

Thursday, 20th June 2024

Panel:

Deputy M. Tadier of St. Brelade (Chair)

Deputy G.P. Southern of St. Helier Central (Vice-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, Head of Programme, Jersey Overseas Aid

Mr. F. Walker, Head of Policy, Cabinet Office

[10:35]

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

Good morning, Minister and team. Welcome to this public hearing, the quarterly hearing. We are going to just go through the opening formalities. We may be joined online. This is being streamed, so it is a public hearing that people might be watching live, you never know, but they might also come back to watch it later. This is the Economic and International Affairs Scrutiny Panel. I am Deputy Montfort Tadier and I am the chair. I will just let the other members introduce themselves.

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

I am Deputy Max Andrews.

Deputy G.P. Southern of St. Helier Central (Vice-Chair):

Deputy Geoff Southern.

Deputy K.M. Wilson of St. Clement:

Deputy Karen Wilson.

The Minister for International Development:

I am Deputy Carolyn Labey. I am Minister for International Development and the chair of Jersey Overseas Aid.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Could you introduce your officers?

Head of Programme, Jersey Overseas Aid:

Good morning. My name is Edward Lewis. I am Head of Programme at Jersey Overseas Aid.

Head of Policy, Cabinet Office:

I am Francis Walker. I am the Head of Policy in the Cabinet Office.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Thank you. You have been to these hearings before. It is just to draw your attention to the statement in front of you about the process and the parliamentary privilege, but I think you are familiar with that. If you are happy, we can just launch straight in. I am going to hand over for the initial questions to Deputy Wilson and she will start off.

Deputy K.M. Wilson:

Thank you. Minister, during the previous public hearing you mentioned the importance of being open and transparent, particularly in relation to remaining accountable to taxpayers. How do you actively measure and track public sentiment regarding international development initiatives?

The Minister for International Development:

That is a really easy one because we commissioned a survey in 2022 because we were mindful of the fact that most people knew Jersey Overseas Aid for the community work projects, which is the smallest part of our budget, and nothing much else. We were curious whether this was actually the case, so we commissioned a survey and we got over 700 responses. We have been analysing that and we wrote our communication strategy on the back of that. Indeed, it did show us what we had already suspected, that they knew us for our volunteering programmes, so we feel there is a job of

work to be done about our sustainable development grants and the other work we do, the outreach and the emergencies.

Deputy K.M. Wilson:

Did the survey give you any feedback on what people feel about what you are doing?

The Minister for International Development:

Yes, it did.

Deputy K.M. Wilson:

What did it say?

The Minister for International Development:

Well, a lot of people did not really understand what we did. There was a mixed feeling as opposed to why we did it. Some felt very strongly that as an international jurisdiction we should be supporting other countries who are below 50 in the H.D.I. (Humanitarian Development Index). Others have the opinion that charity should start at home but they never finish that sentence "but should not end there". The feeling was mixed, I would say.

Head of Programme, Jersey Overseas Aid:

I would say mixed, but I think we were surprised slightly by how positive it was as well. We have previously gauged public sentiment through Facebook posts or whatever, which is not a particularly nuanced way of really getting a grip of what public perception is. So this survey gave us the opportunity to really get a wide base of constituents giving their perspective. Yes, it was more positive than anticipated because not many people come out on Facebook in support. It is usually people coming on to say negative things, so gauging it by that perhaps gave us the impression that there was not the appetite for overseas development assistance that there is on the Island. Overall, it was really positive but it did highlight, as the Minister said, a real need to engage with members of the public. We are doing that through our public engagement Jersey International Development Network, which is an open public event we do every 3 months where we invite experts from the sector to come and talk about trends and challenges. We really make it clear to the public that this is their opportunity to ask difficult questions of us and our partners about why we make those decisions, where the money is going and what impact it is having. I think that relationship with the public is growing and the attendance levels are certainly increasing. At the last one we had with the R.S.P.B. (Royal Society for the Protection of Birds) and Durrell there was well over 120 people in the Arts Centre. We have another one coming up on 2nd July where we will be welcoming U.N.H.C.R. (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) to talk about the Rohingya response in tandem with a photographic exhibition we are hosting in St. Helier and we are expecting it to be

a sellout of 200 as well. That is proof in itself that we are engaging with the right places and we are getting the response that we need to guide our communications as well.

Deputy K.M. Wilson:

Is that the first survey that you have ever done?

The Minister for International Development:

Yes.

Deputy K.M. Wilson:

Are you going to resurvey people so you can track the trends around public perception?

The Minister for International Development:

Yes, I think that would be a really good thing to do every so many years, whatever is advisable, to see if our comms are having an effect and our outreach engagement is having a good effect.

Deputy K.M. Wilson:

In what ways will this public feedback or any other public feedback that you have undertaken directly influence your policy decisions or implementation of specific projects?

The Minister for International Development:

The implementation of specific projects is based on ... if I am talking about the sustainable development projects, our staff monitor and evaluate these. We have got this hefty - I would not say brochure - document that is the result of the work of the officers who engage with our on-the-ground partners in the various countries to monitor and evaluate. When we have the opportunities to go back, they go back to look at those same projects to make sure that they are having the effect that is set out in the proposal. Sorry, I have forgotten the last part of your question.

Deputy K.M. Wilson:

It was really just about can you give us some examples of how your feedback has directly influenced your policy decisions. That is why I asked the question. If this is your first survey, my sense is that that would have given you some content as to how it would influence your policy decisions going forward, but you have obviously experienced other forms of feedback that will have given you some content as to the work that you are doing now. So can you give us some examples of where you have reacted to feedback and said: "This is something that we need to do and shape our policy in this area"?

The Minister for International Development:

Well, certainly our community work projects are an easy to receive direct feedback. For example, this week we have seen the teachers that were sent to Rwanda and that was the first of our skilled volunteers going out. Yesterday evening I saw the group that are this week leaving for Malawi, so they will be going out to Malawi to work. As soon as they return, we have interviews with them to see how our community work projects could be made better and what they want to see and if skilled volunteer programmes are the best or if we are better off deciding we are going to build a community centre or we are going to do our camps that we have done in the past in Lebanon, if those are better. That is absolute direct feedback and we can act and formulate or change or update our policies for the community work projects based on that.

Deputy K.M. Wilson:

In terms of talking to Islanders generally, as much as the experience of people who have gone out and experienced projects come with new feedback, have you got any evidence where the feedback of Islanders has informed your policy work?

Head of Programme, Jersey Overseas Aid:

Certainly I would say on the survey one of the areas, unsurprisingly, that constituents wanted to raise was accountability and transparency, a bit more about how we make decisions, how we select our partners and value for money from the money that we spend on grants. As a result of that, one of the things we did do was bring the Red Cross over and have a public meeting or public event to talk about cash programming in emergencies, why it is so effective, why Jersey should be supporting this more and more in emergencies. That was an example of a direct use of ... it is already in our policy. We already prefer cash programming in an emergency and prioritise that, so it was more about bringing that to the fore so the public can understand why that is important as an aid agency as well.

[10:45]

Deputy M. Tadier:

Can I ask a question, just jumping in as a supplementary, about the teachers in Rwanda? Is that a programme that is led by your department, is it led by Education primarily, and what is the interaction between the 2?

The Minister for International Development:

The interaction with us, it is a 3-way partnership really. J.O.A. (Jersey Overseas Aid) is the lead and the funders. We work with C.Y.P.E.S. (Children, Young People, Education and Skills) and we also work with the partners on the ground who identify the schools to go in, the accommodation, et cetera. So in this particular case we worked with Hands Around the World.

Deputy M. Tadier:

How long would a teacher go out there for at one time?

The Minister for International Development:

They have just been out for 2 weeks and we stated in our school holidays, obviously, which has got to be co-ordinated with their school holidays. Not school holidays, I mean term time, obviously, so that the children are in school.

Deputy M. Tadier:

What is the primary objective of that programme?

The Minister for International Development:

It is a 3-way street, I would say. It is to give teachers an experience. There is a lot of people and we are trying to encourage professional firms to embrace volunteering for their staff and to give time off so that they can experience other things. It adds to a more fulfilled staff member. It gives them skills that they might not have thought they had. It enhances their global experiences. The Rwandan teachers got a lot out of it as well. They can correspond with our teachers here about the teacher programmes.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Is there going to be any reciprocity in the sense that will Rwandan teachers be able to come to Jersey at some point?

The Minister for International Development:

Some of the headteachers came over here to have a look at the set-up and our classes.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Thank you.

Deputy K.M. Wilson:

We just want to explore some of the channels or platforms of communication that you have got with the public. If you could just for the benefit of the public give us an overview of how you do that but also if you give some assessment of where you think that the current mechanisms are either sufficient or insufficient and you have got some improvement work around that communication approach with the public.

The Minister for International Development:

Well, we have a part-time member of staff specifically on communication and she has been invaluable, she is invaluable since she started, I have to say. When we do make emergency grants, when the public are looking at us or looking at Jersey to respond to a crisis, we can get the comms out, which really works where we have got somebody in the office who is understanding our work. We have got the J.I.D.N. newsletter, which is the Jersey International Development Network newsletter, and we stage events, as Ed has alluded to ... quarterly or 3 times a year?

Head of Programme, Jersey Overseas Aid:

Yes.

The Minister for International Development:

We encourage questions and answers there. We offer bursaries, so we advertise for those. We offer C.W.P. (community work projects). We launch those, we speak about what we do and we usually have the venue full at that and we had a record number of responses this last time.

Deputy K.M. Wilson:

What you are describing is that you have a number of public engagement events, you host initiatives with various partners. Do you have any sort of online platform? What we are looking for is how do the public get to know what you do and how do the public get to learn about the effectiveness of what you do.

The Minister for International Development:

We have a website.

Head of Programme, Jersey Overseas Aid:

Yes, we have a website that is quite new. We saw that as a priority. On the back of the communication survey, we identified that we needed to have a much more up-to-date and professional-looking website, so that was commissioned not long after the survey. That is up and running and I think anyone who has been there and compared it to the one previously will see the huge improvement in terms of information share and the material that is on it. We are active on social media through Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn and Twitter as well. That is another way of trying to engage a potentially younger audience.

Deputy K.M. Wilson:

Do you analyse your content and views?

Head of Programme, Jersey Overseas Aid:

Yes, we do and it is a slow process and it is one that we are trying to allocate more resources to. I think we are winning. It takes time to harvest and get a decent number of followers but I definitely think that we are getting in the right direction. A lot is to do with partnering with other Island organisations as well. We do events with the finance industry. We did something recently with the Channel Islands engineering group as well. Creating those partnerships will increase our number of followers. Just to say on the schools outreach, something that we tried to do a few years ago with mixed success and now we are ramping up again, using the partners as a way into getting younger people interested about international development, in the next few weeks we will have some engagement with R.S.P.B. who are coming over to talk to schools and also U.N.H.C.R. to talk about the Rohingya refugees. The combined schools engagement I think will reach over 400 pupils just in those 2 outreach programmes. That is without being present in the Skills Show, which we were at earlier this year, talking to young Islanders about the opportunities in development.

Deputy K.M. Wilson:

Are there any areas where you think that the current mechanisms are ineffective and need improvement? Is there anything else that you think that you need to be doing or are you happy with your current communication arrangements?

Head of Programme, Jersey Overseas Aid:

I think we have to be realistic with the resources that we have and the workload that we have within our staff base as well. I would say at the moment I think we are probably exceeding expectations in terms of getting the message out there in the content we are creating. I think that is in a huge part down to our communications officer who has joined us in the last few years who has done a fantastic job in raising our profile and getting the message out there. The timing I would say we are probably ... I am not sure we could do more than we are currently doing but I appreciate that it is not a quick win and it will take time to gather the numbers that we would like to reach.

Deputy G.P. Southern:

Can I just ask about sustainability and what you were talking about previously, which was a group of skilled volunteers, in this case teachers, doing a fortnight in Rwanda? What is the long-term net gain from that sort of experience?

The Minister for International Development:

I think it probably upskills the teachers in Rwanda and they have got a dialogue with our teachers and certainly on the English teaching there.

Deputy G.P. Southern:

The teachers who have volunteered from Jersey have got a programme that they are using to teach the native workforce - that sounds awful but you know what I mean - as to how to teach English. Is that ongoing?

The Minister for International Development:

Yes, because they are in regular ... they have all got mobile phones because they are as cheap as chips out there. We would like them to ideally have laptops but obviously electricity is sometimes questionable and getting parts and stuff like that. They liaise with our teachers. It is an ongoing thing. It is quite interesting, when I spoke to the leader of the volunteers this week they said that when they went out there they had in their minds they were focusing on the differences but in actual fact when they came back they were focusing on the similarities and how they can assist one another. It is a 2-way street.

Deputy K.M. Wilson:

How do we know that and how do we measure it? For example, you have talked about people develop skills but how would the public know that the investment that is being made in this exchange work is actually contributing to enhanced skills? Where is that accounted for?

The Minister for International Development:

They can speak to the teachers who volunteered but, as I say, we interview the volunteers on return. We also then evaluate the project and speak to the people in Rwanda and talk to them about how things could be improved, made better, is it worth doing more programmes or are the teachers quite happy.

Deputy K.M. Wilson:

Is this written down anywhere in terms of an evaluation or are there any contents that people could look at as part of your website? Would you put some of that on your website and say: "This is what we had as feedback from people; this is what they are telling us; this is the opportunity, the skills that you can gather" as part of developing your approach to getting people excited and engaged in this agenda?

The Minister for International Development:

I know a lot of the volunteers write blogs and we put them up on our website, but I think that is something that we could take away. I think that is ... maybe we need to explain exactly what the community work projects' aims are and the outcomes.

Deputy K.M. Wilson:

Yes, it is demonstrating those outcomes, is it not?

Head of Programme, Jersey Overseas Aid:

Yes, exactly.

The Minister for International Development:

I think that is a really good idea.

Deputy K.M. Wilson:

Okay, I would just like to move on, if I could. In a recent article entitled “Jersey’s role in supporting cocoa farmers in Sierra Leone” it was expressed that a lot of people had not realised that Jersey was involved in such projects. Are there any other demographics that you think you would like to increase engagement with through your work?

The Minister for International Development:

Demographics as in countries?

Deputy K.M. Wilson:

Yes.

The Minister for International Development:

Well, at the minute we have got a very focused way of choosing our countries. It is the Corruption Perceptions Index. We divide the Corruption Perceptions Index and times it by the Humanitarian Development Index squared. Out of those countries that we have highlighted we then choose the Anglophone countries and also with our 3 themes of dairy for development, financial inclusion and conservation livelihoods, we choose the countries that best lend themselves to those particular themes. For example, Sierra Leone does not lend itself to dairy for development but eastern Africa lends itself to that, so we focus our dairy for development in the east and conservation livelihoods in Sierra Leone with the cocoa farmers.

Deputy K.M. Wilson:

But in terms of outside of that, are there any other areas where you think there is unmet need in relation to support from international development?

The Minister for International Development:

As I say, we focus on those areas because when I originally took over Jersey Overseas Aid - “took over”, when I got appointed as chair I should say - we had very much a scattergun approach. We were not focused on any particular countries or any particular themes. With the very able assistance of my dear colleague Simon Boas we focused on 3 themes and focused the countries down to 6

because we felt it was better to build a relationship with those countries, to eventually have an M.O.U. (memorandum of understanding) with the government and we have now with Zambia and I hoping to have an M.O.U. with Malawi and Rwanda certainly for dairy. We do have other countries that we work in through local charities, for example Durrell work in Madagascar. We do fund a lot of projects, conservation livelihood projects in Madagascar through Durrell because that is our partner there. Other charities that we fund might have work in Kenya and those kind of grants to local charities go in different places.

[11:00]

Deputy M. Tadier:

I think we will go on quickly.

Deputy K.M. Wilson:

Yes, I was just going to say because I think I have asked the questions I wanted to.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Yes, thank you for that. I have been looking at your website, which I think is very good, and one of the things you talk about is ... we have talked about effectively communicating with the public about what you are doing, but how do you measure whether the work you are doing itself and the grants that you are giving are effective? For example, one concern we often hear generally about charities is that people get worried about how much is going on administration. How do you ensure value for money and what measures do you have to make sure that the work is effective on the ground?

The Minister for International Development:

Well, as I say, we have got this document which analyses the original proposals and this is 4 months' work and it goes into by professional staff and the N.G.O.s (non-governmental organisations) who have submitted the projects. This document then comes to commissioners and we then have to go through it with a fine toothcomb and those are exactly the kind of questions that we ask - how much in-country spending there is, the overheads and all those kind of things - so the governance is in place. Then the professional staff will continue to monitor and evaluate the projects. Sometimes projects fail or are not doing what we are expecting them to do, in which case we ... we do like to encourage open dialogue with the N.G.O.s because otherwise they will not tell us if things are going wrong and it might not be their fault that things are going wrong. They might not have had enough rains to start the project or whatever it is. So we encourage them. We have been known to stop payments, to ask for our money back if projects are not working as they should, but this comes from recommendations from the professional staff, as I say, and then it will be the commissioners who make the decision.

Deputy G.P. Southern:

I just wondered how long this process took to go from initial ideas and raising ideas as to what you might do to how long it takes to come out and say: "We will engage with these 4 projects."

The Minister for International Development:

We ask for proposals about now, is it?

Head of Programme, Jersey Overseas Aid:

Yes. It is a 2-stage process. Initially we go out to our close partners of about 50-plus and ask for an expression of interest, which is the opportunity for the organisation to propose a concept note essentially. We are not asking them to give us their full proposal, which is a huge document of 60 pages-plus with a comprehensive budget. We are asking them to propose a concept note and then we assess that: is that aligning with our objectives; is it in the right target country; is it value for money? On the back of that, we sift it down from ... this document we had 50 applicants and we whittled it down to 16 shortlisted applicants.

The Minister for International Development:

They will then come to the commission and we will go through them and out of those we will choose a number that we would like further investigation. So we will then go to the N.G.O.s to say: "We would like you to submit a full proposal", which they will do and that is when if that is thought viable the staff then go and have a look at that proposal on the ground.

Deputy M. Tadier:

If there has been a failed project, how do you learn from that? How do you ensure that you learn from it?

The Minister for International Development:

Well, I think one thing we have learnt, the overriding message is to have a good relationship with the N.G.O. and have a very open and transparent relationship with them to ensure that they come to us if things are not right. I think we have learned and so have they.

Head of Programme, Jersey Overseas Aid:

Absolutely. I think things like additional ... when a project is not meeting its targets, and that does happen because of the context in which they are often operating. As the Minister said, that could be seasonal, it could be delayed rain, it could be drought, it could be political. We have definitely been affected by countries that are going to elections in particular where there has been insecurity. What we do is if we can see a project is faltering and we are able to identify that because we have

a very robust process of reporting. So when we award a grant, we are not signing a cheque and letting it go off. The tranches associated with the annual payment are linked to us approving a narrative and a financial report, which is signed off by our head of finance and our programme team. So we have identified then is it meeting its target. If not, do we need to add some additional internal controls and that could be every 2 months checking in with them, as opposed to 6 months. It could be a spot check, which we have done as well. It could be reaching out to other donors who are supporting that organisation and asking their opinion and piggybacking on some of the internal investigations they have done. That could be an audited report and we have done that as well. So we are gathering as much information as possible to get the best possible picture before making that decision whether we pull funding or whether we add additional scrutiny on to that project.

Deputy K.M. Wilson:

The Minister mentioned about asking for money back. Under what circumstances would you ask for money back and how long does it take?

The Minister for International Development:

I am trying to think of an example. I know we did a couple of years ago.

Head of Programme, Jersey Overseas Aid:

Yes, and under what circumstances. Well, it could be fraud, it could be an incident of fraud where that has been identified and that goes against our grant agreement and obviously our legislation, so we would ask for money back then. It could be that the organisation is faltering themselves, perhaps their donor base has shrunk and some donors have pulled out support, and that does happen from time to time as well. That would put the organisation in jeopardy, in which case we would then ask for our money back. It could be that the context in which that project is operating becomes unviable and that is when there is, for example, a climatic shock, which means that there is no chance that we can implement dairy programming in that area because the livestock are dying or they are dead. So that would be a context. It is very rare that that happens but it does happen and I think that is the reality of working in the development sector.

The Minister for International Development:

I am mindful of the fact, I am sorry, we did not properly answer your question about the timeframe.

Head of Programme, Jersey Overseas Aid:

I was coming straight back to it. I was pausing to think about it.

The Minister for International Development:

The concept note ... when we are asking for initial proposals is from about now, so then the N.G.O.s will have concept notes coming back to us in the autumn. The staff will go through them then and they will come to commissioners, to the commission in December or very early January, which is not ideal timing because we normally find ourselves reading projects over Christmas but anyway ... then, like I say, from mid-January to end of April that is when the investigations in-country take place and the decisions are made by the commission at the end of April. We look to sending the first tranche of money that we have decided on around about now. They might not all start at the same time, so it might be staged depending where they are, but from now the initial money will go out. So in actual fact it is about a year from the expressions of interest to the first tranche of money going out.

Head of Programme, Jersey Overseas Aid:

Can I just come back on Deputy Tadier's point on the financial oversight of organisations, how you make sure that they are appropriately spending that? I think that is something that we take very seriously. When we do the in-country assessments we sit with the financial team for a good 6 hours asking them really detailed questions about their internal controls, their financial management systems, their procurement policies, how much goes on staff, really, really giving them a good once-over in terms of understanding their financial capacity as well. Through that, that also feeds into the scoring system in this book and it is a very important part of the analysis we present to commissioners.

Deputy M. Tadier:

That is useful. I suppose the other part of the question is the other end. How do you then gauge whether a programme or an intervention has been successful in terms of outcomes?

The Minister for International Development:

That is a really important part.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Can you say, for example, we have helped build a school in this village and now literacy has gone up in this village or we built a water pump and now disease relating to water has reduced, those kinds of measurables?

The Minister for International Development:

Yes, indeed. Those will be through local charities, those kind of projects, but the sustainable development projects, that is absolutely what we do and we can see that ... for example, there is a development, we have gone into a small village or we started off with single-headed households in a small village and now in the region ... we have literally changed milk yields in regions.

Head of Programme, Jersey Overseas Aid:

One of the criteria in the assessments is monitoring and evaluation. All of the projects that we support will receive an in-country visit from our dedicated monitoring impact officer at J.O.A. at the halfway stage of the project. If it is 3 years, halfway through they will go and they will spend a week going to the project site, leading focus group discussions with beneficiaries, asking them how they see the project is going, asking how their lives have improved or not improved, asking for feedback about how the organisation is achieving or not. They sit with the local authorities as well and see how the co-ordination is going. Then a report is compiled and sent to the organisation. That gives us the opportunity to feed back to the grantee. They might course correct as a result of that and then all of our grants have independent evaluations at the end of their period. We absolutely measure the impact during the course of the project and we really go into granular detail. We ask about food security, is there diversification of diet since the project began, for example, how many days have they been hunger free since the project began, how many children are going to education as a result of this, has their income improved? We ask all of these really important questions in order for us to demonstrate the impact that this funding is having.

Deputy K.M. Wilson:

That is available in that report, is it?

Head of Programme, Jersey Overseas Aid:

No. I can send you a suite of standard indicators that we use across our projects and we can share the monitoring and evaluation strategy as well, if you would like it.

Deputy K.M. Wilson:

Yes, thank you.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Can I just move on to a thing that comes up time and time again? I think we asked you at the last hearing about the benchmarking for budgets. I think you advised us last time that Jersey sits significantly below the U.N. (United Nations) proposed target of 0.7 and even the average of U.N. members. Currently I think we are 0.28.

The Minister for International Development:

Yes.

Deputy M. Tadier:

So, Minister, from a political point of view in this next round of the Government Plan, are you making sounds around the ministerial table asking for ... and how are you looking to get to that 0.7? Is it an aspiration or is it ...

The Minister for International Development:

I think 0.7 is an aspiration and I think it is for a lot of countries. However, what I have negotiated around the table is for our budget to go up by 0.01 per cent per annum. Actually, it is 0.29 per cent in 2024 at the minute and then in 2025 it will be 0.3 per cent. The O.E.C.D. (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) has gone up in recent years. It used to be 0.32 per cent. Last year it went up to 0.36 per cent but it can come down as other countries ... as the cost of living bites and governments decide to cut their aid budget.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Did you ever give consideration to fixing it, like the 1 per cent for arts, as a fixed amount of spending?

The Minister for International Development:

Well, your 1 per cent for arts is on expenditure. This is on the G.V.A. (gross value added), so it is a slightly different matrix.

Deputy M. Tadier:

You could fix it to G.V.A., you could say.

The Minister for International Development:

It is fixed to G.V.A. at the minute and it is fixed to go up by 0.01 per cent.

Deputy M. Tadier:

So if I can relate this question to another theme I think you have talked about. In the 2023 ministerial plan there was the concept of projecting Jersey's image, so a part of the work you do is to I think a positive image of Jersey abroad. The first question, I suppose, is to what extent does the fact that we are well below the U.N. average and the U.N. target, how does that impact on Jersey's reputation potentially?

[11:15]

The Minister for International Development:

I think the fact that it is going up year on year, and make no mistake, the 0.01 per cent can be quite sizeable, depending on our G.V.A. At the minute my budget is £20 million and going up and I think in today's climate we have got to balance it with what we were talking about before, how are we

perceived by the public, the taxpayer. I think if we can demonstrate that we are slowly going up but we have got to bear in mind everything else going on out there. I feel that our budget is based on pure aid. There are some jurisdictions that, for example, will give aid if they get a wood contract back and that sort of thing. That is not pure aid, so we like to ...

Deputy M. Tadier:

Yes, I understand. I know we have got lots to get through but I wanted to understand where the balance strikes between your job promoting Jersey's image positively abroad but also there is the pure philanthropy of overseas aid. Which is the prime motivator of overseas aid in your department in terms of making a difference?

The Minister for International Development:

Well, Jersey Overseas Aid is independent, which I chair. I am not quite sure I understand the question.

Deputy M. Tadier:

What I mean is there is an element which has been identified around ... I will read what I have got here. In the 2023 ministerial plan there was a feasibility study around the co-ordination of the promotion of Jersey's international image externally among various organisations which can do so. I suppose the question is to what extent is your job to promote a positive image of Jersey abroad. If I was being cynical we could say that is a propaganda exercise on behalf of the Jersey Government or Jersey plc versus just trying to do philanthropical good in a poor country.

The Minister for International Development:

Well, I think that is why it is important that Jersey Overseas Aid is independent and retains its independence in that we are not or should not be influenced politically. We are a standalone whereas the Island Identity project is about promotion and I am incredibly proud of what Jersey Overseas Aid does. I think it is good that we are going out in Africa.

Deputy M. Tadier:

You could make an argument that having a minister for overseas aid, effectively, where we did not have one before does necessarily politicise the role and you are going to be subject to political pressures about your budget, which maybe you would not be if there was not a Minister for that department, for example.

The Minister for International Development:

Well, I disagree because the structure ... I feel, yes, I am a Minister so it means I have got a seat around the ministerial table because before there was a Minister appointed our budget was going

down because there was nobody sitting around that table to speak up for international development. So I feel my input is important around that table but the fact that we are still independent and I have got 3 totally independent commissioners plus 3, including myself, States Members, we have got about the right balance of independence.

Deputy G.P. Southern:

You mentioned you have a budget of £20 million. What is the division of that £20 million, say, between emergency aid, projects which are community based or whatever or others? What sort of things are we talking about there?

The Minister for International Development:

Commissioners decide at the beginning of the year roughly, because we do not know what emergencies are going to evolve. So we allocate £5 million for emergencies, humanitarian aid - I am talking rough figures here, I can give you specific ones - £10 million to sustainable grants, £3 million for local charities, which include Durrell, some big projects that we do with Durrell and the R.J.A.H.S. (Royal Jersey Agricultural & Horticultural Society), £400,000 for outreach and we have got 4 per cent for overheads, which is way below the O.E.C.D. average, which is 7 per cent roughly.

Deputy G.P. Southern:

Thank you.

Deputy K.M. Wilson:

Can I ask how you manage that conflict of interest of being the chair of Jersey Overseas Aid and the Minister for International Development? How does that work?

The Minister for International Development:

I do not see there is a conflict of interest. I see that I am representing international development around the C.O.M. (Council of Ministers) table. I think as an international jurisdiction we pride ourselves we have got an international finance centre. It is important we play our part on the world stage with international overseas aid.

Deputy K.M. Wilson:

But how do you separate out your responsibilities as a Minister with the responsibilities that you have got towards J.O.A.?

The Minister for International Development:

I do not see there is a conflict.

Deputy K.M. Wilson:

So how are they independent, how can J.O.A. be independent?

The Minister for International Development:

The decisions to spend the money obviously it is up to the States Assembly to decide how much money or what contribution we get. So it is up to me. I think it is incredibly beneficial, as I said before, to be a Minister because it means overseas aid has a voice around the C.O.M. table and we can have input into what is happening and liaise with other Ministers where there might be support in different areas.

Deputy K.M. Wilson:

Do you ever envisage where there might be a time or a situation where those 2 responsibilities would come into some sort of contention?

The Minister for International Development:

I do not think so. I do not think so. I see it as beneficial to have a seat around the table because, as I said, before when we did not have our budget was going down and I think it is important to have that seat for those purposes and to have input into ministerial documents. We should be proud of what we are doing.

Deputy G.P. Southern:

Can I just take it on to a particular subject, which is the volunteering programme? You say: "We are delighted to have been able to announce a full 2024 programme for overseas volunteering opportunities to Malawi, Kenya, Rwanda and Nepal, and due to high demand, we have increased the number of projects from 3 to 4." Is that the best way of delivering aid to African countries, do you think?

The Minister for International Development:

To be brutally honest, no. It might be better just to write a cheque and spend the money that way or add the funding to a sustainable development grant. However, as part of our outreach, as part of putting something back into our own community to giving local people opportunities ... there are some people who volunteer on our projects who have not travelled far and it gives them those kind of experiences, it makes them more fulfilled in the workplace, I would suggest. For every one volunteer - and there have been 1,000 local volunteers over the time since the inception of Jersey Overseas Aid - they have got families around them. They come back, they speak about the projects and I think it is quite good to do that outreach work.

Deputy G.P. Southern:

It is about educating our population rather than ...

The Minister for International Development:

No, it is both. They go out there, they work very hard, some of them, building community centres. We have got fantastic relationships, for example, in Nepal with the Gurkhas. We have got a relationship with them. They form their own relationships. Some of the volunteers come back and set up their own charities on the back of the trip.

Deputy M. Tadier:

I am guessing it is helpful to have eyes on the ground to see how money is being spent and what is being done as well and report back.

Deputy G.P. Southern:

Can I just focus a minute and say it is one thing to say there is so many people, children in education but if that means they are now going education via the teacher, the skills of the teacher are the key element there rather than sitting in the back row of a class of 90. They are in education but it is not effective education because they do not have a skilled teacher there. A skilled teacher there for 6 months a year might be doing something about the skill base of the teachers. Is there any move to increase the expertise that you are doing rather than you have got plenty of bodies there in Nepal or wherever to do the physical work. It is such an ineffective ... yes.

Head of Programme, Jersey Overseas Aid:

We appreciate that volunteering has changed and is changing. Exactly as you point out, those days of sending privileged people over to areas of low income are, I would like to think, fading out. We recognise that and we recognise the need for a more skills-based approach and that is why we are starting some endeavours at J.O.A., including sending people with recognised certificates or professional degrees to go and enhance capacity of organisations. That is a far more impactful way of doing it and I will give you an example. We have a new partnership with an accountancy firm, A.f.I.D. (Accounting for International Development), and we are going to send 2 qualified accountants to go and system strengthen N.G.O.s in low income countries because the impact of that will feed out much greater than, as you said, a single clinic or a single classroom. Beyond that, we are looking at medical support as well, how we can do virtual support medically from trained professionals in Jersey to help medical professionals in low income countries. We are looking also at where we can use the skillsets of veterans and Blue Light individuals in Jersey to benefit and enhance people's capacity and resilience in low income countries too. So we recognise the need for that but I think there is also a need, for the reasons that the Minister outlined, to engage with people who do not necessarily have those skills but will benefit an awful lot from going overseas, engaging culturally but also skills based, contributing to things like sand dams. I think that is a really

good example of where the impact of a group going over there has a huge impact on a community because the sand dams are able to influence a huge area. They provide water for livestock, for communities and also for agriculture. So a small group of 12 volunteers from Jersey going over and completing a sand dam potentially influences tens of thousands of people. There is definitely ... that demonstrates the value for us in that way as well.

The Minister for International Development:

I think that is it, you have just hit the nail on the head there. It is the value versus the cost and I think there is a huge amount of value as opposed to measuring the financial cost.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Minister, I know we are nearing the end of our time. Are you okay for about another 10 minutes, do you think?

The Minister for International Development:

Yes. I spoke for my colleagues.

Deputy M. Tadier:

I will hand over to Deputy Andrews. Before I do that, there might be areas of questions that we have not been able to go into today. We will obviously follow up with that as we need to. One area we will not talk about today is the Jersey diaspora. We did have that on the plan but I am also mindful that some of that will fall under your external relations role so it might well be that we want to talk to you about that on another occasion specifically.

The Minister for International Development:

Yes. It comes under the Island Identity project.

Deputy M. Tadier:

I think it touches to an extent on this but not exclusively. I will pass over to Deputy Andrews.

Deputy M.B. Andrews:

Minister, when selecting sustainable development projects, during the last hearing you mentioned that consideration is given to the Corruption Perceptions Index. Could you just elucidate on how many cases you have come across where a country has ranked high on the index and whether support has been temporarily withdrawn due to them scoring high?

The Minister for International Development:

Since we came up with this formula, which goes back about 6 years, we have taken the Corruption Perceptions Index into account and every country is on there and they are ranked however. We take the lower ones, so we try and mitigate that as much as possible.

[11:30]

Deputy M.B. Andrews:

So, for instance, if we are maybe looking at the conflict that is currently ongoing in Gaza, when you appraised the Corruption Perceptions Index, was it high, medium or low scoring?

The Minister for International Development:

Our assistance in Gaza comes under the emergencies budget. We do not use that formula for emergencies.

Deputy M.B. Andrews:

Okay, so what we are basically saying is there is a separation that if there is not an emergency the country that is scoring high will not be aided or, shall we say, stakeholders within the state will not be assisted?

Head of Programme, Jersey Overseas Aid:

The formula that the Minister outlined is for long-term development projects only, so that is how we choose those countries, those 6. It is also worth saying that we do not have any bilateral support of these governments. We are not sending money to these governments. So when it comes to emergencies, we are not governed by that, we are governed purely by need and we are purely governed by reports that come back from the likes of the United Nations and other international organisations who are responding and have boots on the ground, eyes on the ground, that can feed back the live reality of what is going on.

Deputy M.B. Andrews:

I know it was just touched on before that in the past there have been occurrences where maybe money has not been spent wisely or maybe, say, there has been instances when we cannot continue with this project. So is it only since then that the Corruption Perceptions Index has been something that you have used or you already had robust processes?

The Minister for International Development:

No, we came up with that formula when choosing the 6 countries that we were going to focus on. I think we are one of the only aid agencies that uses the Corruption Perceptions Index, although aid agencies are now looking so they might copy us.

Deputy M.B. Andrews:

I just want to ask a question really in regards to some instances where, for instance, as you mentioned before, money has been passed back or been withheld. Why do you think that came about and what lessons have been learnt from those instances?

The Minister for International Development:

As Ed spoke of before, there might have been all manner of reasons why money was asked back: whether it rained, the political climate in the country, whether the donorship had not transpired. It can be anything.

Head of Programme, Jersey Overseas Aid:

The particular example that springs to mind was to do with the scrutiny by our executive director of a report that he received from a charity and using his experience he went through the financial statements and it just did not add up. He kept on asking more and more questions and once he unstitched one it started unravel and that is where that decision was made. It comes down to a professional office with the ability to scrutinise appropriate reports and identify where there is a misdemeanour.

Deputy M.B. Andrews:

Thank you very much for providing that clarity. Minister, I know in the last hearing you mentioned about the importance of cultural exchanges. I was wondering if any discussions had taken place between yourself and the Minister for Sustainable Development in relation to this matter.

The Minister for International Development:

Well, the artistic exchanges, I think that is something very much for Economic Development with their culture budget but obviously if we have got a relationship with a country we can certainly assist and provide contacts and networks and whatever facilities might be needed, I do not know.

Deputy M.B. Andrews:

Also obviously we are fully aware as a panel that you are Minister for External Relations. How closely linked are the 2 departments, you as Minister now and then the External Relations? Do you find there is quite a lot of work that both departments are working on together or is it ...

The Minister for International Development:

No, they are not. The only connection is that we are both outward facing, so for our profile, which is why the Island Identity project is like it is set under me so far but some of the elements from that have been taken on by External Relations because they have the resources, frankly. We have got

Francis now and his team ably looking at this but helping External Relations as well as me. Before it was just my secretary and me doing that. No, so the only connection is that we are both outward facing.

Deputy M.B. Andrews:

Thank you very much, Minister.

Deputy M. Tadier:

I think we are going to draw the hearing to a close at this point unless you have got anything else you would like to tell us. Thank you. We could have gone on longer, of course, we have got more questions that we can ask but if we need to follow up in writing we will do that, if that is okay.

The Minister for International Development:

Yes, that is fine.

Deputy M. Tadier:

I just thank you on behalf of the panel for your time and we look forward to scrutinising you and continuing to scrutinise you and see you again and wish you all the best for your programme.

The Minister for International Development:

Thank you very much. I hope to see you on 2nd July.

[11:36]