

STATES OF JERSEY



REVIEW OF JERSEY'S OVERSEAS AID: REPORT ON PROGRESS (S.R.3/2010) – RESPONSE OF THE JERSEY OVERSEAS AID COMMISSION

**Presented to the States on 21st May 2010
by the Chairman of the Jersey Overseas Aid Commission**

STATES GREFFE

**REVIEW OF JERSEY'S OVERSEAS AID: REPORT ON PROGRESS
(S.R.3/2010) – RESPONSE OF THE JERSEY OVERSEAS AID COMMISSION**

The Commission would like to take this opportunity to thank the Corporate Affairs Scrutiny Panel for their work in S.R.3/2010 – *Review of Jersey's Overseas Aid: Report on Progress*. The Commission makes its response to each recommendation below, but by way of introduction sets out an overview of Jersey's aid contribution to developing communities.

On 16th March 2005, the Jersey Overseas Aid Commission (Jersey) Law 2005 (P.14/2005) was adopted by the States of Jersey to take effect in 2006 and beyond. The objectives of the Commission are to manage and administer the monies voted by the States of Jersey to reduce or alleviate the effects of poverty in developing communities and improve the lives of people living in the poorest countries in a way which can be sustained.

The Commission stands as an independent body following the move to ministerial government. The Commission consists of 3 States members and 3 non-States members, with the policies and procedures of the previous Overseas Aid Committee predominantly remaining the same. The Commission may bring legislation or other matters relating to its area of responsibility to the States Assembly for debate and acceptance, modification or rejection. Individual States members may also present propositions to the States Assembly for debate.

It was not until 1968 that the States Assembly agreed to vote money for overseas aid and a Committee was set up to administer the original vote of £14,000 and subsequent votes. Today the Overseas Aid Commission firmly believes that –

- (i) it is our moral duty to care for other people and to help them help themselves;
- (ii) it is our duty to our children and grandchildren to address issues of poverty which may in the long-term threaten global security;
- (iii) it is our duty to provide an example of good governance for others to follow;
- (iv) it is our duty to meet existing international obligations. Jersey is a signatory to Agenda 21, which commits Jersey to moving to a target of overseas aid funding which is comparable with that of other nation states. However, Jersey's overseas aid budget is currently based on taxation revenue rather than GNP.

That there is a great need for overseas aid is illustrated by the following –

- (i) There are 1.3 billion people who continue to live in extreme poverty, seeking to eke out an existence on less than the equivalent of US\$1 or 60 pence per day. Even if expressed as 15 million times the entire population of Jersey, it is impossible for most of us to envisage the degree of poverty in the world and other following problems.
- (ii) Over 1.2 billion people lack access to safe drinking water.
- (iii) Over 750 million people lack access to health services.

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RECOMMENDATION RESPONSES

The Panel recommends that the issue of accountability is the subject of additional investigation as soon as possible, as it is not appropriate for large sums of public money to fall outside the normal methods for ensuring accurate financial responsibility and accountability.

The Commission accepts the Panel's recommendation with regard to its anomalous position within the current governmental structure of Jersey. The Commission has and will continue to meet its obligations under the States of Jersey Financial Directions. The Commission has devoted considerable time and effort to addressing this issue and the Commission Chairman has, subsequent to the publication of the Panel's Report, met with the Chief Minister and the Chief Executive of the States of Jersey and is hopeful that together a satisfactory resolution can and will be found.

The Panel recommends that the 0.7% GNI target should remain a priority for the Commission. The Panel accepts that the achievability of this target will be dictated by financial circumstances.

The Commission accepts this recommendation, with the Panel's caveat. However the Commission is aware of recent independent research issued by the International Policy Network which questions the appropriateness of this measure and the Commission will consider that research in due course.

It should also be noted that whilst the Commission would encourage any increase in funding, it only distributes the grant which is voted to it. The States decides each year what amount the grant will be.

The Panel supports the efforts of the Commission's Chairman to enter into meaningful partnerships with local charities; however, it recommends that the Commission extends its work with local charities because local charities do not have as much formal structure as the larger agencies. The Panel believes this would also improve accountability.

The Commission has over the last year continued to build more meaningful partnerships with local charities working overseas and has increased its budget allocation for this purpose. The total amount given to Jersey Charities operating in developing countries in 2009 was £100,131 as opposed to £56,243 voted the previous year.

Unfortunately the Commission doesn't agree with the Panel's belief that small local charities necessarily, by virtue of being locally based, have improved accountability when compared to international development agencies who might have offices and employees in the vicinity of the work being undertaken.

The Panel strongly feels that there would be great benefit in the Commission carrying out an audit of a project funded through its local grant aid budget. Furthermore, the Panel recommends that an audit should be carried out on an annual basis

The Commission accepts the Panel's recommendation. The Chairman visited Kenya in 2009 and at his own expense, audited several grant-funded projects. Commissioner Routier, again at his own expense, also visited JOAC-funded projects in 2009 in Tanzania (together with Connétable Norman and Senator Le Main). The Commission and the preceding Committees have, until now, taken the view that such visits should be undertaken at the Commissioners' own expense and that incurring additional costs to the Commission's administration budget did not necessarily represent best use of the States grant given. The Commission however recognises that there is a balance to be struck with today's need for heightened compliance and governance oversight and as such, the Commission will be proposing that each Commissioner undertake at least one project review visit during their 3 year term. Should they need financial help towards the costs of such visits, then the Commission would consider making an *ex-gratia* payment to help defray costs.

The Commission does receive reports of completed projects each year and Commissioners review agency accounts on an annual basis, prior to providing any further funding.

The Panel recognises the positive image that a plaque denoting Jersey's Overseas Aid work would project, but it strongly recommends that more could be done to emphasize Jersey's role in helping and administering aid to countries in need.

The Commission has over the last number of years sought to increase its profile within the local community and periodically issues media releases providing updates of projects supported and disaster response. The Commission additionally asks its agencies to also send media press releases about projects funded by Jersey. Unfortunately, the Commission has no control over what is published and often it is disappointing that such opportunities of providing Islanders with such positive news is missed. The Commission is pleased with the response that the media takes in respect of its Community Work projects and additionally tries to provide a more overall picture through publication of an Annual Report which provides a high-level picture of how the year's grant has been distributed and the projects which have been supported.

The Commission is later this year working with 'Jersey One World' on raising the profile of all local Charities operating overseas with its Grand Reunion of all those who have undertaken a JOAC working project since their inception.

The Panel recommends that the Commission's current website should be overhauled as a matter of priority, with a view to increasing community awareness of the Commission and its work.

The Commission accepts this recommendation and has now instructed the creation of a new website which will be going live within the next month.