



Submission by Jersey Side by Side

January 2007

This submission specifically addresses part (b) of the terms of reference, namely:

The JOAC's policies and procedures for the distribution of its grant aid budget.

Jersey may be one of the richest communities in the world, but it is also one of the most generous. The world's response to the Indian Ocean tsunami in December 2004 was extraordinary but Jersey's response still stood out as remarkable. The Jersey Asia Relief Appeal raised more than £2 million, but it was not just the financial generosity which amazed – it was also the sense of community spirit which was engendered and the amount of time and effort people were prepared to commit to helping others.

Jersey Side by Side (JSBS) rose spontaneously out of that appeal and its terms of reference seek to reflect that sense of community, which was so tangible in the aftermath of the worst disaster in modern history. Islanders want to help in times of disaster – that much is clear – but they need to be given the opportunities and channels to do so, and they need to have the confidence that their money is being well spent and that their time and effort have a real impact on the lives of those less fortunate than themselves.

Due to the media reports which followed the tsunami, people are suspicious about how governments and some NGOs use their money, but JSBS has, we believe, demonstrated that by working with trusted local organisations, we can deliver projects which make a real difference to people's lives and that every donated penny is well spent. JSBS itself has no staff and no costs.

In Sri Lanka, JSBS has funded the building of a vocational training centre in the city of Matara and has helped to fund the rebuilding of partially destroyed homes in the village of Seenigama, where it has also helped financially with the creation of a training centre vital for the long term future of villagers whose livelihoods were destroyed by the tsunami.

In Pakistan, JSBS responded to a request from the British Red Cross by donating £50,000 to fund emergency hygiene packs to help tens of thousands of earthquake victims make it through the harsh winter disease-free. JSBS also plans to fund a long-term project in the same region, working closely with local organisations under the Red Cross umbrella. The reason for this submission is to suggest that this spirit of partnership, of Islanders helping each other to help others, could and should be extended to the use of the States Overseas Aid budget.

JSBS could potentially make taxpayers' money go twice as far if the JOAC entered into joint ventures with it. This would be a departure from current policy, but one that we believe has great potential. This public/private approach could enable Jersey not only to fund important, long-term projects in disaster regions but also enable Islanders to feel that they have real ownership and involvement through JSBS. At present, while a grant to an NGO is undoubtedly beneficial, what part do Islanders feel that they have played in helping to alleviate suffering and making a difference? The cheque is signed and aside from an initial report in the media, that's probably where the connection ends.

By adopting a community approach and by adding Overseas Aid funds to those raised directly by appeal, the togetherness, community spirit and pride that we felt in January 2005 could be a permanent thing.

Finally, in general terms, JSBS would support an increase in the Island's Overseas Aid budget to reflect more accurately the wealth of our community, separate to and above the work being done by ourselves and other organisations in the Island.
