

**WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE MINISTER FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT
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ANSWER TO BE TABLED ON TUESDAY 12th MAY 2020**

Question

“What work is the Jersey Overseas Aid Commission undertaking in response to the international Covid-19 crisis to help communities outside Jersey to cope with, or manage, the pandemic; what level of funding is the Commission providing to support this work and the work of other international agencies; and in what countries is this funding being used in the fight against Covid-19?”

Answer

Covid-19 threatens the whole of humanity, not only with the possibility of sickness and death on a huge scale, but with the crippling of the global economy and the prospect of enormous increases in scarcity, unemployment and poverty. Poor nations – and within them their poorest inhabitants – will suffer the most. Jersey is therefore joining other wealthy countries in stepping up where it can to alleviate suffering and provide life-saving assistance, and is doing so at no additional cost to the public purse. Our response can be divided into three overlapping categories:

1. Repurposing existing programmes to tackle COVID-related crises

Humanitarian programming

Because of the strategic way in which JOA allocates part of its humanitarian funding to responsive and accountable pooled funds, grants worth £1.05m to the UN and the NGO-led Start Network are already being put to use to counteract the effects of the pandemic in the world’s poorest countries. In Syria, for example, JOA’s contribution has been used in the Fund’s first Covid-19 related allocation that has been used to support 31 projects including interventions in health, Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH), and Logistics. Additionally, JOA’s £200,000 contribution for Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh is helping to prepare the world’s largest refugee camp for the outbreak.

Development programming

We are supporting many of our existing longer-term development projects to change the way they operate in order to improve preparedness and resilience to the coronavirus. For example, health-related projects in Sierra Leone, Tanzania and Myanmar have been supported to buy PPE, establish isolation units and educate villagers. Meanwhile together with Comic Relief we are reallocating a portion of our joint Financial Inclusion programme to help ensure the poorest people in Zambia, Rwanda and Sierra Leone can remain solvent by accessing basic financial services.

2. Monitoring the situation

The impact of the virus, and particularly the huge damage to economies, is only just emerging. Of particular concern is the effect on the ability of urban daily wage earners to provide for their families, the destruction of food supply chains for net food importers, and the contraction of already-limited social safety nets. Additionally, conflicts persist and may even be exacerbated by the pandemic. Thousands of Jersey's beneficiaries, for example, in addition to facing infection and poverty, have been bombed while we have been in lockdown. As well as receiving reports from grantees on the ground, Jersey is in close touch with other donors, UN Agencies, the World Bank and the Red Cross movement to monitor needs and assess response options.

3. Making new grants

Since March JOA has been cooperating with Treasury to ensure that Jersey had sufficient cash on hand to fight the coronavirus domestically. It has also been prudent to take time to build up a more detailed picture of the impact of the virus on the world's poorest. Therefore Jersey has not yet made any new grants to help communities outside Jersey to fight the pandemic. However, we are now preparing to do so. JOA will delay the start of two planned dairy projects worth £530,000 to enable us to use these funds for immediate humanitarian needs. In addition to the close monitoring mentioned above, we have requested specific proposals from eight partner agencies, and Commissioners will be meeting in late May to discuss these options.

It should be emphasised that all additional Covid-related projects will be funded from JOA's existing budget envelope. However, during what may well prove to be the greatest humanitarian crisis of our generation, we will be able to tell our children 'Jersey was there'.