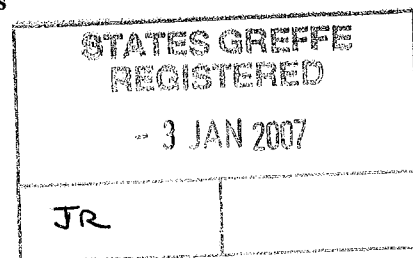


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HELP FROM THE ROCK

A Jersey registered charity helping developing communities

Member of Association of Jersey Charities Reg No 282



Senator Perchard
Scrutiny Office
States Greffe
Morier House
St Helier
JE1 1DD

29-Dec-06

Dear Senator Perchard

Thank you for the opportunity to submit my views on Jersey's Overseas Aid.

In my position as Chairman of a small local charity that is dedicated to supporting small communities in the developing world I know that we have been assisted enormously by the Overseas Aid Commission. Both we and the communities we have been able to help are grateful to the Commission for the help (financial, with equipment and with expertise) that they have provided.

I should also point out that I am a member of the Overseas Aid sub committee on Community Work Projects and have been on four trips as a leader for the Overseas Aid commission. That experience has given me an insight not only to the way the Commission functions but also into the very great need that exists for the help that Jersey can provide.

My comments in respect of points a) and d) would be very similar so I have put them together. There is no doubt that Jersey can afford to be giving out more in Overseas Aid and on moral and humanitarian grounds we should be seeking to increase our current giving. However, I must qualify that by saying that the way in which money is currently given by Jersey is extremely well controlled and very accountable. This, in my opinion, means that Jersey Overseas Aid is in fact high quality aid which goes quickly and effectively to the people that actually need it. This careful control must not under any circumstances be sacrificed merely in order to increase the figures on paper, more money given in the wrong way will achieve less than the current giving. In conclusion on those two points and in order to ensure clarity I would say that Jersey's Overseas Aid budget should be increased slowly and carefully to more accurately reflect the well off society that we undoubtedly are but the way in which our giving takes place should remain as effectively controlled as at present.

In respect of point b) I have had no direct involvement in the distribution of Grant Aid but during my connections with JOAC, and during recent research for lecturing on Jersey Overseas Aid at Highlands College I have gained an insight into the procedures. It would seem to me that the current procedure of giving money to recognized, but not necessarily large, charities for specified projects is a good one. Requiring details including plans and costings for projects before money is given means that we can know how much of the money given actually goes to people in need rather than administration or other costs of the Charity. I believe that a prerequisite of the grant is that following the completion of the project a report is sent to JOAC together with photographs to show the work has actually been carried out. This procedure, it seems to me, is effective to a reasonable degree but I refer you to my comments in the next paragraph.

Measuring effective utilisation of JOAC's Aid Budget. Techniques applied in respect of Grant Aid until now have relied almost exclusively on reports being received back from the recipients of Aid. There is nothing within my knowledge or experience to show that we have been either inadvertently or deliberately misled by any of those reports, but accountability is becoming ever more important.

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There exists no formal method of measuring the effectiveness of Community Work projects and in that respect we rely totally on reports from returning teams who, in turn, often rely on reports back from the community following the completion of the project as it is rarely possible to complete the project during the time the Jersey volunteers are in the community. In a very small number of cases, experience, unfortunately, has shown that the local community have not been able to complete the work or, if it is completed they change the use and/or they are unable to maintain the building. It would be a mistake to be too rigid in trying to enforce conditions on future projects but I wonder if there is some merit in utilising the services of a volunteer to visit the occasional community that has been the recipient of Grant Aid or a community work project. Although the JOAC should not be employing anybody for this work, assisting a volunteer with travel costs, perhaps an extension to a family holiday for example, could be a cost effective way of checking on the usefulness of any Aid given by Jersey. It would not be necessary to visit each project but if all recipient communities were aware that such a visit was possible at some stage after the completion of the project it would well provide the spur necessary sometimes to complete work. It will also, of course, provide JOAC, and through them the Jersey Tax Payers, a better idea of how our money is being used.

Perhaps not within your terms of reference but I would like to raise one other matter. The JOAC's policy is, quite rightly, to assist in projects that provide help in the field of Education or Healthcare. My experiences is that more often than not both areas are sadly lacking in the communities that we assist. It is not possible within the terms of one project, I am thinking of Community Work Projects in particular, to assist in both areas. The current JOAC policy is that each community should only be helped once; it is not clear whether this applies also to Grant Aid applications. While I can understand that it would be wrong for one community to be helped year after year at the expense of other communities, surely there is an argument for us to set up each needy community with basic health care and basic education. I would ask the Commission to look again at this aspect of their policy so that it remains flexible and where necessary a second visit can be made to a community when the need is apparent.

I end by thanking the JOAC for all their support for Help From the Rock and for the opportunity they have given me to work in Africa. My thanks also to the Scrutiny panel for the opportunity to submit my views.

Yours sincerely

