

**WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE OVERSEAS AID COMMITTEE
BY THE DEPUTY OF ST. JOHN**

ANSWER TO BE TABLED ON TUESDAY, 13th SEPTEMBER 2005

Question

“Would the President inform members whether the Committee has made a grant to the Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust and, if so, would she explain the rationale for this and how this aligns with the use of funds for humanitarian aid.”

Answer

“Yes, in 2005 the Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust successfully applied to the Jersey Overseas Aid Committee for two grants for projects located in Madagascar.

The Jersey Overseas Aid Committee’s strategy is driven by a clear mission. It is committed to joining with others in reducing poverty in poorer countries by making a sustained contribution, which is proportional to Jersey’s means, by continuing to contribute to basic health care, medical care, effective education, safe drinking water and food security, projects to assist self sufficiency, emergency and humanitarian needs and working towards the elimination of child labour and abuse. The Jersey Overseas Aid Committee pursues this by working closely with the private and voluntary sectors, ensuring the consistency of policies affecting poorer countries, encouraging and supporting recognised local bodies engaged in overseas aid and by using resources efficiently and effectively.

The first proposal from the Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust was for the implementation of rural development in Baly Bay. The funding request was £24,600. The Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust has been working in Baly Bay since the late 1980’s to support the conservation of the endangered ploughshare tortoise only found in this area of Madagascar, where 80% of the population live in small isolated villages. There is a lack of access to basic healthcare and clean water, school infrastructure is very limited and around 80 per cent of the population is illiterate. Rural livelihoods are based on subsistence agriculture and small scale fishing using traditional techniques. The people rely greatly on surrounding natural resources, for example wood for cooking and construction, medicinal plants and tubers.

The Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust sought funding from the Jersey Overseas Aid Committee to provide training and support to eleven community associations to manage their resources sustainably and implement their own development projects. Resource management was to be undertaken in collaboration with the national park authority and included firebreaks, planting of trees, defining and harvesting implementation levels of wood and raffia. Community development projects were to include the rehabilitation of five schools, the provision of five wells, the training and associate expenses on literacy and basic healthcare and hygiene for five community centres, solar powered cold storage facilities to improve conservation of fish and improve revenues to fishermen and the provision of vegetable and fruit gardens and training for five community centres.

It was anticipated that the proposed activities would reinforce sustainable resource management and conservation of natural habitats that would help ensure the long-term protection and sustainability of Baly Bay National Park and the endangered biodiversity within it. This would help ensure continued provision of valuable natural resources to the rural people of Baly Bay (3,000 people) and bring future development potential, for example from eco-tourism. Working with the community associations would also strengthen their capacity to develop and manage their own development projects, in particular direct contributions will be made to effective primary (500 children) and adult literacy (250 people) education, safe drinking water (1,200 people), basic healthcare and hygiene (500 people trained) and self sufficiency (250 women to manage vegetable and fruit gardens for improved nutrition and for sale to increase household income; 100 households to improve income by selling better preserved fish).

This project was approved on the basis that it provided basic health care, effective education, safe drinking water

and food security and the assistance towards self sufficiency.

The second proposal from the Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust was for school rehabilitation, safe drinking water and sustainable natural resource management in the Alaotra region in central eastern Madagascar. The funding request was £25,100. Alaotra is the most important rice production zone in Madagascar, has one of the most important inland fisheries and is also an important refuge for water birds and the Alaotra gentle lemur, only found in this area. Lake Alaotra is the largest lake in Madagascar and with the surrounding marshes and rice fields constitutes a wetland area of 1,000km² and sustains around 500,000 people many of whom rely directly on natural resources such as fish and marsh products for construction, cooking fuels and handicrafts. Most villages have schools but they are in disrepair and inadequate for the large numbers of children. Lack of clean drinking water causes basic health problems. Wetlands are threatened by over-fishing, siltation from erosion, invasive exotic plants and marsh degradation from burning and cutting. Fewer, smaller fish are being caught and rice production has fallen. The Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust has been working with the communities there since 1996 and the Jersey Overseas Aid Committee was asked to provide training and support to seven community associations to continue with their programmes to manage their resources sustainably and to implement their own development projects.

Resource management activities would be undertaken in collaboration with the Water and Forests and Fisheries Services and would include marsh restoration, clearance of invasive plants, implementation of the fishing convention and management plans (limit mesh sizes, respect a closed season and to stop burning marshes). Community based projects included the rehabilitation of five schools, improved access to safe drinking water including wells and a distribution system to pipe water from clean sources.

It is anticipated that this project will reinforce sustainable management and conservation of natural habitats that will help ensure the long-term sustainability of Alaotra wetland and protection of the biodiversity within it. This will help ensure continued provision of valuable natural resources to people in at least the seven target villages (27,000 people). Working with the community associations and commune federations will strengthen their capacity to develop and manage their own development projects in particular direct contributions will be made to effective primary education (2,000) children and safe drinking water (10,000) people.

This project was approved on the basis that it provided basic health care, effective education, safe drinking water and food security and the assistance towards self sufficiency.”