



3RD January 2007

Dear Senator Perchard,

The Scrutiny Panel have asked for submissions from members of the public concerned with Jersey's Overseas Aid commitments.

I am writing to ask that the Overseas Aid budget is increased to the agreed figure of 0.7% of Jersey's income within the next five years.

Having recently returned from a project in Kenya, part-sponsored by JOAC, I have seen the life-changing difference JOAC grants make to small communities around the world. The community I visited suffered from no near supply of adequate drinking water and chronic health problems. Subsistence farming gives little or no income for educating children and the community is heavily dependent on predictable climate patterns for their agriculture.

I think the key issue, though, is that 15 years ago Jersey signed up to an international agreement to commit 0.7% of income to aiding poorer communities and it is currently falling very short of this. Other jurisdictions, within and outside Europe, have already succeeded in meeting this target. If Jersey wants to be recognized as a player of standing internationally (see, for example, the large section of the Chief Minister's Strategy addressing this very target), then it has an opportunity now to show that it recognizes its responsibilities to the global community.

There are often objections raised that the States' budget is already overstretched, and that any increase in spending needs to be targeted at the needy in Jersey.

The first objection overlooks the very low taxation that individuals enjoy in Jersey. At around 20%, we are near the bottom of the table of tax payers in the developed world. To meet the target of 0.7% we may increase this figure to 21%. We pay very little tax and should be proud of an appropriate rise to meet our obligations.

The second objection is that "charity begins at home". We do have needy sectors within our community and State's departments work hard to meet their needs on a tight budget. However, we must not close our eyes to what is going on elsewhere in the world. There are considerable benefits for developing nations from seeing less developed countries progress out of poverty. An increase in our Aid is not only a moral imperative but is also of economic benefit (see the JOAC Review 1998).

Evidence from Live8 events last year suggests a large groundswell of public support in Jersey for an increase towards 0.7%. I am convinced that we have an opportunity now to bring about long-term improvements in the lives of thousands trapped in poverty, but to do so we must meet the Agenda 21 commitment made at Rio in 1992 by Jersey of achieving the 0.7% target in the short term.

Yours sincerely,

Simon Lewis