



Economic and International Affairs Scrutiny Panel

Quarterly Hearing

Witness: The Minister for International Development

Thursday, 25th April 2024

Panel:

Deputy M. Tadier of St. Brelade (Chair)

Deputy G.P. Southern of St. Helier Central (Vice-Chair)

Deputy M.B. Andrews of St. Helier North

Deputy K.M. Wilson of St. Clement

Witnesses:

Deputy C.F. Labey of Grouville and St. Martin, The Minister for International Development

Ms. G. Challinor, Senior Programme Officer, Jersey Overseas Aid

[14:32]

Deputy M. Tadier of St. Brelade (Chair):

Welcome to our first quarterly hearing with you, Minister. We are pleased to have you here. Just before we start, I have to draw everybody's attention to the following. The hearing is being recorded and live-streamed. It has been known that some people watch these proceedings either live or subsequently, so we welcome those. Then there will be a transcript, of course, published on to the States website, and we would just ask that all electronic devices be switched off. I do not see any members of the public here present, so I do not really need to speak to them. For the purposes of the recording, if you could just speak obviously clearly. What we are going to do first is just state

our names. I am Deputy Montfort Tadier, I am the chair of the Economic and International Affairs Scrutiny Panel.

Deputy G.P. Southern of St. Helier Central (Vice-Chair):

Geoff Southern, vice-chair.

Deputy M.B. Andrews of St. Helier North:

I am Deputy Max Andrews.

Deputy K.M. Wilson of St. Clement:

Deputy Karen Wilson.

The Minister for International Development:

Deputy Carolyn Labey, Minister for International Development and chair of Jersey Overseas Aid.

Senior Programme Officer, Jersey Overseas Aid:

Gillian Challinor, senior programme officer at Jersey Overseas Aid.

Deputy M. Tadier:

We have some officers who are accompanying us from the panel as well.

The Minister for International Development:

Yes, and I have got Freya as well.

Deputy M. Tadier:

We have Alex and Peter in the background but they will stay in the background and keep us on the straight and narrow, I think, and you have other support here, so thank you. We will start with the hearing. First of all, welcome. We are pleased to have you and we have got some questions for you, as you would expect. So if you excuse me, mine are on my laptop so that is why I will be looking here. We wanted to ask you: following the changes that have taken place in the Council of Ministers more widely, has there been any impact on your job in that respect?

The Minister for International Development:

No, not on my job specifically. I lost Steve Ahier as a vice-chair. He is still a commissioner but because he was no longer in the Executive post-vote of no confidence, I could not have him as a vice-chair.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Okay. Did you want another Assistant Minister or were you told that there were none available?

The Minister for International Development:

To be perfectly honest, it does not really make a huge lot of difference because we work as a commission; 3 States Members, 3 non-States Members. So, the only time I would need - sorry, it is an Assistant Minister, I said vice-chair before. I meant Assistant Minister – is if I need some representation if I am unable to attend. For example, the Youth Assembly, as we have recently, so normally Deputy Ahier would have stood in for me as Assistant Minister but this time the Chief Minister had to stand in for me. It does not really make a lot of difference.

Deputy M. Tadier:

That is fine. The next question, I suppose, that partly arises out of that for us just, so we can get it clear in our minds. So obviously previous to 2014 the role was not a Ministerial one, it was a commissioner, and you were the chair of the Jersey Overseas Aid, were you not, so there have always been commissioners and you were previously the chair?

The Minister for International Development:

Yes

Deputy M. Tadier:

And then you became a Minister.

The Minister for International Development:

In 2018.

Deputy M. Tadier:

In 2018, that is right. So could you give us a summary of how the role differs or if there is any difference or what the benefits possibly are of having a Ministerial role versus what was previously a chair?

The Minister for International Development:

Yes. I think internationally, for people looking in at us, to have a position as Minister for International Development, demonstrates that we take our international development obligations seriously. Also if we are dealing with other countries, it is so much better if I can liaise with fellow Ministers directly. It is better to do it. It makes our job much easier to do, dealing with fellow Ministers. For example, signing the M.O.U. (Memorandum of Understanding) with Zambia I was able to liaise with the Minister for Agriculture there, whereas if I am coming from a position of chair of J.O.A. (Jersey Overseas Aid), it certainly does not have the same impact. But also we like to feel we are open and

transparent. and obviously we are accountable to the taxpayer. So, it makes the position far more accountable. I am here now before Scrutiny, I might not have necessarily done that. I have questions without notice in the States. I think it makes the job higher profile and more accountable to the public. It is also very handy that when the Council of Ministers are discussing the Government Plan and budgets that I can keep a weather eye on our budget. So it has made a difference.

Deputy M. Tadier:

That makes sense. Can I just ask, just to get it clear in my head then? Previously, there was a chair and how many commissioners would there have been?

The Minister for International Development:

There are 6, including the chair. So it is the same.

Deputy M. Tadier:

But one commissioner will be a States Member?

The Minister for International Development:

No, 3 commissioners are States Members and 3 are non-States Members.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Can you remind us who the other commissioners are?

The Minister for International Development:

So it is Deputy Steve Ahier and the Constable of Trinity.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Okay, and then yourself. So you are still a commissioner?

The Minister for International Development:

Yes.

Deputy M. Tadier:

And the Minister, but it is possible to have commissioners who are not necessarily Ministers?

The Minister for International Development:

Yes.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Yes, that is fine. We can call it a hybrid system, I suppose, in the sense that you have got ...

The Minister for International Development:

Hybrid from ...?

Deputy M. Tadier:

There is Ministerial responsibility but the Overseas Aid itself is comprised of non-Ministerial and Ministerial representation from the States?

The Minister for International Development:

Yes. Certainly when we are making decisions about our projects and our strategic direction, that has to be taken as a commission, and we need 4 as a deciding vote.

Deputy M. Tadier:

So some of your responsibilities have been designated to you, if I understand it correctly, by the Minister for External Relations, is that correct?

The Minister for International Development:

So that is a completely separate role.

Deputy M. Tadier:

That is not ... okay.

The Minister for International Development:

No, I keep aid and trade, as I like to refer to them, completely separate. The Assistant Minister for External Relations, as I was appointed, post-vote of no confidence, was purely to find a home, for want of a better description, for the Island identity work. So a lot of the outward facing work that we are doing for the Island identity can be done from External Relations and the soft diplomacy.

Deputy M. Tadier:

What delegated responsibility have you received from External Relations for your role?

The Minister for International Development:

If you have a look at the States document, I think it is the law that delegated the functions. The States of Jersey Law 2005, Article 30A lists the delegated functions. They have recently been published. So for External Relations, the particular items are itemised here. I can read them if you want me to.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Yes, if you can summarise maybe some of the key ones.

The Minister for International Development:

It is enhancing the engagement of the Jersey diaspora community; engagement with the honorary consuls in Jersey; engagement with European communities in Jersey and in their home nations; relations with New Jersey, cultural and educational diplomacy; collaboration with external focus non-for-profit organisations that are based in Jersey; and facilitating twinning and co-operation agreements. That is broadly it.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Thank you. That is fine. A lot of that is locally based as well as some of it is what we can call cultural diplomacy. A lot of that is external as well.

The Minister for International Development:

Cultural diplomacy, outward looking, yes.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Okay, that is fine. Gillian, it is not a planned question, but can you just give us a brief summary of your role?

Senior Programme Officer, Jersey Overseas Aid:

My role at Jersey Overseas Aid is senior programme officer. Mostly I am involved with looking after our financial inclusion portfolio, which is our international development grants side of things. But I also look after our local charities that do overseas work, which is another area of our budget. We are quite a small team. There are 9 of us, so we tend to get involved in a number of different areas. Sometimes I will be doing communications work as well, but the main aspect of my work is around international development grants financial inclusion.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Thank you. That is great. Minister, the Common Strategic Policy has been lodged now for debate. Could you outline how your Ministry will be working to support the priorities proposed?

The Minister for International Development:

I think my Ministry comes under business as usual. So there were certain elements highlighted to focus on, in the 2 years that this Government have left, of which my work was not specifically mentioned, nor were many others, because as I say, it is very focused on what is achievable in 2 years. So my area of responsibility comes under business as usual, as I say Which obviously

includes the Island identity work and in the previous 2023-2026 plan it is said to continue and support the work of Jersey Overseas Aid.

Deputy M. Tadier:

I take your point is that if something is not mentioned in the C.S.P. (Common Strategic Policy) it does not necessarily mean it is not happening. It could just be in your ...

The Minister for International Development:

No, absolutely not.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Something I did notice, which might be of interest to you, for example, is that I do not think ... arts was not mentioned in the C.S.P. and culture was only mentioned as part of agriculture when you do a search for it. Are you reassured that those areas, insofar as it impinges on your portfolio to do with Island identity, that they have not been forgotten, that they are still in Government's mindset?

The Minister for International Development:

Yes. Absolutely.

[14:45]

I think it does mention the word "international" a couple of times but no, it comes under business as usual.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Okay, thank you. I will ask one final question for the time being before handing over to Deputy Andrews. In the Ministerial Plan for 2024 to 2027, you have identified a priority to further develop the dairy programmes in Africa, and beginning new projects in Rwanda, Malawi and Zambia to build successful programmes. Could you give us an outline about what these entail and how they will progress?

The Minister for International Development:

Yes. We now have 7 projects currently in our focus countries. Not all the focus countries; we do not do dairy in Sierra Leone, for example. But we are progressing, with the support to the tune of £9.1 million worth of projects there. So, I signed an M.O.U. with the Minister for Zambia a couple of years ago, and the project was actually launched last year. We continue with our projects in partnership with the R.J.A. and H.S. (Royal Jersey Agricultural and Horticultural Society) and other

organisations, other N.G.O.s (non-governmental organisations). We are extending our work in Malawi and Ethiopia, as well as Rwanda.

Deputy M. Tadier:

That is seen as aid, right? So Jersey cows are effectively gifted to these countries or is there a trade element as well?

The Minister for International Development:

No. The cows are not. We have an A.I. (artificial insemination) programme, not wishing to get too technical around the table. But we have A.I. programmes and when a calf is born we hand ... this is how it started out. We handed to usually a single-headed household and when their cow gives birth they will hand it over. That concept has been extended, so instead of improving the lives of single-headed households, it is now improving villages, regions, and is hugely impactful and successful. We now train lots of A.I. technicians and offer support ...

Deputy M. Tadier:

I have just realised what A.I. stands for. We are not talking about artificial intelligence, are we?

The Minister for International Development:

Yes, it is not what everyone else thinks. No, sorry, I should have explained that.

Deputy M. Tadier:

The mind is slightly slow but we got there in the end. But ultimately, the cows would have come from Jersey at some point, right?

The Minister for International Development:

The straws, which are full of semen, are transported down there and then we have A.I. technicians that are taught how to inseminate the cows.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Thank you.

Deputy M.B. Andrews:

Minister, thank you very much for coming before the panel today. I just wanted to ask you a question about corporate social responsibility and whether you have any involvement with some of the firms who are providing who are providing any assistance to overseas countries?

The Minister for International Development:

I am trying to think. We offer many opportunities, I think. I do not know if it would be technically regarded as corporate social responsibility. But, for example, with our community work projects people can volunteer to go down. We have just had a group back from Nepal and they have just built a school down there. How they use that on their C.V.s (curriculum vitae) is up to them. But we are also now looking at specific skills and we are sending, for example this year, 2 groups of teachers down to Rwanda in the school holidays. So I guess that, for all intents and purposes, could be regarded as corporate social responsibility. But it is not yet like an HSBC, go off and do something, but it could become like that. We would like to extend the skill base volunteering programme to include, for example, medics and accountants. But, at the moment, I guess it is more on an individual basis rather than corporate.

Deputy M.B. Andrews:

Okay. As you have just mentioned about the working group who travelled overseas and provided assistance, do you think there is any approach that you would maybe take differently in future to try and expand the scope of what you are doing and also to try and ensure that Islanders are informed about what you are intending to do as well?

The Minister for International Development:

We would like to think they are informed. We highlight our community work projects and opportunities for Islanders on our website. Every year we have a launch of the following year's community work projects. I was in a school yesterday highlighting the opportunities like the internship programme, the Trident programmes, and obviously when they are a bit more qualified we have got opportunities with the U.N. (United Nations); 2-year placements with the U.N. Plus we have got outreach. We go into schools and teach or participate in these S.T.E.M. (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) subjects. That does not mean an awful lot to me and I think the acronym has just changed, has just expanded to include culture. So I do not know what the acronym is now. I would like to think that we do try and reach out to the public to highlight the opportunities available.

Deputy M.B. Andrews:

I note in terms of the Ministerial priorities for 2023, the budget allocation as a percentage of G.V.A. (gross value added) was 0.28 per cent, and that is just slightly below the O.E.C.D. (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) average. I was wondering, do you think there is maybe an opportunity if the Government can offer to fund some of the initiatives, that maybe you could expand the scope of what you are doing and try and engage some of the firms in Jersey to enhance the corporate sector responsibility but overseas, in terms of projects that could be facilitated that way?

The Minister for International Development:

I guess you are thinking of engage with a firm and send a cohort of those members overseas; is that the kind of thing?

Deputy M.B. Andrews:

Or people perhaps if they were to be responsible for a project but it would be with yourself, who would potentially be assisting them, and it would again be supporting what you are trying to do already within your budget but also using some private investment as well/

The Minister for International Development:

We can certainly facilitate and advise, match fund things if they align with our objectives. But I would just say that any funding that we receive is not technically counted as the Government's aid.

Deputy M.B. Andrews:

No.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Sorry, can I jump in?

Deputy M.B. Andrews:

Absolutely, yes.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Just on the figures that we got, 0.28 per cent, there used to be a figure that was used of 0.7 per cent as an aspiration benchmark; what has happened to that?

The Minister for International Development:

No, that is still an aspiration benchmark.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Still there. What is the 0.7 per cent represent. Is that an E.U. benchmark?

Senior Programme Officer, Jersey Overseas Aid:

It is the U.N. target. But the average at the moment is 0.36 per cent.

The Minister for International Development:

It has gone up, so we have slipped down a bit. But we are trying to get to the O.E.C.D. average. That is our aim. A few of the Scandinavian countries reach the target and more than.

Deputy M.B. Andrews:

Obviously there is quite a lot of important work that you are involved with, especially when we are speaking about millions of pounds of funds. I just wanted to know how you are deepening links with, say, the World Bank or financial regulators and supervisors in the work that you are doing?

The Minister for International Development:

How we are what, sorry?

Deputy M.B. Andrews:

So how are you enhancing your relationship with, say, the World Bank, regulators and supervisors in terms of the work that you are doing?

The Minister for International Development:

We do an awful lot of work with corporate players in the field, like the U.N., like the Toronto Centre, who actually train the regulators. We sit on various steering committees. We sit on the North Syrian Steering Committee Fund. Gillian, might want to speak about this because that is more her area.

Senior Programme Officer, Jersey Overseas Aid:

I think quite a huge part of our financial inclusion work is to not only work with financial service providers overseas and M.F.I.s (monetary financial institutions) and the like, but also try and strengthen regulation and make it more inclusive. To do that we do capacity building, training projects through organisations like U.N.C.D.F (United Nations Capital Development Fund) and the Toronto Centre in all of our target countries. I just also wanted to mention, and it goes back to your C.S.R. (corporate social responsibility) point as well, that we are trying to engage much more with the financial services sector in Jersey, particularly in the area of sustainable finance. So we have sat on a number of round tables and we are introducing, as Carolyn mentioned, the A.F.I.D. (Accounting for International Development) partnership this year, when we send 2 Jersey accountants to work on particular projects and do some capacity building and training and exchange of knowledge overseas.

Deputy M.B. Andrews:

Thank you so very much. The panel notes that there is an ongoing consultation regarding sustainable finance. I just really wanted to know, Minister, what was your role in that consultation or is it something that you have maybe not so far contributed to but you will do at some point?

The Minister for International Development:

I do not think ...

Senior Programme Officer, Jersey Overseas Aid:

The open consultation we are going to contribute to. At the moment, I am going to be doing that with our executive director but I am aware that the deadline is Friday. Yes, we do intend to contribute.

Deputy M.B. Andrews:

Thank you very much. Minister, just last question for me in terms of your position as Minister for International Development: do you feel that you have been given the opportunity, as was stated in the Ministerial Plan, to try and co-ordinate an approach to ensure that Jersey is more conspicuous internationally so people are aware of the work that you are doing?

The Minister for International Development:

Yes. I think it is fantastic that overseas we can be known for ... because obviously we have a reputation for being an international finance centre but I think in Africa now, if you mention Jersey, people would think of the Jersey cow and the dairy programmes, or in Sierra Leone and Madagascar the Conservation Livelihood programme. From an outward facing perspective, I think it is good to demonstrate that we are diverse in our offering.

Deputy M.B. Andrews:

Thank you, Minister.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Moving on to Deputy Wilson.

Deputy K.M. Wilson:

Minister, the panel notes that the 2024 programme of overseas volunteering opportunities to Malawi, Kenya, Rwanda and Nepal, can you update us on the work of the projects being undertaken? We also know that there are a record number of applications in 2023; have you received the same number of applications for the 2024 programme?

The Minister for International Development:

We are engaged at the moment with the volunteers where we received a record number. We normally launch the projects in September/October time for the following year, to give people the opportunity to book their time off work and their own diaries. As I alluded to before, for this year we have just had a cohort just return from Nepal, and they have been working with the Gurkha welfare Trust over there to build a school.

[15:00]

When they are building a school, we do not like to send over a group of volunteers who put local craftsmen out of a job. Our volunteers, unless they have got a specific skill in carpentry or block laying, act as the labourers for the projects of that kind. In May, we have got a group of teachers going out with Hands Around the World to share experience of how English is taught in the classroom. They will be learning from one another. The idea is not to go there and impose our teaching. It is to learn. It is a 2-way street. In June we have got a group going to Kenya to build sand dams. In July we have got a group going out with Habitat for Humanity. They are going to Malawi. Again, in August, in the school holidays here, we have got another group of teachers going out with Hands Around the World to Rwanda. Then in the autumn, we will be launching for 2025.

Deputy K.M. Wilson:

How many people have you had come through these schemes?

The Minister for International Development:

We had 103 applying last year and we were able to send 58.

Deputy K.M. Wilson:

The panel understands that the interviews with all of the applicants take place with yourself, is that the case?

The Minister for International Development:

No, it is not. So, if you like, I can act as an appeal if it came to that. It is usually a combination of a couple of staff members. There is an interview process. Obviously we do all the D.B.S (Disclosure and Barring Service) checks and get references.

Deputy K.M. Wilson:

How does the interview process work then? Do you have a panel or do you do ... people apply for a particular scheme or do you allocate people to a particular programme of work?

The Minister for International Development:

They will, in their application form, put down their first and second choice. They will fill out the application, they will come for an interview, usually with a couple of senior staff members.

Senior Programme Officer, Jersey Overseas Aid:

This year there were 140 applicants and we interviewed all of them, but we do it through an online system because it would be very difficult to interview in person 140. It is a very short interview, 15

minutes, but we also have their application form as well and the references and D.B.S. checks, as the Minister says.

The Minister for International Development:

Yes, so 140. It was 103 the year before.

Deputy K.M. Wilson:

Do you get the same kind of people volunteering or do you get it refreshed every year? Are you able to attract new interest in the programmes?

The Minister for International Development:

Yes. It has been encouraging because we are getting younger people apply, which is always good. There are a couple of bursaries that are offered because we ask everyone to pay. It is usually £500, which is their contribution; obviously we contribute a lot more towards that and the inoculations and all the rest of it needed.

Deputy K.M. Wilson:

So this must take up quite a bit of officer time. How is that demand around the recruitment managed in the context of a lot of the other work that you are doing?

Senior Programme Officer, Jersey Overseas Aid:

It is led by our operations officer and we try and just streamline the processes as much as we can. For example, with the online interviews, we set that up through the exchange system, Office 365, so that they can just automatically choose a slot and we are not managing everyone's timetables, if that makes sense. It is quite labour intensive when you are getting the groups ready to go, but the groups also have their own leader. So there will be one person, one of the volunteers, who is in charge of leading that group and who does a lot of the logistics management and meeting up with the groups, making sure that they are catching up with each other and getting to know each other before the trip. So that can be outsourced to the volunteering group; they are self-managing quite a lot of it.

Deputy K.M. Wilson:

Okay. Thank you. Thank you so much. The panel also understands that Jersey Overseas Aid is also developing further online volunteering opportunities in accountancy and health. I believe you were hoping to launch this in spring; has the launch happened? Where are you up to with it, what kind of interest have you got on that basis, and where again were you offering those opportunities?

The Minister for International Development:

We have been offering the accountancy opportunities and we have got a couple of people signed up to that now. We have not done a big launch because this is a new departure for us. It is a question of seeing how it goes, and we are learning from the process as well before we advertise it more widely.

Senior Programme Officer, Jersey Overseas Aid:

Yes, we have just gone straight to the accountancy firms to promote it and been working quite closely with one or 2 of them who are very interested from the C.S.R. perspective in promoting it and trying to make sure that their own ... so they can support the volunteers through additional annual leave, for example. But we have not done a big public launch for the accountancy because we were not sure if we were just going to be inundated. We have 2 positions this year and this is a pilot, so I think after this year's pilot I hope we can launch it more publicly.

Deputy K.M. Wilson:

Okay, and for health?

The Minister for International Development:

Yes, the thinking behind that is to do online consultations and we are still in negotiation with the Health Department about that.

Deputy K.M. Wilson:

Will we hear more about that?

The Minister for International Development:

Yes, I think so. This has been a departure for us, this whole sending skilled volunteers or doing stuff with skilled workers here. So yes, as soon as we get that off the ground it is something we would like to do.

Deputy K.M. Wilson:

Okay. Have you got a time scale in mind for that at all?

The Minister for International Development:

No, not at the moment.

Deputy K.M. Wilson:

Okay. Can you just talk to us a little bit about how the projects are selected? How do you identify what is needed?

The Minister for International Development:

The sustainable development projects for the grants?

Deputy K.M. Wilson:

Yes.

The Minister for International Development:

Okay. That is 75 ... no, it is about 50 per cent of our projects, sorry, but we do use some local charities as well, so it is a bit more. Our sustainable development grants are the bulk of our projects, as I have just said. We have chosen to focus on 6 particular countries and they are chosen ... we take the Corruption Perceptions Index divided by the Humanitarian Development Index squared. We then pick the Anglophile countries and then we follow ...

Deputy M. Tadier:

Anglophile or Anglophone or both?

The Minister for International Development:

Sorry?

Deputy M. Tadier:

Anglophile or Anglophone.

The Minister for International Development:

Sorry.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Well hopefully they will be both, but...

The Minister for International Development:

Yes. Sorry. Then we have got 3 focused areas for our sustainable development, rather than a scattergun approach of doing everything to everyone. We have got dairy, financial inclusion and conservation livelihoods, so if those particular countries lend themselves to those projects then they are favoured. As I say, we have our 6 target countries; obviously if they come up the Humanitarian Development Index then they might be considered too prosperous or ... so we will choose others. So that is our focus area and then we put out to the N.G.O.s that we deal with. They go through huge amounts of due diligence to get on our books to be considered as our partner agencies. We put out expressions of interest in our 3 themes in our 6 target countries to come up with projects and they are gone through initially and then if commissioners are interested in ... if they look favourable,

we will ask them for a very, very detailed application. Then the professional staff go through those applications with a fine-tooth comb and they will go and visit the partners, the projects and then they come back with this wonderful document, which commissioners then go through. These make recommendations or not about the projects.

Deputy K.M. Wilson:

It seems as though there is evidence that the same organisations or the same N.G.O.s are involved in this. How do you broaden the scope of interested parties to become involved in that work? Is it entirely reliant on the matrix you have just described?

The Minister for International Development:

No, the matrix is for the countries, but the agencies that we deal with - or the charities, the N.G.O.s - are chosen because they either work in the country, because their due diligence is up there. They are not necessarily all the large N.G.O.s; some of them are smaller. But like I say, they will go through a rigorous due diligence process.

Deputy K.M. Wilson:

Sure, okay. Do you envisage that local charities or community leaders could be involved in some of that development? Is it always the case that you go through the N.G.O.s for this?

The Minister for International Development:

Some of them are charities; some of them are local institutions like the R.J.A. and H.S. We have partnered with them with some of the dairy programmes. So, they are very, very varied; they are not just the big ones.

Deputy K.M. Wilson:

Okay.

Senior Programme Officer, Jersey Overseas Aid:

Just to add, Deputy, that although we have a closed list of partners, new partners are eligible to apply to us. They have to meet certain criteria and then around about June-time the team will present to commissioners those partners who have applied to come on our list of partners to apply for international development grants. The commissioners will approve, sometimes - I think last year another 5 organisations joined our list - if they meet our criteria.

Deputy K.M. Wilson:

Yes. So you are broadening your base, really.

Senior Programme Officer, Jersey Overseas Aid:

Yes.

Deputy K.M. Wilson:

Okay. It can be noted that 2 of the community work projects are taking place with organisations that receive grants from the Jersey Overseas Aid charity in Jersey. In particular the reference: "The panel notes it is Hands Around the World and the Gurkha Welfare Trust." Can you please outline if it is advantageous for the project to take place through local charities receiving grants from Jersey Overseas Aid?

The Minister for International Development:

Well, some of the grants are for other things, like Hands Around the World go out there and they take their own group of volunteers and do their own work. The Gurkha Welfare Trust, we have funded in the past for other projects and they would be judged on those projects completely and utterly. But we feel it is quite good, especially when we are sending our local volunteers, to know the charity that we are dealing with. I mean the Gurkha Welfare Trust; the Gurkhas, are fantastic for knowing Nepal, knowing areas and ensuring that the project works well and the materials are there when the volunteers turn up or when they are going over. To know the charities I see as advantageous, and I do not see it as a conflict, the fact that they might be getting funding that they would have applied totally independently for a grant on something else.

[15:15]

Deputy K.M. Wilson:

I suppose the question is whether or not, having given it to local charities, that that investment is actually felt in the area where you wanted it to be most impactful, or whether or not it is there to benefit the work of the charity in the way they want to determine the work that they are doing. Do you see what I am saying? There are 2 different aspects to it. There are your priorities in terms of what you want delivering and then there is the work of the charity themselves about what they want doing. Your allocation or your granting of support for them, how do they determine ... is there an alignment with yourself as to how they will exercise their duties around the use of that money?

The Minister for International Development:

Like I explained about using the Gurkhas for Nepal, I do not think we could trust our volunteers to be with a better organisation in Nepal because they know the area. Ditto for Hands Around the World in Rwanda, in a particular area, Bugarama. They know that, they understand it, and so we can feel that our volunteers are safe, if you like. Because there is always a risk in sending a group of volunteers away. So I think to know the organisation is a good thing. The fact that they might

apply for grants doing something else, pursuing their own work without our volunteers, then that will be judged on its merits.

Senior Programme Officer, Jersey Overseas Aid:

In the case of Hands Around the World, the grants that we have open with them at the moment is for construction of classrooms and girls' hygiene rooms and expansion of a number of schools that they have been working in for over a decade. Those projects will be employing local staff; they are nothing to do with the volunteering whatsoever. The volunteering side, Hands Around the World already runs volunteering separate to Jersey Overseas Aid, as does Gurkha Welfare Trust. So they are very well versed in managing volunteering projects and managing volunteers. The volunteers for this skills-based volunteering are not going to be interacting with the ongoing project, but in a way it is strengthening the outcomes of that ongoing project, with the added benefit of those volunteers from Jersey coming back to the Island, understanding better that the amazing work of our local charities, who desperately need more support in the Island, and I think that there is a potential benefit of that as well.

Deputy K.M. Wilson:

Okay. Thank you.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Thank you. Geoff, before you jump in, can I just hold those questions for now?

Deputy G.P. Southern:

Yes, sure.

Deputy M. Tadier:

I am mindful of the fact that we probably will not get through all of our questions today, so we may follow up either with written questions to you or in a subsequent hearing.

The Minister for International Development:

Yes, sure.

Deputy M. Tadier:

I am going to go slightly off-piste in the sense that we had not envisaged talking too much about the other portfolio that you have, if you like, to do with cultural identity. But I think that is also an important part of your Ministry. I am mindful of the fact that a lot of the cultural budget, for example, and the cultural manpower, if we can call it that because I think it is manpower is under economic development. Do you have much interaction with the Culture Department, so to speak, in Jersey?

The Minister for International Development:

The Island Identity document - obviously this was a consultation document - we streamlined it with 50 recommendations and, as you quite rightly say, a lot of those the delivery of them sits with other departments. I recently had a meeting with the Minister for Sustainable Economic Development, as I have had in the past, to set out exactly what we have recommended that they pursue. But it is really down to ... I can sit there and explain why we have set it out in the document and encourage them to pursue some of the recommendations, but it is down to them.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Do you think there is any scope in terms of what you do overseas for maybe more inclusion of cultural exchanges? We know that there is an element of cultural diplomacy in what your department does overseas; is there anything that we could bring back to Jersey in terms of the arts and culture offering and building those kinds of partnerships, do you think?

The Minister for International Development:

I am sure there is, like you can have an exchange of artists in residence in various locations ... yes, there are lots of things I would like to see them pursue. My last meeting with the Minister was a month ago.

Deputy M. Tadier:

With the Economic ...

The Minister for International Development:

With the Minister for Sustainable Economic Development, yes.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Okay, good. Thanks for that. We are going to divert back to ... but this may be an area we come back to in the near future. Thank you. Geoff.

The Minister for International Development:

Okay.

Deputy G.P. Southern:

Following on from that, how important is co-operation with your fellow Ministers in order to deliver what you intend to deliver?

The Minister for International Development:

On Island identity?

Deputy G.P. Southern:

Indeed.

The Minister for International Development:

It is vital because, as I say, out of the 50 recommendations a lot - especially with the Minister for Sustainable Economic Development - fall under his remit and specifically culture. So I have had meetings, post the new Government forming, with the new Ministers again. I keep on speaking to the Ministers and setting out the recommendations, but it is down to them to allocate the budget and the resources and the manpower to pursue.

Deputy G.P. Southern:

Do you find that somewhat frustrating, because you do not have that much control over your budget?

The Minister for International Development:

Yes, I do.

Deputy G.P. Southern:

Hopefully we can pass the message on.

The Minister for International Development:

Yes, hopefully.

Deputy G.P. Southern:

Right, back to where we were, I think, or where we were going. Your 2023 Ministerial Plan, page 51, identifies continued aid to Ukraine. Can you update us with what is planned for 2024 and what learnings you have got from co-operation, or failure to, in Ukraine?

The Minister for International Development:

Right. Well, we plan to continue to support Ukraine with the emergency budget because it is obviously still an ongoing emergency. So far this year we have allocated nearly £400,000 to projects in the Ukraine, one with Crown agents for the rehabilitation equipment in Mykolaiv, in the hospital there, and with British Red Cross and other healthcare provision in Mykolaiv. We look to continue our support where we can. Obviously Jersey has contributed a considerable amount given the population; I think it is the most per capita out of the donations received. We have given £3.9 million, but that is not all Jersey Overseas Aid money because, as you are probably aware, there was a Bailiff's Appeal. So there was funding put in from the public of Jersey as well directly.

Deputy G.P. Southern:

Okay, thank you. During the States sitting of 7th November, you indicated that you had been in discussion with the Minister for External Relations in producing a unity statement regarding the conflict in Gaza. Can you confirm that this was referring to the unity statement issued on 1st November 2023 or a different one? If it is a different one, can you update us on what the content was?

The Minister for International Development:

The unity statement was signed by the previous Chief Minister and the leaders of the faith over here.

Deputy G.P. Southern:

Okay, yes, I see it clearer now.

The Minister for International Development:

Yes. There has not been another unity ...

Deputy G.P. Southern:

It is not separate issue ...

The Minister for International Development:

No.

Deputy G.P. Southern:

... that was part of it. Okay. Here is a nice one. What relationship do the Island's international assistance efforts have with those of the United Kingdom or the European Union? Basically, how much co-operation do you do between yourselves and our nearest equivalents?

The Minister for International Development:

With international development specifically? Is that what you are talking about?

Deputy G.P. Southern:

Yes.

Deputy M. Tadier:

That is right; to do with overseas aid and international development.

The Minister for International Development:

We will sit on panels with them, we will work with them, we have been doing some ... we are involved with the Start Network which is a small organisation but it receives pooled funding. So we sit on the steering committee of that organisation with various other jurisdictions. We sit on the U.N.O.C.H.A. (United Nations Office for the Co-ordination of Humanitarian Affairs) pooled funding ... I forget what all these panels are called.

Senior Programme Officer, Jersey Overseas Aid:

The Pooled Fund Working Group, U.N.O.C.H.A.

The Minister for International Development:

That is it.

Senior Programme Officer, Jersey Overseas Aid:

We are also a member of the Council of Governors for C.G.A.P. (Consultative Group to Assist the Poor), which is an arm of the World Bank which is involved with financial inclusion. There are 30 other country members and although our overseas development assistance is entirely separate to that of the U.K.F.C.D.O. (United Kingdom Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office), through these groups we interact quite a lot with F.C.D.O. and other government donors.

Deputy G.P. Southern:

Okay, thank you. Last one from me, I think. You have mentioned it already, but what interactions do you have with the Bailiff's Office in terms of fundraising and how has that been?

The Minister for International Development:

Okay. There is another committee that - I do not know what that one is called - but that is made up of the Bailiff, Jersey Overseas Aid and Side by Side, the local charity, which was specifically set up for Ukraine. We usually get involved with the Bailiff's funding when there is an appeal. For example, if there is something big like the earthquake in Kathmandu, in Nepal in 2015. Islanders tend to want to give; they want to do something. So it is usually at those times that the Bailiff will launch an appeal for funding, but obviously it is so much better if the funding comes via Side by Side, which is a local charity, because then more funding is derived with the tax. So we normally get involved - I would say the rule of thumb is if there is a disaster emergencies appeal in the UK - for a disaster. The Bailiff does tend to look and then we come in in our capacity as advisers. We have got the professionals, we know which agencies to use where, so we can then advise and put together a package for supporting, and use some of our money, some of his money and some of the appeal's money to support various applications.

Deputy G.P. Southern:

Thank you, Minister. That is me done, I think.

[15:30]

Deputy M. Tadier:

Thank you. I think we will draw ... unless there are any supplementary questions. We had some questions about U.N. Sustainable Development Goals, but we will either forward those on - there are not many - which is an important area of course. So we would be happy to receive maybe written answers or get you in another time to talk about those.

The Minister for International Development:

Yes, sure.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Have you got anything to ask us or to add before we conclude?

The Minister for International Development:

No, but I liked your idea about encouraging everyone else to take up the recommendations.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Well, I think that is something we can come back to. Obviously as a panel we are lucky in the sense that Economic Development falls under us, and it is a big driver for what we are doing in terms of work. You will know that I take a personal interest anyway in that area, but I am sure other members want to make sure also that all Ministers are pulling in the same direction and maximising the synergies that could be available. So, Minister and Gillian, thank you for coming. Thank you for attending and we hope it was not too stressful for you. I think we have got quite a lot out of it, so we will be following your department's progress in the next couple of years.

The Minister for International Development:

Good.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Thank you for coming.

The Minister for International Development:

Thank you for your interest.

[15:31]