



British
High Commission
Mauritius

British High Commission
Les Cascades Building
Edith Cavell Street
Port Louis, Mauritius

Tel: (230) 202 9400
Fax: (230) 202 9408
www.ukinmauritius.fco.gov.uk

PRESS RELEASE

1. Following recent press articles on the British Government Support Package of approximately £40million to the Chagossians in the communities they now live, we wish to clarify a number of incorrect assertions that have been made in these articles. The British Government reaffirms its long-held commitment to work with the Chagossian community. This package represents a massive expansion over the previous projects and help provided to Chagossians by the British Government (through the British High Commission) since 2008. This partnership to improve the lives of Chagossians has always been carried out in good faith and separate from legal proceedings or challenges over resettlement. Any engagement with, or acceptance of, the new Support Package will not be relied on by the British Government to argue that Chagossians have relinquished their aspiration to return to the Islands.
2. There are claims that this Support Package is a replacement for resettlement. It is not. The decision not to support resettlement was carefully considered and based on a wide range of factors. The British Government is clear that these factors will continue to preclude resettlement. This Support Package has been designed in order that we can provide assistance to Chagossians in their current communities to improve their lives and life chances.
3. The decision to implement the Support Package over a decade was made to ensure that projects initiated under the package are carefully designed, implemented and monitored to achieve concrete and sustainable results over the longer term.
4. The British Government is mindful of the fact that the best people who can provide views on how to develop the most appropriate projects under the package are Chagossians themselves. We want to have a full

discussion with them before any projects are finalised. British Government development experts will visit Mauritius shortly.

5. The British Government invites all Chagossians with ideas on how the package can benefit the wider community to contact the British High Commission, either through their representative bodies such as the Chagossian Refugees Group (CRG) and the Chagossian Social Committee (CSC), which we hope will continue to work with us to improve the opportunities and wellbeing of their communities as they have for a number of years, or they can individually contact us directly by letter, email or in person, to discuss these ideas with us. The British Government will ensure that these views are considered as part of the final action plan that will be produced by the development experts.
6. Possible areas for projects are access to health and social care, improved education and employment opportunities. These suggestions were made based on previous conversations with representatives of the Chagossian community in Mauritius who, on several occasions, stressed how important these were in order to improve the livelihoods of the community.
7. These suggestions were also based on previous work that has been done by the British Government (through the British High Commission) and the CRG. For several years, we have been working in partnership with the CRG on various activities to improve the education and employability of the Chagossian community. The British Government (through the British High Commission) provided significant funding towards the construction of the Chagossian Training Centre in Pointe aux Sables in 2008 and has, on an annual basis since, funded the implementation of small projects. The main two projects developed in close collaboration with the CRG include a project to improve the English language skills of young children, implemented by the British Council since 2011, and the improvement of employability skills for young adults, implemented by the Open University since 2015.
8. Both of these projects were warmly welcomed by the community. The British Government now sees the Support Package as an opportunity to greatly expand these projects in order to reach more children and adults who want to improve their education and skills. We want to hear from

Chagossians and/or their leaders whether they believe these projects are still among their priorities.

9. The British Government makes clear that in working with the CRG and the wider Chagossian community since 2008, the implementation of projects has never been impacted or prevented by any legal proceedings that were taking place against the British government at the time in relation to resettlement. Furthermore, none of these projects were implemented against the condition or obligation on Chagossians to drop any legal proceedings against the British Government, nor were the projects brought up by the British Government during any legal proceedings against it. The projects were implemented in good faith between the British Government (through the British High Commission) and the community, in order to help the wellbeing and life chances of Chagossians. This will continue to be the case with the new Support Package that has been announced.
10. The objective of this package is to improve the lives and life chances of Chagossians. Chagossians who benefit from the Package will not, as some media reports have suggested, be asked by the British Government to discontinue their support for the current legal proceedings, nor be excluded from benefitting from any judgement given in favour of the claimants in those proceedings. We would welcome contacts from the CRG, the CSC and individual Chagossians on their views to improve the lives of members of the community.
11. The package also includes the expansion of the programme of Chagossian visits to the islands. Since 2006, the British Government has organised several visits to the islands for the community, but due to limited resources, these visits have been on a small scale, often comprising of only 15 members of the community. We will be organising larger, longer and more frequent visits to the islands. The first visit will take place this year. Further information on this will be issued before the end of March.

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