

Chair's report on Council meeting of 19/20 January 2012

The following people were present at the meeting:-

Trustees

Karen Brown (Chair)
James Darcy
Maja Daruwala
Sandra Dawson
Andy Friend
Vanessa Godfrey
Rajiv Joshi
David Pitt-Watson
Tricia Zipfel

Corporate Management and Staff

Barbara Stocking (Chief Executive)
Bob Humphreys (Finance & Information Services Director)
Jane Cotton (Human Resources Director)
Phil Bloomer (Campaigns & Policy Director)
Thomas Schultz-Jagow (Communications Director)
Andrew Horton (Trading Director)
Cathy Ferrier (Fundraising and Supporter Marketing Director)
Penny Lawrence (International Director)
Joss Saunders (Company Secretary)
Olga Ghazaryan (Regional Director, MEEECIS)
Anne Gornall (Trustees Officer)

Apologies were received from Matthew Martin, Marjorie Scardino and Nkoyo Toyo. The Chair welcomed Andrew Horton for his first Council meeting, and Olga Ghazaryan, attending to give input as a Regional Director. This was the first meeting of Council's annual cycle for 2011/12 and took place in Oxford.

Strategic Discussions on the Oxfam International (OI) Strategic Plan

(Also present: Kate Wareing – Strategy Development Manager, Duncan Green – Head of Research, Kate Raworth – Senior Researcher, Sophie Bebb and Oli Carter – Youth Board and Nkoyo Toyo by telephone)

These discussions took place on the afternoon of Thursday 19 January and the morning of Friday 20 January. At the end of the strategic discussions, Council fed back to all on their concluding thoughts, which could be summarised as follows:

The Doughnut: There is consensus to pursue the concept of the 'safe and just space for humanity' vision, and to use 'the doughnut' diagram as a way of reasserting our values. It must be both simple and passionate.

Achieving change: To achieve change, you need dissatisfaction with the current state, a vision for where you want to go, and a process for getting there.

Making choices: We must make bold and radical choices, and resist the temptation to only respond to what people want us to. Continuing to think about *how* we operate will help us to articulate how we make choices within this.

Key themes: The following key themes should be highlighted more prominently in Oxfam GB's feedback to OI; quality of aid, the closing of civil society space, the need for a positive vision and the importance of Oxfam's values.

Key issues, trends and themes would be fed back to Oxfam International, summarising Oxfam GB's views on context and vision for the Oxfam Strategic Plan 2013-19.

Chief Executives Report

In her regular update to trustees, Barbara Stocking and members of Oxfam's management team covered the following key areas:

Humanitarian

East Africa/West Africa: Barbara Stocking advised that the joint report with Save the Children had received good coverage and contained some important learning. Planning to address the current West African food crisis was gathering momentum.

Kenya: Barbara Stocking gave details of recent diplomacy and discussions with the Kenyan government.

Eritrea: Penny Lawrence gave details about the expulsion of Oxfam and others from Eritrea. While there was great sadness inside and outside Eritrea, the developments had been outside Oxfam's control. Many positive things had been achieved in Eritrea, particularly the solidarity demonstrated with the people there.

Campaigning

GROW Campaign/Land Grabs: Phil Bloomer updated trustees on the latest developments, particularly in relation to land grabs in Uganda. Barbara Stocking had visited Uganda in late 2011 as part of a risk management process, and to

meet members of the Ugandan government. The aim was to obtain compensation for the Communities. The overall land grabs work was aimed at improving global principles and guidelines on their implementation.

World Economic Forum, Davos: Barbara Stocking would be attending the meeting. Running alongside preparation for the Mexican G20 in June was a B20 group of business leaders.

Organisational Issues

Oxfam International Single Management Structure (SMS): Penny Lawrence gave details of the current progress around the implementation of SMS.

Annual Plan: Barbara Stocking indicated that cost savings in non programme areas in the UK would form part of the upcoming annual plan, and work was also being done to identify potential cross-divisional savings.

Oxfam International Governance

The Chair referred members to a paper outlining the latest draft of the Oxfam International governance framework and an interim response from herself on behalf of Oxfam GB. Points were raised including: improving OI governance structures and practice; expanding OI's accountability; and developing mechanisms for resolution of disputes. Council approved the establishment of a governance sub-group which would report to Council as the OI governance proposals were refined and developed.

Restricted/Unrestricted Funding

The Chair welcomed Thomas Winslow (Head of Programme Funding) to the meeting, for a discussion on restricted/unrestricted funding. The Trustee Audit and Finance Group (TAFG) felt the issues raised in the paper gave a context for strategic decision making. Getting the right balance of funding sources is core to Oxfam's independence.

Penny Lawrence gave further contextual details in terms of the NGO sector. In organisational terms, it was felt with Oxfam's increasing proportion of restricted funds, that the current ratio of 70:30 restricted to unrestricted income represented a point at which more in depth analysis was welcome. Cathy Ferrier gave further details on trends with donors, where increasingly a level of restriction was requested.

Other points raised and discussed included: work on how to make better use of unrestricted funds, and absorb some programme management costs from within restricted costs; and the importance of Oxfam's continued independence.

The meeting then moved on to the business and governance items on the main agenda, as follows:

- Issues that had been discussed at the TAFG meeting on 6 January, including the Small Enterprise Impact Investing Fund (SEIIF).
- Council received the 2nd quarterly report.
- Council agreed changes to membership of Trustee and Association groups.
- Council approved a paper on the role and operation of Honorary Officers.
- Council were updated on the process for the upcoming recruitment of new Trustee and Association members.

Trustee Trip to Haiti

David Pitt-Watson and Rajiv Joshi reported back to Council on their programme visit to Haiti, and thanked all who had worked to make this an effective and illuminating trip. The programmes visited had delivered a mix of water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), some Oxfam Quebec programmes, and a livelihoods programme. They had considerable exposure to a range of stakeholders including communities, small business owners, development banks, media and government.

Penny Lawrence stated that it had been important for trustees to visit a country like Haiti, which was both challenging and hugely needy. Barbara Stocking gave some additional perspective following her recent visit, and all felt that Oxfam had much to be proud of in its record of delivery, given the very difficult circumstances, since the earthquake in early 2010.

UK Poverty Programme Conference

Tricia Zipfel briefly updated trustees on her attendance at a conference with minority groups to discuss women's rights.

As this was their last Council meeting, the Chair thanked Thomas Schultz-Jagow and Cathy Ferrier for their contributions to Oxfam's work and for their support to Council as members of CMT. The Chair then advised that the next meeting would be on Friday 16 March 2012.

Karen Brown
Chair