

Chair's report on Council meeting of 2 October 2009

The following people were present at the meeting:-

Trustees

John Gaventa (Chair)
Maja Daruwala
Gareth Davies
Sandra Dawson
Andy Friend
Vanessa Godfrey
Adebayo Olukoshi
Richard Taylor
Stan Thekaekara

Corporate Management and Staff

Barbara Stocking (Chief Executive)
Bob Humphreys (Finance & Information Services Director)
Jane Cotton (Human Resources Director)
Penny Lawrence (International Director)
Phil Bloomer (Campaigns & Policy Director)
Cathy Ferrier (Fundraising & Supporter Marketing Director)
David McCullough (Trading Director)
Joss Saunders (Company Secretary)
Anne Gornall (Policy and Trustees Officer)
Mamadou Biteye (Regional Director for West Africa – a.m.)

Apologies were received from Maureen Connelly and Matthew Martin.

This was the fourth meeting of Council's annual cycle for 2008/09 and took place in Oxford.

The meeting started with updates from the Chief Executive (Barbara Stocking) and members of Oxfam's management team. These were as follows:-

Humanitarian issues

Barbara Stocking and Penny Lawrence (International Director) talked about a range of Oxfam's humanitarian work and responses in recent weeks. This included the response following the recent typhoons, earthquakes, tsunamis and floods in East Asia. Preparation was being made in anticipation of further emergencies and rehabilitation work was being planned.

Development and programme issues

Barbara Stocking updated trustees on her recent visit to Nicaragua. A number of useful meetings had taken place, including a televised interview with President Ortega and his wife Rosario Murillo.

Campaigns

- Phil Bloomer (Campaigns and Policy Director) gave details of the climate change campaigns, including the Global Wake Up call on 21 September where Oxfam had taken a very active role.
- Barbara Stocking spoke about the UN campaign against user fees in health care. Research by Oxfam GB had demonstrated the negative effect of user fees on poor people.

After the updates, the meeting moved on to the strategic and business items on the main agenda. These included the following:

1. *Oxfam International.* John Gaventa (Chair) and Barbara Stocking updated trustees on recent discussions around the governance and management of Oxfam International and work in hand to finalise a single Oxfam management system in individual countries. All agreed that the key criteria for any decisions made should be to improve Oxfam's overall capacity and further reduce poverty and suffering. A final discussion would take place at Council in March 2010 prior to sign off by the Oxfam International Board.
2. *West Africa update and Livelihoods Review.* As part of the programme of regular reviews on key areas of Oxfam's work, Mamadou Biteye (Regional Director for West Africa) gave a presentation covering Oxfam's work in the West African region, with a particular focus on livelihoods work. He drew attention to Oxfam's vision for West Africa i.e. the demand for better governance, and the emphasis on equitable economic growth. He also showed a video which communicated voices of some communities in the region e.g. from people in the cotton programme in Mali, and private sector work in Senegal. With further inputs from Sam Bickersteth (Head of Programme Policy) and Nicola Day (Head of Private Sector Strategy), the meeting then moved on to consider feedback from a recent livelihoods-focussed event ('Oxfam Reflects'). It was noted that livelihoods was deeply embedded with the rest of Oxfam's work and

concerns (e.g. gender, governance). This holistic way of working was quite distinctive and needed to be better understood, both within and outside Oxfam.

3. *Strategic Steer 2010/11 – 2012/13.* Barbara Stocking, supported by Bob Humphreys (Finance and Information Services Director), introduced the Steer. It had been produced at a half way position between the Strategic Plan 2007/10 and a new Strategic Plan for 2013. It addressed the changed circumstances since the original plan was produced e.g. the current economic downturn, outlined proposals to streamline the existing planning process, and initiated a new three year planning schedule to include an amended financial year end (1 April 2010). With further input from the Honorary Treasurer (Gareth Davies) on discussion at a recent meeting of the Trustee Audit and Finance Group, Council considered the steer in some depth and approved it (with some minor text clarifications).
4. *Investment Policy.* As recommended by the Trustee Audit and Finance Group, this policy was approved.
5. *Draft Annual Report and Accounts 2008/09.* The Chair welcomed Liz Hazell (PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP) who was representing Oxfam's auditors. Bob Humphreys (Finance and Information Services Director) advised that the accounts included some changes in format which were required under the Charities Act. Overall considerable efforts had been made to increase transparency in some key areas. With some minor changes of wording, the accounts were approved to go forward to the Annual General Meeting on 4 December.
6. *Governance updates and annual reports of trustee groups reporting to Council*
 - 1st Quarterly report 2009/10. The report did not show any current areas not achieved or likely to be achieved.
 - Annual Health & Safety Report, including appendix on security. This was introduced by the lead trustee on health and safety (Vanessa Godfrey). Council welcomed the opportunity to consider these important issues and looked forward to a seminar discussion on humanitarian space before the Council meeting in March 2010.
 - The Company Secretary (Joss Saunders) introduced a paper on the constitutional changes going forward to the Annual General Meeting on 4 December. These were approved. The proposed appointments to Council and the Association were also approved to go forward to the AGM.
 - Council noted the annual report of the Recruitment and Development Group. This group handles the recruitment, induction and training of Oxfam's governance (Council and Association).
 - Council received an update on the work carried out by the Remuneration Committee. This committee reviews Oxfam's policy on staff remuneration and determines the remuneration packages of senior management. It was agreed that the members of the Corporate Management Team would have a pay freeze this year. The Chair advised that trustees had also considered pay issues at an earlier meeting before Council.
 - Approval was given to two ex gratia requests (in relation to recent legacies).

Finally trustees congratulated the team of trustees and management which had taken part in Trailwalker July 2009. The meeting closed with an evaluation to inform future meetings and agenda planning.

John Gaventa
Chair