

Chair's report on Council meeting of 18 January 2013

The following people were present at the meeting:-

Trustees

Karen Brown (Chair)
James Darcy
Vanessa Godfrey
Matthew Martin
David Pitt-Watson
Marjorie Scardino
Gavin Stewart
Nkoyo Toyo
Steve Walton
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)
Andrew Horton (Trading Director)
Penny Lawrence (International Director)
Paul Clarke (Supporter Marketing Director)
Joss Saunders (Company Secretary)
Anne Gornall (Trustees Officer)
Tim Brown (Trustees and CMT Administrator)

Apologies were received from Maja Daruwala. Rajiv Joshi attended part of the meeting via Skype. The Chair welcomed Sue Turrell, Deputy International Director, who was attending the meeting as an observer. This was the first meeting of Council's annual cycle for 2012/13.

Chief Executives Report

Gender-based violence in India: Council reflected on a note from Maja Daruwala about the implications in India and beyond arising from the recent appalling rape in India. Penny Lawrence gave details of Oxfam GB's support to Oxfam India on the media issues arising from this incident, and also support to the We Can Secretariat. It was hoped that Oxfam India and the Secretariat could work more effectively together.

Syria: Barbara Stocking gave details about the scale up of activity in Lebanon and Jordan in anticipation of a worsening humanitarian crisis in Syria. Oxfam was working with communities which had fled Syria, and there was great humanitarian need including water and sanitation.

Financial update: Bob Humphreys referred members to the Trustee Audit and Finance minutes from 8 January.

Frip Ethique and Oxfam shops: Andrew Horton updated Council on the expansion of Frip Ethique in Dakar and some problems which had arisen with a UK contractor. This had raised a number of issues, not least the importance of working closely with the Regional Centre and the need to tighten up on internal controls. This would be further considered by the Trustee Audit and Finance Group (TAFG). He also outlined current trading conditions in the UK.

Food for All Campaign: Barbara Stocking and Phil Bloomer spoke about the launch of this campaign on 26 December 2012. It had generated significant discussion about the use of imagery around Africa and was progressing well.

IF Campaign: This campaign had an interface with the Food for All Campaign but was being spearheaded by a coalition of 65 agencies. The timing was aimed to harness public concern and inspire people to take action at two key moments: the UK budget announcement in March (including the proposed 0.7% allocated to international aid), and the G8 Summit and Hunger Summit in June (hosted by the UK).

Oxfam's Humanitarian Programme: Perceptions, Performance and Investment

The Chair welcomed the following people for this discussion: Jane Cocking (Humanitarian Director), Graham Mackay (Deputy Humanitarian Director), Nigel Timmins (Deputy Humanitarian Director), Kate Wareing (Strategy Development Manager)

Jane Cocking introduced the discussion, outlining the implications for the choices that currently exist in the humanitarian sector, given the increasing scale of need. There is agreement that the primary duty bearers are the nation state, along with an acceptance that it is absolutely necessary for Oxfam to be part of the delivery arm of the humanitarian system in order to build the capacity of the system globally.

In future working in partnership will increase in importance to achieve increased scale and Jane Cocking provided examples of how working with regional inter-government organisations is in some cases an effective strategy.

Council then shared their thoughts on the challenges faced in the humanitarian sector, and raised points including the need to maintain our top-class capacity as a humanitarian deliverer, and the vital role of resilience work, as an effective and efficient method of mitigating against the need for humanitarian response. Oxfam should continue to demonstrate to others

approaches that work (something which it is very good at), while at the same time, continuing to work with others on managing risks, rather than crises.

Areas of priority for Oxfam GB in its delivery of the Oxfam Strategic Plan (OSP)

Following Council's discussion in January, the Chair introduced this session as a chance to check on Oxfam GB's proposed priorities, before the final version comes to Council in March. Council discussed the intention not to work on standalone women's rights and gender development programmes, including the direct delivery of changing attitudes on domestic violence. This shift is in the context of the ambition in the Oxfam Strategic Plan, and Council's request that OGB makes decisions around prioritisation. Oxfam's mutually reinforcing work around economic justice and food security is the main focus of OGB's plans for the first three years of the strategy and women's rights remain an integral part of this and all priority areas. Programme staff are acutely aware that supporting women's economic empowerment can increase gender-based violence (GBV) and therefore programme design and analysis is very much taking this into account.

Oxfam International (OI)

Draft Oxfam Strategic Plan (OSP) 2013-19 (Paper E)

Kate Wareing explained the process going forward for the sign-off of the OSP. This was the last chance for trustees to comment, before the plan was agreed at the March OI Board meeting.

Council shared their thoughts on some of the issues still of concern in the plan, to input back to OI, including accountability, and the level of ambition. The plan was approved on the basis of Council's comments being taken into OI for consideration, and it was agreed that Karen Brown and Penny Lawrence (as acting Chief Executive) had Council's authority to sign-off the final draft at the OI Board meeting in March.

Financial Health of Affiliates: Policy on Transparency, Prevention, and Intervention (Paper F)

The Honorary Treasurer introduced a paper on affiliate financial health. The paper had been considered carefully by the Trustee Audit and Finance Group (TAFG), and TAFG recommended that the focus should be on resilience, helping affiliates plan to be a going concern. Executive Directors would be discussing a financial health check, and looking at ongoing indicators to be used in monitoring the financial situation of affiliates.

New Executive Director

Council acknowledged the appointment of Winnie Byanyima as the new Executive Director of Oxfam International, reflecting that her appointment adds considerable muscle to Oxfam's work on women's rights, and understanding of Africa.

Governance

Following the work of the OI governance group, an updated proposal would be going to all affiliates shortly, with the final OI governance proposals coming to Council in March.

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 8 January, including street fundraising, and income forecasts.
- Feedback from the meeting of the Programme Review Group (PRG), which had concentrated on the work of the Campaigns and Policy Division.
- The appointment of Claire Deegan to the Trustee Audit and Finance Group.
- Agreements from the latest meeting of the Recruitment and Development Group.
- Noting the 2nd Quarterly Report.
- Trustee report on the Programme Leadership Team meeting, 12/13 November 2012.

Trustee farewell to Barbara Stocking

On behalf of the trustees, Vanessa Godfrey and Karen Brown reflected on Barbara Stocking's contribution to Oxfam over the last 12 years, and paid tribute to Barbara's strategic passion and focus, the parts of Oxfam that she has transformed or sharpened up, and her sense of fun. Barbara expressed appreciation to trustees, and briefly reflected on the privilege that leading Oxfam had been.

The Chair advised that further details of the planned seminar and meeting Thursday 14 / Friday 15 March 2013 would follow in due course.

Karen Brown
Chair