

Status: Public

OXFAM GB

CHAIR'S REPORT ON COUNCIL MEETING ON 16 AND 17 OCTOBER 2014

The following people were present at the meeting:

Trustees

Karen Brown (Chair)

Rajiv Joshi

Matthew Martin

David Pitt-Watson

Marjorie Scardino

Katy Steward

Tricia Zipfel

Steve Walton

James Darcy

Corporate Management and Staff

Mark Goldring (Chief Executive)

Penny Lawrence (Deputy Chief Executive)

Jane Cotton (Human Resources Director)

Andrew Horton (Trading Director)

Sue Turrell (International Programmes Director)

Bob Humphreys (Finance & Information Services Director)

Jack Lundie (Communications Director)

Tim Hunter (Fundraising Director)

Penny Fowler (Head of Private Sector)

Joss Saunders (Company Secretary)

Anne Gornall (Governance and Leadership Team Officer)

The Chair also welcomed Kul Gautam (Trustee Designate) and Nellie Nyang'wa (Oxfam GB Country Director for Zambia).

Apologies were received from Maja Daruwala, Gavin Stewart, Nkoyo Toyo and Ben Phillips. Ruth Ruderham, trustee designate, also sent her apologies. This was the fourth meeting of Council's annual cycle for 2013/14. Declarations of interest were made.

Chief Executive's Report

Mark Goldring highlighted two main themes in his written report, the breadth of Oxfam GB's current humanitarian responses and the 2020 process. He referred in particular to the work in South Sudan and also to the ebola crisis, now being escalated to a Category 1 emergency. The Chair observed that the report demonstrated the extent and breadth of Oxfam's work which continued to be delivered despite many challenges. Trustees also expressed appreciation to staff for their commitment with regard to the ebola response, not least the many who had volunteered to help.

Six Month Report Against Objectives

Influencing: Nellie Nyang'wa highlighted the campaign on health for all in Zambia. This was an example of how Oxfam had used its knowledge of health issues to influence at a national level. Looking more widely, Mark Goldring, Sue Turrell and James Darcy reflected on the output from effectiveness reviews and the recent partnership survey. There were some challenges from partners but learning was being taken on board, and the influencing agenda was gaining real momentum.

Income: Tim Hunter provided an update on fundraising. Overall work is being done to engage a broader range of donors, from supporters who respond to the situation in South Sudan to supporters who support work on water and sanitation to supporters who are engaged through the Enterprise Development Programme. Andrew Horton provided an update on trading, including progress on e-commerce.

International: Mark Goldring referred to the outcomes from the Oxfam International Executive Board meeting on 6 to 10 October 2014 which had made further decisions concerning the 2020 process. Council discussed the opportunities and sensitivities of the process, including in respect of governance. Council supports the 2020 process and highlighted areas that will require clarification and further work.

Communications

Jack Lundie highlighted how Oxfam might better communicate its unique qualities via brand clarity and more effective communications and programme content. Jack Lundie advised that the proposition would be developed further by the Leadership Team and would be brought back to a future Council meeting.

People

Katy Steward and Jane Cotton introduced a discussion on recruitment and retention, including uncertainty created for staff by the 2020 process. The input from the upcoming staff survey would be shared with trustees in January. The Trustees' input was sought on their experience of recruitment and retention at a time of change and there was a discussion.

Campaigns, policy and influencing policy

The Chair welcomed Nick Bryer (Acting Head of UK Policy, Programmes and Campaigns) and Mike Parkinson (Policy Adviser, Legal Team) and they presented on the campaigns, policy and influencing procedures overall and in the context of the 2014 Lobbying Act and the 2015 election in the UK. While highlighting the importance of the policies and procedures Council also expressed the view that Oxfam should stay true to its mission and not be afraid to speak out.

Governance and Accountability

- *Trustee Audit & Finance Group (TAFG)*

The Honorary Treasurer gave a brief update from the meeting on 3 October 2014.

- *Programme Review Group 16 October 2014*

The action notes from the meeting on 16 October 2014 were tabled.

- *Plan Refresh 2014*

Bob Humphreys introduced financial plan that reflected input from TAFG on 3 October 2014. The meeting stressed the importance of a financial budget that was realistic and not over optimistic. The plan was approved as a steer for the 2015/16 budget.

- *Risk Management Update*

Trustees expressed appreciation for the paper presented to the meeting that reflected conversations through the year with TAFG. It included additional risks arising through the 2020 process together with issues flagged up by donor and internal audits.

Farewells

- Council sent best wishes to Maja Daruwala who was retiring as a trustee but had not been able to attend the meeting. Rajiv Joshi paid tribute to the fresh human rights perspective she had brought to Oxfam and her testimony on issues about poverty, injustice and rights.
- Tricia Zipfel paid tribute to Matthew Martin who was also retiring as a trustee. He had brought a wealth of expertise to Oxfam and some important networks and contacts. He was also bold in speaking truth to power.
- The Chair paid tribute to David Lingard's excellent work during his six years on the Association.
- Mark Goldring advised that this was Jane Cotton's last Council meeting since she was leaving at the end of 2014. He paid tribute to her fifteen years as Oxfam GB's Human Resources Director. Her practical, straightforward, kind but also insightful approach had been hugely helpful to the Chairs and Chief Executives she had worked with.

Any other Business

The Chair confirmed that the next Council would take place on 22 and 23 January 2015.

Karen Brown
Chair