

## Chair's report on the Council meeting of July 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup>

All trustees were present. Also present were the Director (Barbara Stocking), the Directors of the International Division (Jasmine Whitbread), the Human Resources Division (Jane Cotton), the Finance and Information Systems Division (John Shaw) and the Campaigns and Policy Division (Phil Bloomer), the Fundraising and Supporter Marketing Director (Edward Fox), Barney Tallack (Deputy Trading Director), the Company Secretary (Joss Saunders) and the Policy and Trustees Officer (Anne Gornall).

This is the point in the year where as Council we engage in a free-flowing discussion of strategic issues, as an input to the organisation's strategic planning. First, however, we dealt with some important items of formal business.

The main item of the report from the Director was her report on *Make Poverty History*. Barbara Stocking shared her perceptions and reflections on the 'Make Poverty History' events in early July. These included the challenges around coalitions and arriving at an agreed statement about the outcome of G8 together with the need to keep the impetus going now that such a high profile had been achieved.

Trustees **agreed** that Rosemary Thorp should write to all staff and volunteers to thank them for the effort that had gone into 'Make Poverty History' and the July events.

The following points were also raised:-

- 'Make Poverty History' and the Live 8 concerts had invigorated and engaged people, and placed enormous pressure on politicians.
- While celebrating the achievements of 'Make Poverty History', it is important to push rigorously on the difference actually made to our beneficiaries.
- It had been interesting to see the level of engagement in areas such as Aceh, where many people had been greatly enthused.
- The profile and enthusiasm around 'Make Poverty History' had encouraged the African Union to call for debt cancellation. This represented a concrete outcome, with real benefits.

The most substantial item of the formal business which followed was the discussion of the Annual Report and Accounts. Frank Kirwan (Honorary Treasurer) commended the positive working relationship between the Finance team led by John Shaw and the auditors, PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP (PWC). The Trustee Audit and Finance Group (TAFG) had found the accounts to be very clear; there were no outstanding issues on the accounts themselves. A full discussion followed on the Annual Report, from which a number of changes were agreed, mostly in the interests of greater clarity. Trustees also asked for a further discussion of the challenges faced in the area of unrestricted fund-raising.

Trustees also heard a report from two of its members with special "lead member" responsibility for the International Programme. As Chair of the Trustee Impact Group, Richard Jolly referred members to the Oxfam GB Programme Impact Report. This had been sent to trustees for information with their Council papers. Richard Jolly reminded trustees of the points raised by Council in July 2004 with regard to the previous Programme Impact Report. Many of these had been addressed in the current report e.g. costs, a wider range of activities including the UK, more discussion around impact and ensuring sustainability. The report was also available on the Oxfam website which meant that the issues were very much in the public domain.

John Gaventa gave details of future plans for the Impact Group. Current members and staff had agreed that the group needed to widen its focus to include programme quality; this might also involve a change to the membership of the current group. Jasmine Whitbread endorsed this change of focus.

Council also considered and approved a proposal in regard to the chairing of the Council subgroup working on the recruitment and development of trustees. Non-trustee members of the Association play an important role in this group, and an Association member often chairs it. It is proposed to move to a system of two co-chairs, one an Association member and the other a trustee. This will improve the link between Council and the work of the group, while still retaining the valuable independent input of the Association.

After the formal meeting, Council adjourned for an informal discussion on strategic directions, with inputs from Becky Buell (Head of Programme Policy), Duncan Green (Head of Research), Nick Roseveare (Humanitarian Director) and Matthew Lockwood (external speaker). The discussion was intended as an input to the wider process of strategic planning. A particularly significant consensus was reached on one point, however, which it was felt should be minuted. Following a long discussion of the meaning of “being a global organisation”, it was emphasized that being global was a direction and an aspiration, implying a vision built jointly from different places on the globe, legitimacy in all parts of the globe and sensitivity to Northern biases in perspective. There was a consensus that we did indeed aim to be a global organisation.

Rosemary Thorp  
Chair