

## **Chair's report on Council meeting of 20 & 21 April 2006**

10 out of 12 trustees were present on 20 April, and 11 trustees on 21 April. Also present were the Director (Barbara Stocking), the Director of the International Division (Penny Lawrence), the Directors of the Human Resources Division (Jane Cotton), the Finance and Information Services Division (John Shaw), the Campaigns and Policy Division (Phil Bloomer), the Fundraising and Supporter Marketing Director (Edward Fox), the Acting Director of the Trading Division (Barney Tallack), the Head of the Programme Policy Team (Becky Buell), the Company Secretary (Joss Saunders) and the Policy and Trustees Officer (Anne Gornall).

This was the third meeting of Council's annual cycle for 2005/06.

At the beginning of the meeting on 20 April the Chair announced that John Gaventa had been elected unanimously as Chair Designate. He would take over as Chair after the AGM on 10 November 2006.

The minutes of the meeting on 9 and 10 February 2006 were approved. Matters arising were covered under the Director's Report.

The Director gave an update on progress with regard to filling some key management posts. She reflected that the organisation remained very stretched, partly as a result of a very busy year following the Tsunami in late 2004. This had some implications for the Corporate Management Team's strategic planning where prioritisation was needed.

The Director also gave updates on the following:-

- Progress made on strategic planning at a meeting of the recent Oxfam International Global Co-ordination Team.
- Continuing fraud investigations in Aceh. While the fraud was regrettable, it had been identified at a relatively early stage, which had limited the financial loss. Oxfam had been very open about this but there were some important lessons to be learned.
- Programme on the West Bank. A meeting with the Charity Commission was scheduled for May to discuss the issues associated with this.
- East Africa appeal.
- "I'm in" campaign. 200,000 people had signed up for this.

Council then considered a report from the Chair and Stan Thekaekara on visits made in India, and a further report on the future of Oxfams in India (prior to discussion at the Oxfam International board meeting in May 2006). Trustees' view was that a decision on Oxfam India should not be made until a bigger discussion had taken place at Oxfam International e.g. on the place of Oxfam International in a global world and how it might most effectively operate in and with countries like India.

Gareth Davies – the Honorary Treasurer Designate – presented a report on his visit to Mozambique and reflected on the HIV/AIDS programme there.

Trustees briefly considered the Corporate Risk Register prior to a more in-depth discussion on risk at the July Council meeting. They also approved the seventh annual report on the Trustee Code of Conduct, and delegated the Chair to sign up to the International NGOs' charter on accountability if appropriate, following further legal advice.

The 2006/07 annual plan (i.e. the objectives and the budget) was approved. Some suggestions were made on how to improve the process for the plan in the following year. This would probably involve scrutiny of the more detailed plan by the Trustee Audit and Finance Group. A discussion on setting objectives as measurable goals was scheduled for the July Council meeting.

On Friday 21 April Council concentrated largely on strategic issues. The discussion began with a presentation from the Acting Director of the UK Poverty Programme (Liz Hughes). Trustees expressed unanimous support for the programme which had now been running for ten years and had made some important inroads e.g. on participatory budgeting and with partners in the anti-poverty network. There was now a shift towards livelihoods work.

Council also considered a paper on 'Being Global' that linked with the issues discussed earlier around Oxfams in India. The discussion was seen as the first step before further discussions over the middle months of the year, including at the Oxfam Assembly. A project group would take this forward at an appropriate point in the plan period and develop the principles in order to make some more specific recommendations.

During the rest of Friday 21 April Council had considered some templates being developed for the July Council meeting, as part of the Oxfam GB and the Oxfam International strategic planning process. Additionally trustees received an update on Oxfam in China, which was identified as an important area. The development and future of China – not least China's role in developing countries – would be thoroughly researched together with colleagues in Oxfam Hong Kong.

Rosemary Thorp  
Chair