Chair’s report on Council meeting of 18 March 2011

# The following people were present at the meeting:-

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| |  |  | | --- | --- | | *Trustees*  John Gaventa (Chair)  Karen Brown  James Darcy  Gareth Davies  Sandra Dawson  Andy Friend  Vanessa Godfrey  Rajv Joshi  Matthew Martin  David Pitt-Watson  Tricia Zipfel | *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)  Thomas Schultz-Jagow (Communications Director)  David McCullough (Trading Director)  Joss Saunders (Company Secretary)  Anne Gornall (Trustees Officer) |   Apologies were received from Maja Daruwala and Marjorie Scardino. This was the second meeting of Council’s annual cycle for 2010/11 and took place in Oxford. |  |

*Matters arising from minutes of January Council meeting*

There were no matters arising.

*Chief Executives Report*

In her regular update to trustees, Barbara Stocking and members of Oxfam’s management team covered the following key areas:

*Humanitarian*

Following the Japanese earthquake and tsunami, Barbara Stocking advised that funds could be channelled to Oxfam Japan, as it was the Oxfam working there. Instability in Cote D’Ivoire had implications for Liberia and Ghana. Oxfam was currently providing water and sanitation to around 90,000 displaced people in Liberia, working with the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) and UNICEF. It was anticipated that the problems could spread to Ghana.

Within the wider context of diplomatic negotiations and the UN Security Council’s responsibility for protection, Oxfam was advocating the protection of human rights in Libya. In Yemen considerable efforts were being made to find out what was happening to the people and to address their lack of food and access.

Trustees endorsed the ongoing focus on protection and the lobbying of the international duty bearers.

*Campaigning*

Oxfam had participated fully at a number of fora to celebrate International Women’s Day. The new Food Justice campaign will be launched on 31 May. Following the British aid reviews, Oxfam had given a positive response to the focus on fragile states, and would be monitoring how things progress.

*Fundraising*

Upcoming events would include Selfridges Pop-Up shop, Marks and Spencers clothes exchange, an exhibition by photographer Rankin, and the London Marathon (where Oxfam is the charity of the year).

Barbara Stocking advised that a partnership with Paypal (100% Giving) had been launched in February, and David McCullough updated trustees on barcode technology in shops.

*Oxfam International Board meeting 23/24 March 2011 – Issues for Oxfam GB*

Barbara Stocking updated Council on overall progress with the implementation of the single management structure.The new structure was scheduled to go live in 22 countries where Oxfam GB was the managing affiliate in the financial year 2011/12. Some useful work had also taken place on support functions, including IT and internal audit, collaboration, programme standards and leadership.

Council also considered the issues highlighted in the Oxfam International Executive Director’s report: the statement of purpose and beliefs; constitutional amendments; OI governance and secretariat review; the election of an Oxfam International chair; and the future of the Oxfam International board.

*Annual Plan*

Barbara Stocking introduced the annual plan, and also advised Council on the future Oxfam International strategic plan. The key issues for the year were highlighted, including the launch of the Food Justice campaign, building capacity in humanitarian work, and securing continued resources. The Honorary Treasurer (Gareth Davies) advised that the Trustee Audit and Finance Group (TAFG) were happy that this was a robust budget, and after some discussion, trustees approved the plan.

*Aid effectiveness including Oxfam’s own reputation*

Thomas Schultz-Jagow introduced the discussion, with input from Jane Cocking (Humanitarian Director), Jen Corlew (Head of Media) and Max Lawson (Senior Policy Adviser). They explained the inter-related issues that made the current public discussions on aid both confusing and contentious. Given the implications for Oxfam’s reputation, future fundraising, and its stakeholders and beneficiaries, it was important for Oxfam and its trustees to address these issues and engage in the debate.

*Oxfam’s place within the international humanitarian system*

James Darcy and Jane Cocking introduced a paper. Trustees and CMT supported a small but significant shift in Oxfam’s positioning, where Oxfam would continue to be a strong and engaged player in co-ordination but would focus less on carrying out direct provision with its own staff. Instead the organisation would invest more in developing the capacity of national actors who are the primary duty-bearers for humanitarian response.

The meeting then moved on to the business and governance items on the main agenda, as follows:

1. Trustees noted the 3rd quarterly report of 2010/11, including health and safety.
2. The appointment of Nkoyo Toyo to Council was confirmed.
3. Council considered a paper on their engagement with stakeholders. Suggestions were made, including interaction with staff, fundraisers and donors, attending fundraising events, and having more exposure to international staff and partners.
4. The issues that had been discussed at the TAFG meeting on 4 March. Impact assessment and monitoring and learning (MEL) would be scheduled for Council discussion after consideration by the Programme Review Group (PRG) and TAFG
5. Matthew Martin reported back on an informal and informative visit to Oxfam Mexico.
6. James Darcy undertook to share the amended terms of reference for the PRG with Council.

The Chair advised that the next meeting would be on Friday 20 May, preceded by the Oxfam Connects event on Thursday 19 May.

John Gaventa

Chair