

Note of Oxfam Australia Board Meeting – 7 December 2018

The Oxfam Australia (OAU) board met for its last meeting of 2018 on Friday 7 December. We said farewell to our 2018 participant from the Observership Program, Esther Gyorki, and will be welcoming a new observer (our third over 3 years) in 2019.

The meeting started with an update from the Chief Executive (CE) Helen Szoke on OAU's activities and performance, reflecting on a year which has proven challenging for all of us. Helen's report traversed Oxfam's performance and operating environment, financial and related matters, programs – including an account of a BlockChain pilot run in Vanuatu under a DFAT program which demonstrates Oxfam's drive towards innovative solutions - people matters, and partners and donors. The board noted the massive change agenda evident throughout the agency's activities and thanked the team for its engagement and commitment.

A report was provided on Oxfam International (OI) affairs by the CE in her capacity as a member of the Executive Board and by the Chair as a Board of Supervisors member and Treasurer. Strengthening our safeguarding measures, rethinking our country footprint to maximise development impact, reviewing our global operating model, finances, and making our governance fit for the future were high on the list.

Next, a report was given by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander team on the highly successful, just completed Straight Talk gathering in Canberra of over 70 Aboriginal women. Its aim is to provide leadership and advocacy skills and networking so that these women can be change-makers in their community. The board discussed potential for upgrading OAU's Indigenous programming as we move into a new planning cycle.

A presentation and discussion ensued about strategic directions and options for operating models that could be adopted to increase OAU's effectiveness in delivering its mission of a fair world without poverty.

This was followed by the customary quarterly review of the Operational Plan, a finance, compliance and risk report, and a discussion on OAU's process for seeking re-accreditation as a DFAT program partner and the board's responsibility and role in this process. The Financial report outlined the significant challenges of the organization, particularly in relation to generation of income in our community support income areas, and this will be addressed in the future planning that management is currently undertaking.

Towards the end, the board considered reports from the Public Engagement and Governance Committees, including plans for a board performance review, which will be assisted by an external independent review organisation.

The meeting concluded with the board thanking the management team and all Oxfam people for their engagement, commitment and hard work over the year gone by, and a vote of thanks to all those who support Oxfam.

Dennis Goldner
Board Chair
December 2018

