

MAKE POVERTY HISTORY

MP Meeting Guide

How To Use This Outline

This outline provides a clear and simple 6-point plan to ensure that your meeting with the MP goes well. While you can certainly vary the meeting format (and the MP will almost certainly add things to the meeting that take things off-track), this outline provides a useful framework for your meeting. This will ensure that our key messages to MPs are clear and consistent. MPs also appreciate it when lobbying meetings are clear, focused, and include a specific request for their action.

The boxed sections include stories or information that may be useful to share with the MP at different points, or to help answer tricky questions. In your meetings you may choose to use some, all or none of this extra information. Don't spend too long on this information, or your meeting may get bogged down.

As a group, look over the five parts of the meeting outline. Choose who will lead the discussion at each stage, or make particular points, during the meeting. Identify one person to have primary responsibility for keeping the meeting on track. Identify one person to take notes during the meeting, particularly of anything the MP said or committed to doing.

NB: If the MP raises a question or issue that you don't know the answer to, just acknowledge that and move on. You should feel free to make a commitment to get back to the MP with an answer or more information, and contact Make Poverty History for assistance.

Meeting Outline

- 1) Introduction
- 2) Purpose of the meeting
- 3) Thank the MP
- 4) Specific focus of the meeting
- 5) What the MP can do

1) Introductions

Thank the MP for making the time to meet with you. Each participant can introduce him/herself and explain briefly why they are supporters of the Make Poverty History campaign. If people come from the MP's own electorate (or Senator's state), they should indicate this.

Ask what the MP knows about the Make Poverty History campaign, and the Millennium Development Goals.

2) Purpose of the meeting

Explain that you support the Make Poverty History campaign, and that you wish to encourage Parliamentarians to make sure that Australia does all that it can to help achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

Make Poverty History in Australia is a coalition of over 60 aid agencies and community groups, along with our partner Micah challenge, an alliance of churches and Christian groups. Make Poverty History works to influence the leaders of both rich and poor nations, encouraging them to fulfil the commitments they made to achieve the Millennium Development Goals – an internationally agreed framework, that if achieved, will halve global poverty by 2015.

Make Poverty History is part of the Global Call to Action Against Poverty, a coalition of members from more than 100 countries.

The Millennium Development Goals together aim to halve global poverty by 2015. The Goals represent a compact between rich and poor nations, committing both groups to coordinated action to reduce poverty. They set specific and time-bound targets, with measurable indicators of progress.

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Goal 1: Halve the proportion of people living on less than USD 1 per day and halve the proportion of people suffering hunger by 2015
Goal 2: Achieve universal primary education
Goal 3: Achieve gender parity in all levels of education by 2015
Goal 4: Reduce child deaths by two-thirds by 2015
Goal 5: Reduce maternal deaths by three-quarters by 2015
Goal 6: Halt and reverse the spread of HIV, TB, malaria and other major diseases by 2015
Goal 7: Ensure environmental sustainability – including by halving the proportion of people without access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation
Goal 8: Develop a global partnership for development – including by increase poverty-focused aid, cancelling poor country debt, and making international trade work for the poor.

Tell the MP that 2008 has been identified as a critical year for action need to accelerate progress towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals (2000-2015). The World Bank, International Monetary Fund, United Nations, among many others, acknowledge that the Millennium Development Goals can be achieved by 2015, but that all developing country regions will miss out on at least some of the Goals if we simply proceed with business as usual.

World leaders have recognised the urgency of accelerating progress if we are to achieve the Millennium Development Goals by 2015. In January, political and business leaders, issued an *MDG Call to Action* from Davos, Switzerland, noting that the poor face a “development emergency” and pledging to make 2008 a “turning point in the fight against poverty”.

The President of the UN General Assembly said in April:

“At this halfway point, the question is not whether the glass is half full or half empty. The issue is, how quickly are we going to fill it up?... The stakes are high. If we achieve the MDGs on time 500 million people will be lifted out of poverty, 300 million more people will be adequately fed, and 30 million young children's lives will have been saved.

Yet at the midpoint between the adoption of the Goals and the 2015 deadline to achieve them, it is already clear that our pace is too slow. We must not be remembered as the generation that betrayed rather than honoured our commitments.”

A summit of world leaders will be held in New York in September (with the Prime Minister planning to attend) to determine priorities for renewed action on the MDGs.

3) Thank the MP

Take this opportunity to give some positive feedback about some good recent initiatives that the MP's party has taken.

The MP may not be fully aware of the policy you are thanking them for, so be sure to go into enough detail when you describe it to them.

Government (Labor): Thank them for the Government's commitment to increased aid to 0.5% of Gross National Income by 2015. This will increase aid to

Thank them also for the new focus on water and sanitation, with an additional \$300 million being budgeted over the next three years. There are around 1.8 million deaths each year in developing countries from diarrhoeal disease, 90% of which are directly attributable to unsafe drinking water, and inadequate sanitation and hygiene. As well as contributing directly to illness and death, poor water and sanitation leads to roughly \$50 billion of global economic losses, through lost productivity, additional labour burdens on women, and school absences. Inadequate sanitation is also a major cause of girls missing school in many countries.

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Opposition (Coalition): Thank them for the commitment they made, while in Government, to increase aid to \$4.3 billion by 2010, which was the first time any Australian Government has made a timetabled, multi-year commitment to increase the aid budget.

Thank them also for the education policy, *Better Education*, that the Coalition developed and released in 2007, while in Government. This policy aims to help get 10 million extra children in our region into school, and to help improve the quality of education for a further 50 million. This focus on basic education, as well as education quality, is very welcome and has lifted Australia's spending on basic education to \$200 million per year to basic education (which is about the level of our fair share of the cost of achieving the goal of universal primary education).

4) Specific focus

Tell the MP that for this meeting, you specifically wish to focus on *aid*, and particularly *maternal and child health*.

One of the key ways that Australia can support the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, is by giving long-term and predictable aid that is focused on agreed poverty reduction targets.

0.7% of Gross National Income (which would be just over 3% of the federal budget) represents our international commitment, and the amount we should give in order to do our fair share towards achieving the Millennium development Goals. We currently give just 0.32% of our Gross National Income (32 cents in every \$100 of national income).

The 0.7% target

Australia, in supporting the Millennium Development Goals, has signed on to the Millennium Declaration, in which 191 world leaders declared that,

We will spare no effort to free our fellow men, women and children from the abject and dehumanising conditions of extreme poverty, to which more than a billion of them are currently subjected.

The UN's millennium taskforce has estimated that the cost of achieving the Millennium Development Goals (on top of the resources that poor countries can mobilise domestically) would be at least 0.54% of Gross National Income. When emergency humanitarian relief and other global initiatives are factored in, the amount required is about 0.7% of Gross National Income.

Developed countries have a long-standing (but little kept) commitment to invest 0.7% of their Gross National Income in aid to developing countries. In 1970, Australia (along with the entire UN General Assembly) adopted Resolution 2626 on International Development Strategy for the Second United Nations Development Decade. This resolution stated that,

Each economically advanced country will progressively increase its official development assistance to the developing countries and will exert its best efforts to reach a minimum net amount of 0.7 per cent of its gross national product ... by the middle of the Decade.

In response to the urgent need to increase aid to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, donor countries met in Monterrey, Mexico, in 2002 and urged,

developed countries that have not done so to make concrete efforts towards the target of 0.7 per cent of gross national product (GNP) as ODA to developing countries.

Australia has recently reaffirmed its support for this target (though without setting a timetable to achieve it). The "EU-15" (European Union) donors have all set timetables to reach 0.7% by 2015, which leaves only a handful of countries, including Australia, who have yet to set a timetable for reaching the target.

Although aid is not the only response required to the problem of extreme poverty – which is why the campaign calls for fair international trade, debt cancellation for poor countries, a commitment to good governance, and tackling climate change – more poverty-focused aid is urgently needed if progress is to be made towards the MDGs.

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In 2008–09, Australian aid is budgeted to be \$3.66 billion (or 0.32% of Gross National Income). The Government has further committed to increase aid to 0.5% GNI by 2015, which will be around \$9.5 billion at that time. The Prime Minister has also talked about the importance of doing more to help achieve the Millennium Development Goals, particularly in our region, South-East Asia and the Pacific. He has described extreme global poverty as “the enemy of all humankind.”

However, despite the recent increases (and planned future increases) Australia is still well short of other developed country donors (that give an average 0.45% GNI in aid), and in 2015 we are still likely to be 17th of 22 developed country donors in terms of the size of our aid program.

These increases are enormously welcome, but will still leaving us behind the donor average and well short of the internationally-agreed 0.7% target. These increases are good, but not good enough, falling well short of our fair share of the costs of achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

Can we afford it?

Australia could lift its aid to 0.7% GNI this year, fully fund all domestic programs, deliver tax cuts, and still maintain a budget surplus of over \$17 billion. So scaling aid up to 0.7% GNI by 2015 could easily be funded within projected budget surpluses. Providing 0.7% of GNI to aid would require just over 3% of the federal budget in total.

From a purely self-interested point of view, the positive benefits to Australia of tackling poverty in our region are very strong, as the Prime Minister and many other politicians have noted. Reducing poverty would lead to a more stable and prosperous region. It would reduce the social pressures that have contributed to unrest in places such as the Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea. By supporting better health and education outcomes, it would enhance economic productivity in the region. At a time when other donors have already made a commitment to increase aid to 0.7%, matching this commitment would also enhance Australia's reputation internationally.

Can it be used effectively?

Some politicians have raised the question of whether the additional money could be used effectively if aid was scaled up to 0.7% GNI by 2015. There are some very good reasons to believe that it can be.

First, the world has made enormous progress on improving coordination and effectiveness of aid. Aid donor and recipient countries have made an agreement about accountability, cooperation and coordination in aid – the Paris Declaration – which commits all countries to mutually-agreed targets about ensuring aid effectiveness.

Second, much aid is still delivered on a project-by-project basis, which *is* difficult to scale up rapidly. However, many Governments are moving away from delivering aid through many, fragmented projects that can be costly to administer, and towards providing aid as direct budget support (sometimes for a specific sector such as health or education). Australia should increase its commitment to support the financial and delivery systems of partner countries through this kind of budget support aid.

Third, there are critical MDG areas that already have identified needs, identified avenues for delivering financing to meet those needs, and massive shortfalls in meeting those needs. Health and education are probably the most critical areas.

In health, The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, TB and Malaria – an effective and innovative organisation – has already delivered USD 10.7 billion in funding to proven projects in 136 countries to fight these three diseases. However, it has demonstrated that a large financing gap exists in global plans to stop TB and roll back malaria. The funding gap in nationally and internationally-agreed plans to combat these two diseases will be USD 17.7 billion in the period 2008–10. Australia could substantially increase our commitment to The Global Fund in order to close this gap.

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The Education For All Fast Track Initiative is the world's first global agreement meant to fully fund the education sector plans of developing countries. However, even though developing countries have their education sector plan vetted and approved by donors, this initiative faces a three-year funding shortfall of around USD 1 billion per year for the 36 countries whose education sector plans have already been endorsed, and this shortfall will grow as more countries have their plans approved.

The need is there, and the resource gap is great. Australia could increase aid to 0.7% and be confident that it would be used effectively.

Tell the MP that one area that needs new funding and focus is maternal and child health. Make Poverty History believe that Australia should:

- 1) Increase aid for basic health to \$1 billion per year by the 2010–11 budget (from around \$370 million this year).
- 2) As part of this increase, contribute our fair share to effective international health bodies such as the Global Fund to fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, Global Alliance on Vaccines and Immunisation, World Health Organisation, UNICEF and UNAIDS.
- 3) Actively contribute to the International Health Partnership and other efforts to improve international health coordination and ensure adequate and predictable funding by donors and developing countries.

Australia's fair share of the global cost of achieving Millennium Development Goals 4 and 5 – to reduce the number of children who die from preventable causes and reduce the number of women who die in pregnancy and child-birth will be around \$1 billion in 2010. However, despite recent increases in this area, Australia is budgeting only around \$370 million to basic health in 2008–09.

Proven, cost-effective interventions exist to prevent the majority of child deaths. A series of studies on child survival in the British medical journal, *The Lancet*, in 2005 estimated that scaling-up and focusing on the poorest communities to provide:

- * insecticide-treated bed-nets
 - * basic antibiotics
 - * immunisations
 - * promotion of breast-feeding
 - * oral rehydration treatment to prevent dehydration from diarrhoea
- would prevent almost two-thirds of child deaths.

5) What the MP can do

For all MPs, if they wish to have further information provided, or have a question on notice drafted for them, or be given notes to make an adjournment speech in Parliament, Make Poverty History can arrange for this to be emailed to them within two days.

Government:

- 1) Pass on appreciation to the Parliamentary Secretary for International Development Assistance, Bob McMullan, for the Government's commitment to invest an additional \$300 million for water and sanitation by 2010, and for increased funding for fistula surgery, and to the Prime Minister for the commitment to lift aid to 0.5% GNI by 2015.
- 2) Contact the Prime Minister, Treasurer, and Foreign Minister, seeking a timetabled commitment to lift Australia's aid budget to 0.7% GNI by 2015.
- 3) Contact the Parliamentary Secretary for International Development Assistance, asking him to develop and implement new basic health programs and aid spending on basic health to \$1 billion annually in 2010–11.
- 4) Continue to speak up in support of the Millennium Development Goals in Parliament and in public. (And if the MP has a website – include a link from it to the Make Poverty History site: www.makepovertyhistory.com.au)

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Opposition:

- 1) Pass on appreciation to the Leader of the Opposition, Brendan Nelson, and the Parliamentary Secretary for International Development Assistance, Senator Marise Payne, for their commitment to increase aid to \$4.3 billion by 2010, and make new investments in basic education and health while in Government.
- 2) Call on the Government to invest more in maternal health and child health through the aid program in order to bring our spending on basic health to \$1 billion annually in 2010–11.
- 3) Contact the Opposition Leader, Shadow Treasurer, and Shadow Foreign Minister, asking them to take the lead again on aid policy, by making a timetabled commitment to lift Australia's aid budget to 0.7% GNI by 2015.
- 4) Continue to speak up in support of the Millennium Development Goals in Parliament and in public. (And if the MP has a website, to include a link to Make Poverty History from their site www.makepovertyhistory.com.au)

Minor Party or Independent:

- 1) Continue to speak up about the Millennium Development Goals (and if they have a website – to include a link to Make Poverty History on the site).
- 2) Ask questions and made speeches in Parliament about the importance of child and maternal health, and calling for greater investment in this area.