

## Meeting your MP

**This is a 'how to' guide for arranging a meeting with your MP on poverty and climate change.**

### Why speak out?

Meeting with your MP is an easy and effective way to raise the issues that matter to you *and the world's poorest people*.

Tearfund is here to help you. We've got a dedicated team who want to equip and encourage you as you prepare to meet your politicians. If you have any questions about meeting with your MP, what to ask, or how to respond after your meeting, please do get in touch with us at

[campaigning@tearfund.org](mailto:campaigning@tearfund.org)

### How to arrange a meeting

Although meeting your MP may seem daunting, it's actually very easy to arrange, and most certainly doesn't have to be stressful.

- Find your constituency at <http://www.parliament.uk/mpslordsandoffices/index.cfm> and get in touch with their office. It's probably best to make the initial approach by email or letter.
  - Be aware that MP's offices are often dealing with large amounts of correspondence every day, so follow up your letter or email a few days later with a phone call to check that it's been received.
- Many MPs have a Friday or Saturday advice surgery in their constituency – so this would be the perfect time to meet them!
- You certainly don't have to do all this by yourself. Being part of a group is a great way to show your politicians that these are issues that concern a broad range of people – making your message even stronger! Why not invite a small delegation from your church to come with you?

The meeting could take a number of different forms, such as

- Visiting the politician during their surgery times. A surgery is a regular time when constituents have the chance to meet their MP face to face and discuss anything they like.
- Inviting them out for a coffee. Although this might sound a bit strange, MPs are frequently asked to meet up with their constituents and it is part of their job, so don't feel awkward about it.

### Top Tips for your meeting

- Don't assume your MP **will know any more than you do about the issues** – the chances are they won't. MPs generally know a little about a number of different issues, so take the opportunity to give them some more detailed information about development and climate change.
- Do some **research about your MP** ahead of the meeting to find out what they are interested in or if they have any connection with the issue you're going to speak to them on. Have a look on their website or go to sites like [www.theyworkforyou.com](http://www.theyworkforyou.com) which allow you to search for anything your MP has said on a particular topic in Parliament.
- Before the meeting, **spend some time as a group discussing what you want to cover** within your meeting. Think about it as drawing up an agenda for a church council meeting, work out who will lead on the different agenda points. Spend some time **praying** for your meeting and your MP.

- Remember that the main purpose of these meetings is to demonstrate to MPs the level of concern about global poverty and justice issues that there is within local churches in their constituency. However, a suggested 'agenda' might look like this;
  - **Introductions** – tell the MP something about the church you represent. How many people attend, the community activities you run, etc. Agree with your MP how long you have for the meeting.
  - **Personal Story** – get someone from your group to explain why they're personally passionate about the issue. Perhaps it'll be based on a story from a overseas trip they've been on, or the experience of a campaign event they attended.
  - Invite your MP to share a little about where they stand on the issue.
    - **Focus in** – identify a few key issues that you'd like to discuss in more depth. If you're not sure where to start, why not take along some props to assist the conversation – have a look at the website for some ideas.
    - **Commitment to action** – make sure you finish the meeting with an action point for your MP to take forward. Tearfund will often suggest these to you.
- In the meeting, be polite and listen to what your MP has to say. You might not agree with them but we need to ensure that our interactions are 'full of grace'. Appoint someone to take notes of what you discuss, this is useful if you need to follow up afterwards.
- Before you leave the meeting it would be useful to hand them a letter which reiterates some of the key issues that you've discussed. Contact Tearfund Campaigns Team if you would like a template letter.
- If the politician asks a question you can't answer, be honest, and offer to get back to them with the information.
- **Take the lead in the discussion** – don't let the politician guide the conversation – if they try to change the subject, politely but firmly bring them back to what **you** came to talk about. Asking specific questions makes it harder for them to fill the time talking!
- Take a photo of yourself (or your group) with the politician, and send it to us and possibly to your local media. And don't forget to tell the politician that you are a Tearfund supporter – it will encourage them to take interest in our work.

## After your meeting

- Take some time as a group to 'debrief' on how it went. Have you taken any specific actions away from the meeting?
- After your meeting, write to your MP, thanking them for meeting you and taking the opportunity to restate your points.
- Keep your MP in your prayers.
- **And do please let Tearfund know what you're up to! Send us your stories, successes, photos and anything else that you want others to hear about. We'd love to know how you're getting on, and offer you any help if you need it. Do get in contact – details below.**

## Further information

Contact details: Campaigns Team, Tearfund, 100 Church Road, Teddington, TW11 8QE

[campaigning@tearfund.org](mailto:campaigning@tearfund.org)

0845 355 8355

---

We are Christians passionate about the local church bringing justice and transforming lives – overcoming global poverty.

**www.tearfund.org** 100 Church Road, Teddington, Middlesex TW11 8QE  
0845 355 8355 (ROI: 00 44 845 355 8355) [enquiry@tearfund.org](mailto:enquiry@tearfund.org)

Registered Charity No. 265464