

HOW TO CONTACT YOUR LOCAL MEDIA

Your local media want to hear from YOU! - A simple, how-to guide for engaging the media to maximise your campaigning efforts.

Contacting media is an important way we can use our voice for justice for the poor. This might seem a bit intimidating at first – but remember that a personal story or letter from a local resident has great news-worthiness. Local papers love a local angle and this is often exactly the type of article they are looking for.

It is important to remember that local media are more interested in a unique or entertaining story than in facts and figures; you might be passionate about the statistics behind global poverty, but local media are more interested in the narrative – how the issue is affecting local residents like you.

This is why your involvement in an event like a 'Survive Past Five' 5th Birthday Party or Voices for Justice provides a perfect occasion to contact your local media and provides a fantastic photograph and interview opportunity. Getting coverage in local media also makes a big impact on politicians, who keep a close eye on the local media of their electorate.

Examples of media avenues to contact

- Your local newspaper ('local rag').
- Your local community radio station.
- Your local Christian radio station.
- Your church/denomination's website or blog.
- Denominational newsletter/magazines.
- National/daily papers (this is best done through a 150 word letter to the editor – see the Micah Challenge website for tips on how to write a good letter to the editor).

Tips for writing to your local paper:

1. Contact the editor – Visit <http://www.nla.gov.au/npapers> to find online details of all Australian newspapers. Find the email address for the editor in the 'contact us' section of your newspaper's website

- 2. Send a high-resolution photograph** of your group with the article – pictures often speak more powerfully than words and make articles more attractive to readers.
- Media love kids, so a photo or story about school aged kids taking part in an action such as a 'Survive Past Five' 5th Birthday Party party is an excellent angle. (Make sure you get written permission from parents).
 - See the Micah Challenge website for tips on how to take good photos for the media.



3. Find an interesting, local angle, such as a **MP Visit**, 'Survive Past Five' 5th Birthday Party or **MDG Forum**.

- Include quotes from local residents, politicians and community leaders, such as the minister from your church.
- Keep your article short – preferably less than one page.
- Contact your local media as soon as possible – ideally within three days of the event. You may also like to contact your local media before an event and offer a photo opportunity or interview. Note: If they decline to come to your event, you should still send them a media release and photo after the event.

4. Follow up with a phone call – the day after you send your article, phone the editor to check that they received your article and to see if they need any further information.

5. Be persistent! – Don't be too disappointed if your article doesn't get published the first time you write.

- The more letters and articles on an issue the paper receives, the more likely a story will get published.

6. Let us know if you have an article published in your local media, so we can publish your story on the feedback page of the Micah Challenge website. It's always encouraging to see Micah Challenge supporters profiled in their local media – helping to get justice issues on the media agenda, as part of their advocacy.

Please take the time when organising an event to contact your local media, speaking from your personal perspective as a concerned resident. Be sure to emphasise that you believe the Australian Government should do more to help the poor, for example, by making a solid commitment to reach an aid commitment of 0.7% by 2015. Everyone who takes action has a story to tell. Below you will find a template for a news article.

MEDIA RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: *[Insert date of issue]*

Local voices for global justice *[or come up with your own punchy title]*

Not many Australians have the chance to walk the Nation's corridors of power, but one group of *[Insert name of area]* residents met with MPs in Parliament House Canberra this week to share their concern about global poverty.

[Insert names of group members], members of the *[insert electorate name]* electorate were in Canberra as part of 'Voices for Justice', a gathering of supporters of the Micah Challenge campaign. The event brought together hundreds of campaigners of all ages, from around Australia who want to see the Australian Government act on issues of extreme poverty. In particular, the event calls on world leaders to fulfil their commitments to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

In times of economic uncertainty, we must remember that it's the poorest of the poor who will be worst affected. The World Bank now estimates that more than 300 thousand more children will die each year if the Global Financial Crisis continues. By increasing Australia's International Development Assistance (ODA) to 0.7% - or just 70 cents in every hundred dollars - of our national income, Australia could help save the lives of millions of people in extreme poverty. The Rudd Government has committed to spending 0.5% of GNI in aid by 2015, but this will fall short of what is needed to achieve the MDGs.

The group met with Member for *[insert electorate]*, *[insert name of MP]* MP. *[Name of MP]* expressed interest in the issues, "It is always rewarding to meet people from our area who care about and who work to help those in need" he said. "It's great to see such a fantastic event occurring in Parliament House, it's an important issue and raising awareness is crucial to achieving results." *[Insert your own quote from your MP]*

This was the first taste of political lobbying for the youngest member of the group, 15 year old high school student Jamie Smith. "I think that young people can use their voices to tell the story of people who experience poverty", he said. *[Insert brief personal story from group member]*

Voices for Justice helped participants see that they have a part to play in effecting the decisions of our leaders. "It's so great that I can have an impact on politics", said *[insert name of group member]*. "I got to speak out for people who never usually have their voices heard. It was a fantastic experience."

Micah Challenge is a global movement of aid and development agencies, churches, schools, groups and individuals who want to deepen their engagement with poor communities and influence world leaders to meet their commitments to the Millennium Development Goals. For more information about the campaign visit www.micahchallenge.org.au.