

## HOW TO RUN A MDG FORUM

### What is a 'MDG Forum' and why would we run one?

A Millennium Development Goals Forum (MDG Forum) is a meeting at which Members of Parliament share their views about their party's policies to achieve the MDGs with people of your church (or other organisation) and during which members of your group have an opportunity to ask questions of their MPs.

A MDG Forum can be an effective educational and advocacy tool. A Forum is:

- A good way to educate people in your community about the MDGs and help them to engage with the issues.
- A good way to educate and engage your local Parliamentarians on the MDGs. MPs and Senators juggle a very large number of issues and interests. By inviting them to a Forum, they will need to make sure they are familiar with the facts and with their parties' positions.
- A good advocacy tool. It lets your MP know that there are people in the electorate who are concerned about the issue, and whose votes may be influenced by poverty policies. It is particularly effective to run a Forum in the lead up to a Federal Election.

### Getting ready for your Forum

1. Select two or three dates on which a MDG Forum can be held. Make sure the date:
  - a) is not when Parliament is sitting (in which case your local MP will be in Canberra – see <http://www.aph.gov.au/house/info/sittings/sittingstext.htm> for sitting dates).
  - b) is a time likely to maximise attendance. For example, you may attract good numbers if you can hold the Forum immediately after church or in conjunction with another event. For example, you might like to run a Forum as a part of a 'Survive Past Five' 5th Birthday Party celebration.
2. Invite the candidates for the two main political parties, the Liberal/National Party and the Labor Party, to attend. If your sitting Member is an Independent you should also invite him/her to attend. You will need to decide whether you will invite candidates from minor parties. One thing to be aware of if you do this is that your Forum would be very large, leaving less time to explore the positions of those likely to form the Government.
 

You may also like to include someone from the advocacy arm of a development agency on your panel.

When inviting candidates, let them know that questions will be asked about Australia's approach to the MDGs and global poverty. Ask them to come ready to answer on this topic, including ways their Party policy compares to the Micah Challenge policy suggestions surrounding aid levels and focus, debt, corruption, trade, and climate change.
3. Appoint an MC for the Forum. This should be a person who is a capable public speaker and familiar with the main issues.
4. Ask someone who has travelled in the developing world or been involved with a development agency to share from a personal perspective why they believe it is important to address global poverty, or show a short DVD on poverty. The aim is to personalise the issue – giving a human reality behind the facts and figures of poverty.
5. Advertise your Forum, including to your church, other churches in the area, schools, local advocacy groups (e.g. TEAR supporter groups, other Catalyst groups, Amnesty groups) etc. Be creative – consider flyers, advertisements in church newsletters, and emails.
6. Produce a press release and send it to your local papers. Do this before and after the event. Ring your local papers and invite them to attend and report on the Forum. Use the [How to Contact Your Local Media](#) resource to help you. You can also find an easy to use sample article and a weblink to find your local newspaper(s) on the Micah Challenge website.



## On the day

Prepare your venue and make sure someone is set aside to welcome the candidates when they arrive and show them where to sit. A table at the front of the room, on a raised platform with the candidates and MC seated behind it, is preferable.

Make sure there is a supply of paper and pens for people to write down questions. Also provide people with copies of the "Fact Sheet on Poverty" (which is available in the more detailed "How to Run a MDG Forum" resource on the Micah Challenge website).

A suggested outline for the program is below. See the more detailed "How to Run a MDG Forum" resource on the Micah Challenge website with extra suggestions for parts 1, 2 and 5 below.

### 1. Introduction and welcome (5 minutes)

### 2. Poverty stories (5 minutes)

See the Micah Challenge website for pictures to display on a projector, and accompanying text that can be read out. Alternately have someone tell their personal experience of poverty.

### 3. Introducing the MDGs (10 minutes)

Have someone present for no more than 10 minutes on the MDGs – what are they and what does Micah Challenge believe Australia needs to do to achieve them. Use the Micah Challenge campaign factsheets on the website to help you.

### 4. Politicians present (15 minutes)

Introduce the first politician to speak, for approximately seven minutes each. Ensure you give his/her name and Party. After the first Parliamentarian has spoken, express thanks, then introduce the next speaker, again noting his/her name and party.

### 5. Questions (30 minutes)

Thank those who have presented and allow a five minute break for people to write down any questions they have. Play some music in the background. You may wish to then take questions directly from the floor, or ask people to write them down, and then read them from the front. Make sure all panellists have a chance to input on questions. See the Micah Challenge website for suggestions on how to moderate questions.

### 6. Close (2 minutes)

Thank everyone for attending, thank the candidates for attending, and ask people to thank them with applause. Make sure that you finish promptly.

### After the Event

1. Before the candidates leave arrange a photo with them. If local press have covered the event encourage them to take a photo also.
2. In the week following the event write a thankyou letter to each of the candidates who attended. If they promised to do anything during the MDG Forum (e.g. follow up an issue) note this in the letter and, if appropriate, ask for a time to see them to discuss it further.
3. Write a story and send it and the photo along to your local newspaper.

