

# How to have your views heard in the media

## Making the case for nutrition investments



### How to engage the media

This month we are asking you to write to the media to bring pressure to bear on the UK Government to make an announcement on how it will be spending its commitments made at the Nutrition for Growth event. Crucial to making it possible for leaders like Justine Greening, Secretary of State for International Development to make big funding announcements is strong public and media support. If they can see that the people of Britain are behind them in making bold announcements, and that we are paying attention, that helps create the political space for them to push forward an announcement. This month we will be that voice. Getting something published in a local or national paper is an excellent step. **If you are successful in doing so then send a copy of your letter to both your local MP and to RESULTS.**

### Top tips for working with the media

- **Research the publication** you are targeting to check the usual style of items they publish and ensure your submission is similar. Also find out when it goes to press you need to make sure your piece goes in well ahead of publication. Find out who is the best person for you to send your piece to. If it's the general letters page or to the editor then that's easy but if you are pitching a story or feature aim for a journalist or editor with the most relevant interest.
- **Always drop names**, mentioning the policymaker (**Justin Greening**) or agency (**DFID**) that should take action. This will greatly increase the likelihood that they will see this media coverage directly. Anything in the news mentioning an MP will be read by their senior staff and sometimes by the members themselves.
- **Find a 'hook' to hang the story on**. For this action the hook is clear and simple: **We are approaching the one year anniversary of Nutrition for Growth (June 8<sup>th</sup>) and we're still waiting for DFID to tell us how they plan on using their commitment to bring an end to preventable child deaths.**
- **Tell the world!** If you are successful in getting something published make sure you let the right people know. Send a copy to **The Rt. Hon Justine Greening MP, Secretary of State for International Development, DFID, 1 parliament Street SW1A 2EG**, one to **your MP** (find their address at [www.theyworkforyou.com](http://www.theyworkforyou.com)), and one to us here at **RESULTS** ([felix.jakens@results.org.uk](mailto:felix.jakens@results.org.uk)).

### 1. Letter to the Editor

**For this action, a letter to the editor is the most likely chance we'll have for getting a piece of media published.**

Most newspapers and magazines have a 'letters' page that gives readers the opportunity to express their views. Letters are widely read (particularly by local MPs) and provide a good opportunity to discuss your issues. **We want letters to go in on or around June 8<sup>th</sup>** so find out when the nearest edition is and send your letter in good time. **June 8<sup>th</sup> is a Sunday, so consider writing to the Sunday papers on the day.** Check your paper's letters page or website for guidelines on how to submit a letter as these vary.

1. June 8<sup>th</sup>, the anniversary of Nutrition for Growth, provides us with a perfect hook to get a story published. Use it in the first line of your letter!
2. Pick out a few key points to highlight. End on a challenging note with a call to action, and if possible mention the name of people you want to take action, for this action mention Justine Greening MP.

3. Try composing your op-ed using the **EPIC** format: **Engage** the reader, state the **Problem**, **Inform** about solutions, give a **Call to Action**.
4. Keep it short! The ideal length is about 150 words. Letters over 500 words are unlikely to be considered.
5. Here is a sample letter to the editor. Feel free to adapt it, edit it, re-use, scrap, and otherwise re-package.

“Dear sir, exactly one year ago, myself and thousands of others gathered in London’s Hyde Park to celebrate the culmination of the ‘Enough for Everybody...IF’ campaign, calling for an end to global hunger. That day, the UK Government announced it would be spending £655 million pounds on fighting deadly hunger around the world. But here we are one year on and barely 5% of the money has been allocated or spent. It’s time for Justine Greening, Secretary of State for International Development to stand up and honour Britain’s commitments to bring an end to preventable child deaths.”

## 2. Op-eds

Most newspapers print opinion editorials (op-eds) or guest columns. An op-ed is an expression of opinion rather than a news item. Although style varies among different newspapers, an op-ed tends to be lively, provocative and sometimes controversial.

Op-eds are usually 600 to 1,000 words long. If possible, speak to the person who is responsible for making decisions on op-eds to alert them that you intend to submit one and briefly explain the importance of the issue. You can find the contact details for the publication on the newspaper website or in the printed paper itself, often on the letters page. You will most likely need to speak to the ‘editorial desk’ although the terminology varies depending on the publication.

1. Scan your paper’s opinion pages to get a sense of what people are and are not writing about. Make your piece current and relevant. **For this action it may be worth including figures on HIV rates in your local community.**
2. Try composing your op-ed using the **EPIC** format: **Engage** the reader, state the **Problem**, **Inform** about solutions, give a **Call to Action**.
3. Get in touch with how you personally feel about the issue and use examples from your own experience. **You can use and adapt our pre-prepared OP-ED for the facts and figures then illustrate with your own story**
4. Include a call to action for your member of parliament and/or your readers. Name the people you want to take action- **Justine Greening MP**. An op-ed is a prominent piece that will be read by many people; use this opportunity to be bold in what you want.
5. Send your op-ed to the paper along with a covering letter (or email) explaining why the op-ed is timely and of interest to the readers of the publication. **If you need help with this letter let us know.**
6. Follow up on your submission by phone if you have not heard back within one week. Explain that if this newspaper does not wish to publish the op-ed you would like to submit it to other publications and ask when they will make a decision about whether to publish it. If your op-ed is not published by the first newspaper you send it to, consider sending it to an alternative publication.