

Millennium Development Goals: National Day of Action Organizers' Kit

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SUMMARY:

In March 2010 Federal Budget, the Canadian government decided to put a freeze on Official Developmental Assistance (ODA) for the next five years. ODA is aimed at helping poor countries in alleviating poverty and living a life with dignity. Without this assistance, many lives will suffer. As Oxfam Canada Campus Groups, we would like you to bring attention to the importance of ODA during the September 2010 Federal Budget discussion by showing up outside your MP's office with a large banner spelling out "Unfreeze Aid Now" and inviting as many as your peers, colleagues, and community members as possible. The idea is to send a message to MPs that Canadians care about this issue and we want bold action from our leaders! For detailed steps in carrying out this action, please read "Ready, Set, and Action" of this kit.

I. Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)

a) What Are MDGs?

The **Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)** are eight international development goals that all 192 United Nations member states and at least 23 international organizations have agreed to achieve by the year 2015. They are:

Goal 1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger

Goal 2: Achieve universal primary education

Goal 3: Promote gender equality and empower women

Goal 4: Reduce child mortality rate

Goal 5: Improve maternal health

Goal 6: Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases

Goal 7: Ensure environmental sustainability

Goal 8: Develop a global partnership for development

Eradicating extreme poverty continues to be one of the main challenges of our time, and is a major concern of the international community. Ending this scourge will require the combined efforts of all, governments, civil society organizations and the private sector, in the context of a stronger and more effective global partnership for development. The Millennium Development Goals set time bound targets, by which progress in reducing income poverty, hunger, disease, lack of adequate shelter and exclusion — while promoting gender equality, health, education and environmental sustainability — can be measured. They also embody basic human rights — the rights of each person on the planet to health, education, shelter and security. The Goals are ambitious but feasible and, together with the comprehensive United Nations development agenda, set the course for the world's efforts to alleviate extreme poverty by 2015. "

United Nations Secretary-General BAN Ki-moon

b) Where do these goals come from?

At the United Nations Millennium Summit in 2000, all member countries, including Canada, signed a Millennium Declaration committing to do their part to reduce extreme poverty, hunger, disease, illiteracy, environmental degradation and discrimination against women by 2015. The idea of uniting to improve global human conditions is nothing new, but the Millennium Declaration was the first time developing and developed countries of the UN committed to meeting a set of goals with measurable, time-bound targets.

c) *Why are the goals important?*

The Millennium Development Goals represent a historic pact shared by developed and developing countries alike. Important commitments have been made during the summits and conferences of the 1990s, but they were never synthesized in a single set of goals adopted at such high political level of the United Nations. Broken into measurable targets and indicators, the Goals also allow us to track progress and require that countries report on their policies and programs to attain them.

The Goals are also important for the future of humanity because they simultaneously aim to promote human rights, peace, and security.

How the Millennium Development Goal commitments were used to realize Human Rights in India

On 13 December 2006, the Supreme Court of India passed an order requiring the allocation of state and central government funding for supplementary nutrition for children, pregnant women, nursing mothers and adolescent girls. In passing this order, the Supreme Court repeatedly referred to a report highlighting the low probability of India meeting the Millennium Goal on hunger, and specifically to the low likelihood of halving the share of underweight children and halving the proportion of the population below a minimum consumption level.

Text from United Nations Millennium Campaign's "Human Rights and the Millennium Development Goals: Interdependent Commitments".

II. Canada and the MDGs

a) *What is the 0.7 target?*

0.7 is a Canadian initiative and refers to a standard that was set in 1969 by an international commission headed by former Canadian Prime Minister Lester B. Pearson. 0.7 refers to the repeated commitment of the world's governments to commit 0.7% of rich-countries' gross national income (GNI) to Official Development Assistance.



First pledged 35 years ago in a 1970 General Assembly Resolution, the 0.7 target has been affirmed in many international agreements over the years, including the March 2002 International Conference on Financing for Development in Monterrey, Mexico and at the World Summit on Sustainable Development held in Johannesburg later that year.

In Paragraph 42 of the Monterrey Consensus, world leaders reiterated their commitment, stating that “we urge developed countries that have not done so to make concrete efforts towards the target of 0.7 percent of gross national income (GNI) as ODA to developing countries.”

Ours is the first generation in which the world can halve extreme poverty within the 0.7 envelope. In 1975, when the donor world economy was around half its current size, the Millennium Development Goals would have required much more than 1 percent of GNI from the donors. Today, after two and a half decades of sustained economic growth, the Goals are utterly affordable.

b) Why 0.7 matters for the MDGs?

The UN Millennium Project's analysis indicates that 0.7% of rich world GNI can provide enough resources to meet Millennium Development Goals, but developed countries must follow through on commitments and begin increasing ODA volumes today. If every developed country set and followed through on a timetable to reach 0.7% by 2015, the world could make dramatic progress in the fight against poverty and start on a path to achieve the Millennium Development Goals and end extreme poverty within a generation.

As of June 2005, 16 out of the 22 donor countries have met or agreed to meet the 0.7 target by no later than 2015. Sadly Canada isn't one of them. There is great irony in the fact that Canada has not yet set a timetable, since 0.7 was very much a Canadian creation. Now, 35 years later, Canada gives approximately 0.3 per cent (or 30 cents per \$100).

c) A note about aid freeze

In March 2010 Federal Budget, it was confirmed that the government will cap (i.e. freeze) the Canadian Official Development Assistance (ODA) for the next five years. Given a capped aid level for Canadian ODA at 2010-2011 levels, Canada's aid performance will decline from 0.33% of Gross National Income in 2010-2011 to 0.28% in 2014-2015. This performance puts Canada at the lowest ranking in its history as a donor among the 22 donor country – at 18th spot in 2010 according to the OECD DAC. Only the United States (0.20%), Japan (0.20%) Greece (0.21%) and Italy (0.20%) rank lower in 2010.

If there was ever a time to take action, now is that time. We are standing at a moment in time where the inactions of our leaders are harming the people of this planet. Let's stand together and speak out at the same time against this injustice.

d) Your role

So if it is possible to reach the Millennium Development Goals by 2015, why are we lagging behind on so many fronts? When there is enough food to feed the world, why do millions die of malnutrition? When a vitamin A tablet worth only 6 cents can prevent blindness in children why are they still going blind?

What we are missing are not resources but the **political will** both in developed and developing countries. Canada, despite our wealth, has not been able to live up to its commitment to give at least 0.7% of our GNI to official development assistance.

What we need is the political will both in developed and developing countries. This is the heart of the matter. As part of a movement of over half a million post-secondary students, you are in a position to influence our country's policy measures. That means students have the power to create the political will to strengthen Canada's contribution to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

In order to create a strong political will in our leaders, we need to send them an urgent message with our demands: aid helps MDGs so we need to unfreeze it!

III. Ready, Set, and Action!

a) Overview of the proposed action

Every year as part of the Stand Up Against Poverty initiative in September, events are organized of all types to bring attention to the worldwide crisis that we all face – poverty. Given how important aid is in eradicating poverty, we need Canada to responsibly contribute to the Millennium Development Goals. As Oxfam Canada Campus Groups, we need to push our elected representatives to demand that aid freeze is lifted. In the words of Oxfam Canada Policy Coordinator Mark Fried “*This is a winnable cause. If we push hard enough on decision makers in Ottawa, they will change this aid freeze policy.*” Given the federal budget discussions in September, the Stand Up Against Poverty events, and the heads of states meeting in New York from Sept 20-22, 2010, the potential impact of our actions can be very high. The goals of this event is to send a message to decision makers – through MP meetings, media actions, and other forms of MP engagement, - to “**Unfreeze Aid Now**”.

After a successful national Oxfam Canada Gender Justice Summit and CHANGE Initiative, a national action committee was struck to build on the energy that was created in Toronto in June 2010. The committee is mainly composed of student leaders across the country. They met and discussed opportunities to continue campaigning against poverty. Given the momentum built in June and the slow paced actions from the world leaders, it was clear to them that students would have to remind their government why aid is important in eradicating global poverty. **Together they decided on the theme “Unfreeze Aid Now” to be delivered outside their Members of Parliament’s office on or near Sept 16th in lead up to both MDG Summit in New York and the Stand Up Against Poverty.**

The idea is to invite fellow students and community members to Stand Up Against Poverty on or near Sept 16th (date to be chosen by each campus group) outside their Member of Parliament office at a particular time. Once on site, a group of core students will highlight the message of aid by holding a banner that says “Unfreeze Aid Now” and may even want to dress up in heavy winter gear to dramatize the message (it will be visually impactful to have some dramatization element in your midst. You may want to brainstorm other ideas with your fellow campus members, your regional youth liaison, Bill Hynd, Oxfam Canada’s national campaigner (billh@oxfam.ca) or Hasnat Ahsan, campus engagement officer (hasnata@oxfam.ca). And don’t forget to take a picture of your activity!

b) Steps in organizing the action

This is a very simple and effective action to organize. You will be mobilizing a great number of people by inviting them to show up outside the MP’s office and Standing Up Against Poverty and by delivering a message to your MP that aid is important. Here are some things to consider as you start your planning (please note that there is a suggested timeline attached to each item; you may choose to follow it or make your own timeline. Either way, we highly recommend that you do create a timeline for your action):

- 1) Strike up a core group (3-4 people) to plan the event.** *This should be done by 6 weeks before the event. 4 weeks before at the latest.*

- 2) **Outline exactly what your event is going to involve.** Which MPs will you be meeting with? How many people are going to be at your stunt? What are your media attention goals? If you are not able to meet with your MP, how will you engage them? (e.g you could do a letter writing or phone call drive). *This should be done 4 weeks before.*
- 3) **Delegate responsibility for the core aspects of the event and collectively agree on when those aspects should be done by.** As you are going through the planning process, make sure you identify exactly who is responsible for what and when they will finish it by. During meetings, by writing down and making sure everyone understands who is accountable for what and when it will be done by, then things will be much more organized. For example, planning meetings should result in written details like: "John will have the banner made by Sept 10", "Iman will have prepped a group of 3 people to meet the MP by Sept 13", "Min will organize volunteer sign up drives on Sept 4, 8 and 12". Many groups call these "Action Items". Making "Action Items" a regular part of your meetings is a very good habit for your group to get in to. *This should first be done 4 weeks before and repeated and followed up on at every planning meeting.*
- 4) **Use the "MP Meeting Guide" provided to you by Hasnat Ahsan to arrange a meeting with your MP.** *This should be done 3 weeks before.*
- 5) **Once a meeting has been arranged, call your MP's office to let them know that you will be outside their office to Stand Up Against Poverty.** You will speak to their staff. Emphasize that it is a peaceful action to highlight the message that we can end poverty. Ask them if it is okay if you do this action before you have a sit down meeting with them. Invite them to come out and speak with the people who are participating in the Stand Up. *This should be done 2.5 weeks before.*
- 6) **Recruit people to participate in your stunt.** *This should start as early as possible (at least 3 weeks before) and should continue throughout.*
 - a. **Create sign up lists for participants in your stunt.** You can print multiple signup sheets and give them to your organizing committee or to your group's exec. Encourage the people with signup sheets to ask as many people as possible to sign up to participate. Also set up a way that people can RSVP their participation through e-mail, facebook, or on a website.
 - b. **Designate someone as the "Email list master".** This person should collect the names/emails that others collect and add them to one central email list. They should also monitor and reply to email/facebook/online RSVPs. Most importantly, this person should maintain contact with everyone who signs up by emailing reminders or updates about the stunt in the weeks and days leading up to the event.
 - c. **Set a goal for how many people you want participating.** If you want a big stunt, set a goal of 75, if you are going for something small, set a goal of 20. Then, as a group, commit to working hard to sign people up until you reach your goal.
 - d. **Create hype for the event.** Make a facebook event! Send exciting e-mails to your listserves! Put up posters! Make a flyer to distribute around campus! Make announcements in your classes or ask your prof to make announcements. Put a PSA on campus radio or in the campus newspaper! Ask other campus groups to send it to their listserves! Set up info booths around campus or at volunteer fairs! Make sure that the necessary event info and contact info is included in all of the above described communications.
 - e. **Hit the streets and sign people up.** A great way to recruit people for this is just to talk to them and ask them. Go around campus with your sign up lists and approach people, ask them if they have a minute to hear about Oxfam's upcoming national action, describe it

to them in 30 seconds, and tell them they have the opportunity to participate in 15 seconds and ask them to sign up in 15 seconds.

- f. **Keep everything going until the day of your event!**
- 7) **Prepare the stunt essentials.** *These should be done at least 3 days before the event.*
 - a. Paint a large banner (to be held by at least 3 people) that says “Unfreeze Aid Now”
 - b. Obtain a mega phone for the day so you (or someone else in your group) can be the MC (nothing too heavy, just welcome people and tell them about MDG and why they are important).
 - i. The MC should practice what they are going to say beforehand. Hasnat Ahsan will be e-mailing all campus groups a guideline script for the stunts by September 7. MCs can use these as is, or they can simply use them as a guideline or for extra ideas
 - c. Make sure you get all the gear needed to dress up for winter! Parkas, wooly hats, snow boots, the whole shebang. Think about what will make a good photo op and get creative. Maybe you want to wheel a snowblower out there, maybe you want to hand out hot chocolate to media personnel, or perhaps someone in ski and snowboard gear would get some attention. Get creative and get your materials together early.
- 8) **Prep the people who are meeting with the MP.** Follow the “MP Meeting Guide”. *This should be done at least 2 days before the MP meeting.*
- 9) **Get someone in your group to play a “follow up and support role”.** All the above tasks, and other ones you identify, should be clearly delegated to specific individuals on the organizing committee. It will be very helpful if at least one person can take the time to follow up with each of these people in the days before their responsibilities are expected to be done. With this follow up, you should ask if everything is on schedule, if there are any challenges they are facing and support/assistance should be offered. *This should be done throughout the event.*

IV. More information in taking action

A note about engaging your MP

Your Member of Parliament’s job is to hear and consider your thoughts and concerns about issues of federal policy. Your MP and her or his staff are there to hear your concerns. A good MP tracks the issues they receive phone calls and letters on from constituents; many even return messages personally. Don’t underestimate the power of a phone call to your MP!

a) Calling your MP

If calling your MP sounds intimidating, consider calling them after hours and leaving a message on their voicemail. Draft out what you want to say – make sure to identify yourself as a constituent and at a minimum, leave a phone number where you can be reached.

If you have written a letter, e-mail or fax on this issue to your MP make sure you reference it in your phone message or call.

A voicemail message for example:

Hi. My name is Hasnat Ahsan. I live in your riding and my contact number is 555-555-5555. I want you to look into unfreezing the aid budget.

Aid is very important because not only do half of the world's population lives on less than \$2 a day, but every 3 seconds, a child dies as a result of extreme poverty.

Poverty prevents people from eating adequately, caring for the sick, and making a living. Focused, quality aid can be the first step to helping millions of people work their way out of poverty. Over 30 years ago, Canada promised to give **0.7%** of its Gross National Income (GNI) to international aid. The government has continued to make this pledge to poorer countries, but has never set a timeline to meet the goal.

Canada must: Reach the UN target of giving 0.7% of our national income (GNI) to foreign aid.

I hope to hear soon how you are going to stand up against poverty in your interventions at the House of Commons. Again my name is Hasnat Ahsan and my number is 555-555-5555. Thank you.

If you don't have your MPs phone number, go to: <http://bit.ly/findyourmp>

b) Writing your MP

We suggest you use the following framework to make your voice heard:

- 1) **Recommendation:** Start off by noting the article in question and the event – in this case dialogue about unfreezing aid.
- 2) **Justification:** Use some of the facts listed above to outline your reasoning why unfreezing aid is a sensible policy measure. Use the facts selectively by including the ones, which make the most sense to you.
- 3) **Conclusion:** Restate your support for the unfreezing of aid and be sure to re-iterate the fact that aid helps people out of poverty.

The EPIC model (Engage, Problem, Inform about the Solution, Call to Action) is useful for writing and speaking powerfully about an issue.

For example:

Engage:	Dear _____, As a citizen, I think it is time that Canada lives up to its 0.7 promise initiated by former Canadian Prime Minister Lester B. Pearson.
Problem	The freezing of international aid for the next five years will have devastating effects on many poor communities around the world.

Inform about the solution	More than anything, what is urgently needed is for rich countries such as Canada to live up to their long-standing, and long-unfulfilled, commitment to give 70 cents of every \$100 of gross national product (0.7 per cent) to the poorest countries, by the year 2015, so that impoverished societies can fight disease, grow more food, start small businesses, and thereby escape from extreme poverty. Canada needs to unfreeze aid so people around the world can live with dignity.
Call to action	Aid is one of the most important tool is alleviating poverty and now is not the time to freeze it. Can I count on you, in your role as my MP, to support the initiative to unfreeze aid?

c) Meeting your MP

See the attachment titled “MP Meeting Guide”

V. Engaging the media

MPs and other decision-makers track letters-to-the editor and op-eds in national, regional and local papers. Getting published on the importance of aid is an excellent way to make sure that MPs and others know that Canadians want more and better aid and they want action to fight poverty.

10 great tips for getting an Op Ed or your Letter to the Editor published and for maximizing impact!

1. Find a ‘hook.’ Use current events in the news locally or nationally that can be linked to your issue. It can be anything - a recently released report, an upcoming summit or conference, even a controversy that is attracting public attention! Direct some of that attention your way by hooking it to what you want to say. We have found this greatly increases your chances of people published. If your letter relates to something you saw already in the newspaper, be sure to explicitly mention the article you are writing about in your opening statement.

2. Keep it short. Be catchy, snappy and always ensure your text ends with a conclusion that takes the form of a demand. Editors like creative, concise, and insightful commentary. If you can’t say what you want in three paragraphs or less then you should write an opinion piece, or op-ed. It is usually longer (around 300 words) and develops a more in depth argument on a particular topic.

3. Adopt the proper tone. Be respectful and polite. Don’t let anger or slander get in the way of a good opportunity to get your point across. Wit and humor can increase your chances of being published.

4. Expand your reach. If you are going to the trouble to write one good letter, why not modify it slightly and publish it ten or twenty times? You likely won't have time to research how to "hook it" in every case but don't let that prevent you from distributing your letter more widely. Save time by using the 'cut and paste' approach, but make sure you send the letter to each paper individually. Look to the RESULTS Canada website for a media list with up-to-date email publications for publications across Canada at http://www.results-resultats.ca/Tools/LetterToEditor_eng.asp .

5. Don't discriminate! Local community papers are underutilized and often go begging for good, publishable letters. Consider writing to them as well as larger National Dailies. Don't forget magazines and on-line publications as well.

6. Display authorship. The strength of a letter to the editor is that it represents the view of an ordinary citizen. Learn about an issue and then write from their heart and with their own "voice". Most papers need to confirm authorship of your letter so always include your name, address and a daytime telephone number in the signature block.

7. Dynamite title. Once you have completed your letter, give it a title that will draw attention. Newspapers reserve the right to change your title and often do so. However, if the title you are proposing attracts the attention of the Editor, your chances of getting your letter published are much higher.

8. Share it! Letters to the Editor have impact beyond their publication date. After, or even before you are published, share your letter with colleagues, friends, decision-makers. Use your letter as your personal calling card and take the time to broadcast your message beyond the printed page (this can be the basis for a letter or call to your MP).

9. Don't give up. If your letter hasn't been published after a couple of days, call the letters editor and ask him or her for their reasons. Find out what it would take to get published next time.

10. Track it. When you're published, let us know!

Meeting Your MP

A Step-by-Step Guide

Arranging the meeting

- The first step in this process is to find out how to contact your MP, a service which is provided by the Canadian Parliament website. Simply go here: <http://www2.parl.gc.ca/parlinfo/compilations/houseofcommons/memberbypostalcode.aspx?menu=hoc> type in your postal code, and you will receive your MP's office address and phone number
- Next, you should contact your MP's office to decide on a good time for a meeting. You can do this any way you choose, but phone calls tend to be faster and more effective than an email. You may also choose to visit the local office to have some face time prior to the meeting.
- Keep in mind that the MP won't always be in his or her local office. The Parliamentary calendar is freely available, allowing you to see when Parliament is not in session, which is when MPs are more likely to be in their local offices.
<http://www2.parl.gc.ca/housechamberbusiness/ChamberCalendar.aspx?Language=E>
 - Parliament is adjourned all summer, meaning MPs are much more likely to be in their local offices during these months
 - Many MPs come back to their local offices on weekends as well
- Make sure to book your meeting well in advance of your desired meeting time, up to 3 weeks before. MPs can have crowded schedules.

Preparing for the meeting

- You should first decide on the issue you want to address with your MP
- Once the issue has been settled on, you should decide whether you will be meeting with your MP alone or with a group.
 - Going alone can be stressful and intimidating
 - A group allows you to be more prepared, with each member taking on a different role in the meeting
- If you decide to go with a group, have a meeting with them beforehand
 - This will allow your group to be better organized, and on the same page when it comes to discussing the issues
- You should next educate yourself about the MP you're meeting, and the party your MP belongs to.
 - Every MP's voting history is freely available here: <http://howdtheyvote.ca/>

- You can also see the MP's position in the party, as well as whatever committees they belong to, by finding him or her here:
<http://webinfo.parl.gc.ca/MembersOfParliament/MainMPsCompleteList.aspx?TimePeriod=Current&Language=E>
- Look for media reports that involve the party, or the MP, related to the issue you've selected to discuss
- Next, you should learn as much as you can about the issue you will be discussing. For this you can use any number of resources. Reports from NGOs are normally relevant, and easy to find. Look for news articles as well.
 - You can also find reports from the government here:
<http://www.canada.gc.ca/publications/publication-eng.html>
 - Also, look for articles provided by the Library of Parliament:
<http://www2.parl.gc.ca/Sites/LOP/VirtualLibrary/index-e.asp>
- Now that you know all you need to know about the issue, you should decide what issues are most important to bring up with your MP. You should breakdown all the information you have found into short, concise, talking points. These points should touch on all the most important points that you want the MP to take away from your meeting.
 - You may want to put this information on a sheet of paper to bring with you to the meeting. This allows you something to look at for reference during the meeting, and you could also leave this information with your MP if they request it.
- You should also decide what your objective for this meeting is. It can be as simple as wanting to build a lasting relationship with your MP. You may also want to have your MP raise this issue during Question Period, or bring the issue up with the critic/Minister in his or her party.
- Shortly before your meeting, you might want to run a practice meeting. This would help you run things better during the meeting, and might make things run more smoothly.
- Finally, make sure to dress appropriately for this type of meeting, business –casual is usually best.

In the meeting

- Before going into the meeting, be sure you are aware of the time. Your MP likely has a busy schedule, so try to talk about everything in a limited amount of time and be concise.
- Introduce yourselves, and give a brief description of the issue.
- Present your issue, using the talking points you developed earlier. Make sure to mention the positive aspects first, and try to find a way to relate the issue to your MP. This can be done through the telling of a story, or mentioning the successes that have come from the government dealing with this issue before. This is especially helpful if your MP's party has dealt with the issue before.
- Mention your objective. Get this out early, so you don't ambush your MP with the prospect of raising an issue in the House at the end of the meeting.

- Outline the support that your issue has. If you have a lot of community support, especially from your MP's constituency, it could help bring your MP to your side. This would be a good time to present a petition, if you have one, as well.
- Listen to the counter arguments. Make sure to respect both sides of the argument, but also be ready to counter any points brought up. You should be prepared for this from the time you've spent researching the issue.
- Wrap-up the meeting. Mention your objective again, and point out your support and why the issue you're discussing is relevant. Also, leave whatever background information you have brought with you, if your MP has requested it. You should also request an update on the progress of your group's objective in a few weeks time.
- Show your appreciation to your MP. Give a simple thank you, and maybe take a quick picture.

After the meeting

- You should immediately sit down with your meeting group and discuss the meeting. Talk about what you thought went well, and what did not. Also, think about what could be improved, and how, for next time.
- Later, have a larger meeting with your group. This is where you can present the results of your MP meeting with the group members who did not attend.
 - You can use this meeting to decide what further actions should be taken.
- Wait for the requested update from your MP. Depending on the result, you could either send a letter of thanks, or have another meeting to discuss the same issue.
- Cultivate this new relationship! Don't be afraid of your MP and continue to meet with them as new issues arise!

Congratulations! You can now successfully orchestrate a meeting with your MP!

Good luck and happy planning!