



# PRIMER 4

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### SUMMARY:

Make headlines in your community and raise awareness on global poverty issues through submitting a letter to the editor. Use this guide to plan, write, and submit your letter to your local paper—and then leverage it to make even more impact!

## PRIMER ISSUE

4

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

**WHY LOCAL MEDIA MATTERS**

Submit a letter to the editor of your local paper to inform community members and your members of Congress about an issue and invite them to act. Newspapers run pieces written by grassroots advocates, especially if the article is well-written, timely, and has a local angle.

Members of Congress often ask World Vision to help educate their constituencies about the importance and impact of U.S. foreign assistance to help generate greater local backing for their supportive action. Letters to the editor are a great way to do this. **Use this guide** for tips on how to successfully submit—and publish—a letter to the editor.

**HOW TO WRITE A LETTER TO THE EDITOR****GETTING STARTED:  
SELECT YOUR PAPER**

The first thing you'll need to do is select the local paper where you'd like to submit your letter. Look online or in the paper for the Opinion section to see if they publish letters from their readers. We can provide you with guidance if you're choosing between more than one local paper.

Next, learn the guidelines for submitting. You can find your local paper's guidelines for editorial submission on their website, often in the "Contact Us," "FAQ," or "Editorial" sections.





## WRITING YOUR LETTER

World Vision has draft letters that you can personalize on several global poverty issues, and we can also recommend the most relevant or strategic topic to write about. Then, we'll help you edit your letter so that it's in the best place for submission.

However, your letter to the editor will be the most successful if you follow these tips:

» **Keep it short.**

A letter to the editor should be between 150 to 300 words, but follow your paper's specific guidelines.

» **Make it locally relevant.**

Newspapers publish information they believe is pertinent to their readers, so your piece is more likely to be published when it is tied to a current issue or local event. Find ways to connect the global issues you care about to local news.

» **Be personal.**

While your letter should include facts about the issue, it should also reflect your personality. Explain why the subject is relevant to you—the writer—and the reader. Don't be afraid to tell your own story and why you care about the issue.

» **Mention your members of Congress.**

You can thank them or encourage them to act in response to the issue you write about. They'll pay more attention if they see their name!



Don't forget to include your first and last name, your title/World Vision Advocate, and your city when you submit. The editor will send you a note to let you know if they're going to run your letter or if they have any questions or edits. Keep us updated so we can support you and share your success!



## SUBMITTING YOUR LETTER

Submit your piece (via email or online form, depending on the paper's guidelines) and ask for a confirmation that it was received. Some papers specify on their website that if you do not receive a reply from them within a certain amount of time then your submission will not be published, so you should follow up and ask for a response if the paper's protocol allows.



## SAMPLE LETTERS

One of the best ways to hone your letter writing skills is to learn from others that are published. Look at recent letters that were published in your local paper. What do they have in common? What length are they? Do they reference a specific article or local event? Do they tend to mention facts and statistics or share a personal story?

You can also check out examples published by advocates just like you in the [Chicago Tribune](#) and [the Austin Statesman](#) (it's the third one down).



## SAMPLE LETTER TO THE EDITOR

### **CALL ON MAINE SENATORS TO CO-SPONSOR FOOD SECURITY ACT**

*Sen. Susan Collins recently met with leadership from the Good Shepherd Food Bank of Auburn to talk about the importance of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, a federally funded program that puts food on the table for Americans who can't access it. I applaud Sen. Collins' focus on feeding the hungry in our nation, and I urge her to also consider how she can address hunger abroad – worldwide, nearly 2.7 million children under the age of 5 die each year from malnutrition. We can change this.*

*Through a U.S.-funded program called Feed the Future, nonprofits, the private sector and academic institutions partner with 12 developing countries to strengthen their food and agriculture systems. They connect local farmers with improved agricultural technology and markets, while also providing nutritious food for their community. Since Feed the Future began in 2011, 9 million more people are*

*(continued)*

*living above the poverty line, and 1.8 million more children are free from stunting caused by malnutrition in these 12 countries. Together, we have made this possible.*

*Right now, Congress has an opportunity to continue the progress we've made in these 12 countries—and make these programs even more effective and efficient. But they might miss it if they don't hear from constituents like us.*

*Sen. Collins was one of the first co-sponsors of the bill that authorized Feed the Future in 2016. Join me in calling on her and Sen. Angus King to show their support again and co-sponsor the Global Food Security Reauthorization Act (S. 2269). Let's continue U.S. leadership in ensuring all children can access healthy futures and making hunger a thing of the past.*

**Carol Smith, Acton**

[www.pressherald.com/2018/03/26/letter-to-the-editor-call-on-our-maine-senators-to-co-sponsor-food-security-act/](http://www.pressherald.com/2018/03/26/letter-to-the-editor-call-on-our-maine-senators-to-co-sponsor-food-security-act/)

## REVISING AND TRYING AGAIN

If you discover the paper will not publish your piece, you can ask if the editor has a reason for doing so. Even if they don't respond to you, you can try a new spin! New articles are published every day that your letter could respond to. Since letters to the editor are short, make a few simple revisions to keep your opinion relevant and resubmit it with the new angle. You don't need to re-write the entire piece to resubmit it—and we can help you revise your letter.



## USING YOUR PUBLISHED LETTER TO THE EDITOR

- » **Mail, email, tweet or hand-deliver your published piece** to your members of Congress to maximize its impact with them, especially if you publicly called them to take a specific action or thanked them in the letter. Having the published letter or editorial in hand opens dialogue with them about the subject and helps hold them accountable to take your requested action.
- » **Share it!** Be sure to share your published editorial or letter with World Vision, so we can track our collective impact and encourage other advocates with your example!
- » **Say thanks.** If your piece is published, follow up with the editor and thank them. It helps to develop a positive relationship with them for future submissions.