

DROP DEBT, SAVE LIVES

COVID-19 AND THE DEBT CRISIS IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

Weren't able to get a meeting with your MP? You can still make sure your voice is heard by taking one (or all) of these three actions:

- 1. Write to your MP**
- 2. Take action on social media**
- 3. Write to your local paper**

1. Write to your MP

Some of you may have written to your MP in the past on this issue. If not, write to them now. You can use this template to help you:

'Dear **xx MP**,

As one of your constituents, I'm writing to express my grave concern about the coronavirus pandemic's impact on the poorest countries and the urgent need for debt relief to help save lives. [It was unfortunate that you were able to meet with me virtually to discuss this issue, so in lieu of a meeting] I am writing to kindly request you write to the Chancellor sharing my concerns on this matter.

In normal circumstances, half the world's population does not have access to essential healthcare. The coronavirus pandemic is placing further strain on already-weak healthcare systems in developing countries, putting millions of lives at risk. The same countries face economic turmoil because of lockdown measures as well as huge drops in commodity prices,

tourism and remittances. The choices available to governments in these countries are further constrained by huge debt burdens. As a new debt crisis approaches, responding to the health crisis is near impossible.

Before the coronavirus crisis, 121 countries were already spending more servicing their debt payments than on their health care systems. For example, Ghana spends four times more on its external debt payments than it does on healthcare. In 2020 alone, the poorest 76 countries were due to spend over \$40 billion on debt repayments. Without immediate action to provide debt relief to the poorest countries, governments will be unable to tackle the coronavirus crisis and [as many as half a billion more people could be pushed into poverty](#).

The UK has already shown important global leadership by signing up to the Debt Service Suspension Initiative (DSSI) – supporting the poorest countries by suspending their debt payments until the end of 2021. However, this is just a temporary measure that suspends only bilateral debt and doesn't include private lenders or institutions such as the World Bank or IMF. It is vital that the UK Government takes action to ensure an extension of the DSSI and the mandatory inclusion of private creditors and multilateral development banks. [Please find enclosed a briefing on this issue](#).

Please write to the Chancellor expressing my concern about the debt crisis and asking for the following from any future debt relief agreements:

- An extension of the DSSI, or a longer-term debt relief initiative that lasts at least four years, to give countries the capacity to invest in healthcare
- The inclusion of private creditors and multilateral development banks in debt cancellation efforts, as without this, countries will still be under huge debt burdens and not be able to cope
- The cancellation, not the suspension of debt, which merely delays the inescapable impending debt crisis faced by countries

Please do send me a copy of the letter you send to the Chancellor, as I would be delighted to see it.

Many thanks,

[\[Your Full Name](#)

[Your full address including postcode\]](#)'

2. Take to social media!

If you can't meet your MP then social media is a great way to show solidarity and get your voice heard!

Tweet at your MP and (or) Rishi Sunak

Check out some of our [graphics here](#) - just save them to your computer and upload them to the social media channel of your choice! Don't forget to add #CanceltheDebt to all your posts.

Here's some suggested copy you can use:

- *There's no time to waste, @RishiSunak. Poorer countries need your help now! If we #CancelTheDebt then those countries can spend more on health care during the #Covid19 pandemic. It's easy: #DropDebtSaveLives.*
- *I'm asking [Your MP] to call on the Chancellor @RishiSunak to #CancelTheDebt which could save millions of people globally from being pushed into covid-related poverty. Let's not waste this opportunity! #CancelTheDebt*
- *.@RishiSunak, the pandemic is pushing millions into poverty. Yet the world's poorest nations are spending more on debt than on health. At this week's #G20 meeting, it's time to #CancelTheDebt*
- *We've all had our lives turned upside down by the pandemic – but the crisis threatens to push millions in the world's poorest countries into poverty. @RishiSunak, you have the power to stop this. Please use that power and #CancelTheDebt.*
- *.@RishiSunak and other G20 finance ministers are meeting this week to discuss how the world rebuilds from the pandemic. We're sending a clear message to the Chancellor that it's time to #CancelTheDebt.*

OR

- **Take a pic**

Step 1. Take a selfie, or ask a friend to take a photo of you creatively displaying the words 'Cancel The Debt', like this:



Step 2. Write your post. We want Rishi Sunak to take note so you could say something like:

The Chancellor has a chance to save 500 million people globally from being pushed into covid-related poverty. @RishiSunak, don't waste this opportunity #CancelTheDebt

Or this:

Some of the poorest countries are having to spend more on debt payments than on healthcare. @RishiSunak you and other Finance Ministers can

change that next week. I stand with hundreds calling on you to #CancelTheDebt

Step 3. Share your image on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram and use the hashtag #CancelTheDebt and tag us @dropthedebt!

If you don't have a social media account, email your photo to us at debtcoalition2020@gmail.com

3. Write to your local paper

Use this template to write to your local paper about debt cancellation and why it's important.

'Dear Editor

This week, finance ministers from rich governments across the world – including our UK Chancellor Rishi Sunak - will be discussing how the world can recover and rebuild from the pandemic.

As a global citizen, I'm writing to express my concern about the coronavirus pandemic's impact on the poorest countries in the world and the urgent need for debt relief to help save lives.

As the coronavirus has spread around the world, concern has grown that poor countries do not have the resources to provide vulnerable people with health care and to support their poorest citizens as the economic effects of the crisis threaten to push millions into extreme poverty. More than 64 countries spend more on paying external debts than on health care, with campaigners pointing to the example of the Central African Republic which has just three ventilators for almost five million people yet it's due to spend \$25 million on external debt repayments in 2020.

[Add a few sentences in your own words, explaining why this is important to you and what you hope will be the outcome of the global financial meetings will be.]

For people living in the world's poorest countries, the knock-on effects of the crisis are set to be catastrophic. Yet at the same time, most of these countries are spending more on debt payments to rich governments, banks and private lenders than they are on their own health systems.

Thousands of us across the country have been calling for the to push for an agreement to cancel debts – not just to suspend debts, storing up more problems for the future.

And to use the UK's voice and power at the World Bank and International Monetary Fund to make sure that those institutions also cancel debts owed to them by the world's poorest nations.

Now is the time to show leadership. Now is the time to cancel the debt.

Yours sincerely

[Your name & details]