

Jubilee USA Network Media Kit

4. Sample Editorial Memo. Editorial writers express the opinions of the newspaper on the left-hand side of the last page of the A section. You can contact the editors on the editorial board anytime by phone or email to ask them to write an editorial in favor of a particular action step, such as urging Congress to pass new debt legislation. You can ask for a meeting to brief them on debt cancellation. Some editorial writers will meet with members of the community; some will simply want to talk on the phone. It is a good idea to submit an Editorial Memo to help them write the editorial. This approach can also be used for a columnist who writes regularly for the op ed page.

Memorandum

To: William Smith, Editorial Writer
From: Name of Person, Group
Date: January 9, 2007
Re: Concrete Action to End Global Poverty

Our Congressperson, Harry Summers, is a leading sponsor of debt cancellation, which would significantly reduce poverty in impoverished nations in Africa, Latin America and Asia. We are writing to ask you to write an editorial urging the new Congress to take bold action on the debt crisis.

Around the world, one in five people live on less than one dollar a day – extreme poverty that is unimaginable to most Americans. The new Congress has the chance to do something about global poverty and we urge them to take this opportunity. Bold new debt legislation is needed which would cancel the illegitimate debts of certain impoverished nations in the southern hemisphere.

In the 1970s, developing nations borrowed money often with unfairly high interest rates and sometimes to the benefit of dictators rather than their people. An example of the impact can be seen in Sub-Saharan Africa, the world's most impoverished region that carries \$201 billion in debt, despite repaying more than 90% of the \$294 billion received between 1970 and 2002. Today, the countries of Sub-Saharan Africa remain burdened debt, paying \$14 billion annually in debt service.

The demands of powerful creditors force developing nations into a downward spiral of deepening poverty by forcing them prioritize debt payments over clean water, adequate housing, AIDS prevention, basic health care, and schooling for their people. Many of these debts can be classified as odious and illegitimate because often these debts were contracted by undemocratic regimes such as the Duvaliers in Haiti, Samuel Doe and Charles Taylor in Liberia, Mobutu Sese Seko in the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Suharto in Indonesia.

Every day, 30,000 children die of easily preventable diseases due to malnutrition and lack of adequate medical care. One person in seven has no access to clean water for drinking, cooking or washing. Around the world, 104 million children do not go to grade school because their parents cannot afford fees, books or uniforms.

The quickest and most just solution is debt cancellation. Simply stated, debt relief works.

Social spending in countries that have received debt relief has increased by 75% on average. Three billion dollars in debt relief has enabled Tanzania to increase funding for poverty reduction by 130 percent over the last six years. Their investments in education enabled approximately 1.6 million children to return to school almost overnight. Debt relief has enabled Mozambique to make strides in combating HIV/AIDS. By 2002, 24 testing and counseling offices were opened; 50 offices will be operating by the end of this year.

Twenty nations in Africa and Latin America have had their debts to the International Monetary Fund, World Bank and African Development Bank cancelled, but this is only the beginning of what is needed. Only one in ten people in the developing world will benefit from the debt cancellation provided to date.

Inspired by Old Testament texts calling for the cancellation of unjust and harmful debts every seven years, people of faith across the country are calling on their elected representatives to observe a Sabbath Year in 2007. In Biblical times, Sabbath Year observance required that debts be cancelled, those enslaved because of debt be freed, and equal relations among community members be restored. In modern times, the Sabbath Year observance calls for the creation of just relationships among nations and alleviation of the extreme poverty that pervades the southern hemisphere.

As Americans, we enjoy so much good fortune, and we understand that from those to whom much has been given, much is also required. We can start by increasing our efforts to end the suffering of people who live in unimaginable poverty. If we care about the future of the world community, we must all do our part – starting by asking our elected officials in Washington, D.C. to pass bold and prophetic debt legislation which will allow more countries to meet the basic needs of their people. This is not an act of charity. It is an act of justice.