

# MEETING YOUR LOCAL MP



**THE ISSUE:** Increasing debts threaten to make it harder for impoverished countries to reduce poverty and inequality. Debt payments by impoverished country governments have increased by 60% in the last three years, taking money away from vital services such as healthcare and education.

One of the reasons for this increase is because loans are being given recklessly, so the money is not spent well. In the worst cases, loans have been given in secret. A solution to this is to make lenders publicly disclose loans to governments, so that media, parliaments and campaign groups in the country concerned can hold their government to account on how the money is spent

The UK is vital to this. Secret loans in recent years to Mozambique, Congo and Chad were given by British companies, and they are owed under UK law. In fact, of the debts owed by African governments to private companies that we publicly know about, 90% of them are owed under UK law.

## MEETING YOUR MP

Building a relationship with your MP is one of the best ways to get debt issues on their radar. MPs are inundated with issues and casework to deal with and as a campaigner it's your job to convince your MP that debt, and their action on debt, matters.

They are much more likely to do this if they meet you in person, more so than just receiving lots of emails or letters. If you would be willing to meet your MP to talk to them about the importance of tackling unjust debts in impoverished countries, it would be incredibly helpful. Here are some steps you can take:

### 1 WHO IS YOUR MP?

If you don't already know, find out who your local MP is by entering your postcode at [www.theyworkforyou.com](http://www.theyworkforyou.com)

### 2 DO YOU WANT TO MEET THEM?

Let us know you want to meet your MP, by telling Tim Jones by email on [tim@jubileedebt.org.uk](mailto:tim@jubileedebt.org.uk) or calling 020 7324 4722. Tim will then link you up with anyone else with the same MP who would also like to meet them.

### 3 WHEN TO MEET?

MPs have regular meetings in their local areas to meet constituents – known as surgeries - often on a Friday. Contact the local office of your MP to make an appointment to talk about the debt crisis in impoverished countries. You can find the contact details for the office of your MP at this website: <https://www.parliament.uk/mps-lords-and-offices/mps/>

### 4 READY TO GO?

Once you have arranged a meeting with your MP, let Tim know on [tim@jubileedebt.org.uk](mailto:tim@jubileedebt.org.uk) or by calling 020 7324 4722. We can then publicise the meeting to other people with the same MP who might join you. Tim will also let you know the one thing your MP can do to support the campaign (based on which party they are part of, and what role they have).

# PREPARATION

## BEFORE

- ✓ Plan what you will say in rough notes, especially what you want to ask your MP to do.
- ✓ Make sure you have some copies of the '[Shine a light on loans to Governments](#)' briefing with (and don't forget to leave one with your MP!)
- ✓ Try to go with one or more other people. You can ask a friend or fellow member of a campaign or religious group.
- ✓ If you keep us informed of your plans, we will try to link you up with other Jubilee Debt Campaign supporters with the same MP.

## ON THE DAY

- ▶ Be sure to arrive on time, even if the MP often runs late.
- ▶ Greet them, introduce yourself as a Jubilee Debt Campaign supporter and explain why you are there. Say why you particularly care about this issue, and what you want the MP to know (see 'What to say' overleaf).
- ▶ Remember that you will almost certainly know more about this issue than your MP. Don't be afraid to talk about the issue in a bit of detail.
- ▶ If your MP goes off topic, try to steer them back. Say something like "I know your time is limited – what I really came to talk about is..."  
A tactic many MPs use is to divert the conversation away from what you want to talk about to what they want to talk about. Be polite, but don't let them do this!
- ▶ Make what you want the MP to do very clear (see What to say overleaf). Try to get a definite yes or no as to whether they will do so.
- ▶ Ask if you can get a picture taken with your MP. If they say yes, please be sure to send it in to the Jubilee Debt Campaign office (and share on Twitter if you use it).

## AFTERWARDS

- ✓ Write an email or letter to your MP to thank them for their time. Re-affirm what action they've agreed to take and ask them to keep you informed. If you're both on Twitter you could also tweet to thank them, sharing a picture if you have one.
- ✓ Tell Jubilee Debt Campaign how it went by calling by emailing Tim on [tim@jubileedebt.org.uk](mailto:tim@jubileedebt.org.uk) or calling 020 7324 4722

# WHAT TO SAY ON THE DAY

THESE ARE THE KEY THINGS WE WANT MPS TO KNOW ABOUT THIS ISSUE:

## DEBT PAYMENTS

Debt payments by impoverished country governments have increased by 60% in the last three years, taking money away from vital services such as healthcare and education.

## INCREASED DEBT DISTRESS

The International Monetary Fund says that the number of impoverished countries in debt distress or at high risk of being so has increased from 15 five years ago, to 32 now.

## SECRET LOANS

One of the reasons for this is that loans are being given in secret, preventing parliaments, media and citizens in a borrowing country from holding their government to account on borrowing and spending.

## MOZAMBIQUE AND CONGO CASE

In the worst cases of secret loans, in Mozambique and Congo, the loans were given by British-based companies, and using UK law.

## PRIVATE COMPANIES INVOLVEMENT

Of the debts owed by African governments to private companies that we publicly know about, 90% of them are owed under UK law.

## THE G20 GROUP

This June, the G20 group of governments will be discussing what action to take to make loans to governments more transparent. The UK has an important role to play in this because it is the legal and financial centre for lending to governments.

## WHAT PARLIAMENT CAN DO

The UK parliament should pass a law which requires all loans given under UK law to governments to be publicly disclosed when the loan is given.

## WHY SOMETHING NEEDS TO BE DONE

Citizens have a right to know about the debts taken out in their name.

## MORE TIPS...

It is key to have one clear thing you want your MP to do on the issue. Speak to Tim on [tim@jubileedebt.org.uk](mailto:tim@jubileedebt.org.uk) or call 020 7324 4722 to find out what it would be most useful for your particular MP to do.

# TRICKY QUESTIONS ANSWERED

Your MP is unlikely to ask detailed questions. But if they do, here are some possible responses to some tricky questions they might ask (or more likely, statements they will make!)

## **DIDN'T WE CANCEL THE DEBT – IT'S COUNTRIES OWN FAULT THEY ARE IN DIFFICULTY AGAIN**

\$130 billion of debt was cancelled for 36 countries in response to the global Jubilee campaign. However, the campaign also demanded regulations to prevent debt crises being created, and these have not been implemented.

Debt crises can be caused by a variety of factors. If loans are given irresponsibly, this is the fault of both the borrower AND the lender. Yes, the particular government concerned is to blame, but so are the companies who lent to them. The citizens of that country are not to blame, especially if loans were given in secret.

The UK has a responsibility to ensure that loans by British companies, and loans given under UK law, to governments are publicly disclosed when they are given.

## **INTRODUCING A REQUIREMENT THAT LOANS UNDER UK LAW HAVE TO BE PUBLICLY DISCLOSED WILL JUST MEAN ANOTHER COUNTRY'S LAW IS USED INSTEAD**

Over 99% of government international debt contracts are owed under UK or New York law. These jurisdictions are used because there is case law which means lenders can be clear how the law will be implemented. It is very unlikely, and would be costly for lenders, to shift to using law other than UK or

New York. Moreover, having our proposed rule could make the UK more attractive as it would clarify what information has to be disclosed for a debt to be able to be enforced in the UK, and allow lenders to show that debt is above board, and so they would be more able to sell it on to other investors. Most government debt is sold by the original lender to other companies.

It would be very useful for New York to also introduce the same legislation. Jubilee Debt Campaign are working with groups in the US to try to get New York law changed as well. This issue is already one of the top finance issues being discussed by the G20 group of governments. A really positive move from the UK government will be for it to announce it want to introduce our proposed law as part of the G20 negotiations, and call on New York to do so at the same time. It is the state of New York, rather than the US government, which would need to change the law.

## **INTRODUCING MORE REGULATIONS ON BANKS WILL BE BAD FOR THE UK'S FINANCIAL SECTOR**

Increasing transparency of debts owed by governments is good for lenders because it gives them more information with which to make responsible decisions. Banks do not want to lend to a government and find out afterwards that other banks have already lent money to that government in secret.

The group of multinational banks, the Institute of International Finance, is developing guidelines on disclosing loans

to governments. What we are calling for will just enforce those guidelines, so they have to be implemented by all lenders, not just those who are more responsible.

UK banks and politicians agree that more transparency is good.

In January 2019, Brian Wrigley, Chairman of British banking organisation UK Finance said *"We want to ensure the UK is the safest and most transparent financial centre in the world."* In December 2018, Chancellor Philip Hammond said *"I reject the idea that laxer regulation makes a jurisdiction more attractive."*

## **THE UK ALREADY HAS STRONG REGULATIONS IN PLACE TO STOP BRIBERY AND CORRUPTION**

The Financial Conduct Authority have confirmed to Jubilee Debt Campaign that there are no regulations which require loans to governments to be publicly disclosed.

The London-based banks which gave the \$2 billion loans to Mozambique may have broken the UK 2010 Bribery Act. However, UK authorities have failed to investigate them properly. It is a US investigation which has led to bankers being arrested in the case.

The UK does not have regulations to ensure loans to governments are publicly disclosed. And UK authorities have not been properly enforcing the laws which do exist.