

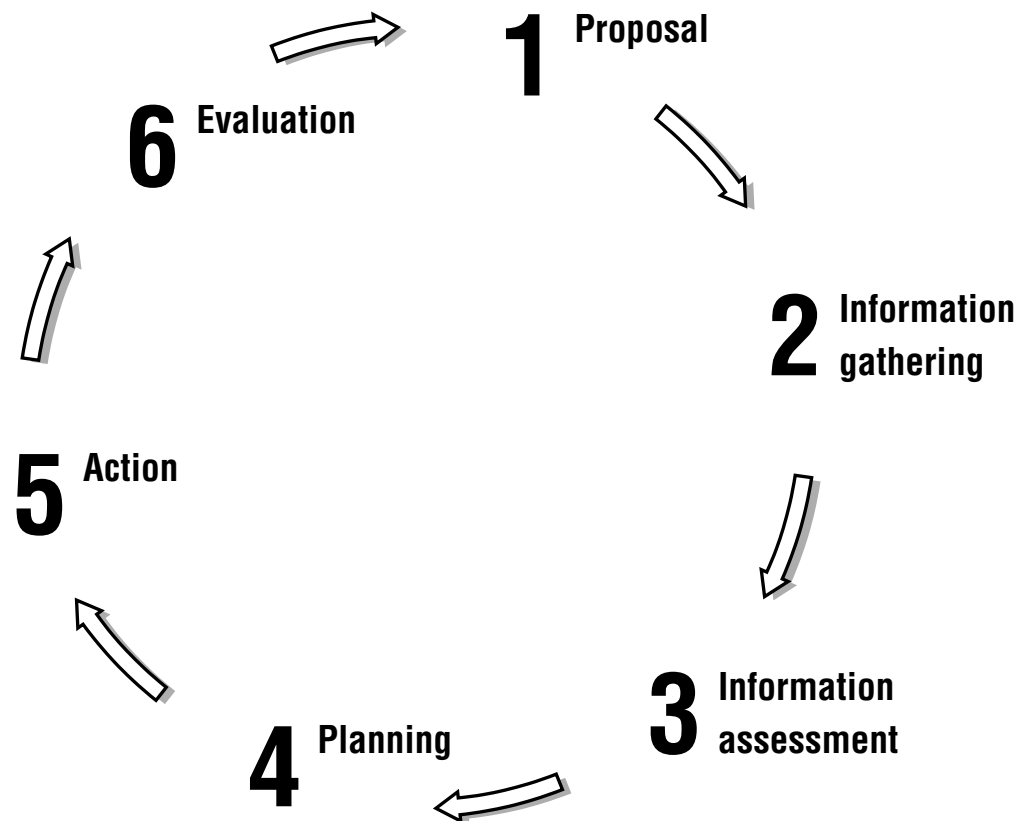
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What Can You Do?

Before you start to think about doing advocacy work, it is a good idea to be familiar with a process for planning it. To get the full picture we would advise you to read the *Advocacy Study Pack* produced by Tearfund. Here are some of the basic things to be aware of, reproduced from the *Advocacy Study Pack*:

THE ADVOCACY CYCLE

Any advocacy initiative can be divided into stages. In practice these stages will overlap. The time it takes you to complete all the stages and the necessary detail will vary greatly, depending on the urgency and complexity of your particular issue, the amount of information you need in order to act, and the advocacy methods you choose. The basic advocacy procedure is:



Within the advocacy cycle the key questions to be considered are:

- What is the problem?
- What are our objectives to solve that problem?
- Who is our target? Who has the power to make change happen?

- What methods and activities are we going to use to achieve our objectives, eg: meetings, letter-writing, press-releases, public demonstration?
- Who are our allies?
- Who are our opponents?
- What time-scale are we working to?
- What risks will we run if we carry out the advocacy? What risks will we run if we don't?
- Who has responsibility for the different activities?
- How can we measure whether we have been successful?

ACTION AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

The first step is to gain an understanding of the problem. A whole range of information is available from the many churches and other organisations working on debt worldwide, but you can also carry out your own research to link the issue to your local area. This is not as daunting as it may sound. (Tearfund will be glad to help by suggesting where you can look for information.) Remember that more important than any experience and training in research methods is a determination to seek only for the truth, and to be persistent in getting to the bottom of things.

Questions to investigate

- **The extent and nature of poverty in your area.** Are there problems of unemployment, under-employment, landlessness, migration from rural areas to city slums, family breakdown, street children etc?
- **The state of basic services.** Is primary education free, adequate and available to all? If not, what proportion of local children are not able to go to school, or go but do not complete their basic education? Are local health services adequate and free to those who cannot afford to pay? Are common medicines always available? Does everyone have access to the water they need, and is it safe to drink? Is transport to the nearest market adequate and affordable? If local services are inadequate, then what are the reasons for this? How much of the government budget is used to pay for basic services and to reduce poverty generally? What other categories of expenditure compete with social spending?
- **The state of the environment.** Is extensive logging taking place? Are there problems of water pollution or over-grazing? Is there industrial pollution, either because environmental controls are inadequate or because they are not enforced? Are such problems linked to an over-riding concern to earn export income and pay off debts?

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- **The size of the national debt.** How much does your country owe to external creditors? How much is owed to domestic creditors? How much are the annual debt service payments? How does the debt and the debt service compare with national income, that is, with Gross National Product (GNP) and the proportion of GNP that the government can reasonably take in taxation.
- **The origin of the debt.** Is any of the debt military debt (the result either of war or 'prestige' spending)? Are you aware of any big projects that proved to be costly mistakes, for example a dam, some unused industrial plant or an over-ambitious city office block? Are politicians, government officials or high-ranking military officers suspected of diverting state funds to private bank accounts overseas? Are foreign exchange earnings dependent on volatile commodity markets (for agricultural products or minerals)?
- **Can you document some case studies** of individual families or communities and the impact of the debt burden on their lives?

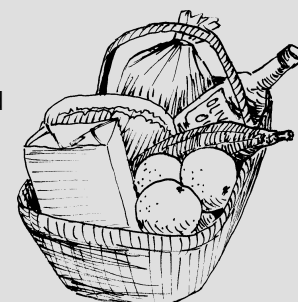
CASE STUDY 1

Churches in Zambia were given a strong call to get more information and understanding about Zambia's debt in a joint pastoral letter issued by the Evangelical Fellowship, Christian Council and Episcopal Conference of Zambia in August 1998.

So the Jesuit Centre for Theological Reflection in Lusaka looked for ways to make the link between local people and the debt crisis. It had already carried out a 'food basket' survey on the price of basic foods in the Lusaka area, and this could be linked to statistics on the amount of debt service paid per person.

Also important was finding a way to address the concerns raised by local people when they were asked to support the campaign. George Show Makaha, an assistant at the Jesuit Centre, produced a lively report of the most commonly asked questions, with suggested answers. For example, many wanted to know how the money released by debt cancellation would be used to help the poor. The answer? – 'That's why we're arguing for a 'debt mechanism' that oversees debt negotiations and poverty reduction in a fair and transparent fashion.' As well as producing printed resources, the Jesuit Centre linked up with Kamoto Community Arts group to spread the message about debt to communities around Lusaka through theatrical performances.

(Source: Jubilee 2000 Zambia)

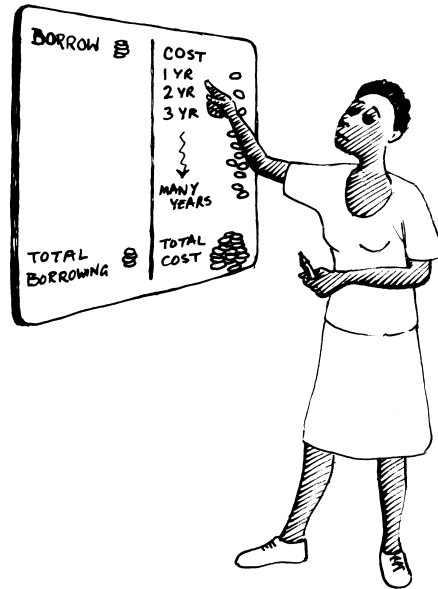


Once you begin to gain an understanding of the issue of debt you can then start spreading the information among local churches and communities. Obviously, the further you can spread knowledge of the problem and its causes, the greater the chances of raising public concern and initiating action. Here are some ways to do it:

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Spreading the information

- Hold an information stall about debt at a local event, on the street, in the market or at church. Explain the problem of debt in a simple way, and tell people how they can get involved in further action on the issue.



- Organise a meeting about the debt issue in your church or community. Explain the issue in a simple way, and show people how debt relates to their own lives. Allow plenty of time for people to ask questions and discuss the issue, and at the end ask them to spread the message by getting involved in further action.
- Think of further ways to educate people about debt, such as writing an article for a local newspaper or magazine, asking a radio station to run a programme about debt, or helping to create a drama production which can be performed in schools and churches.



CASE STUDY 2

Young people at the Nawarembe Resource and Education Centre (Narec) in Kampala, Uganda, carried out education work on debt. They held meetings in schools and villages, collected petition signatures, and even made a radio programme. 'Their work really had an impact,' says Charlotte Mwesigye, campaign co-ordinator at the Uganda Debt Network. 'Because they were enthusiastic young people it encouraged others to get involved, and the education projects helped people to think nationally and globally, relating the issues back to their own village.' The work of the young people at Narec was replicated around the country, as a massive civic education programme involving churches, schools, NGOs and local leaders helped to raise awareness of the debt issue and lay the ground for further campaign actions.

ACTION AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL

Identify potential allies such as other churches and NGOs, women's groups, trade unions, the national debt cancellation movement. Find out what research, if any, they have carried out. Discuss with them:

Points to discuss

- **Possible solutions to the debt crisis.** The options may range from peace and reconciliation efforts (if your country is at war) to cuts in defence spending, to diversification of the economy, to action against corrupt practices. It may be necessary to call upon the government to practise greater openness in deciding on the country's budget. How are priorities set? How might they be changed? For example, could money be diverted from expensive city hospitals that mainly serve an urban élite to primary healthcare in rural and slum areas?
- **Lobbying and teaching opportunities.** Could you win the support of present and future church leaders through input into meetings of denominational leaders and into theological training? How might you and your allies influence local and national government, and become involved in the PRSP process (see SECTION 6)?
- **Opposition.** What arguments and concerns are there about debt relief for your country? What factors in your country might give the World Bank/IMF reasons to delay debt relief? For example, the level of corruption, perceived shortcomings in the legal system (eg business contracts cannot be enforced), economic policies that differ from those encouraged by the World Bank/IMF. How can you counter these arguments and allay concerns?
- **Co-ordinating action.** Can you develop a national strategy for your work, for example agreeing on a common action (such as signing a petition) or choosing a national day or week of action when events and education work on debt will take place all around the country?
- **Identifying key press opportunities.** Think of occasions when you could have maximum impact, such as a visit of politicians from one of your country's biggest creditors. What actions can you take to raise the profile of the debt issue? You might plan a demonstration, for example, or ask church leaders to present a letter to World Bank officials or to the embassies of creditor countries.
- **Production of resources.** What material will you and your allies need to back up your advocacy work? This might include material for:
 - briefing papers (to give to politicians or to present to poverty reduction strategy meetings)
 - press releases
 - educational work among church members or other supporters of the debt campaign.

Decide where you will obtain this material. You may be able to write some of it yourself, based on your own research. Then you may be able to co-operate with other churches and NGOs in your country, using material that they have already written as well as your own. Perhaps you can use or adapt material produced by debt campaigning groups in other countries (see APPENDIX 2 for possible sources).

CASE STUDY 3

'Every child that is born owes \$1,200 – each child.' Sixteen year old Jovana Cruz Condor spreads this message about the stark reality of debt in Peru. She is a member of Manthoc, an organisation for working children with 5,000 members, who decided to join the Peruvian debt campaign, 'Life before Debt', because of the crucial need to raise awareness of the effects of debt.

Through the work of organisations like Manthoc, 'Life before Debt' has created huge public support for debt cancellation, gained media attention and collected more than 1.8 million petition signatures. Campaigners say that their success is because the issue of debt unites all Peruvians: once people realise that they had no say in the negotiations in which Peru acquired its debt, that everyone contributes to debt repayment through their taxes, and that many social services are no longer available because funds have been re-directed to repaying debts, then the population in general is ready and willing to ask the industrialised countries to reduce what is owed to them.

An important factor in the success of the campaign has been the way in which very different groups have worked together. The Round Table for Debt and Development, a grouping of non-governmental organisations, was broadened to form a coalition of both civil and religious organisations, including the Peruvian Catholic Bishops' Conference and a number of the Evangelical and Protestant churches. Everyone recognised that the issue of debt was so important that they needed to work together on the campaign.

Posters, factsheets and stickers were produced with the financial help of partners in the North. Campaigners helped to distribute these materials nationally, both in their own organisations and communities, and also in schools, universities, mothers' clubs and soup kitchens. Talks and workshops were held to discuss the issue of debt and how it relates to unemployment, ecological issues, health education, rural development and women's advancement. Campaigners say that the workshops confirmed what they had thought to be true: that people working at the local level are the best equipped to assess a region's needs and to recommend what sort of projects will help to respond to these needs. The campaign worked best where everyone co-operated, from the grassroots up to and including local leaders, with people coming together for some special activity on debt, or making debt the central topic at a religious or civic event.

(Source: Jubileo 2000 Peru, New Internationalist)

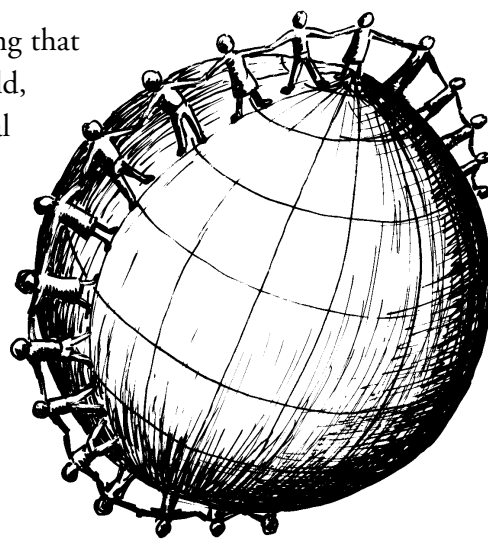
ACTION AT THE INTERNATIONAL LEVEL

Some churches and church-linked organisations will contribute by taking part in national networks, but an international problem such as debt will also require international networking. At least one member of the national network will need to become involved in international networking, to keep informed about what is happening

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in other countries, share information, and have greater impact by co-ordinating action with other campaigners. Remember that:

- Campaigning groups in other debtor countries can benefit from your experiences, and they may well be able to use the resource materials that you produce. You may also get campaigning ideas and resource materials from them.
- Campaigning groups in creditor countries will need help from you. For example, it will help them to have full case study material on your country's debt and the impact on ordinary people in your home area. You may need their help in raising issues with their government and/or with international bodies such as the World Bank/IMF.
- Everyone can draw inspiration from knowing that they are united with others around the world, working to end the injustice of international debt. Try to make as many links as you can with individuals, churches or campaign groups in other countries, and ask them to share ideas and personal stories. You can then use these stories in your own advocacy work to help make the issue more real for the people you are talking to, and to create a sense of solidarity with other ordinary people around the world.



CASE STUDY 4

What do children from St Elizabeth's School in Lunga Lunga, Kenya and Dean's Community High School in Livingstone, Scotland have in common? Answer: they both took part in a 'Life or Debt' art competition organised jointly by the UK and Peru debt campaigns.

This sort of international linking lies at the heart of advocacy work on debt. The Kenya Debt Relief Network involves churches, environmental groups, women's groups, businessmen and women and members of parliament in the campaign for debt cancellation in Kenya. But it also links up with other debt campaigners in Africa and around the world to share experiences and resources, helping to inspire each other and increase the effectiveness of their work by co-ordinating action. For example, Archbishop David Gitari of the Anglican Church of Kenya was one of three African clergy to take part in a speaking tour of Japan (a key creditor), funded by a UK Christian organisation, to raise awareness of Africa's debt in Japan and lobby the Japanese government for further debt cancellation.

Solidarity has helped to support the Kenyan campaign too. When 63 campaigners, including a number of Christians, were arrested during a peaceful debt march in Nairobi in April 2000, floods of protests from around the world helped to ensure that the charges against them were dropped.

