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## WRITE AN OP-ED OR LETTER TO THE EDITOR

**One of the best ways to influence and educate a wide audience outside your immediate circle is to write and submit an Opinion Editorial (op-ed) or Letter to the Editor (LTE) to be published in your local newspaper.** By drafting concise, to-the-point commentary about a current event or article, you join a legacy of writers and advocates who use the power of the press to change minds and influence Members of Congress. **When that LTE or op-ed ties in with CARE's mission and advocacy agenda, you multiply the power of our work while educating readers** on their personal power to affect global change.

Letters to the editor and op-eds are easy to write and get published. Most news outlets have specific guidelines on their website for what type of submissions they accept, how long it should be and how to submit your piece for consideration and publication. There are no guarantees they'll choose your piece, but when you follow their directions and the tips below, you'll boost the odds that your piece will get published.

**“For me, the most effective advocacy tool is to relate things on a human level through stories... it's the most meaningful way I can contribute.”**

**— Katie Brunk, CARE Advocate, Illinois**

### What's The Difference Between an LTE and an Op-Ed?

**LTE's are short and fast!** They provide a quick reply to a recently published article or column. They should:

- Be around 250 words in length
- Reference an article that appeared in that specific newspaper
- Include a call-to-action

**Op-eds are long form!** They offer a new point or counterpoint to an article. They should:

- Be around 400-500 words in length
- Include a call-to-action

### Defining a Call-To-Action

*A call-to-action, or CTA, is a crucial part of your advocacy with elected officials and those in your community. It's what you want someone to do! This could be **cosponsoring a piece of legislation in Congress, showing public support for a specific issue, or encouraging members of your community to register to vote** ahead of an election. CARE strives for clear and succinct calls to action that are impactful for our global work.*

### 13 Tips for Writing a Great LTE or Op-Ed

#### 1. Start with your Regional Advocacy Manager

Reach out and tell them your idea and **they'll give you advice and guidance on writing and submitting your piece.** Your RAM will:

- Help you find the right resources and examples to connect your story and opinion with CARE's advocacy agenda.
- Review your piece and offer feedback.
- Provide personalized, one-on-one training on how to submit and publish your piece.

#### 2. Familiarize yourself with the issues

Learn about the unique issue areas you will base your LTE or op-ed on. **Familiarize yourself with CARE talking points** and make sure your piece is accurate before submitting. Additional background or context on the issues can always be found on [care.org](http://care.org).

#### 3. Get inspired

**Read other op-eds and LTEs for ideas on how to write your own** and check out our sample LTE and op-ed templates below.

### 4. Find your angle

The more **tailored**, **local** and **timely** you are, the higher your chances for success. Be sure to pay regular attention to stories in your local newspaper.

### 5. Be current

Base your LTE or op-ed on information the newspaper has recently published and/or current events they've referenced. **Write and submit your piece close to the time the original event or article occurred**, ideally within a few days.

### 6. Start writing

Expect to write a few drafts of your LTE or op-ed before you are ready to submit it for publication. **Edit thoroughly**, watch your spelling and grammar and be sure to have someone else (like your RAM) read your piece before you submit it.

### 7. Hook 'em

**Open your piece with a strong sentence** that pulls your reader in and keeps them reading. Start with action, not history.

### 8. Provide numbers

Compelling statistics go a long way to add legitimacy to your piece. Your RAM can make sure you have the right stats to boost your opinion and highlight CARE's work.

#### Commonly Used Statistics:

60% of people experiencing food insecurity are women and girls.

Every 2 minutes, a woman dies from a pregnancy-related complication

One in every 69 people is forcibly displaced due to conflict or persecution

### 9. Tell a story

All numbers and no narrative make for a very boring article. **Add personal details** when possible to make your opinion more relevant to readers lives.

### 10. Mention CARE

**Connect the dots for your reader** between the article or event you're referencing and CARE's mission and advocacy agenda. Your RAM can help ensure you represent CARE accurately.

### 11. Mention your Member of Congress

If it's appropriate in your piece, **add a quote from your Senator or Representative and reference their work**. Then, share the piece with their office and tag them on social media once it's published.

### 12. Include a call-to-action

**Tell your reader what you want them to do** after they read your piece. Do you want them to call their Senator, sign a petition, read an article, or donate to a cause? Tell them! Your RAM can help you figure out exactly what your call-to-action should be.

### 13. Stick to the wordcount

If your piece is too long, it might not get published. **It might also get shortened by an editor** who cuts the parts you think are most important, so submit something that is concise to avoid additional cuts later on.

## Publication and Promotion

### What should you do if your piece gets published?

Celebrate and promote your piece! Take pride in your work and the difference you're making. Here's what you should do next:

### Share Your Work!

*"I've been published in  
@[Publication Name]  
urging U.S. Congress to  
support @CARE's global  
work and the issues I  
care about. Check it out!  
[Insert Link]"*

Send your published LTE or op-ed to your Member(s) of Congress via email or social media (which you can find on their website)

- Share it with your Regional Advocacy Manager — it may even show up on CARE's social media accounts!
- Promote the piece on your personal social media accounts
- Email it to people in your community, to CARE staff and to your fellow advocates

### What if your piece didn't get published?

No worries — that happens to every writer. If the topic is still current, try polishing it up and sending it to another newspaper. National publications and newspapers located in other cities and states are always looking for compelling, well-written editorials.

Keep a list of publications you want to target and keep trying.

Another good way to make good use of your written letter and keep the conversation going is to send your unpublished LTE to your Member of Congress. Here's a sample message you can use:

#### Email Template:

Dear Representative/Senator \_\_\_\_\_ (Your Member of Congress's Name),

I am a constituent of yours living in \_\_\_\_\_ (District or State).

I wanted to share this Letter to the Editor I recently submitted to the \_\_\_\_\_ (Publication Name) urging Senator/Representative \_\_\_\_\_ to support \_\_\_\_\_ (issue, like U.S. development assistance). As you'll read in my letter, this is an important issue to me and I hope I can count on Senator/Representative \_\_\_\_\_'s support. Unfortunately, my letter wasn't published by the \_\_\_\_\_ (Publication Name) but I'll be sure to share if it gets picked up by any other local papers.

Your Name

Your Phone Number

Your Email

## How Influential Are LTEs and Op-Eds?

**Members of Congress care a lot about what is written about them in the media and about what their constituents are concerned about. They also frequently submit their own LTEs and op-eds to local and national publications as a way to express their opinions and let constituents and other Members know what they're working on. That makes LTEs and Op-eds very influential for keeping Congress informed and accountable.**



### Samples:

Review CARE's samples below to orient yourself with writing and preparing pieces for media.

Sample LTE: Pg 6

Sample Op-Ed: Pg 7

### Sample LTE:

*Millions of Americans are hungry. Your article today on long lines at food banks during COVID-19 resonated with me as evidence of growing food insecurity around the world. Older Americans remember the soup kitchens that popped up in every city during the Great Depression. People who live in developing countries don't have to think that far back in history. For billions of people who live in poverty around the world, food insecurity is a current event that's growing worse by the day.*

*Right now, 35 million Americans live with hunger. Globally, 820 million people will go to bed hungry tonight, and 2 billion more don't know where their next meal is coming from.*

*When people are hungry, they're unable to work, learn, think or grow to their full potential. When they're fed and have secure food access, they can change their lives and support their families and communities.*

*Whether it's happening in the U.S. or in another part of the world, food insecurity is a solvable problem that can stabilize entire countries. Donate to your local food bank and to organizations like CARE.org who provide solutions for poverty eradication and elimination of food insecurity. Then, contact your Member of Congress and tell them that tackling food insecurity is important to you, important for our communities and essential for stabilizing a hungry world.*

*Your Signature*

### Sample Op-Ed:

*Make friends with the new kids in class. Your article, titled “Welcoming Freshmen to the 118th Congress” by [Author’s Name] was a great read about how new Members of Congress get acclimated to their new position. As someone who has only become politically active in the past few years, it was enlightening for me to learn that, just like the rest of us, these powerful leaders begin as green and new as anyone starting out at a new school or job. They’re excited, inspired, determined, vulnerable, confused and overwhelmed. They’re eager to find their friends and identify the bullies. They’re also looking for trustworthy allies who will tell them the truth, educate them about topics they’re unfamiliar with and support them so they can represent their constituents and lead to their best ability. That provides unique opportunities for advocates who are willing to be that ally.*

*I am a volunteer citizen advocate for CARE, a humanitarian organization that works around the globe to save lives, defeat poverty, and achieve social justice. Along with many other advocates, I hold meetings with Members of Congress to talk about foreign assistance, gender equality, hunger, poverty and other issues related to CARE’s mission. At many of these meetings, my Congressperson, Senator or their staff person is eager to hear what’s happening in the countries where organizations like CARE work. They’re grateful for the data, statistics and stories we provide that connect the dots between foreign assistance policy and legislation and the people CARE serves.*

*They may arrive from very different backgrounds, but most Members of Congress come to understand that we all live within a global economy, that we’re all impacted by global health and that global security depends on everyone’s stability. For brand new Members of Congress, this type of advocacy, provided by volunteer citizens who represent global concerns, offers them a high-level education in foreign assistance and local compassion.*

*For those of you who were inspired to become politically active, I ask you to continue being an advocate for whatever cause stirs your heart. Join with others and reach out via email, social media or in-person (or by video conference) to your Members of Congress. Be their ally. Keep them informed. Educate them, influence them and use your voice to be part of the political process. This is how we’ll create a more stable and secure future for everyone.*