

Campaigning with your local politician

By campaigning with your MP on loss and damage you can help shape the impact they can have on poor communities near and far.



Supporters lobbying their MP on the climate emergency at a mass climate lobby outside Parliament in London.

Why campaign with your local politician on loss and damage?

The UK is the sixth largest historical emitter of carbon emissions, burning fossil fuels that have contributed to the loss and damage being experienced today. It's also still seen as a world leader on climate and therefore could play a key role in negotiations about compensation for communities impacted by the climate crisis.

Find out more about loss and damage at:
caid.org.uk/riseuppayupresources

Your local politician is interested in what people like you care about – even if they don't always agree. They have the power to influence decision making, pursue policies and pass laws that can have a huge impact on people and communities around the world. Their actions can either help

or hinder progress on providing funding for loss and damage.

At the moment, there isn't enough awareness of loss and damage within the UK Parliament – **but you and your church can change that.**

As Christians, we seek to follow Jesus' teaching to love our neighbours. You can do this by speaking up with the world's poorest people. And as a constituent, you have a unique relationship with your local politician through which to pursue justice.

In 2008, the Climate Change Act was put in place largely because constituents just like you championed the rights of the world's poorest people and raised these issues with their local politicians.

1. Getting to know your local politician

Politicians are people – just like you, they have relationships, interests and ideas. They're used to getting out in their constituency, attending events and meeting people. This means there are lots of great opportunities to interact with them.

Research your local politician

Knowing about your local politician's values, interests and views is a good way to help build a relationship with them. You can use this information to think about how and when to approach them. Tailoring your requests can increase the likelihood of them saying 'yes'!

For example, say your local politician hasn't supported action on loss and damage yet, but is supportive of a local environmental project. What links can you make to connect with their interests?

You can find out more information about your local politician, for example:

- **Formal information** – such as their speeches and additional responsibilities. This will help you understand their key areas of work. Search theyworkforyou.com, your politician's website, or speak to their staff. Your local politician may also write a regular column in your local paper.

- **Informal information** – such as their other interests or whether they are a member of a church. This will help you understand your politician as a member of your community. Try looking at their social media profiles and website, and talking to community groups they work with.

2. Reaching out to your local politician

Once you've done some research and found some common ground with your local politician it's time to tailor your approach to them. The most effective way to approach them is to write, asking for an initial meeting.

Frame the issue

- Politicians receive many letters each week, so make sure yours is engaging, concise and clear about why you would like to meet. You should also emphasise that this is a letter from a group of concerned constituents (your church) so they know there is a group of people who support action on loss and damage.
- Check out the template letter to politicians: caid.org.uk/riseuppayuppolitical
- Read the supporter briefing and parliamentary briefing on loss and damage: caid.org.uk/riseuppayuppolitical

When writing to your local politician on loss and damage:

Make it personal

- If you're writing to them as a church, briefly state why you care about loss and damage. See if you can connect the issue to anything local.
- Shape your invitation to fit your local politician's interests and personality. Think back to your research.
- Approach the relationship in a spirit of partnership and mutual benefit. What can your local politician achieve by meeting with you?
- Be clear about why you want to meet with them.

3. Awaiting a response

Your politician receives many letters, so do give them enough time to respond but if you haven't heard from them within two weeks, follow up with a phone call to their office.

If they agree to a meeting, think about:

- How you will run the meeting to get the most out of it.
- How you can engage with them after your meeting, for example, you could invite them to a community event on loss and damage.
- How to share the success of your meeting with the local community and in local media – getting your politician's actions in the public eye is a great way to hold them to account. You can use our template press release to help caid.org.uk/riseuppayupresources

If you don't receive a positive response:

- Is it during a very busy time of year – might they have needed more advance notice?
- Can you tailor your ask even more closely to their interests? Are there any other local groups who might want to help you?

4. Meeting your local politician

When meeting your local politician, make sure you make the most of it by having an in-depth conversation on loss and damage and its importance to you and your community.

Once a date is set, make sure that you/your community have enough time to prepare beforehand. Think about things such as:

- What do you want to get out of the meeting?
- Who will say what (and when)?
- What will you ask your local politician to do as a result?

- How will you show them that you are representing the views of a larger group, church or community?
- Do you have the necessary resources (such as our parliamentary briefing) to give them?

Remember, it's OK to not have all the answers – it's fine to say you are unsure and can find out more information.

5. Following up your meeting

If your local politician has agreed to take an action, it's important to follow up to ensure they do. Don't expect results immediately – give them some time, but don't be afraid to be persistent.

As well as following up on what you've asked your local politician to do, there are other ways to maintain your relationship with them. If you haven't already, invite them to events you are holding as a church and keep them in the loop about your activities.

Check out what they are getting up to and attend public events they're involved in. You may have the opportunity to speak to them and remind them of your meeting.

Don't forget to:

- **Send a thank you to your local politician and include any extra information they have requested.**
- **Remind them of anything they've agreed to do.**
- **Keep the conversation going.**
- **Hold them to account! Make sure they do what you've asked them to but give them reasonable time to do it.**
- **Let us know that you have met with your local politician and what you have achieved via email campaigns@christian-aid.org.**