



## Raise Your Voices for Women and Girls! Write a Letter to the Editor

A letter to the editor of your local newspaper is an effective way to let your elected officials and community know of your passion for improving the lives of impoverished women and girls around the world. It is a relatively easy way to influence public opinion on a large scale, so put pen to paper and be heard!

**Know the rules.** Most publications have a word limit of 150 to 300 words. Respecting the limit will raise your chance of being published and reduce the chance of being edited for space. Sign your full name and provide contact information.

**Be timely.** Newspapers favor letters that respond to recently published articles and opinions. When foreign aid for women and girls has not made headlines, refer to pending legislation or recent events that relate to your point.

**Stay focused.** Given the word limits, letters are most effective when they stick to one topic. State the purpose of your letter up front, briefly explain the issue along with a simple fact or two, and make a clear and concise call to action.

**Name names.** Know who among your elected officials can act on your issue and where they stand. If they serve on a relevant committee in Congress, for example, name them and ask for a specific action. If they have taken favorable action, thank and commend them and name others who should do the same. Elected officials closely monitor constituents' letters to the editor, especially those in which their name appears.

**Speak from your heart.** Few newspapers publish form letters. Find the local angle, use your own words and make them count!

A few talking points:

- State that you are a member of your local chapter of Dining for Women, a grassroots organization with 8,000 members in 420 chapters across the nation. Dining for Women supports gender equality and empowerment in developing countries by awarding grants, advocating for women and girls, and fostering global citizens here in the U.S.
- DFW calls on Congress to support a strong foreign aid budget that puts gender equality at its core.
- Foreign aid represents a very small percentage – about 1 percent – of the total U.S. budget. Only about half of the international affairs budget is used to combat poverty and advance humanitarian efforts.
- Advancing gender equality and empowering women and girls is the most effective way to end extreme poverty, promote peace, and build economic and political stability in the developing world.

**For more tips and tools, visit [diningforwomen.org/advocacy/](http://diningforwomen.org/advocacy/)**