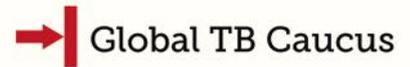


# A guide to working with parliamentarians



*“When it comes to engaging parliamentarians, my experience has taught me a great deal about the “do’s and don’ts”! I’ve been a parliamentarian for the last three years in the UK House of Lords, and for the 20 years before that I was a campaigner and adviser in both the UK Parliament and the European Parliament. I know both sides of the fence and understand the huge impact that can be made when we work effectively together. As a parliamentarian, listening to civil society is one of the key parts of my job. If you make it clear for us, we can help make sure your voice is heard where it needs to be”*

**Baroness Suttie**, Member of the UK House of Lords - Vice-Chair of the UK All-Party Parliamentary Group on Global TB

## Why is parliamentary engagement an important tool to achieve your advocacy objectives?

The TB Europe Coalition (TBEC) strongly believes that the voices of individuals and civil society organisations are critical in the global fight against tuberculosis (TB) around the world. TBEC also believes that acting alone can limit the scope, scale and sustainability of advocacy efforts at national and regional levels. One of the ways in which TBEC members try to shape TB policy is by engaging with national parliaments.

Parliamentarians play an important role in legislation and policy, initiating or amending laws proposed by the government, and influencing government decisions. Furthermore, parliamentarians have an important say on how much money is available for TB efforts and what it gets spent on, smart advocacy can result in a substantial increase in the national TB budgets. Finally, parliamentarians hold an oversight function, providing an accountability and transparency opportunity.

TBEC works closely with the Global TB Caucus, a network of over 2000 parliamentarians, from over 131 countries, who are committed to taking action to end TB. The members of the Global TB Caucus work together and individually to press their governments for improved TB policies and increased domestic funding to tackle disease.

## How can I work with the Global TB Caucus?

The Global TB Caucus exists to foster the global political will to end TB, and aims to create a sustainable political response by ensuring that the network is locally led. This means that national civil society take the lead on building relationships with the parliamentarians in their country, and work with them to push for change where it is needed. The Global TB Caucus is always looking for civil society partners who can use the mechanism of the Caucus to engage their parliamentarians.

The Global TB Caucus operates in regional networks with a Eurasian Parliamentary Group on TB for parliamentarians from Europe and Central Asia. The parliamentarians that form the group take on various activities to raise the profile of the disease within the region, and some have established national parliamentary groups on TB (also known as national TB caucuses). Although the group already has good representation across the region, it is always seeking new parliamentarians to further its work.



## How can I engage with parliamentarians?

There are many variations in the way that individual countries' parliaments work, and the ease of accessing parliamentarians can differ from country to country. However, there are several core ideas to stick to when engaging with parliamentarians that can apply across the world.



### TIPS & TRICKS

- Develop good relationships with their staff. Parliamentarians are often busy, with competing demands on their time. Their staff, who decide what mail they see and what meeting invitations they accept, can be useful allies. They often have limited resources – so sell yourself as an additional resource.
- Have a look at their CVs on the parliament's website. If you cannot find the information you need online, try to make use of your network and contacts that may have access to government institutions and/or parliament.
- They do not have to be an expert on TB to help you. Becoming a political champion is a journey. Advocacy is about education and positive encouragement and it's your job to show them how and why it's important that they help tackle TB.
- Be topical and relevant. How does your ask align with the policies of the parliamentarians party or the interests of their local constituency?

## Identifying parliamentarians to work with – know your audience

Prior research is key to successful engagement. When deciding which parliamentarians you would like to speak to, you might want to think about:

- Parliamentarians who have already showed interest in the issue. They may have tabled questions, made speeches on the subject or have personal experience of TB.
- Your local representative – representing the region or city you or your organisation work in.
- Parliamentarians from the most affected constituencies; for example, where TB numbers are particularly high.
- Parliamentarians who are members of relevant parliamentary committees, subcommittees and interest groups. Most often it is the Health Committee, but depending on the issue you might prefer to target others as well. You might choose to target the Finance Committees when discussing sustainability of programmes after donor withdrawal or the Legal Affairs Committee before debating a new law on TB.
- Parliamentarians who are involved with relevant regional and multilateral organisations. They might be more open to engage on TB with their fellow parliamentarians or willing to raise their profile within the organisation by championing a particular issue.

## Timing your ask

- Timing is everything. It often demands a good understanding of your national decision-making processes and national and regional political context to make it effective.
- Work with parliamentarians to initiate or attend events planned on relevant dates, for example World TB Day on 24 March or WHO World Antibiotic Awareness week.
- Check the agenda of the parliament for the next year:
  - » Any relevant legislative proposals planned – what is the timeline, which committees will provide input?
  - » Timeline for meetings of relevant committees, subcommittees and interest groups;
  - » Timeline for the formulation and adoption of next year's budget;
  - » Elections.

## Briefing parliamentarians – know your message

There are a number of ways in which you can communicate your message to parliamentarians. Providing them with written briefings and meeting them in person are two of the main ways you can engage them.

### Written briefing:

- Keep it concise and to the point, no more than 2 pages.
- Avoid jargon and overly technical language.
- Include top lines with your key messages and a clear ask for the parliamentarians.
- Ensure it is structured logically with clear section headers so that the parliamentarian can skim read it. No one will want to read a dissertation.
- Use statistics, but not too many and always in context.
- When using statistics, try to frame them in interesting ways, for example, saying “a number greater than the population of a particular city or region”, rather than using a number such as 200,000.
- Photographs can add to your message if it is appropriate to use them.
- Personal stories are often a very effective method of engaging parliamentarians.



### TIPS & TRICKS

If you can, tailor the briefing to their region or district. They may find it more meaningful if they are confronted with TB statistics from the region where they grew up.

If it concerns legislative changes, show clearly in the briefing which article or paragraph you want to delete or change as well as the suggested language.

### TIPS & TRICKS

The day of the debate or the event is too late and more than a week before is too early – a week to five days before the debate or an event is just right. However, if the event is high-level, international or a long time in planning, early engagement can be appropriate.



### Face to face meeting:

- Briefly introduce yourself and the organisation you represent.
- Smile and be friendly. Try to develop a rapport with them before going straight in with an ask, especially if it is the first time you are meeting them.
- When you proceed with the ask tell them what you want them to do in one sentence. For example, more money for TB treatment in the next budget negotiations, introduce a particular amendment in the law, or establish a national TB Caucus.
- Know your facts and figures, but be prepared for differing points of view. For example, if you know the parliamentarian does not believe in the safety of ambulatory TB care, keep it in mind and use counter-arguments in your opening statement.
- Follow-up – if you promise to send them more information after the meeting, make sure you do so within the next two days. They will know you are a reliable partner and will be more likely to want to work with you in the future.

## Successful parliamentary engagement – the Georgian example:



In 2015, Georgian TBEC members, the Georgia TB Coalition (GTBC) and USAID Georgia TB Prevention Project (GTPP) decided to approach Georgian Members of Parliament (MPs) and use the Barcelona Declaration (the founding document of the Global TB Caucus) to initiate a conversation with them about the TB epidemic.

Before the meeting the group considered which of the MPs might be most interested in working on TB. Dr George Khechinashvili MP was chosen as a likely ally due to his medical degree and previous work as Director of the National TB Programme. The Georgian TBEC members translated the Barcelona Declaration and related materials into Georgian to help inform a greater number of MPs. They then organised a plenary session, at which Dr Khechinashvili MP gave an impassioned speech on TB. Following the

speech, brochures summarising the issues he discussed were given to the MPs, stirring great interest and resulting in 40 MPs signing the Barcelona Declaration and becoming new members of the Global TB Caucus.

After the plenary event, the Global TB Caucus invited the most active Georgian MPs to attend the Union World Conference on Lung Health in Cape Town in December 2015. Their participation in the conference encouraged them to launch a Georgian National TB Caucus on World TB Day in 2016. The launch was covered extensively by national media and featured a performance by Georgian artists, helping to further engage the public and raise awareness of TB. Continued engagement with the most active MPs has yielded results in more than one area - in 2016, Georgia finally adopted a new law on TB. This was only possible due to heightened awareness of the issue amongst MPs.

### TIPS & TRICKS

If you choose one leading figure amongst MPs, make sure you have contingency plans for if he or she does not get re-elected.

Remain open and engage with members of different political parties.

Be aware of the MP's time schedule – one minute they may be able to give you half a day for in-depth chat about future of TB treatment, another they may be visiting in their constituency and be unavailable.

### Want to know more?

Formed in 2009 by group of activists, TB Europe Coalition aims to bring together national organisations and individuals capable of raising awareness about TB and advocate for bolder policies to fight it at all levels. Seven years later, and many more members richer, TBEC continues to believe in joint work and cooperation. The engagement with the Global TB Caucus, and national parliamentarians in particular, is one of the ways in which individuals and civil society can help to increase political will to fight the disease across the entire region and worldwide.

For more information on TBEC and GTBC engagement or how to work with parliamentarians in your country, get in touch with us at [coordinator@tbcoalition.eu](mailto:coordinator@tbcoalition.eu), or visit our websites at <http://www.tbcoalition.eu> or [www.globaltbcaucus.org](http://www.globaltbcaucus.org)

### Other international and regional networks:

**Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe:** <http://www.assembly.coe.int/nw/xml/AssemblyList/MP-Alpha-EN.asp>

**OECD Parliamentary Network:** <http://www.oecd.org/parliamentarians/members/>

**European Parliamentary Forum on Population and Development:** <http://www.epfweb.org/members>

**Inter-Parliamentary Union:** <http://www.ipu.org/english/membshp.htm>



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