

U.S. Commitment to Global Child Survival Act of 2007 Tips on Writing an Opinion Editorial Piece

An opinion editorial (op ed), a column located opposite a newspaper's editorial section, is a powerful way to convey your message through the media because you control the content. National papers often publish articles written by well-known public figures, so focus on writing op eds for local newspapers, magazines, and other types of media to increase the chance of getting your piece published. Don't get discouraged if your op ed doesn't get published the first time that you submit it. Keep trying!

Writing an op ed doesn't need to be intimidating. Here are some simple steps and a sample op ed to get you started.

- *Contact the newspaper you are targeting to determine the proper protocol for submission.*
- *Don't write an essay, but rather engage the reader quickly by writing something that will surprise readers, engage their emotions and minds, and make them laugh.*
- *Have one clear message or opinion to convey and stick to it.*
- *Tailor the message to your audience.*
- *Use strong evidence to support your opinion, including statistics, a story, research results, without getting too caught up in technical jargon.*
- *Be timely. Op eds must relate to current events so that people will want to read them.*
- *Let your personality come through.*
- *Be succinct and simple. Use simple sentences and vocabulary. Stick with strong verbs rather than abundant adjectives and adverbs. Keep the op ed to no more than 750 words.*
- *Draw strong conclusions and be clear about them.*
- *End the op ed with a call-to-action.*
- *Remember to include your name, street address, e-mail address, phone number, and brief bio at the end of the piece.*

Sample Op Ed

Idol Gives Back...and We Need to Keep on Giving

By Mark Rasmuson and Gary Darmstadt

If you're an American Idol fan like we are, you didn't miss a minute of this week's finale, in which 70 million votes crowned new teen Idol Jordin Sparks, and last month's "Idol Gives Back", which raised more than \$70 million for health programs for children in the U.S. and in Africa.

It is no longer surprising when such star-studded events raise huge sums of money for charitable causes. Americans are generous people and open their hearts and pocketbooks in an emergency like Hurricane Katrina or the Asian tsunami or when asked to give to a worthy cause.....especially when asked by Bono, Madonna, and yes....Ryan Seacrest.

What *is* astonishing is that it takes these kinds of events to raise money for child survival programs in poor countries that should be the cornerstone of America's foreign assistance.

The United States offered global leadership and financial support for child survival interventions and technologies in the 1970s and 1980s, helping to reduce child mortality in poor countries by 50 percent from 1960 to 1990. But over the past decade, U.S. funding for these health programs has stalled, as global initiatives for HIV/AIDS and malaria and other development programs competed for attention and funds.

For example, immunization for childhood diseases has saved over 20 million lives in the last two decades. Immunization rates for the six major vaccine-preventable diseases--whooping cough, tuberculosis, tetanus, polio, measles, and diphtheria--have risen from under 10 percent in the 1970s to nearly 80 percent today. More recently, however, vaccine coverage has leveled off. Worldwide, about 30 million children still do not get the routine immunizations that they need. Rates in some African countries have dropped to less than 30 percent.

Now we have an opportunity to get back on track. Both the House and Senate are now considering a crucial foreign assistance bill, the U.S. Commitment to Global Child Survival Act of 2007, which will authorize the administration to dramatically ramp up U.S. assistance to save the lives and protect the health of children and mothers in the developing world.

The statistics are staggering: More than 10 million children under age 5 will die in 2007, or nearly 30,000 per day—more than the number of adults who will die from AIDS, malaria, and TB combined. Nearly 40 percent of these deaths are in the first month of life, often due to preventable causes like birth asphyxia, and serious infections, including childhood diarrhea and pneumonia and neonatal sepsis. Nearly all of them occur in poor countries. Unfortunately, these deaths are like a “silent tsunami”—devastating and deadly, but invisible because they happen every day all over the world rather than in a sudden catastrophic emergency that receives saturation media coverage.

What makes these deaths even more of a global and moral tragedy is that the solutions are well-known, proven effective, and affordable. A package of about two dozen interventions, including skilled care at birth, breastfeeding, hand washing, childhood vaccinations, treatment for infections like pneumonia, and micronutrients could save 6 million children per year at a cost of less than \$25 per child.

The Global Child Survival Act of 2007 gives the U.S. the opportunity to once again lead the world in protecting the health of mothers and children. The Act calls on the U.S. government to dramatically increase its funding for newborn, child, and maternal health programs over the next five years and help achieve the United Nations Millennium Development Goal of reducing under-five mortality by two-thirds by 2015.

Public opinion surveys routinely show that health care for mothers and children is one of the programs that Americans value most highly in our foreign aid portfolio. These programs should not be left to private charity, mobilized when a humanitarian emergency occurs or when celebrity consciences are moved. They should be an ongoing pillar of

America's foreign policy. U.S. leadership for global health programs will not only help those mothers and children in need, it will help the U.S. as well--demonstrating to the world our commitment to the most vulnerable members of the global community and our unmatched capacity to make a difference in their lives.

Congress should pass the Global Child Survival Act and send it to President Bush for his approval. The President and our leaders on the Hill have demonstrated vision and generosity in taking on the causes of AIDS and malaria in recent years. Now is the time to build on that momentum and refuse to continue to allow the preventable deaths of the world's children and mothers.

Mark Rasmuson is Director of the Center for Global Health Communication and Marketing at the Academy for Educational Development, an independent, nonprofit organization based in Washington, D.C. that focuses on solving critical social problems both in the U.S. and abroad. Gary L. Darmstadt is Associate Professor and Director of the International Center for Advancing Neonatal Health in the Bloomberg School of Public Health at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, Maryland. Both are members of the US Coalition for Child Survival.