

# SAC'S SHINING STAR

AND UNICEF CANADA'S CHILD REPRESENTATIVE



It is not every day that one meets a young person of such considerable insight and maturity (with a schedule as busy as a top CEO) only to discover that he is just 11 years old. The young man of whom I write is Bilal Rajan, UNICEF Canada's Child Representative and a grade 7 student at St. Andrew's College.

Bilal may have only just turned 11 but he has been changing the world for the better for the past seven years. Bilal was first introduced to the concept of helping others when his parents told him about the devastating hurricane in Gujerat, India. The four year old, who was eating a clementine at the time, decided

he could do something to help: he sold clementines door-to-door in his Toronto-area neighbourhood, raising \$350. Thus began a lifelong devotion to, and interest in philanthropy.

As UNICEF Canada's Child Representative, Bilal travels extensively across Canada bringing his message and fundraising experiences to school children around the country. UNICEF has embraced the Schools for Africa campaign (a concept that Bilal fully endorses) for their annual Halloween collection of donations. UNICEF's Schools Programs, of which Bilal is spokesperson and ambassador, has yielded enough donations in the past year to provide school supplies for about 200,000 African children.

Bilal's connection with Africa was solidified by a trip he took to Malawi in 2005 and to Tanzania in the summer of 2007. In keeping with his mantra of helping those in need wherever they may live, Bilal travelled to Tanzania to make a series of educational presentations to villagers about HIV/AIDS, in which



Hands for Help nursery school with 73 orphans attending - July 2007.



*Bilal presenting his 8 Principles Workshop to the rural children in Tengeru, Tanzania in August 2007 after his HIV/AIDS education presentation.*



*Bilal launching 2007 Trick or Treat for UNICEF campaign at Institute of Child Study private school in Toronto in October 2007.*

he identified causes, symptoms and prevention. While in Africa, Bilal's main purpose was to offer reassurance, help and support to the children of HIV/AIDS victims. In Malawi, he spoke with children in schools, community centres and orphanages to reassure them that other children around the world are concerned about their health, education, and general welfare and are all doing something to help. In Tanzania, his workshop series that outlines eight steps one can take to realize their true potential was an inspiration to the school children. Bilal helped them visualize their own goals and set up action plans to help achieve them. Hearing from one their own

age would certainly have been living proof that anything is possible.

On his return from Malawi nearly three years ago, Bilal helped UNICEF Canada celebrate its 50th anniversary by helping raise awareness of the plight of children's education in Africa. He once again met with former Prime Minister Paul Martin in Ottawa (his first meeting was in January 2005 after the Tsunami, upon issuing the Canada Kids Earthquake Challenge) to discuss his trip. Bilal then gave a speech on Parliament Hill in support of UNICEF Canada's "Click or Treat" campaign for Halloween to build schools in Africa.

Bilal's most recent projects include acquiring his school in Arusha, Tanzania, for children orphaned by HIV/AIDS, and his two books due out this spring: *8 Principles to Maximize your Child's True Potential* and *A Fundraising Guide for Activist Kids: Tips from an Underage Overachiever*. These endeavours keep

him extremely busy, and yet he has also managed to establish an Endowment Fund at SAC for a prize to be awarded to a Grade 8 student who has devoted the most hours to noteworthy Community Service projects. When asked how he manages to balance his extensive travels and his schoolwork, Bilal replies that, "It hasn't been that hard. All of my teachers are so helpful and supportive. This is why I wanted to come to SAC, ... because the school really does support the development of the complete man, the well-rounded citizen." Is he a future Headmaster or Executive Director of Advancement? Perhaps, although Bilal has set his sights on a career in medicine.

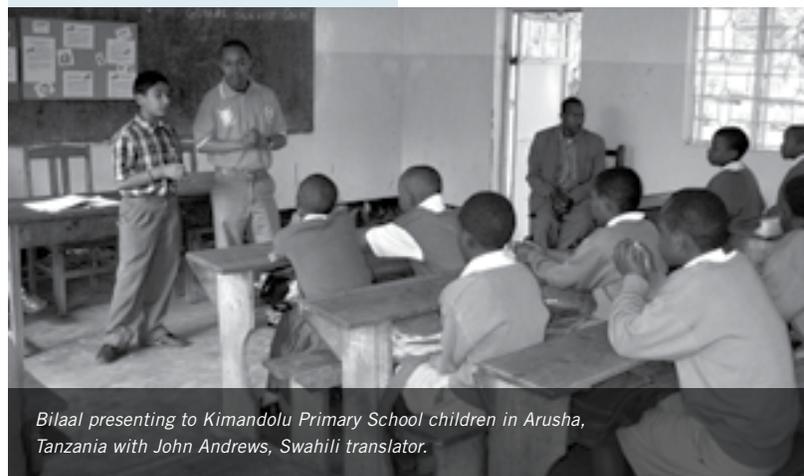
Bilal's dedication to helping others is obvious in his commitment to community service projects here at St. Andrew's. Working closely with the Middle School's Outreach Committee has helped to foster a sense of "giving back" close to home.

His website, [www.handsforhelp.org](http://www.handsforhelp.org), reinforces his message

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**Bilal Rajan**

of raising awareness in Canadian children of the plight of other people in the world, especially children. His motto is simple – "Remember, together we can make a difference". But what is perhaps most striking about Bilal is his lack of judgment for those in our privileged society who, unlike him, do not think



*Bilal presenting to Kimandolu Primary School children in Arusha, Tanzania with John Andrews, Swahili translator.*

of those in need or what they can do to help. "It would be amazing if everyone in the world could help, but this isn't always possible—some people are living difficult lives themselves," he says.

For the young man who wants to be a neurosurgeon and an astronaut, these are wise words indeed. St. Andrew's, and the world, will be a better place with the likes of Bilal Rajan looking out for us all. **A**

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