



Bilaal's "Giving" Story

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Occasionally, on our journey through life, we meet a truly extraordinary person who literally changes the world with seeming ease and grace, who knows no limits, and is content to do nothing less than set new records and inspire the world to heights never before dreamed. Young Bilaal Rajan, of Toronto, Canada, is just such a person. Bilaal made the decision to become a "giver" when he was just 4 years old! He raised funds (\$350) selling clementine oranges door to door to help the 2001 earthquake victims in Gujarat, India.

How a four year-old could possess an understanding of money and the impact it can have is incomprehensible, but he must have found it personally rewarding, because from there he targeted global poverty and by 2007 raised over \$50,000 for *The World Partnership Walk*. He found a powerful benefactor in the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) who matched that figure dollar for dollar.

Bilaal then went on to support the ravaged island of Haiti after the hurricane of 2004. He knew his \$10 allowance would not be sufficient to help on the scale he had in mind, and his desire to help in a big way sparked a brilliant solution. Bilaal asked his father's company to donate boxes of cookies to sell at school recess to raise awareness and funds for the starving Haitian children. Bilaal was bright enough to realize he could be more successful if he leveraged the time and energy of others, and formed a team of 12 other children to help.

Do you see the pattern here? First, he decided to give. Then he acted on his decision without letting himself be bogged down by obstacles, instead focusing only on how to make it happen.

This inspired young man also set up a dedicated website, (www.handsforhelp.org) to raise awareness for children in need. In October 2004, Bilaal and his teammates presented UNICEF with a cheque for \$6,387 from cookies sold. They'd never heard of such young people generating this size of donation, but the elated UNICEF representatives accepted with gratitude and amazement.

In fact, UNICEF Canada was so impressed with Bilaal's achievements, that they made him their official child spokesperson. As such he publicly read Toronto Mayor David Miller's proclamation to make October 31, 2004 "UNICEF Day". Bilaal made front-page

news and has appeared on television many times since to raise the awareness of the plight of the Haitian children.

In true roll-up-the-sleeves leadership style, Bilaal then reached out to over 50 major companies by phone and letter. APOTEX, a leading pharmaceutical company, donated prescription medicine worth \$342,700 CAD for his cause. Heinz Canada donated over 2000 cases of baby food and Loblaws and Shoppers Drug Mart responded to Bilaal's appeal with gift certificates.

Another creative inspiration arose from some acrylic plates Bilaal made for his teachers as Christmas gifts. They loved them, so he decided to make more for a UNICEF drive for children with HIV. In the week prior to Christmas, Bilaal collected over \$1,200 selling his unique, decorative plates. He was unstoppable!

Bilaal heard the call to action next when the South East Asian earthquake and tsunami disaster hit. On December 31, 2004, he issued a UNICEF Canada Kids Earthquake Challenge (www.unicef.ca) whereby urging Canadian children to raise a minimum of \$100 each to achieve a total goal of \$1 million. He also made a personal pledge to raise \$10,000. Incredibly enough, the dynamic young crusader personally raised \$50,000 and as a result, on January 14, 2005, the Toronto District School Board presented Bilaal and the President and CEO of UNICEF Canada, with a cheque for \$1.3 million. The Government of Canada then matched this, making the final donation nearly \$4 million!

So you see, it is entirely possible to start small and finish big!

Not surprising, many high profile people and agencies have honoured Bilaal for his remarkable efforts, including the Right Honorable Paul Martin, Prime Minister of Canada, who organized a press conference. Bilaal wowed the crowd with his insights on fundraising and his vision for the world and the next day was front page news! But Bilaal is not driven (or fazed) by media attention. He attracts it through the purity of his intentions.

The "Canada for Asia Concert" organizers invited Bilaal to be an announcer for the event initiated by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) in January 2005. Canada's premiere artists, athletes, and performers joined Bilaal in the program that raised over \$4 million CAD that night. Bilaal himself assisted the small Canadian Indonesian community in Toronto in organizing a fundraiser especially for the Indonesian victims. It was no surprise that this event, too, was a spectacular success and raised over \$13,000 for tsunami relief.

In March 2005, UNICEF Canada named Bilaal their National Child Representative. Being a curious young man, Bilaal wanted to know how the funds raised for the tsunami victims were being used, and asked his parents to visit four of the most affected countries on his March break. There he met with dignitaries including the President of the Republic of the Maldives. Bilaal returned to Canada and reported back on the situation there, further raising awareness in the public and the media.

Bilal personally visited Africa and the HIV infected children there. He selflessly spread his reassurance and support to the stricken kids in schools and orphanages. He also spent the summer of 2007 volunteering in Tanzania, Africa to bring awareness and education of HIV/AIDS to their communities.

Bilal's motto is "*Together we can make a difference*". The young people he's touched are in awe of his confidence and passion for what he does and are inspired enough to join him and make a difference in whatever ways they can. Adults can learn many valuable lessons from this unassuming, hard-working young man. Though only a boy, Bilal clearly possesses an astonishing talent for not only bringing out the generosity in people, but for motivating them to join him. The results speak for themselves. Does that not remind you of Alex in at least some small way?

And would you believe it? Bilal has embraced information marketing too! The experience this phenomenal crusader has gained in his many objectives came to an inevitable climax when he was inspired to design his "*Eight Principles to Success*" program which he shares by seminar at schools and through speaking engagements. And although he just turned 12, he has written a book called "*Making Change*" which his publisher is offering for sale this Friday in Chapters and on Amazon.

If your school or organization would like to book Bilal for a function, if you would like to partner with him and sell his books on your web site as a joint fundraising effort, or even if his story has simply inspired you to stay your own course when it comes to giving, please email him and let him know at bilal@handsforhelp.org.