

# 13 Year-Old UNICEF Ambassador Bilaal Rajan Challenges Canadian Youth To Help Haiti

Toronto – Bilaal Rajan, the grade nine student at Lakefield College in Ontario, UNICEF Canada Ambassador, youth activist, best-selling author and fundraiser, has issued a challenge to each student throughout the country to raise a minimum of \$100 for the relief efforts in Haiti.

“Hundreds of thousands have died, and millions are without shelter, food, running water or medical attention. Young Canadians have to get involved and help,” says Rajan, the fund-raising wunderkind who has raised millions of dollars for programs that help children in need all over the world. “I think the potential students have for raising millions of dollars is overwhelming.”

Barely a teenager, the Toronto-based childrens’ activist is already a force to be reckoned with. An accomplished writer, Rajan’s book, *Making Change: Tips from an Underage Overachiever* (160 pages, Orca Book Publishers), shows people how they can take charge and make a difference in their communities, no matter what their age.

Rajan is adding an extra incentive for students to raise money. He



13 year-old UNICEF Children’s Ambassador Bilaal Rajan talking with a young student. Bilaal’s travels have taken him to five continents where he has spoken publicly to thousands of youth. His recent Help for Haiti Challenge calls for every student in Canada to raise \$100 for the relief efforts in Haiti.

will shave his head in honour of the school or student that raises the greatest amount of funds. “I’m looking forward to see what kinds of fund-raising ideas young people come up with and how much money they can raise. Am I looking forward to going bald? Not so much. I hope the students are gentle,” he laughs.

At 4, Rajan began his fund-raising success by selling clementine oranges door-to-door raising money for victims of the 2001 earthquake in Gujarat, India. At 7, he founded *Making Change Now*, an organization dedicated to heightening awareness of youth issues and raising funds for children in the developing world. In

March 2005, he was chosen as an official Child Representative and Ambassador for UNICEF Canada.

In 2004, Rajan launched his first UNICEF fund-raising challenge, at the age of eight, called the UNICEF Canada Kids Earthquake Challenge, through which Canadian children raised more than \$1.8 million to help those who were impacted by the earthquake and tsunami of south Asia. Canada’s youth contributed again in May 2008 to those affected by the Myanmar cyclone through Rajan’s *Me and You for the Children of Myanmar* UNICEF fund-raising campaign.

All the proceeds raised by Rajan’s *Help Haiti Challenge* will go to UNICEF and the organization’s relief efforts in Haiti. And for every dollar donated to UNICEF Canada, the Canadian International Development Agency will contribute a dollar to the relief efforts. “The challenges of the Haitian people won’t go away overnight,” he says. “But I know that students throughout Canada will step up to the plate and make every effort to help those who are suffering in the country.”

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