

## Suggested Talking Points and Questions for Bilaal Rajan

### Talking Points

- Bilaal first began fundraising when he was only four years old, selling clementine oranges door-to-door in his neighbourhood in Toronto, Canada to help those affected by the devastated earthquakes in India in 2001. In 2004, Bilaal founded an organization ([www.bilaalrajan.com](http://www.bilaalrajan.com)) to heighten awareness of youth issues and raise millions of dollars to help kids in need all over the world.
- To date, Bilaal has raised millions of dollars for various children's causes, and in March 2005 was chosen as an official child ambassador for UNICEF Canada.
- The world is in desperate need of help. Nine million people – 75% of them children – will die this year alone from starvation and malnutrition. Three billion throughout the world live on less than two dollars a day. One in three children in the world today will never go to school. Hundreds of millions in the developing world go without clean drinking water, adequate shelter or health care on a daily basis.
- Bilaal recently published a book called *Making Change: Tips from an Underage Overachiever*. Bilaal wrote his new book especially for young people. He wanted them to learn how possible – and how much fun – it really is to make a difference. More information can be found at [www.makingchangenow.com](http://www.makingchangenow.com).
- Bilaal travelled to central Africa to speak with children about personal empowerment. He also brought with him HIV/AIDS rapid testing kits which he raised from the Medmira Corporation and conducted testing on young people in Tanzania. As a UNICEF children's ambassador, he also personally visited Malawi, Thailand, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, and the Maldives to oversee how the funds he raised were being spent to help people recovering from the terrible Tsunami of 2004.
- Bilaal is currently creating a youth volunteer program award at middle schools throughout Canada. His main goal is to “inspire one million young people to make change in their communities.”
- Last year, Bilaal started a new initiative called the Barefoot Challenge, where he lived life without shoes during National Volunteer Week. Thousands of young people from more than 25 countries around the world kicked off their shoes to better understand the struggles faced by poor children in underdeveloped countries, many of whom cannot afford shoes, let alone other basic necessities. This year, on International Children's Day (June 1, 2010), Bilaal is doing the same. Barefoot Challenge 2010 is bigger than ever before.
- In June 2009, Bilaal traveled throughout South Africa, where he met privately with former President Nelson Mandela and Archbishop Desmond Tutu. “It was such an honour to meet the world's most influential advocate for peace, social justice and freedom,” says Bilaal. “He showed everyone that when people work together, they can overcome even the greatest of struggles and change the world forever.” Bilaal is also speaking to school children and various charitable organizations.

- In August 2009, Bilaal went on a two-week scientific expedition of the Arctic named “Students on Ice,” where 75 young people learned how increasing greenhouse gas emissions and climate change are affecting the Aboriginal peoples of the far North. He saw first-hand the destructive changes caused by global warming.
- In February 2010, Bilaal issued the “Help for Haiti Challenge,” where he asked each student throughout Canada to raise \$100 for the earthquake relief efforts. He also agreed to have his head shaved in honour of the school that raises the greatest amount of funds.
- Through his very busy speaking schedule, Bilaal is raising further awareness about the relationship between environmental harm and global poverty. “Further damage to our ecosystems will cause underprivileged children even greater hardship,” he says. “We can’t let global warming continue to threaten the waterways, agriculture and food security of millions of people in underdeveloped countries. We need action now.”

### **Suggested Questions**

- You started fundraising when you were just a child. You went on to raise millions of dollars for children’s causes and became an author and UNICEF Children’s Ambassador. What inspires you to do such things?
- Your recent book is called *Making Change: Tips from an Underage Overachiever*. What is the book about and what made you write it?
- Tell me about your travels to central Africa and South America. What issues did you discuss with young people there?
- You often quote Mahatma Gandhi’s famous saying, “Be the change you want to see in the world.” What does this mean to you?
- If you could give some advice to young people who want to make a difference in the world, what would it be?
- What was it like meeting Nelson Mandela and Archbishop Desmond Tutu? What issues did you talk about?
- Tell us about Students on Ice, the journey you took throughout the Arctic. How is climate change affecting the people of the North? What can we do in our own lives to help reduce greenhouse gas emissions?
- You issued the “Help for Haiti Challenge” in February 2010 and offered to have your head shaved by the school in Canada that raises the greatest amount of funds. Where did this idea come from?
- Tell us about your Barefoot Challenge. What is it like going without shoes? What kind of support did you receive throughout Canada and internationally?
- What activities are you planning for the future?