

Goals Oriented

Dylan Mahalingam's Lil' mdgs works with the united nations to help kids.

By **Layla Schlack** // Photograph by **Tony Luong**

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Hemispheres

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WHO: DYLAN MAHALINGAM, 15

MISSION: “To empower and engage youth around the world to get more involved in making the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) happen,” says Mahalingam. Those goals, set by the U.N., include universal education, ending poverty and stopping the spread of HIV/AIDS by 2015. Mahalingam has used his role as a U.N. youth representative to reach out to 20,000 volunteers in 40 countries, and his organization, Lil’ MDGs, has helped raise \$10 million for hurricane relief and \$780,000 for tsunami victims. “Children are naturally empathetic. They want to do something, but they don’t think they can,” he says. “We help them do something.” That can range from taking up a collection to hosting a benefit to sending used clothing to disaster victims.

MOTIVATION: When he was nine years old and traveling in India, Mahalingam saw poverty firsthand—“children working in the street instead of going to school,” he says. He returned to New Hampshire and talked to his cousins, Courtney Fillebrown and Pooja Dharan, about what he’d seen and what they could do. “We talked to my sister, and she told us about the MDGs,” he says. So the three founded the Lil’ MDGs. “We began working to let other kids know about the MDGs, and the U.N. contacted me to become a speaker.”

IN HIS SPARE TIME: “I’m really into music. I play piano and guitar, and I compose some of my own songs,” Mahalingam says. “But what I really, really love is technology. I mean, of course I’ll keep going with philanthropy, but my future is definitely in technology.”

To learn more, go to lilmdgs.org