



Get Inspired: Divya's Story

Divya Shah
14, from Markham

My Story

"My dad used to work in Nairobi, and all my life he told me heartbreaking stories about poverty and children without education. When I heard that sometimes 30 kids share one pencil in Africa, while my friends and I just throw away half-broken pencils, I knew had to help.



"My dad told me about Pencils for Kids, a charity that provides children in need with books and school supplies, and I decided to email them to get involved.

"Soon after, I saw a big story in the newspaper about the stationery company Ecojot's "Buy One, Give One" campaign – for every notebook bought, they would donate one notebook to kids in need. That's when I put two and two together, and I asked the company to extend that campaign to Pencils for Kids as well.

"Working with Pencils for Kids, I got \$15,000 worth of notebooks for kids in Niger. It's just amazing that one small request has made such a difference in people's lives. It makes me so happy because the kids who are getting the school supplies they need, they really don't take for granted little things like pencils."

Learning experience

"A challenge I've faced is my age – people see me as just a child, and people don't trust that youth can do anything. But I think youth has power, because we can relate to the feelings of other children, we understand how important education is, and we can help. This experience has really made me believe that yes, I can make a difference in lifting poverty through education. If I can help, so can anyone else."

Get inspired

"There are many ups and downs in life, but don't give up—you can do anything you set your mind to. Never, never give up, because it's really important to reach those dreams."

Divya Shah was 13 years old when she started her own local chapter of Pencils for Kids. She was the grade 7-8 winner of the 2010 Markham Mayor's Youth Award.