

Interview with Sara Hildebrand, Founder and Director of Millennium Kids in Canada

Q. Who are the Millennium Kids, and what are they trying to accomplish globally?

Millennium Kids are inspiring what's needed to fulfil the United Nations [Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\)](#) by 2030.



MKs ask their prime minister, ministers and members of parliament to keep Canada's promise to end extreme poverty globally. In September 2015 Canada and 192 United Nation member countries signed onto an unparalleled set of 17 goals to radically change our world. The 17 goals include: end poverty, end hunger, health, education, gender equality, water and sanitation, clean energy, decent work, technology, reduce inequalities, sustainable cities, responsible consumption, climate change, oceans, land, peace and global partnership.

We need to hear the voices of our kids! Our innovative justice and advocacy actions are designed to engage both interested students/families and classrooms/faith communities. We desire to foster relationship between kids and their local members of parliament laying the groundwork for lifelong **active citizenship for the common good.**

Q. How many kids are involved, and what are their ages?

Our Millennium Kids' workshops culminate in a creative advocacy action within the workshop. We have taught MK workshops at student leadership conferences, in classrooms and faith communities (approximately 100 JK-grade 10 classrooms in Ontario). Most often teachers incorporate our workshop into their **grade 5/6 government unit, grade 7/8 geography class and grade 10 civics class.**



Have you found that kids can advocate for change within our society, and if so how?

[Kids voices are powerful!](#) (CTV news coverage of MK speaking to Toronto City Council) Conversations with politicians change when a child speaks up. **Kids remind everyone of why we do what we do and re-establish a moral compass by way of their presence. We find they ask profound questions that reveal the heart of matters.** During our last trip to Parliament in Ottawa, a 10-yr-old Millennium Kid asked the deputy minister of international development, *"Why do we sign international agreements we don't intend to keep?"*

[An 11-yr-old and 12-yr-old MKs appeared](#) (45-second video) before Canada's federal finance committee during their pre-budget consultation last fall to ask Canada to make a plan to reach our global aid target and to direct the increased spending to global education and hunger. One of the MKs compared her 60-minutes/wk reading assignment to global aid spending for the committee; *if I want to reach 60 minutes in a week, I need to plan for 10 minutes of reading on Monday, Thursday and Friday, and 15 minutes on Tuesday and Wednesday, she suggested. What is our plan to reach the aid target we promised?* Ultimately the finance committee included in their report a formal recommendation to increase Canada's aid spending to reach the promised target by 2030, with an emphasis on global education and food security spending!

Nine MKs were also asked to speak at an alternative committee meeting on Parliament Hill. Students repeatedly asked, *"when will Canada reach our promised global aid target of 0.7% of national income?"* When a student did not receive a satisfactory answer, they asked the question again!



Q. What success have you seen over the last 10 years?

We have created many advocacy initiatives with capacity to engage Canadian kids nationwide and beyond. During the 2015 PanAm Games hosted in Toronto, we invited Millennium Kids to [chalk “.7% AID” on sidewalks all across Canada to send a powerful message to our government leaders](#) meeting in Ethiopia with world leaders to discuss financing for the Sustainable Development Goals. One MK teen posted a photo of his “.7% AID” written in the sand on a Florida beach!

During the Syrian refugee crisis and following Canada’s promise to welcome 25,000 refugees, MK encouraged students and classrooms across Canada to create [handmade welcome cards for Syrian children fleeing to Canada](#) and to remind our government of their promise. After 60 workshops exploring the Syrian crisis and what it might be like to flee one’s country to a brand new one, forty Millennium Kids delivered 1700 handmade cards to Canada’s minister of immigration receiving applause in the House of Commons! [Many classrooms across Canada](#) delivered their cards to their own members of parliament to be distributed to newcomer refugees in their own neighbourhoods.

For the last four years, MKs have been invited to **participate in the United Nations Economic and Social Council’s Youth Forum on the SDGs in NYC**. MKs have gathered ideas from meeting with Canadian ambassadors to the UN and the 500+ global youth seeking to fulfill the SDGs in their own countries and around the world.

Millennium Kids has raised widespread awareness of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (and its precursor the Millennium Development Goals) through **national television broadcast of public service announcements**, a **twitter hash tag campaign** in collaboration with organizations in the UK and Germany, a formal **petition** (there is no minimum age for signing one in Canada!) asking our government to fulfill the goals and reach the promised aid spending target (set by the UN and agreed to by UN countries) and **lawn signs during Canada’s 2015 election asking our 42nd Parliament to act now on poverty and climate**.

Q. If our readers and members would like to get involved, or have kids that would like to get involved in Millennium Kids, how can they partner with you?

We are currently teaching **interactive SDG workshops** in which students create a 22 cm square collage box representing one of the 17 SDGs. We plan to deliver a set of 17 hand-collaged SDG boxes to our provincial government and members of provincial parliament at Queen’s Park, Toronto, in late April or early May 2018. We still have some openings for workshops this spring. Alternatively, for students or schools outside the GTA, **we would be happy to work with you online to encourage the creation of an SDG collage box followed by communication with your local member of parliament**.

This summer our **federal government is presenting a Voluntary National Review reporting on Canada’s SDG progress at the UN headquarters in New York City**. To ensure our government has children and youth data we are developing an **online survey to discover which SDG actions Canadian kids consider their responsibility** (e.g. to sort my recycling items from my garbage, to reduce my food wastage).

We welcome your participation in these initiatives!

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