

In April 2009, at the age of 24, Shezmin Madhani founded her own charity, Nia Children's Foundation, which helps feed underprivileged children in Africa. Here, Shezmin explains what motivated her to set up the charity...

“ BEING ONLY 24 AND ATTEMPTING TO START MY OWN CHARITY SEEMED CRAZY. BUT ONCE I GOT THAT CONFIDENCE IT CHANGED MY LIFE”

After graduating with a Masters in Chemistry I realised science was not the area I wanted to develop a career in and I was stuck as to what to do with my life. Charity work always interested me so I decided to take a break and go to Kenya where I volunteered in a few slum schools.

I came across one particular school which really got under my skin. St Monica's school was set-up by local women who used their own money to feed and educate underprivileged children; they were not funded by any organisation or government body. The women were struggling to provide basic food and educational materials to the children and were at risk of closing down.

Once I returned to the UK I decided that I had to help them but didn't have the tools or knowledge to do so. I enjoyed organising and charity work so decided to volunteer as an Events Coordinator for a small UK charity and learn about the third sector.

After a year I moved jobs to



working in corporate events and returned to Kenya for a few weeks to visit the school and see how I could help. I calculated the biggest need was feeding the children and managed to gain the support of a local Kenyan Supermarket who agreed to sell me food supplies at cost price and ship them to the school monthly, we called it the 'Food Programme'.

I returned to London and started

raising money to pay this food bill each month. I ran fundraising events, talked to corporate donors and gained the support of a lot of family and friends. I then realised that if I was registered as an official UK charity I would have a lot of doors opened to me so took the step of registering the charity, this is where it all began.

The hardest part was taking that first step. From visiting the school for the first time to actually launching the 'Food Programme' there was a gap of two years. I was too scared of helping as I thought I was out of my league. Being only 24 and attempting to start my own charity seemed crazy. But once I got that confidence it changed my life...

For more information about Nia Children's Foundation, go to www.niachildrensfoundation.org

PARTNERHSIP WITH PVPE

Working in partnership with PVPE, Nia will develop a scheme to broaden the knowledge of children and young people in the UK about the lives children in Africa lead, and create a fundraising scheme to provide children who attend schools in Africa with at least one healthy

meal per day. Nia would also like to create a pen-pal scheme, specifically for primary schools, to link African schools with UK schools and help create a bridge of communication and knowledge. Further details of PVPE's and Nia's partnership will be published on www.pvpengland.org.uk.