Meera Vashisht, a 13-year old girl living in Sugarland, Texas, USA, studying in 7th grade at Sartartia Middle School. She was working on a science project in her school in Texas Last year when she first heard about the Indian Government’s move to replace each of the 77 crore existing incandescent bulbs with power saving light emitting diode(LED) ones. Meera, who was born and brought up in America and is a seventh grader student began thinking harder: would it be really possible for India’s underprivileged to replace their incandescent bulbs with LED lamps that are over seven times as expensive?

The 13-year old got down to drafting a letter which she sent out approx 500 letters to “random people that she could find in her family phone book”, explaining the government’s objective of reducing greenhouses as well as taking electricity to the poorest villages in India and asking for donations that would enable her to distribute LED bulbs. The problem however, as she pointed out in the letter, is that although the government was subsidizing the cost of outreach of the poorest sections of the society where the maximum impact will be felt. Meera’s letter was a plea for donations that would enable her to distribute LED bulbs on her visit to India. “Electricity is empowerment. In rural areas, it helps kids study after dusk, it helps ease the workload of people, it improves agricultural output”, she explained to her potential donors.

Meera has collected $2,079.51 or approximately Rs.1,40,000, with which she purchased 1850nos. 7W LED bulbs from Energy Efficiency Services Limited (EESL), the implementing agency for the UJALA programme and distributed them to the residents of JJ clusters in Keshavpuram in Delhi today.