

Gerard Butler directs 'incredible' school nativity play

Actor Gerard Butler took up a new role during his recent trip to Haiti with school feeding charity Mary's Meals.

The star travelled to the Caribbean to see the charity's life-changing work first hand and to meet some of the children who benefit from it. While visiting the École Communautaire Saint Michel de Morne Mouton in Mirebalais, Gerard was invited to direct the school's Nativity play, a position he accepted enthusiastically.

He rolled up his sleeves and got fully involved in all aspects of the production – from making costumes to coaching the young actors in how to project their voices.

Gerard was surprised at how the children were able to create something great from very limited resources.

He said: "You get there and there are no costumes, no nothing, so we were really starting from scratch. They surprise you with their ingenuity and how they make the most of what little they have ... and suddenly you're like, 'This looks like a proper play!' It was way more than charming, it was incredible."

Gerard was in Haiti with Mary's Meals' founder, Magnus MacFarlane-Barrow, and was clearly moved by the poverty he witnessed and the positive impact the charity is having. Mary's Meals provides daily school meals for children in some of the world's poorest communities to attract them to school and enable them to learn and thrive.

Gerard added: "I've been cheered up no end by these beautiful souls who, despite living in a country that has gone through so much hardship, have nothing but love to give. Communities are transformed by what Mary's Meals does to feed children in a place of education. I've seen it in action in Liberia and now in Haiti."

Haiti is the poorest country in the Americas – three in every four people struggle to survive on less than \$2 a day and more than half the population does not have enough to eat. Mary's Meals works with local communities and dedicated volunteers in Haiti, who prepare huge pots of rice and beans to feed 41,831 hungry children every school day.

Mary's Meals is a simple idea that works. The promise of a daily meal encourages children – who might otherwise skip lessons to work, beg or scavenge for food – to come to school and gain an education that can provide an escape from poverty.

The charity runs school feeding programmes in 17 countries around the world. Until 1 March 2019, public donations to the charity's Double The Love campaign are being matched by the UK government, up to £2 million, to transform the lives of hungry children in Zambia. That means a donation of just £13.90, with UK government matching, will feed TWO hungry children in school for a whole year.

For further information about the Double The Love campaign, and to find out how to get involved, please visit www.marysmeals.org.uk

Watch the heartwarming footage of how the Haitian Nativity came together [here](#).

Notes to Editors

- The adorable film of Gerard Butler helping the children prepare for their Nativity play is available on YouTube here [<https://youtu.be/6kZNfIS4mlk>]. B-roll footage from his trip to Haiti is also available on request.
- Mary's Meals feeds 1,361,586 children every school day in 17 countries across Africa, Asia, Latin America, Eastern Europe and the Caribbean.
- The Mary's Meals campaign was born in 2002 when Magnus MacFarlane-Barrow visited Malawi during a famine and met a mother dying from AIDS. When Magnus asked her eldest son Edward what his dreams were in life, he replied simply: "I want to have enough food to eat and to go to school one day."
- The charity began school feeding in Haiti in 2006 and currently works alongside local partners Hands Together, Summits Education, and Caritas Hinche to provide daily meals to children **41,831 children** at **143 schools** across the country.
- Children receive Mary's Meals in schools in the capital city Port-au-Prince – in Haiti's largest slum, Cité Soleil – and in the Artibonite and Centre regions.
- The charity's vision is that every child receives one daily meal in their place of education and that all those who have more than they need, share with those who lack even the most basic things.
- Mary's Meals is a simple idea that works. The charity provides one daily meal in a place of learning to attract chronically poor children into the classroom, where they receive an education that can, in the future, be their ladder out of poverty.

UK Aid Match

- UK Aid Match brings charities, the British public and the UK government together to collectively change the lives of some of the world's poorest and most vulnerable people.
- It is designed to provide opportunities for the UK public to engage with international development issues and have a say in how UK aid is spent, whilst boosting the impact of the very best civil society projects to reach the poorest people in developing countries.
- For every £1 donated to a UK Aid Match campaign the government will also contribute £1 of UK aid, to help these projects go further in changing and saving lives. UK Aid Match is funded from the international development budget, for donations made by individuals living in the UK.
- Please visit marysmeals.org.uk to find out more about the work of Mary's Meals and the Double The Love campaign.

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