

Mary's Meals is now feeding 1.4 million children every school day

Mary's Meals is now bringing life-changing school meals to **1,425,013** hungry children in **18** countries and has begun feeding in Zimbabwe for the first time!

Thanks to the incredible generosity of supporters from the UK and around the world, the number of children receiving Mary's Meals at school has risen by almost 14% since January 2018. The charity has welcomed 197,363 more children – and 414 new schools, nurseries and education centres – to its school feeding programme.

Mary's Meals works with local volunteers to provide school meals in some of the world's poorest communities. The promise of a nutritious meal encourages children – who may otherwise be forced to work, beg or scavenge for food – to come to school and gain an education that can provide an escape route from poverty.

The charity's founder, Magnus MacFarlane-Barrow, said: "Every child welcomed into our Mary's Meals family gives cause for celebration and I am delighted that we are now reaching children in Zimbabwe for the first time. It is incredible to think that more than 1.4 million children in 18 countries now enjoy these meals, served with love, each day at school.

"I am so grateful to everyone who makes this wonderful work possible through generous gifts of money, skills, time and prayer. Your kindness is helping children in some of the world's poorest communities to gain a precious education, which opens the door to the possibility of a brighter future."

Mary's Meals recently extended its successful school feeding programme to schools in Zimbabwe. Once referred to as the 'breadbasket of Africa', years of violent upheaval, forced land distribution and drought have had a devastating impact on many farming families, leading to widespread hunger in parts of the country.

With the help of volunteers from the local community, Mary's Meals is now feeding 18,435 vulnerable children at 40 schools in the impoverished Tsholotsho District. The mug of vitamin-enriched porridge served each school day helps hungry children like 12-year-old Nomthandazo to make the most of their education.

Nomthandazo said: "Some children don't come to school because they are working to help their parents. Some are too hungry to learn. Life would not be easy without school and the Mary's Meals food that we receive there. We get energy after eating and are able to write faster. I like learning new things. I hope to get knowledge so that I can brighten my future. School will help me to get a job."

Mary's Meals began feeding just 200 children in Malawi in 2002. Today, the charity provides nutritious meals to more than 1.4 million children from some of the most vulnerable communities in the world.

In recent months, the charity has grown its school feeding programme in other areas of particular need, reaching an additional 27,007 children in Zambia and 5,566 new children in Liberia. Mary's Meals is also bringing vital school meals to an additional 1,744 children at four schools in the war-torn city of Aleppo in Syria.

Mary's Meals is a simple idea that works. Research shows that in schools where children receive Mary's Meals, enrolment increases, attendance improves, drop-out rates fall, and children are happier, healthier and do better in class.

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 more 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

Notes to Editors

- Mary's Meals feeds 1,425,013 children every school day in 18 countries: Malawi, Liberia, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Haiti, Kenya, India, South Sudan, Uganda, Ethiopia, Benin, Lebanon, Syria, Myanmar, Thailand, Ecuador, Madagascar and Romania.
- It's a simple idea that works. Mary's Meals provides a daily meal in a place of learning in order to attract chronically poor children into the classroom, where they receive an education that can, in the future, be their ladder out of poverty.
- In Zimbabwe, Mary's Meals works with a local partner organisation, Childcare Ministries, to feed 18,435 vulnerable children at 40 schools in the Tsholotsho district. Children in Zimbabwe are served a vitamin-enriched porridge made from a blend of corn and soya.
- Mary's Meals is owned and run by local communities in the countries in which it operates. Where possible, meals are prepared using food that has been grown locally. This helps to support poor farming families and boost the local economy.
- The average global cost to feed a child with Mary's Meals for a whole school year is just £13.90 / \$19.50 / €15.60.
- 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."
- Mary's Meals is committed to keeping costs low and at least 93% of donations are spent on charitable activities. This is possible thanks to the dedication and commitment of many thousands of volunteers – including more than 80,000 in Malawi alone – who carry out lots of little acts of love on behalf of Mary's Meals.
- Independently verified research from Malawi, Liberia and Zambia shows that in schools where children receive Mary's Meals, hunger is reduced, enrolment increases, attendance improves, drop-out rates fall, absences dwindle, concentration in lessons is heightened, attainment levels increase, parents are less anxious, and children are happier. **[Source: *Mary's Meals Malawi Impact Assessment Year One, 2016* – <http://bit.ly/29k7Y3m>.]**
- Please visit www.marysmeals.org.uk to find out more about the work of Mary's Meals.

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