

Mary's Meals is now feeding 1,187,104 hungry children every school day

Global child hunger charity Mary's Meals has announced today that it is now reaching 1,187,104 of the world's poorest children with a nutritious daily meal in school.

Owing to the continued generosity of its supporters around the world, the charity has been able to add more than 85,000 new children to its global school feeding programme since the beginning of 2016.

Mary's Meals provides vital support to impoverished communities across four continents, setting up community-run school feeding programmes, which encourage children – who may otherwise be forced to work, beg or forage for food – to come to school and receive a nutritious meal that helps them to concentrate on their studies.

The charity began by feeding just 200 children in Malawi in 2002, amidst a devastating famine. Today, Malawi is in the grip of another food crisis, following severe floods and drought which destroyed this year's harvest. With 6.5 million people in Malawi facing chronic hunger, Mary's Meals has launched an urgent campaign, Crisis in Malawi, in an effort to help lessen the devastating impact.

Magnus MacFarlane-Barrow, Mary's Meals' founder and chief executive – who recently returned from Malawi – said: "The joyful news that 1,187,104 children are now receiving Mary's Meals is all thanks to the incredible efforts of our supporters and volunteers around the world, who give whatever they can – time, money, skills and prayer – to help the communities in which Mary's Meals is working.

"Whether it's the terrible ongoing conflict in South Sudan or the worsening food crisis in Malawi, we are constantly reminded that the promise of a daily meal in school for hungry and vulnerable children has never been more important.

"We are determined to maintain that promise to the 1,187,104 children already benefitting and to find ways of reaching even more of the schools waiting in line for Mary's Meals in the months and years ahead."

The operation of Mary's Meals' global school feeding programme is made possible by an army of volunteers – often mothers, grandmothers and other relatives – who get up early to prepare, cook and serve the food for their children.

And Mary's Meals has today announced that – in Malawi alone – its network of community volunteers has risen in number from 65,000 to a record 80,000, all giving freely of their time and labour to ensure their children are nourished and educated.

Magnus says: "We continue to see first-hand the incredible transformation that can take place when a child is given the opportunity to learn with a full stomach.

"Community engagement, empowerment and ownership is key to the success of Mary's Meals – and we are so heartened to be working hand-in-hand with more and more community volunteers across 12 countries. We give wholehearted thanks to all those who share our vision that every child in the world should be able to receive one good meal every day in their place of education."

Research from Malawi shows that in schools where Mary's Meals are served 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.

In a world where 59 million children are out of school and millions more are chronically hungry, Mary's Meals is calling on support to help reach the next school on its waiting list, so that more classrooms can be filled with happy children, eager to learn.

To find out more or to donate, please visit www.marysmeals.org

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Notes to Editors

- Interviews, case studies and images are available on request.
- Mary's Meals is a simple idea that works. The charity provides one 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.
- Mary's Meals feeds 1,187,104 hungry children every school day across four continents, in countries including Malawi, Liberia, Kenya, Zambia, Haiti, Uganda, South Sudan, Thailand and India.
- The average global cost to feed a child with Mary's Meals for a whole school year is just £12.20 / \$19.50 / €14.50.
- Research from Malawi shows that, after the introduction of Mary's Meals, parents who say they worry about their child going hungry dropped by 94%, and teachers saying 'children in my class never complain of hunger' increased from 7% to 87%.
- 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 spending at least 93% of donations directly on its charitable activities. This is only possible because most of the charity's work is done by an army of dedicated volunteers – including more than 80,000 in Malawi alone.
- Please visit www.marysmeals.org to find out more about the work of Mary's Meals.

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