



Embargoed until 00.01am on Monday 27 February 2017

Mary's Meals launches school feeding programme in Aleppo

Mary's Meals has expanded its school feeding programme into Syria in an effort to help long-suffering children rebuild their lives following years of brutal civil war.

The school feeding charity, in partnership with the Dutch organisation Dorcas, is working in six schools in Aleppo, providing nearly 1,500 children in Syria with a daily meal in their place of education.

In a country where 1.7 million children are out of school and 69 per cent of the population are living in extreme poverty, the Mary's Meals school feeding programme is designed to encourage children – who for a large part of their young lives have endured unimaginable trauma – into the classroom where they can receive a nutritious meal and an all-important education.

Magnus MacFarlane-Barrow, Mary's Meals' founder and chief executive, said: "After a four-year long battle for Aleppo and tens of thousands of deaths, the siege – at least for now – is over. At last, children have the chance to start regaining their lost childhoods.

"Through Mary's Meals, both the immediate, desperate needs of today, and the longer term necessity of education, will be nourished and nurtured through each meal served by local volunteers.

"The promise of this simple meal, made possible by the continuing love and generosity of Mary's Meals supporters all over the world, will provide hope and encouragement to communities taking their first tentative steps on a very long and uncertain road to recovery."

The expansion into Syria follows the charity's pilot programme in Lebanon where, alongside its regional partner Dorcas, Mary's Meals began providing daily meals to Syrian refugee children and their Lebanese classmates in a school near the capital, Beirut, last year.

Lebanon is hosting 1.5 million refugees from Syria; two-thirds of the refugee children are not in school and 74 per cent of refugee families are food insecure.

With Lebanese and Syrian mothers volunteering side-by-side to implement the school feeding, the programme has been extended to reach children at the Bourj el-Barajneh refugee settlement in the southern outskirts of Beirut, bringing the total number of children benefiting from Mary's Meals in Lebanon to 1,430.

Mary's Meals' provides daily meals to more than 1.1 million children every day they attend school, working in 14 countries including Malawi, Liberia, Zambia, Kenya, Haiti, India and South Sudan.

The average global cost to provide a child with Mary's Meals for a whole school year is just £13.90.

— ENDS —



Notes to Editors

- Mary's Meals is a simple idea that works. By providing daily meals in a place of learning, Mary's meals attracts chronically hungry children into the classroom, where they receive an education that can, in the future, be their ladder out of poverty.
- 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."
- Counting on support from across the globe, Mary's Meals has registered affiliate organisations in Austria, Canada, Croatia, Germany, Italy, Ireland, the Netherlands, Spain, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and the United States, as well as international fundraising groups in Australia, Belgium, Denmark, France, Portugal, Slovenia, and the United Arab Emirates.
- 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 carried out by dedicated volunteers, including more than 80,000 volunteer cooks in Malawi alone.
- Please visit www.marysmeals.org.uk to find out more about the work of Mary's Meals.

For more information, please contact:

Roisin Eadie / Jane Hamilton, Mary's Meals

0141 336 7094