

Scottish Minister sees “remarkable difference” created by Mary’s Meals in Malawi

Scotland’s International Development Minister enjoyed a mug of hot porridge in Malawi today as he met children whose young lives are being transformed by the Scottish charity Mary’s Meals.

Ben Macpherson was welcomed to Mpangweni Primary School in Dowa by children, staff and the community volunteers who cook and serve the likuni phala (vitamin-enriched maize and soya porridge) to hungry children every school day.

Mary’s Meals attracts children to the classroom, enabling them to access an education and look forward with hope towards a life free of poverty. For many of the children, the likuni phala provided by Mary’s Meals can be their only food of the day.

Moved by witnessing the life-changing work of the school feeding charity, Mr Macpherson said:

“I’ve just seen the remarkable difference Mary’s Meals is making here in Malawi, feeding more than a million children thanks to contributions from across Scotland, including from the Scottish Government.

“It’s been wonderful to see the difference that a nutritious daily meal in school, provided by Mary’s Meals, is making towards helping young people in Malawi to get the best from their education and make the most of their potential. It’s been a real privilege to see the work of Mary’s Meals, supported by individuals and organisations across Scotland, making such a difference here in Malawi.

“The UN Global Goals make clear the links between addressing poverty and hunger and achieving quality education as part of securing sustainable development. Mary’s Meals provides a lifeline to many children across Malawi who may not have access to safe and nutritious food. The funding provided by the Scottish Government is life changing for many children and helps to incentivise parents to send their children to school safe in the knowledge that they will have a substantial meal.”

Mr Macpherson joined the volunteers to serve the likuni phala, visited classrooms, watched lessons taking place, and talked to children, volunteers and staff to find out more about the long-term impact created by Mary’s Meals.

The Minister is in Malawi to strengthen the long-standing relationship between the two countries. It is also providing the opportunity to visit projects that receive funding from the Scottish Government Malawi Development Programme.

With huge challenges in education, access to healthcare and high levels of child malnutrition, Malawi is one of the poorest countries in the world. It is nearly 13 years since the signing of the co-operation agreement between the governments of Scotland and Malawi, and in August this year the Scottish Government announced it is to provide £11 million to support local projects in Malawi focused on health, education, economic development and renewable energy.

Mary’s Meals is to receive £1,080,000 to provide school feeding in 27 primary and 79 Early Childhood Development centres in Zomba, southern Malawi. It is the latest in a series of awards to Mary’s Meals from the Scottish Government, dating back to 2005.

Daniel Adams, Executive Director of Mary’s Meals UK, welcomed Scotland’s International Development Minister to Malawi on behalf of Mary’s Meals, alongside Dalitso Mcheka, Mary’s Meals’ Head of Programmes in Malawi.

Daniel said: “It was wonderful to see the happy, smiling children as they arrived this morning, with their mugs in hand and ready for the day’s learning. We’re delighted that the Minister was able to join us to witness the amazing changes that are being created in the lives of so many children across Malawi and beyond.

“Our mission was born out of the devastating famine in Malawi in 2002. From humble beginnings feeding 200 children in a school not far from here, Mary’s Meals is now providing meals in school for more than 1.3 million children around the world every school day.

“By working in partnership with local communities – we have more than 80,000 dedicated volunteers in Malawi alone – Mary’s Meals is ensuring that children, who would otherwise be working or begging for their next meal, are instead sitting in a classroom with a full stomach, learning how to read and write.

“Funding from The Scottish Government Malawi Development Programme enables us to reach many more children in Malawi, helping them to gain an education and the hope of a brighter future.”

From feeding 200 children in Malawi in 2002, Mary’s Meals now provides meals in school to 30% of primary school aged children in the country. Earlier this month, the charity announced that is now reaching 1,361,586 impoverished children in 17 countries worldwide.

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.

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

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Notes to Editors

- Photo captions:
 - Image 1: Scotland’s International Development Minister Ben Macpherson stirs a pot of likuni phala (vitamin-enriched maize and soya porridge) at Mpangweni Primary School in Dowa, Malawi.
 - Image 2: Scotland’s International Development Minister Ben Macpherson met children whose young lives are being transformed by the Scottish charity Mary’s Meals.
- 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 1,361,586 children every school day, across five continents, in 17 countries: Malawi, Liberia, Zambia, Haiti, Kenya, India, South Sudan, Uganda, Ethiopia, Benin, Lebanon, Syria, Myanmar, Thailand, Ecuador, Madagascar and Romania.
- The average global cost to feed a child with Mary’s Meals for a whole school year is just £13.90.
- 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.
- The Scottish Government’s Malawi Development Programme recently announced £1,080,000 to fund Mary’s Meals feeding programme in 27 primary and 79 Early Childhood Development centres in Zomba, southern Malawi reducing classroom hunger and promoting access, participation and progression through primary education.
- 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 much 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.uk to find out more about the work of Mary’s Meals.

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