Our vision, mission and values

Our vision

Our 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.

Working together with those who share our vision, we believe there is no good reason why this cannot be realised.

Our mission

Mary's Meals is a global movement supported by people from many walks of life and different backgrounds.

Our mission is to enable people to offer their money, goods, skills, time, or prayer, and through this involvement, provide the most effective help to those suffering the effects of extreme poverty around the world.

We welcome all into the Mary's Meals family and we believe everyone has something important to contribute to the realisation of our vision.

Our key values

Our values underpin all our work and should be shared by all those involved in carrying out our mission (from those involved in fundraising right through to volunteers living and working in communities of greatest need).

We have confidence in the innate goodness of people.

1. We believe in the willingness of people to respond generously when informed of the needs of those suffering extreme poverty. We strive to communicate those needs on behalf of the poor.

2. We believe in the willingness of people to give freely of their money and goods to those living in poverty and so we aim to provide a variety of effective ways in which they can do this.

3. We believe in the willingness of people to give freely of their time and skills. We are a voluntary organisation, and our work will always rely on the generosity of volunteers.

4. We expect our paid staff to have a vocational attitude towards their work.

5. We recognise the willingness of people to pray and fast for our work and invite those who share this belief to play their part in our mission in this manner.

6. We believe that everyone is capable of contributing in some way to our mission and we welcome all those who wish to do so.

7. We believe that our acts of goodness can bring hope and peace into those communities suffering the worst forms of poverty, violence and injustice. Therefore, we strive to work in those places where such suffering is most acute.

We respect the dignity of every human being and family life.

1. We believe that those who require our aid should be seen not as the problem but as people who can become the principal builders of a new, more human future for everyone. Therefore, we are committed to:

- Listening to, and learning from, those in need and offering appropriate help accordingly.
- Giving help freely, without ever coercing those who accept it into changing their beliefs or creed, or without ever judging their past behaviour.
- Nurturing human life. Our work helps individuals to fulfil their potential and gives families the freedom to grow and develop in the way they choose. We respect the right to life of every human person, from conception until natural death.
- Continuing to help those who accept our aid for as long as their need exists and as long as we believe our help to be appropriate, whilst ensuring we never create a culture of dependency on aid.

2. We believe that every volunteer and member of staff has a unique and crucial role to play in the fulfilment of our mission. Therefore, we will strive to empower all those involved to carry out their role to the best of their ability. We will do this by:

- Communicating our vision, mission and values to all those involved in our work.
- Providing training when necessary.
- Creating a caring, supportive and safe working environment.
- Creating a working culture that respects the responsibilities of family life.
- Keeping our staff and volunteers informed about our work as it develops.

We believe in good stewardship of resources entrusted to us.

1. We aim to be open and accountable to all our supporters and those involved in our work.

2. We strive to keep our fundraising and administration costs very low to maximise the amount of resources we direct towards those we are helping.

3. We work to develop long-term relationships based on mutual trust with those who implement and monitor our work with the poor.

4. We will take care that all our activities are carried out in an environmentally responsible manner.

5. We will ensure that any supporter group or organisation affiliated to us accepts our visions, mission and values.

6. We will regularly assess the effectiveness and appropriateness of our work and will always be willing to adapt and improve our methods when necessary.

Our name and its origins

In 1992, a family in Argyll, Scotland, launched an appeal to help the people of Bosnia-Herzegovina, who were suffering because of the war there. They did this from their home, Craig Lodge Family House of Prayer, a Catholic retreat centre that they had opened after a family pilgrimage to Medjugorje in 1983.

It is claimed that the Virgin Mary has been appearing in Medjugorje, Bosnia-Herzegovina, since 1981 and it was to this same place that they delivered the first aid that was donated. What was meant to have been a one-off delivery grew into an organisation called Scottish International Relief that went on to deliver millions of pounds worth of emergency aid and fund various other projects aimed at helping the poorest of the poor in several other countries around the world.

In 2002, whilst Scottish International Relief was delivering emergency food aid in Malawi, the Mary's Meals campaign was born in response to a realisation that many poor children were missing school as they worked to survive and a belief that the provision of a daily school meal could help break this cycle of poverty.

Those who suggested the name and who helped Scottish International Relief set up the first Mary's Meals projects in Malawi were all also people whose lives had been changed through pilgrimages to Medjugorje. This campaign soon became almost the sole focus of the organisation's work and grew rapidly around the world.

In 2012, Scottish International Relief officially changed its name to Mary's Meals. Mary's Meals is named after Mary, the mother of Jesus, and is often described as a 'fruit of Medjugorje.' It is also a work that consists of, respects and reaches out to people of all faiths and none.