



**mary's  
meals**  
a simple solution  
to world hunger

# Mary's Meals International

Annual Report to Mary's Meals Ireland  
January – December 2020



## Mary's Meals International annual report to Mary's Meals Ireland

January to December 2020

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## 1. Executive summary

Mary's Meals International is pleased to present this report outlining the key developments made across the global movement in 2020. It has been a year characterised by unprecedented challenges to all aspects of our work, from school feeding to fundraising. Throughout, the Mary's Meals movement has stayed true to its values and demonstrated an unwavering commitment to the core mission. We adapted our ways of working to ensure we kept our promise to the children who rely on us and in the face of multiple barriers, we strived to reach more and more children with our daily meals. Thanks to our supporters around the world, we have been able to:

- Expand our programmes in eight countries to provide an additional 130,000 children with Mary's Meals for the first time, either with meals in-school or through community distributions while children do their best to learn from home.
- Begin working with three new partners in Malawi, Niger, and Zimbabwe, enabling us to expand our programme to reach more children.
- Progress in strengthening the organisation through the integrated CRM and School Feeding Delivery Model projects.
- Embark on innovative, virtual fundraising activities which grew our global movement.

With the launch of the 2021-2023 Strategic Plan 'The Next Child', Mary's Meals will continue to build upon the strong foundations from the three strategic aims set out in the 2018-2020 Strategic Plan, "It's Possible". The three key strategic aims that will continue to guide our work throughout 2021-23 are:

- To feed more children in a place of education and help those suffering the effects of extreme poverty in the world's poorest communities.
- To grow the global movement and enable more people to offer their money, goods, skills, time, or prayer to advance the work of Mary's Meals.
- To strengthen the organisation and Mary's Meals' global network in furtherance of the vision, mission, and values.

This report details the progress made towards these strategic aims and provides a range of stories from across our global movement.

## 2. Strategic report

### Mary's Meals response to Covid-19

In 2020, the Covid-19 pandemic changed the world and caused Mary's Meals to adapt all aspects of our work across the global movement. As the pandemic tightened its grip globally in March and April 2020 and schools had to close their doors, we knew we had to adapt to find new ways to continue feeding the vulnerable children who count on our daily meals to ensure they had enough nutritious food to help them concentrate and learn as they done their best to learn from home.

Throughout the year, we operated in rapidly developing and constantly moving situations in all programme countries. Due to government-sanctioned school closures, the vast majority of our programmes were temporarily suspended in mid-March as a result of Covid-19. In collaboration with local communities, governments, and local authorities we distributed take-home rations of Mary's Meals as part of our adapted delivery model. Mary's Meals' programme staff, partners and volunteers swiftly devised and implemented a range of appropriate and safe community food distribution systems, in conjunction with local governments and the communities themselves. In adapting our programme to respond to the ongoing crisis, we provided additional



Families collecting take-home rations of Mary's Meals at Jacaranda School for Orphans, Malawi

rations of soap to each child in our programme to encourage good hygiene at home and reduce the spread of Covid-19. Our staff and partners worked extremely hard to keep our promise of a daily meal to the children during this unprecedented situation.



We are delighted to share that 1,838,859 children are now receiving Mary's Meals around the world, despite the immense challenges caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. This is an astounding achievement and one that each and every one of our supporters, volunteers and staff can say they have played a role in achieving. We are incredibly grateful to Mary's Meals Ireland for your steadfast support over the last year, without which, we would not have been able to adapt and grow our movement as successfully as we have.

Sadly, the Covid-19 pandemic is far from over and it will continue to impact the lives of the children who benefit from our programme for years to come. In the long-term, marginalised rural communities and low-income families will feel the brunt of economic downturn, exacerbating child poverty and having a long-lasting impact on children's health and learning outcomes. The intersection of the long-term impact of Covid-19 with multiple other factors, including climate change, will multiply to disproportionately aggravate poverty amongst the world's most vulnerable communities. Now, more than ever, Mary's Meals has a crucial role to play in giving hope to children and supporting them to achieve their ambitions.

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“The UN recognises school feeding programmes as integral in strengthening the resilience of education systems and contributing to an equitable recovery from Covid-19” – *United Nations, August 2020*

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The Mary's Meals global movement is playing a vital role in supporting children, families, communities, and countries to recover from Covid-19. As we expand to reach more and more children in desperate need, we are grateful for the support we receive from people all over the world; from dedicated fundraisers in Mary's Meals Ireland to the committed volunteer cooks who prepare and serve school meals every day. We are delighted to present this report which outlines how we have reached more children this year, grown the global movement, raised awareness of our important work and strengthened our organisation to enable us to keep growing.

### Reaching more children

Throughout 2020, our school feeding programme grew by 171,792 children - including the 130,000 reached through expansions into 475 places of education and thousands more children continuing to enrol in schools already receiving Mary's Meals - meaning that we are now reaching a total of 1,838,859 children in 19 countries. The table below details the breakdown across our programmes.



Number of children in each country		
Country	Number of children	Places of education
Benin	2,894	4
Ecuador	330	1
Ethiopia	24,320	36
Haiti	99,328	293
India	42,914	102
Kenya	78,723	451
Liberia	157,439	625
Lebanon	1,600	3
Madagascar	25,687	181
Malawi	1,044,834	993
Myanmar	1,554	18
Niger	182	3
Romania	13	1
South Sudan	46,537	80
Syria	4,158	13
Thailand	368	4
Uganda	11,356	12
Zambia	248,914	499
Zimbabwe	47,708	96
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,838,859</b>	<b>3,415</b>

### [Malawi](#)

Schools across our largest and longest-running programme country, where around a third of all primary-school age children normally receive Mary’s Meals, were closed on March 20 following the Government of Malawi’s decision to mitigate the spread of Covid-19, which has had a devastating impact to the vulnerable population within the country.

Since community distributions have taken place, we have experienced widespread support from the communities we work alongside. Community member and Mary’s Meals volunteer Catherine, pictured right, was interviewed when collecting food rations at Mtende Primary School in Mzuzu City, Malawi. In Mzuzu, a large portion of the urban population live in informal settlements and work in the informal sector. Many residents live without access to a water supply and in overcrowded housing, making sanitation, physical distancing, and disinfection extremely difficult. The support Mary’s Meals has provided during this difficult time act as a safety net for families like Catherine’s, who are most affected by this crisis.



Catherine told us of how Mary’s Meals is helping her community during this time. She said: “There are often times when children in this village are sent to school without eating anything from their homes. I volunteer [to cook Mary’s Meals] because I know the importance of this porridge, to ensure children from this community attend school without feeling hungry. I ensure my household is adhering to what the government is encouraging every household to do. I have purchased a special water bucket [so that my] children and all relatives wash their hands frequently with soap. I also stop them from attending any social gatherings where they may be exposed to the virus. I’m so happy today to be receiving this





food so that I will be able to make phala [porridge] for my children at home.” Feedback like Catherine’s demonstrates the unwavering commitment and engagement community members have in providing Mary’s Meals to children throughout their community as places of education were closed.



In November 2020, under the framework of community distributions, Mary’s Meals was able to reach an additional 4,890 children across six schools in the Nkhotakota district, located in the central region of Malawi, through a new partner – Missionary Community of St Paul the Apostle (MCSPA). Together with MCSPA, we are providing hope to these children through the promise of a school meal that is playing a vital role in reinforcing the importance of education within developing communities. The photo above shows pupils at Mkaika Primary School, one of our six new expansion schools, with their new handwashing stations provided by Mary’s Meals to promote hygiene during community distributions and to support future in-school feeding. We look forward to being able to serve Mary’s Meals in schools throughout Malawi as soon as it is safe to do so, providing hope for a better future.

### [Zambia](#)

Nationwide school closures since March 2020 resulted in the disruption of in-class learning for more than 4.4 million children and adolescents in Zambia, as well as suspending the provision of critical services to millions of children and youths.<sup>1</sup> The Covid-19 pandemic began at a time when Zambia was already struggling with drought and flood disasters in more than 58 districts for the past two seasons, including the districts we operate in.<sup>2</sup> In this challenging context, it was critical that Mary’s Meals continued to reach each beneficiary enrolled in our school Zambia feeding programme. It was vital that we worked with communities, as they remain at the heart of everything we do, to overcome challenges and continue to reach more beneficiaries enrolled in our feeding programme during this great time of need.

To gauge the effectiveness and impact of our community distribution approach during our Covid-19 response, Mary’s Meals Zambia conducted a post-distribution survey during our May – June distributions. The survey randomly targeted a total of 234 respondents, made up of three to four parents or guardians collecting take-home rations per school, in 35 schools across five districts. The findings from the post-distribution survey (right) demonstrated that our community distribution approach was successful in reducing hunger of beneficiaries in a great time of need. Results and

**99%**  
reported the  
distributions helped  
in reducing hunger at  
home

**98%**  
confirmed that it was  
easy to follow Covid-  
19 health  
guidelines/measures  
that were in place  
throughout

<sup>1</sup>Reliefweb, *Zambia Situation Report: October 2020*.

(<https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Zambia%20Situation%20Report%2C%2029%20October%202020.pdf>)

<sup>2</sup>Reliefweb, *United Nations Covid-19 Emergency Appeal: Zambia, May-October 2020*.

([https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/ZAMBIA\\_%20COVID-19\\_Emergency\\_Appeal.pdf](https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/ZAMBIA_%20COVID-19_Emergency_Appeal.pdf))



feedback also show that the distribution process was well organised and efficient as well as giving communities confidence in the resilience of our programme, even during times of crisis.



Dickson Phiri, pictured left, has two children who attend Nguluwe Primary school in Chipangali district. He told us: “The shutting down of schools due to Covid-19 has affected a lot of things in our lives economically, socially and physically. We did not expect such a generous gesture. Our children will now have something to eat every morning. Porridge will give them energy to face the day with courage and positivity amidst Covid-19.” We ensure that, during home distributions, we promoted the importance of handwashing and social distancing to combat the spread of the virus in these vulnerable communities. Dickson said: “My family and I are doing everything possible to slow down the spread of the virus by washing

hands regularly, covering our faces with masks and keeping social distance. To Mary’s Meals, I just want to thank the organisation for the good work it is doing, do not stop. A lot of children would not have been going to school without the porridge.”

We are delighted to welcome thousands of children back into the classroom and provide them with a daily meal at school that will give them the energy that is so desperately needed for them to grow and learn. Wonderfully we were able to expand our programme in Zambia even further to reach more children in need of Mary’s Meals. In October and November, two large expansions of our school feeding programme were delivered to reach 133 new schools in Zambia. We increased the number of children fed in Zambia by an incredible 30% in 2020 and our programme is now operational in seven districts in the Eastern Province, having recently expanded into Chasefu district to reach children who have never received Mary’s Meals before. We are now providing a nutritious daily meal in school to an incredible 248,914 children in Zambia.

Kenya

Mary’s Meals has identified a great need regarding pre-school children in Early Children Development (ECD) centres in Turkana, located in the northern, semi-arid region of Kenya. Many children there experience high levels of poverty and food insecurity, and schools and ECDs experience poor enrolment and attendance rates. Young children are particularly vulnerable to malnutrition and can suffer its effects in later life.<sup>3</sup> As such, early interventions for disadvantaged children have proven to lead to increased survival rates, better health, growth, and brain development and those children are more likely to achieve success at school and have higher employment rates and better health as adults than those who were deprived of good nutrition during their early childhood.<sup>4</sup>

In response to this great need and the understanding of the impact a daily meal can have on young children, we are focused on growing our feeding programme in the region. We expanded to reach 6,947 children enrolled in 72 ECDs throughout Turkana in September 2020 through community distributions, as ECDs in Turkana remained closed from March 2020 until January 2021. This is a remarkable achievement and demonstrates Mary’s Meals’ deep resolve to reach children where the need is greatest with a daily meal in their place of education, whether that be in school or learning from home because of school closures.



We are pleased to report that we are now reaching a total of 78,723 vulnerable children in Kenya. In Turkana, Mary’s Meals is now providing a vital daily meal to around 45,000 children in 378 ECDs and we have also continued to work with our trusted partner, the Diocese of Lodwar, and are now providing

<sup>3</sup> UNICEF, WHO and World Bank Group, *Joint malnutrition global and regional dataset*, 2017.  
<sup>4</sup> UNICEF, WHO and World Bank Group, *Joint malnutrition global and regional dataset*, 2017



daily meals to 4,747 children in 37 ECDs centres located in Turkana. In Eldoret, we are delivering feeding to 23,904 children in 25 schools across three counties, Uasin Gishu, Kisii and Nyamira County.



In the harsh conditions of the remote Turkana region, Mary's Meals has made it possible for children like Longoria, pictured left, to go to school. Seven-year-old Longoria has his heart set on becoming a politician and making sure his community has enough to eat. He said: "I come to school because I want to learn and become a local councilor. I will make sure all the people in this area are getting food." Like most families in the open plains of Turkana in Kenya, Longoria's parents are pastoralists who earn a living from herding sheep and goats. Consecutive years of poor rainfall have caused crops to fail and animals to die, pushing many families, including Longoria's, to crisis point.

In the face of widespread food and water shortages, Mary's Meals is bringing hope to families in crisis. Longoria attends a Mary's Meals supported school where he receives a nutritious meal once a day. When he talks about the food he enjoys each day at Kangole ECD,

Longoria's face lights up. He said: "I love Mary's Meals. The food is helping me come to school. When I eat, I feel full." Some children in this community drop out of school to herd animals full time, but Longoria is determined to make the most of his education and, thanks to the guarantee of a nutritious daily meal, his studies are off to a great start. Thanks to your support, children like Longoria can continue their education by removing hunger barriers and incentivising parents to send their children to school.

The support we have provided to the children located in the Eldoret region of Kenya also proved vital as the impact of Covid-19 is especially disastrous for children who live in slums, which is the case for the majority of the children in our Eldoret programme. These children are already a very vulnerable group, who are exposed to extremely harsh living conditions and are at risk of violence and discrimination on a daily basis.<sup>5</sup> The Covid-19 pandemic has exacerbated these already high risks, as these children have no means of social distancing or undertaking necessary hygiene measures in overcrowded slums.

In this completely desperate context, our community distributions were a lifeline for these children, who greatly rely on Mary's Meals as their main, and sometimes only, source of nutrition. This support is highlighted by Abdrisack Jaldesa, County Commissioner of Uasin Gishu district, where Eldoret is located.

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*"I take this opportunity to congratulate you people for this noble idea because the exercise has enabled many Kenyans who are currently going hungry because of Covid-19 pandemic."*

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Discussing the impact feeding is having on families during this particularly difficult time. He said: "The ongoing school food distribution to households in my jurisdiction is a great relief to children coming from poor backgrounds. The food you are distributing in schools will be very helpful to these families, particularly in informal settlements. This is because, the curfew by the government has greatly affected citizens who depend on wages from daily work to feed their families. The directive has forced employers across all sectors to scale down their operations by reducing their staff thus denying many Kenyans a daily income they were used to", he noted. "The idea of distributing this food to the household level,

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<sup>5</sup> UN Human Rights: Office of the High Commissioner, *Annual General Meeting for the Consortium for Street Children: Video Statement by United National High Commissioner for Human Rights*, November 2020. ([://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=26480&LangID=E](http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=26480&LangID=E))





with a focus on children, is very commendable. I take this opportunity to congratulate you people for this noble idea because the exercise has enabled many Kenyans who are currently going hungry because of Covid-19 pandemic.”

Our extremely high distribution rate and positive community feedback highlights the effectiveness of our adapted feeding model in ensuring we continued reaching the most vulnerable and marginalised children. In doing so, Mary’s Meals continued to provide long-term sustainable improvements to the demographic, including providing the nutrition needed for young children to grow and develop.

### Liberia

Mary’s Meals is now providing a daily meal to 157,439 children in 625 places of education across five of the poorest counties in Liberia. Our programme in Liberia proves significant since one of the major underlying causes of poverty and food security in the country is low level of access to education, with official statistics showing that only 27% of children are enrolled in school.<sup>6</sup>

With such a close link between food security and education in Liberia, we ensured that we conducted community distributions that targeted all of the vulnerable children who rely on our daily meals after schools closed in March 2020. At the end of July 2020, the Government of Liberia announced a phased re-opening of places of education, with schools re-opening at different times for different grades, to allow children to catch up on time missed. Considering this phased re-opening, Mary’s Meals continued our community distribution approach for the remainder of the 2019-2020 academic year to ensure continuity throughout the feeding programme in-line with government health guidelines. We are delighted to share that the new academic year started on 1 December and all children are now able to enroll in school again and we have reinstated in-school feeding.



*A student of ORS with their take-home ration of Mary’s Meals and their take-home lessons from school*

In a [video](#) sent from Oscar Romero School for the Deaf (ORS), one of our programme schools located in Bomi County, teacher Harper Kovah explained in sign language the importance of a daily meal in allowing children to concentrate while they were learning at home.

He highlighted: “Since Mary’s Meals came to Liberia, things have improved. Mary’s Meals encourages plenty of deaf children to attend school in the area to allow the children to learn for their future. As a teacher, I am very happy for children in Liberia...The ration received makes them feel happy. Deaf children in my area feel so happy for the food shared by Mary’s Meals, this enables them to have a meal to eat every day at home.”

As a result of the school closures in Liberia, distance learning was done by the government through the radio, however, the deaf students at ORS were understandably unable to benefit from this. In order to allow these students to continue with their studies while schools were closed, their teachers prepared and distributed written lessons. Thanks to Mary’s Meals, students enrolled at our supported schools, including ORS, continued to be supported with food provisions during this extremely challenging time.



Your continued support enables us to keep reaching some of the world’s most vulnerable children with the promise of a daily meal and provide them with the opportunity to change their lives. As a boy, Daniel ate Mary’s Meals at school in Liberia. He says “Mary’s Meals made me who I am. Without them, I wouldn’t have finished my education.” Thanks to the food provided by Mary’s Meals, Daniel

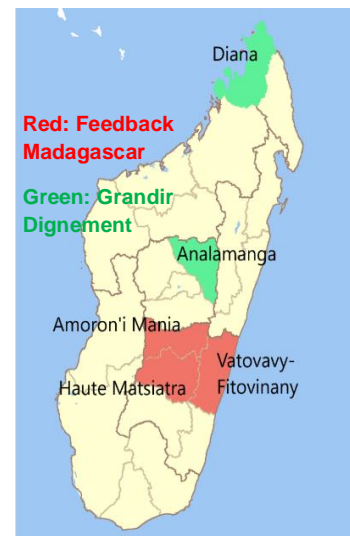
<sup>6</sup> World Food Programme, *Liberia: Country Brief*. December 2020. (<https://www.wfp.org/countries/liberia>)



finished school, and he now works as an Area Manager for Mary's Meals Liberia to make sure thousands more children in classrooms across Liberia can enjoy life-changing meals. He knows from personal experience how the promise of food and education can help shape the future, "I remember carrying my bowl to school every day, and how much it meant to have a tummy full of food." Thanks to your continued kindness, we can provide life-changing meals to the children at your three sponsored schools and give them the opportunity of a better future just like Daniel.

### [Madagascar](#)

We are pleased to share that with the support of our partners, we have more than doubled the size of our feeding programme in Madagascar in 2020. Over the course of two separate expansions in April and November, we were able to reach an additional 14,018 children across 96 schools with our partner, Feedback Madagascar. These expansions focused on some of the poorest and most marginalised communities in the central highlands of Madagascar in the Amoron'i Mania, Haute Matsiatra and Vatovavy-Fitovinany regions. Feedback Madagascar specialises in supporting communities living around natural forests, where the competing priorities of people and the environment interlink. Through the help of our two partners in the country, Feedback Madagascar and Grandir Dignement, we are now feeding a total of 25,687 children in 181 places of education.



Feedback Madagascar conducted research on the impact of the school feeding programme since it started in 2019. Amongst many findings, they observed that the programme had increased child attendance at school and helped children to participate in the classroom. Key findings were:

- Children are more energetic and participative at school; playing more in break-time and, on arriving home, they no longer complain that they are hungry but instead can help their parents.
- Pupils come early to school - now pupils wait for teachers, rather than teachers waiting for pupils.
- Parents can work a full day to earn money rather than having to return home to provide food for their children at lunchtime. Leading to increased household revenue.
- Before men didn't have any role in the kitchen due to gender norms but as a result of participation in school feeding committees, now men aren't embarrassed to help with cooking or fetching water. And this has impacted on household dynamics too.
- It has triggered a change in hand-washing habits. People are used to washing hands before eating now and the programme has supported the adoption of good practice handwashing at a household level.

### [Niger](#)

Despite the challenging global context, we have been able to grow the global movement and reach out to additional children in need of Mary's Meals. We are delighted to report that we fulfilled plans to feed children at remand centres in Niger in April, making it the 19th country to join our global family.

We have been working towards this with our trusted partner, Grandir Dignement – who we also work with in Madagascar - and are now providing daily meals for child prisoners at three remand centres in Niger's largest cities, Niamey, Maradi, and Ziner. This is a lifeline for the many children, some as young as 13, who are awaiting trial for minor crimes, like the theft of food, and are yet to be found guilty.





The daily serving of Mary's Meals in Niger – which consists of rice, served with a vegetable sauce and meat, fish, or an egg as can be seen in the picture on the right – helps these vulnerable children to stay healthy and make the most of the education and vocational training they receive in remand centres.



Boubacar Badjé is the prison educator in Niamey remand centre, speaking to us about the impact of our feeding programme, he said: "The children are delighted. They are happy that they are no longer hungry, that they are no longer worried about how they will get meals during their period of detention. They all welcome the implementation of this food." He also told us that this is relieving the concerns parents have, saying: "I have seen how reassured the parents of the children in the remand centres are by this – knowing that their children have access to meals removes additional worries for them."

Speaking of our newest feeding programme country, our founder and CEO, Magnus MacFarlane-Barrow, said: "In these uncertain times, being able to share news of such a positive, new opportunity brings hope and comfort, and is a reminder to us all of the goodness of people and what we can achieve together."

## [India](#)

We are delighted to announce that we are now feeding 42,914 children across 102 education centres in India. Since the Covid-19 outbreak earlier this year, India has recorded more than 8.6 million cases, peaking in mid-September. Due to the lack of testing services, shortage of doctors, health equipment and lack of hospital beds, even in more developed areas of India, Covid-19 is a major threat for the country. As per the National Health Profile of India, 2019, India's expenditure on healthcare as a percentage of GDP was merely 1.28% which is lower than poorer countries of the world.<sup>7</sup> This highlights the great need in India for the support of Mary's Meals in order to support the nutrition of children.



Manu, pictured left, lives in the rural district of Jharkhand with his parents and his seven older siblings. Like many families in remote villages scattered across rural India, Manu's parents have a small field where they grow vegetables for the families to eat. Manu's mother also gathers firewood which she sells to earn money for rice and other essentials. With seven children to feed, it is often a struggle to make ends meet.

Manu walks for around an hour to reach his school each day, normally on an empty stomach. He told us: "I walk with my friends to school. I don't normally eat breakfast and I walk for maybe 4km. The food here is one of the reasons that I come to school." The meals provided by Mary's Meals provide a valuable incentive for thousands of children, like Manu, to attend school and further their education. Manu explains: "We survive day by day, but I come to school to learn and eat and that makes me happy. I don't know what I want to be when I grow up, but I would love to live in the city." Manu is just one of nearly 43,000 children across India who are finding hope in the classroom as a result of the work of Mary's Meals and BREAD.

Since schools closed in March 2020, BREAD have been providing take-home rations of meals to ensure children continue to receive food while they do their best to learn from home. You can see an overview of BREAD's Covid-19 response [here](#). The Government of the Republic of India permitted schools to

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7 Rakshit, B., & Basishtha, D. (2020). Can India stay immune enough to combat COVID-19 pandemic? An economic query. Journal of Public Affairs. Online: <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/pa.2157>



open after 15 October 2020, however, many students have not returned for fear of the spread of Covid-19. As a result, BREAD is currently continuing with home distributions to parents/guardians as part of our commitment to safeguarding the children who rely on Mary's Meals. BREAD remain hopeful that the education centres where they deliver the school feeding programme will see children returning to school in 2021 but, for now, they remain focused on ensuring they reach each child with a that all-important daily meal.

## Haiti

We have continued to significantly expand our programme in Haiti alongside our trusted partners, the Bureau de Nutrition et Developpement (BND) and Summits Education. Through expansions that occurred through both partners in November 2020, Mary's Meals was able to reach 29,203 children across 91 schools in the Central Plateau region and the Ouest departments, including the capital, Port-Au-Prince. In total, we are now reaching nearly 100,000 children across Haiti, bringing hope to even more of the world's poorest children who are in desperate need of food assistance as Covid-19 exacerbates the ongoing socio-political turmoil that the country continues to face.



Schools in Haiti were amongst the first of our programme countries to re-open in August 2020. As schools re-opened, our partners, school and community volunteers worked tirelessly to make sure our in-school feeding programme was reinstated as effectively and as safely as possible as thousands of children were welcomed back into the classroom for the first time since March.



We spoke with Cassandre Regnier, pictured left, Director of Programmes for our partner, Summits Education, who we work with in the Central Plateau region of Haiti to feed over 13,000 children in 57 schools. Cassandre outlined the role that our school feeding programme is playing since children have returned to school. She said: "All schools are operating and getting used to the 'new normal'. The biggest constraint in Haiti is the political situation that is extremely volatile and unpredictable. In the midst of this, we are operating as best as we can as our main mission is to support the most vulnerable out of poverty. We know that this is possible through education, and it is important to provide meals to alleviate hunger [of the students]." She added: "We are extremely grateful for this partnership and the support. We look forward to serving as many students as possible."

As we go forward in 2021, a promised daily meal will prove vital as the food security outlook for Haiti is forecast to be at 'Stressed' or 'Crisis' levels until at least June 2021, as years of socio-political unrest continues.<sup>8</sup> As great political uncertainty takes hold across the regions where we work, compounded by the Covid-19 pandemic, the promise of a consistent daily meal will provide great stability to the children we serve when everything else around them remains uncertain.

## Growing the global movement

We are delighted to provide updates from the fundraising activities and developments that have occurred across the Mary's Meals network as our global movement has continued to grow stronger throughout 2020. Despite traditional event planning and raising awareness activities being severely affected by Covid-19 restrictions, we have continued to find new, innovative ways to adapt and plan raising awareness activities to invite more supporters into our global family. We continue to be humbled

<sup>8</sup> FEWSNET, *Central American and Caribbean: Haiti*, December 2020 (<https://fews.net/central-america-and-caribbean/haiti>)





by the hard work of our global staff, volunteers, and supporters in raising awareness of our vision that every child receives a daily meal in their place of education, especially during this very challenging time.

In June 2020, Mary's Meals USA launched the "Send and Receive" campaign. The goal of this campaign is to raise awareness about the work of Mary's Meals and invite more people to join the Mary's Meals family in communities across the US. For every new supporter joining our mailing list, a generous donor has agreed to provide a child with a nutritious daily meal in their place of education for an entire school year. Through this campaign, we have seen over 600 people join the Mary's Meals family in the last six months. Mary's Meals USA Ambassadors (key volunteers) have been instrumental in raising awareness for the campaign and Mary's Meals has used other influencers and channels to reach new supporters. As part of their 2021 strategy, Mary's Meals USA are continuing to use new ways to share this campaign with different audiences.



Mary's Meals Ireland continued to raise awareness for Mary's Meals through the annual 'Step by Step for Mary's Meals' (the Walk to Knock) challenge. The event is always a fundraising highlight, with supporters from all over Ireland setting off from five starting points across the country as they make their way to the Marian shrine in County Mayo, wearing Mary's Meals branding and engaging with members of the public along the route.



The event took place from the 7-15 August, with volunteers walking over 200km across nine days. To overcome the major challenge of Covid-19 government restrictions reducing the scale of participants in the walk this year, Mary's Meals Ireland created the option of a 'virtual or circuit' walk, which could be completed near supporter's homes all throughout Ireland. Thanks to the inspiring effort of all our supporters involved in the walk, the event was Mary's Meals Ireland's biggest fundraiser of the year and has been highly successful in raising awareness Mary's Meals.

In November 2020, Mary's Meals Germany launched the 'Felix Runs for Mary's Meals' campaign. Dedicated Mary's Meals supporter, Felix Zech, is paralysed from the neck down following a deep-diving accident. He launched his campaign to coincide with Advent, 'running' as far as possible on a special training machine to raise funds for Mary's Meals with the aim to feed at least 500 hungry children in Turkana.



As a result of Felix's inspiring story, the campaign gained international interest and amazing support from across our global network. Several National Affiliates, as well as MMI, launched the campaign on their respective websites. After only a week of fundraising, Felix quadrupled his original goal of 500 children and thanks to his incredible hard work and determination, the campaign raised enough funds to feed more than 7,000 hungry children for an entire school year. Speaking about this exceptional achievement, Felix said: "I am so amazed and speechless ... Thanks to your support and your generosity, so many children can receive a school meal. I am really grateful."

At the end of 2020, MMI and other National Affiliates across our global network launched the annual 'Big Family Christmas' campaign. The campaign invited supporters to set a place at our virtual Big Family Christmas dinner table, with every place set feeding a hungry child for an entire school year. With each donation, a personalised plate was set on the virtual table with the option to receive placemats featuring the names of friends and family via email to print out and send on if a donor was



setting a place as a Christmas gift. We are delighted to report that upon completion, the campaign raised enough funds to provide more than 14,200 children across our global programmes with a daily meal for a whole school year.

Mary's Meals UK launched the 'Double the Love' campaign in early November 2020, following the success of their UK Aid Match application to the Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO). The launch of the campaign means that for a three-month period between 2

November 2020 to 31 January 2021, public donations to the campaign will be matched by the UK government up to the value of £2 million. This project will support more than 43,000 vulnerable children located in Bong County, Liberia, over the course of three years between 2021 and 2024.



Food insecurity and poverty remains high in Bong County, with many families struggling to send their children to school. Therefore, this is a fantastic opportunity to reach some of the most vulnerable children in Liberia, allowing them to attend school regularly and improve their academic performance, giving them a better chance of becoming educated individuals that can lift their communities out of poverty.

Despite the challenges faced in 2020, our National Affiliates and their supporters continued to discover innovative and effective ways to grow our global movement. We continued to be humbled by the generosity of our global volunteers and supporters as they give their time, donations, and prayer to the Mary's Meals global movement. It is this dedication that allows us to keep our promise to vulnerable and marginalised children across the world, especially during this challenging time.

### Raising awareness of our work

In February 2020 – before Covid-19 took hold globally and travel and gathering restrictions were put in place – Gerard Butler received The Cinema for Peace Honorary Award, in recognition of his work with



Mary's Meals. The Scottish actor has been a long-time supporter of our work since presenting a CNN Hero award to our founder Magnus a decade ago. This time, Gerard was presented with his award by Magnus at a ceremony in Berlin, Germany. Gerard said: "It's humbling to be recognised by Cinema for Peace in this way, but I've always felt it's a privilege to be involved with Mary's Meals. Feeding kids, while they learn, is a simple thing that truly transforms lives. The communities I spent time with, in Haiti and Liberia, were amazing

and inspiring. What Mary's Meals always reminds me is that great things happen when everyone does their bit."

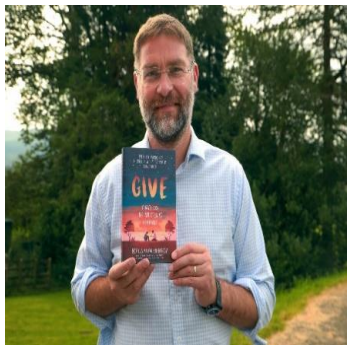
Our new film, 'Love Reaches Everywhere', featuring Hollywood actor Gerard Butler, was officially released on 25 June 2020. The film documents the time Gerard and our founder and CEO, Magnus MacFarlane-Barrow, spent in schools and communities in Haiti and Liberia, showing the impact Mary's Meals has on vulnerable children in action. Feedback has been positive, and the impact it has had in raising greater awareness for Mary's Meals has been encouraging, with strong media reportage such as the largest daily newspaper in Bosnia and Herzegovina, 'Večernji list', sharing front page coverage and an additional article to announce the premiere of the film.



Alongside the film, National Affiliate websites have resources on how to set up a Facebook screening and a shareable link for those interested in sharing the film across social media and with friends and family. These resources were created with the aim to invite more people into the Mary's Meals family



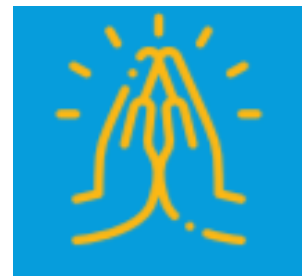
in a simple and effective way. We are very excited by the new awareness the film will bring our vision and mission by showing the impact that a simple daily meal can have on so many children's lives. If you would like to watch our new film, you can do so, [here](#).



In September 2020, Magnus released his second book, 'GIVE', where he draws from almost 30 years of charity work and leadership as he examines and celebrates the role of charity in our lives. The publication of 'GIVE' is helping to create awareness of Mary's Meals through various National Affiliate activities to promote this work. Various radio and television interviews have taken place through Mary's Meals Ireland and Mary's Meals Italy, with many more planned for 2021. The book will also be available to non-English speakers as Mary's Meals Italy are currently translating the book into Italian, allowing our work to reach a wider audience.

Due to Covid-19 restrictions, the annual Mary's Meals pilgrimage to Medjugorje was unable to happen in its usual form. However, Magnus was delighted to host the first virtual pilgrimage in which attendees were warmly welcomed regardless of faith or whether they were or were not already involved in the work of Mary's Meals. The virtual event took place from between 13-15 November and included prayer, some short talks about Medjugorje and how Medjugorje continues to help shape our mission. The event was a huge success, with over 10,000 users engaging across the Mary's Meals Medjugorje Pilgrimage site from 103 countries across the globe, with the highest number of attendees joining online from the US, across all 50 states.

Feedback from both attendees and National Affiliates has been very positive, with more than 200 attendees subscribing to Mary's Meals email updates and 97.5% of attendees surveyed post-event reporting that they would be likely to attend future events hosted by Mary's Meals, as well as many enquiring how they can further help and donate to our work. The pilgrimage also allowed for a permanent Mary's Meals Medjugorje website to be developed, allowing other future online events or information regarding Mary's Meals Medjugorje to be utilised, helping in raising awareness for our work in the future.



National Affiliates continue to provide more resources to raise awareness for our work. In March 2020, Mary's Meals Czech Republic released an audio and e-book of the Shed That Fed A Million Children, available for download free of charge from their website. Thanks to Mary's Meals Czech Republic's efforts, the story of Mary's Meals is now easily accessible to Czech language speakers. Additionally, Mary's Meals Slovakia has also released a The Shed That Fed a Million Children in Slovak, which was nominated as the chosen Book of the Year by SSV – the largest publisher of Christian books in Slovakia – meaning that 80,000 copies of the book will be distributed free of charge to members of their book club throughout Slovakia.

Despite the ongoing challenges faced by Covid-19, our national affiliates have continued to raise awareness of Mary's Meals through virtual events and creating resources that are easily accessible to our supporters around the globe. As we continue into 2021, we hope to continue to grow as an organisation and raise awareness in communities across the world, with the aim of working toward achieving our vision that every child receives a daily meal in their place of education.



## Strengthening the organisation

The Mary's Meals global network has continued to develop during 2020 as we grow as an organisation. The Mary's Meals 2021-2023 Strategic Plan '**The Next Child**', was approved by the Mary's Meals International Board and was shared across the organisation at the beginning of November 2020 via a virtual meeting, with board members, staff, and key volunteers from across the Mary's Meals family invited to attend. In doing so, the whole organisation came together - more than 700 people - to discuss the aims that will underpin our work over the forthcoming strategic period and ensure that all those involved in our global movement are moving towards this new strategic period together.

Mary's Meals will continue to build upon the strong foundations from the three strategic aims set out in the 2018-2020 Strategic Plan, "It's Possible". The three key strategic aims that will continue to guide our work throughout 2021-23 are:

- To feed more children in a place of education and help those suffering the effects of extreme poverty in the world's poorest communities.
- To grow the global movement and enable more people to offer their money, goods, skills, time, or prayer to advance the work of Mary's Meals.
- To strengthen the organisation and Mary's Meals' global network in furtherance of the vision, mission, and values.

The continuation of these aims is testament to the fact that Mary's Meals is a simple idea that works. We are very excited to continue with these aims over the next three years as they remain fundamental to our work to grow as an organisation. More details of our 2021-2023 Strategic Plan can be found [here](#).

## National Affiliate Forum

The quarterly National Affiliate Forum (NAF) has grown in strength throughout 2020 and has continued to generate more requests to include additional delegates, with over 30 attendees from 15 national affiliate countries joining in December 2020, highlighting the valuable platform the forum creates for our National Affiliate network. National Affiliate working groups have also been created, dedicated to various subject matters, including - volunteer recruitment, youth engagement and a global church strategy - in order to share and develop ideas and processes to grow our global movement.

Each working group has experienced successful and efficient outputs throughout 2020. As part of the volunteer recruitment working group, National Affiliates were able to create a permanent repository of useful volunteer documents that can be accessed, updated, and continuously improved by all affiliates. The youth engagement working group continues to be focused on developing Mary's Meals' engagement with young people and is aiming to build an understanding of best practice across the global family when considering engaging with young people. In doing so, the group will aim to develop a bank of resources that can be used across the National Affiliate Network. The global church strategy group has discussed what opportunities there are to invite communities into the Mary's Meals family and as we go into 2021, aims to develop a donor journey within the church community.

The NAF has encouraged greater communication amongst affiliates throughout 2020 and has been useful in sharing ideas and opportunities for collaboration. In keeping with our core values of stewardship and simplicity, the NAF and working groups will continue to seek creative ways to develop and share resources to grow our global movement as this work develops throughout 2021.

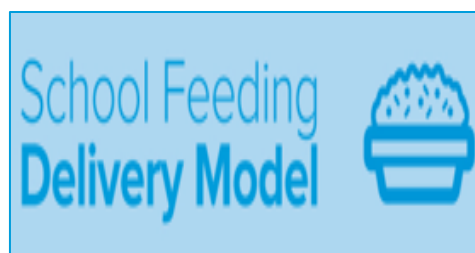
## School Feeding Delivery Model updates

We have continued to focus on the development of our School Feeding Delivery Model throughout 2020. After review and implementation of five key processes in 2019, Mary's Meals has decided on a digital platform to provide and help us develop our digital/mobile platform to assist in the delivery of our school feeding programme.





By capturing school feeding programme data digitally, we will improve programme data accuracy through sophisticated data validation checks, improve the speed in which the data is available and enhance our reporting and analysis capability. Until we are ready to deploy this new software, an interim mobile application for school feeding officers has been designed and built and is currently being piloted as a tool for completing field-based school monitoring.



Following delays in roll-out of the application because of Covid-19 travel restrictions in place throughout 2020, Mary's Meals aims to deploy the application in all four of our Programme Affiliate countries in 2021.

## Developing our systems

### Integrated CRM project

The integrated Constituent Relationship Management (CRM) tool ensures that National Affiliates have the support system needed to cultivate strong relationships with supporters and volunteers. The onboarding of Salesforce to National Affiliates will increase our understanding of our existing supporter base and enhance our ability to target communication campaigns to raise awareness of our work.

The system improves our ability to analyse data from campaigns and communications, enhance our understanding of our supporters and facilitate and improve the relationships we hold. As a result, we are more knowledgeable about which type, style, content of campaigns and communications are preferred by different supporters which helps us better tailor how and what we send, and the frequency with which we send out materials. This new system continued to have a considerable impact on the organisation in 2020 through:

- Integrating our global websites and payment systems.
- Improving the efficiency and cost-effectiveness of our supporter and donation management processes.
- Enabling us to better track and measure the success of fundraising campaigns and communications.
- Giving supporters access to manage their personal information and fundraising projects through our online self-service area.

The CRM experienced a large increase in community user accounts (supporters who can log into their user account), with more than 9,000 registered on the system, this is an increase of over 6,000. In addition, there is also over 147,000 contact records held in the CRM, providing users with a full view of all supporter engagement across their affiliate network.

We are pleased to report that Mary's Meals Poland became the latest National Affiliate to deploy the Salesforce CRM system. By implementing the system in the early days of the organisation, Mary's Meals Poland will be assisted to deliver its growth plans, and supporter communications will be enhanced. As the integrated CRM project continues into 2021, our focus will be on continuous improvement and the onboarding of additional National Affiliates.

### 3. Report on funding received this year

We continue to be grateful for the financial support of Mary's Meals Ireland and confirm that the total amount of funding received during 2020 was €1,206,960. Funding was allocated to individual country programmes according to your direction. Information on the amounts received and their allocation is presented in Appendix A.



#### 4. Thank you

Thank you to the hard work and dedication of Mary's Meals Ireland throughout the last year. Covid-19 has changed the way we work and has been an incredibly challenging year for everyone but all national affiliates and everyone involved in our global movement embraced and managed the changes whilst showing unwavering support for our mission and vision. Thanks to this incredible commitment, 2020 was a hugely successful year for Mary's Meals as we have continued to reach more vulnerable and marginalised children at a time when it matters most, whilst also strengthening the organisation.

On behalf of all the children that Mary's Meals Ireland has supported, thank you.



Appendix A

Information on the amounts received during the year and their allocation is presented in the table below.

<b>Mary's Meals Ireland</b>													
<b>Country Programme</b>	<b>Jan-20</b>	<b>Feb-20</b>	<b>Mar-20</b>	<b>Apr-20</b>	<b>May-20</b>	<b>Jun-20</b>	<b>Jul-20</b>	<b>Aug-20</b>	<b>Sep-20</b>	<b>Oct-20</b>	<b>Nov-20</b>	<b>Dec-20</b>	<b>Total Funds</b>
Ethiopia	€ 0	€ 0	€ 0	€ 0	€ 0	€ 0	€ 0	€ 0	€ 0	€ 0	€ 20	€ 0	€ 20
Haiti	€ 200	€ 0	€ 0	€ 0	€ 0	€ 0	€ 0	€ 0	€ 0	€ 0	€ 0	€ 0	€ 200
Kenya	€ 0	€ 1,000	€ 0	€ 0	€ 0	€ 0	€ 0	€ 0	€ 0	€ 0	€ 0	€ 0	€ 1,000
Liberia	€ 15,935	€ 557	€ 2,121	€ 11	€ 384	€ 5,330	€ 3,924	€ 5,814	€ 7,919	€ 21	€ 6,324	€ 7,221	€ 55,560
Malawi	€ 7,262	€ 2,955	€ 8,521	€ 1,600	€ 18,548	€ 198	€ 613	€ 4,295	€ 4,212	€ 2,000	€ 2,365	€ 2,670	€ 55,239
Zambia	€ 0	€ 0	€ 0	€ 0	€ 4,485	€ 100	€ 230	€ 0	€ 17,219	€ 0	€ 0	€ 2,455	€ 24,489
Global Feeding*	€ 68,700	€ 43,118	€ 135,860	€ 63,593	€ 54,595	€ 118,909	€ 111,084	€ 126,005	€ 93,188	€ 62,826	€ 71,151	€ 121,423	€ 1,070,451
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>€ 92,097</b>	<b>€ 47,630</b>	<b>€ 146,502</b>	<b>€ 65,204</b>	<b>€ 78,013</b>	<b>€ 124,537</b>	<b>€ 115,851</b>	<b>€ 136,114</b>	<b>€ 122,538</b>	<b>€ 64,847</b>	<b>€ 79,859</b>	<b>€ 133,769</b>	<b>€ 1,206,960</b>

\*Mary's Meals International carries out school feeding programmes in 19 countries as shown on page four.