



Mary's Meals Ireland Trustees' Annual Report

For the year ended 31 December 2025

mary's
meals

a simple solution
to world hunger

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Directors and other information

DIRECTORS

Fr. Eamonn Kelly
Jimmy Murphy
Deirdre Kenny Rudden
Paul Galvin
Bert Main
Arthur Coary
Patricia Brandon
Ruairí O'Connor
Michael Galvin

COMPANY SECRETARY

Patricia Friel

COMPANY NUMBER

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REGISTERED CHARITY NUMBER

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CHARITY NUMBER

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REGISTERED OFFICE AND BUSINESS ADDRESS

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AUDITOR

Clive Curran
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BANKERS

Bank of Ireland
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Taratra Primary School
Madagascar, 2025

Chairperson & Executive Director report 2025

It is with a deep sense of gratitude and renewed hope that we present the 2025 Annual Report for Mary's Meals Ireland.

This year held particular significance for Mary's Meals Ireland as we celebrated our 20th Anniversary. 20 years of raising vital funds to feed the world's poorest children. This milestone offered us a moment to reflect on all that has been achieved over the past two decades, while renewing our commitment to the mission that continues to guide us: to reach the next hungry child waiting.

As we journeyed through another year marked by global instability, ongoing conflict, and increasing food insecurity, we remained steadfast in that commitment. In a world where many continue to feel the pressures of the cost-of-living crisis, the generosity and compassion of our supporters across Ireland have been both humbling and inspiring.

In Ireland, we are delighted to report an income of over **€2.9 million** this year. With this support, alongside our global Mary's Meals family, we are now reaching more than 3 million children with a daily meal in their place of education across 16 countries.

Our income this year was built on thousands of little acts of love from our dedicated supporters, our volunteers and donors across Ireland. This was further boosted by an extremely generous donation from **The Tom Cunningham Trust**, of €500,000 whose support helped feed 22,727 children for a whole school year. The Trust also powered our very successful Double the Love campaign.

The **"Double the Love"** appeal continued to inspire generosity, reminding us of the power of collective giving and the tangible difference it makes in the lives of the children we serve.

In 2025, we were proud to continue sharing the powerful message that it still costs just **€22** to feed a child for a whole school year, an extraordinary impact made possible through the kindness of our supporters.

Throughout this anniversary year, we witnessed a growing community of people engaging with our mission in new and meaningful ways. Awareness continues to grow across Ireland, with more individuals, schools, and communities connecting with the work of Mary's Meals.



We are especially encouraged by the continued growth of our volunteer network. In 2025, **196 active volunteers** supported the mission of Mary's Meals across Ireland. We were delighted to welcome new groups in **Kilkenny, Athlone, Leitrim, Athenry, Waterford, Louth, and Inishowen**, each bringing fresh energy, creativity, and commitment. These grassroots efforts remain the heartbeat of Mary's Meals Ireland, helping us to raise awareness, build relationships, and reach more people with the story of our work.

A highlight of this special anniversary year was once again our **"Step by Step to Feed the Next Child" Walk**, which brought communities together across the country in solidarity with the children we serve. This event continues to grow in both participation and impact, reflecting the deep commitment of our volunteers and supporters.

As the year came to a close, we paused, especially in this anniversary year, to reflect with immense gratitude on all that has been achieved over the past 20 years, and on the role each of you continues to play in this story. Every donation, every prayer, every act of volunteering has helped bring life-changing meals to children who need them most.

We remain deeply committed to being faithful stewards of the generosity entrusted to us. Our promise to direct at least **93%** of all income to our charitable activities continues to guide our work, ensuring that your support has the greatest possible impact for the children we serve. In 2025, Mary's Meals Ireland managed to get **97%** of all income to go to our charitable activities.

We extend our heartfelt thanks to our supporters, volunteers, staff, and trustees for their unwavering dedication and belief in our mission. Together, we move forward with courage and conviction, focused always on reaching the next hungry child waiting for Mary's Meals.

Together, let us continue this important work.



ARTHUR COARY
Chief Executive

Arthur Coary



PATRICIA FRIEL
Chair

Patricia Friel



Trustees' annual report

WHO WE ARE

Since 2002, Mary's Meals has provided children with nutritious meals in areas of great need, breaking down barriers to education and offering a potential pathway out of poverty. Our simple yet transformative approach provides daily meals within places of education, encouraging children into the classroom and giving them energy to learn.

Today, we are humbled to be among the largest non-governmental organisation providers of school meals globally, delivering locally procured meals at scale to those children who are most vulnerable, while working alongside communities, governments, and partners to create lasting change. Food insecurity, child hunger, and malnutrition continue to be persistent and critical global challenges, particularly in areas where we work. Of the 118 million children experiencing hunger in 2025, it is estimated that more than half were in this situation because of conflict rather than environmental issues or economic pressures.

Extreme weather events deepened food insecurity across Africa and beyond, exacerbating challenges for children and communities already living in poverty and vulnerable to hunger. Mary's Meals school feeding programmes provides a vital lifeline and social safety net for children and their families, reaching some of those communities worst affected by acute food insecurity, drought, flooding, and rising food prices.



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.

OUR VALUES

We believe that the way we do our work is as important as the end results. It is vital, therefore, that through our values, we create a consistent and deeply held understanding of 'the Mary's Meals way' in order to help all of us to live it better. Our values underpin our work and are shared by all those involved in carrying out our mission from those involved in fundraising right through to volunteers living and working in the communities we partner with.

Our key values are that:

- We have confidence in the innate goodness of people
- We respect the dignity of every human being and family life
- We believe in good stewardship of resources entrusted to us

Our values help us understand the principles on which our decision-making and organisational culture are built. Our values have always proclaimed that this mission belongs to people of all faiths and none. That has been the reality of Mary's Meals since our inception and will continue to be, always. People belonging to one particular faith or denomination will never be more welcome in this mission than any other. The only qualification required to join this movement is a desire to see the hungry child fed and set free from poverty. While we may not share the same beliefs, we certainly share a love of the children we serve.

OUR CHARITABLE OBJECTIVES

MMI has a specific role in the Mary's Meals movement to deliver on the vision and mission through the following charitable objects:

- a. To provide a daily meal, in a place of education, for children in the world's poorest communities;
- b. To provide relief for those suffering, in any part of the world, as a result of humanitarian crises or poverty, to help people escape poverty and to provide care for orphaned, abandoned and vulnerable children and to work for the prevention thereof;
- c. To raise awareness worldwide of poverty issues through education and;
- d. To assist and support the work of other organisations, financially or otherwise, in particular members of the Mary's Meals network throughout the world, the objectives of which would be considered to be charitable purposes and similar in nature to these objectives

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 in the world's poorest communities. 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 STRATEGIC AIMS

We work towards the above charitable objects by focusing our efforts on three core strategic aims:

- 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, time, or prayer to advance the work of Mary's Meals
- To strengthen the organisation and Mary's Meals global network in the furtherance of the vision, mission and values

We firmly believe that the children receiving Mary's Meals today can one day grow up, well-nourished and well-educated, to become the men and women who will lift their communities out of poverty.



Sanjit smiling, India, 2024

Volunteers: The heart of Mary's Meals Ireland

At the heart of Mary's Meals Ireland is a remarkable community of volunteers whose generosity, commitment, and faith in action make our work possible every day.

In 2025, **196 dedicated volunteers** across **30 groups in 19 counties** gave their time, energy, and creativity to support our mission. From organising local fundraisers and church collections to hosting coffee mornings, social dancing, Art sales, quizzes, school talks, baking, making jam, collecting cans and bottles and many community events, their efforts continue to ensure that children receive a daily meal in their place of education.

Our volunteers are not simply supporters of Mary's Meals; they are ambassadors of our mission. Through countless "little acts of love," they raise awareness, inspire others to get involved, and bring communities together in solidarity with the children we serve. This year, we were especially encouraged by the growth of our grassroots network, with **new groups forming in Kilkenny, Athlone, Leitrim, Athenry, Waterford, Louth, and Inishowen.**

These new beginnings are a powerful reminder that the mission continues to resonate strongly across Ireland, and that more people are stepping forward to play their part.

Volunteer-led grassroots fundraising remains a cornerstone of our work, contributing **close to half of our annual income**. This is an extraordinary achievement and a testament to the passion and dedication of our supporters. Whether through long-established groups or newly formed communities, every effort contributes directly to feeding children and giving them the opportunity to learn.

We are deeply grateful for the time, sacrifice, and heart that each volunteer brings. Behind every event organised, every euro raised, and every conversation shared is a desire to make a difference in the lives of others.



As we look ahead, we remain committed to supporting and growing our volunteer network, ensuring that those who give so generously feel valued, equipped, and connected to the global mission of Mary's Meals.

To each and every volunteer: **thank you**. You are the hands and feet of this mission, and through you, hope is shared with children around the world.



Michael Ridgeway
on Mount Everest



Schools & youth: Young people leading with generosity

Schools across Ireland continue to play a vital role in the mission of Mary's Meals, with students and staff embracing creative and joyful ways to make a difference.

From fancy dress days and cake sales to whole-school Santa walks, young people are using their imagination and energy to support children around the world. These activities are not only fun and engaging, but they also foster a deep sense of compassion, global awareness, and shared responsibility.

What is especially inspiring is how students choose to use their own talents. Whether it's baking, organising events, performing, designing posters, or speaking at assemblies, each contribution reflects a genuine desire to help others.



We are also greatly encouraged by the **growing number of Mary's Meals Youth Ambassadors** across Ireland.

These passionate young leaders are taking an active role in promoting our mission within their schools and communities, speaking confidently about Mary's Meals, organising initiatives, and inspiring their peers to get involved. They are a powerful voice for the next generation and a sign of the future strength of our mission.

The impact of these school-led activities goes far beyond fundraising. They help nurture a generation that understands the power of kindness and the importance of standing in solidarity with those in need.

We are continually encouraged by the enthusiasm and commitment shown by schools, and we are deeply grateful for the creativity and heart they bring to Mary's Meals.





Feeding more children

Mary's Meals experienced many incredible moments in 2025. While our commitment to the children already receiving our meals remained central to our work, we were delighted to achieve growth in many of our school feeding programmes and celebrate a significant milestone: providing **more than 3 million children** with daily school meals.

Over the course of the year, we served more than **400,883,000** meals across **91%** of school days, while achieving gender parity for another consecutive year.

EXPANSIONS

2025 was a record-breaking year for Mary's Meals in many ways. Our global school feeding programmes surpassed reaching 3 million children, and we had the largest single year of growth in the history of our programmes, driven by ambitious expansion plans.

Across Ethiopia, Haiti, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, South Sudan, Zambia, and Zimbabwe, **more than 650,000 additional children** in over **1,300 schools** began receiving Mary's Meals in 2025. More information about our expansions and the impact of our work throughout the year will be available to read in Mary's Meals' 2025 Annual Impact Report.



EMERGENCY IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

In the first quarter of 2025, Mary's Meals launched a six-week emergency appeal as millions of people across Southern Africa faced a deepening humanitarian crisis driven by the region's worst drought in a century.

Throughout the campaign, we shared stories from individuals and communities bearing the brunt of the situation and raised vital funds for our school feeding programmes in Malawi, Mozambique, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

Thanks to the extraordinary generosity of all those who supported the campaign, more than €900,000 was raised. This support helped us to expand our reach across the four countries, which now sits at more than 2.1 million children.

3 MILLION SMILES

To mark the milestone of reaching more than 3 million children with nutritious meals every school day, Mary's Meals launched a multi-national campaign, **3 million smiles**, on 8 September. Supporters and followers of Mary's Meals were invited to share photos of their smiles on social media using the hashtag **#SmileForMarysMeals**.

The images were collated on our Wall of Hope, an online visual showpiece where visitors could scroll through smiles from around the world.

The campaign provided an opportunity to celebrate an extraordinary achievement while also reflecting on the work still needed to realise our vision.





Volunteers coming from
drawing water, Malawi, 2025

Growing the global movement

THE SHED THAT FED CONTINUES TO GROW GLOBALLY

The Shed that Fed A Million Children (updated as *The Shed That Fed 2 Million Children*) and *GIVE*, written by Mary's Meals Founder and CEO Magnus MacFarlane-Barrow continue to be powerful tools for introducing the work of Mary's Meals to new audiences, with National Affiliates and International Fundraising Groups investing significant time and effort to promoting and distributing copies.

Several notable book-related milestones were reached in 2025. The first low-cost promotional-only print-run of English books was completed in partnership with HarperCollins, allowing English-speaking affiliates and the Medjugorje Information Centre to purchase a bulk order of books at a fraction of the usual price for free distribution.

Mary's Meals Germany, Austria, and Switzerland jointly decided to pursue a self-publishing model for the updated version of *The Shed That Fed 2 Million Children*. Two versions were self-published: one for the Austrian market and another for Germany and Switzerland, with help from Mary's Meals Czech Republic.

In Slovakia, publisher SSV released a Slovakian translation of *GIVE* in October, and a self-published edition of *The Shed That Fed 2 Million Children* in Hungarian was printed locally in Medjugorje.



In April, Mary's Meals' documentary *On the Frontlines of Hunger* premiered at the **Sarasota Film Festival**. The film tells the relatively unknown story of the people of Tigray, Ethiopia, in their own voices, highlighting how conflict, poverty, climate change, and drought destroyed decades of progress and pushed the region to the brink of famine once again. The documentary was also screened at **Westminster (UK Parliament)** and at the **Frontline Club** in London to mark the 40th anniversary of Live Aid and bring renewed focus to the crisis.

The summer months were an incredibly busy time for the Mary's Meals family, following an official invitation to participate in official activities of the **Youth Jubilee** in Rome. A prayer vigil presided over by Pope Leo XIV at Tor Vergata was a highlight, with Mary's Meals Youth Ambassadors presenting our work to the vast crowd ahead of the Pope's appearance. Three well-known Catholic singers also performed live on stage as Mary's Meals representatives.

In August, Magnus travelled to the Rimini meeting in Italy, where he was invited to speak on a panel – *Justice is not enough: charity is needed* – alongside Lord John Bird, Founder of The Big Issue magazine.

MARY'S MEALS ON THE GLOBAL STAGE

Mary's Meals Founder and CEO Magnus MacFarlane-Barrow was invited to attend and speak at the Vatican's inaugural **World Leaders Summit on Children's Rights** in Rome in February. The summit brought together global leaders, including Queen Rania of Jordan; Megawati Sukarnoputri, former President of Indonesia; and Al Gore, former US Vice President. Addressing this esteemed audience, Magnus spoke about the importance of children's 'Right to Hope' alongside other important rights of the child.



SPORTS AND SPONSORED WALKS

Sports and sponsored walks also gave wonderful momentum to our mission throughout the year. Early on, supporters gathered around the Tipperary hurlers' clash with Laois hurlers on 14 January 2025. These moments of county pride created a natural opportunity to raise awareness and bring people together in support of Mary's Meals.

Later in the year, the lads toggled out once again, this time as **All-Ireland champions** on 20 December, taking to the field against the Kilkenny hurling team and continuing to inspire communities to come together in support of our mission.

We were also inspired by the energy and generosity of the **Sharks Rugby Girls** (U14 level) drawn from multiple Dublin clubs, including Blackrock College RFC, Old Belvedere RFC, Wanderers FC, and Terenure College RFC, who used their sporting talents to support Mary's Meals and raise awareness as they travelled for the Rugby World Cup in September 2025.

Their example shows the powerful difference young people can make when they choose to use their gifts in the service of others. We are deeply grateful to all teams, their managers, and the dedicated committees behind them. Their support, leadership and willingness to use their platforms to make a difference have had a meaningful and lasting impact on our work.

And, of course, our **Step by Step to Feed the Next Child** walk continues to be one of the most visible and meaningful ways people support our work. Year after year, individuals, families, and communities take part with generosity and determination, showing that every step taken in solidarity can help bring hope to a hungry child. Our thanks to everyone who made this walk such a success.



Strengthening the organisation

NEW RESOURCES AND SUPPORT

Throughout 2025, Mary's Meals International (MMI) continued to strengthen the organisation by upgrading existing systems and introducing new tools.

In May, a new **Integrated Digital Platform (IDP)** toolkit was launched. This centralised hub for digital process learning and support helps new and existing IDP users get the most from the platform, offering process guides for core tasks, a Salesforce glossary, video walkthroughs, and ready-to-use templates to simplify data uploads.

A new **Procurement Hub** was also launched in May to equip employees with more information about the procurement team, the new Procurement Policy, and useful tools such as the Procurement Manual.

Meanwhile, the **Digital Content Library** – used widely across the organisation to access content from our school feeding programmes – underwent significant maintenance and improvements led by the MMI Content team.

Updates include enhancements to the simple search function, the addition of new metadata fields, and a refreshed Featured Collections section (where content is filed into campaigns and themes), which has had new collections added. Visual language for thumbnails has also been adopted to improve navigation.

OPERATIONAL CHANGES IN KENYA

Following significant changes in Kenya, including government-led school feeding initiatives extending their reach and increased support from the Turkana County Government, a decision was made in 2025 to deliver our school feeding programme entirely through our trusted local partner, Diocese of Lodwar. To support this transition, Diocese of Lodwar increased the number of Early Childhood Development and Education centres (ECDEs) in Turkana where it delivers our school feeding programme, to reach learners that were previously served by Mary's Meals Kenya.



LEADERSHIP APPOINTMENTS

In 2025, following a restructure of the Mary's Meals International Executive Leadership Team (ELT) the previous year, several further changes were made and new roles appointed.

Erin Pratley, Director of Programme Operations, was promoted to Chief Programmes Officer. Alex Keay, who has been with Mary's Meals for 10 years, moved from his role as Director of Programme Affiliates and Partners to become Director of Partnerships, using his wealth of experience and knowledge to lead on major partnerships and nurturing high-level donor relationships.

Keli Marshall, formerly of Mary's Meals Canada, was selected for the Director of Strategic Initiatives role, leading work to grow revenue, strengthen National Affiliates, and drive long-term, sustainable income growth.

Natalie Peters was appointed Director of Brand and Marketing in August, leading on Mary's Meals' global brand and marketing to drive audience growth, strengthen supporter engagement, and enable sustainable income across the international network.

Following Rhain Cooke's promotion to Chief People and Governance Officer, Nicola Green was appointed Director of People and Culture, driving forward the People and Culture strategy to enable talent retention, ensure culture and values alignment and nurture effective leadership.

Working closely with CEO and Founder Magnus MacFarlane-Barrow, the MMI ELT comprises Graeme Little, Chief Operations Officer; Cheryl McGeachie, Chief Growth Officer; Erin Pratley, Chief Programmes Officer; Rhian Cooke, Chief People and Governance Officer.





Rakotobe Primary School,
Madagascar, 2025

Celebrating 20 years of Mary's Meals Ireland

In 2025, we were proud to mark the **20th Anniversary of Mary's Meals Ireland**, a significant milestone celebrating two decades of generosity, and unwavering commitment to feeding children in some of the world's poorest communities.

A highlight of this special year was our **Gala Lunch and Auction for Hope**, held on **May 3rd** in the beautiful setting of Maynooth University. This memorable occasion brought together supporters, volunteers, and friends of Mary's Meals to celebrate all that has been achieved and to look forward with hope to all that is still to come.

The event was made possible through the extraordinary dedication of many, and we extend our heartfelt thanks to **Fidelma Largey**, Mary's Meals Dublin Volunteer, for her immense work and commitment in bringing the day to life.

We are also deeply grateful to **Marian Pilgrimages**, our event sponsor, whose support reflects a shared mission of faith, hope, and service. Our sincere thanks to **Ger Nevin of Reilly's Antiques**, our wonderful auctioneer, who brought both professionalism and great warmth to the day and to the wonderful **Sisters Étaín and Máire of An Chéad Ghluín Eile** for sharing their beautiful music and song with us.

We were honoured to hear an inspiring address from **Magnus MacFarlane-Barrow**, Founder and CEO of Mary's Meals, whose words reminded us of the simple but powerful vision at the heart of our mission that every child should receive one daily meal in their place of education. His message renewed our sense of purpose and encouraged all present to continue playing their part in this global movement of hope.



Our Lead Youth Ambassador, Aoibhínn, whose leadership and confidence are a powerful example of the next generation carrying this mission forward, beautifully read a letter from **President Michael D. Higgins**, acknowledging the impact and importance of Mary's Meals and expressing his gratitude to all the staff, volunteers and supporters over the past 20 years and encouraged us to keep moving forward.





Thank you

As we reflect on 20 years, we give thanks for every supporter, volunteer, donor, every corporate donor who helped us cover our costs and friend who has played a part in this journey. Together, through many small acts of love, we continue to bring hope and nourishment to children around the world.

Mary's Meals Ireland

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