

A young girl with dark skin and short hair, wearing a light blue school uniform, is smiling and holding a bright pink plastic cup. The background is dark and out of focus.

mary's
meals

a simple solution
to world hunger

Mary's Meals International

Annual Report to Mary's Meals Spain
January – December 2021



Mary's Meals International annual report to Mary's Meals Spain

January to December 2021

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1. Executive summary

Mary's Meals International is pleased to present this report to Mary's Meals Spain outlining the key developments made across the global movement in 2021. Despite the ongoing challenges of Covid-19, our vision burns as brightly as ever, and the Mary's Meals global family has worked together to ensure that some of the world's most vulnerable and marginalised receive a daily meal in their place of education. The link between hunger and education is a devastating and unrelenting cycle, but by working as a global family and with supporters who share our ideals, Mary's Meals has reached an incredible milestone, expanded our global programmes, and raised more funds and awareness of our work. Thanks to our supporters around the world throughout 2021, we have:

- Fed **over two million children**.
- Began working in Yemen, our **20th** programme country.
- Began working with two new partners, Yemen Aid in Yemen, and Mary Help Association in South Sudan.
- Expanded our programmes in **12** countries, providing an incredible **425,209** 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 due to Covid-19.
- Made significant progress in strengthening the organisation through greater digital onboarding and usage of the integrated CRM and School Feeding Delivery Model projects.
- Continued to grow the global movement through our network of National Affiliates across various fundraising activities and campaigns.

Mary's Meals International is pleased that the Mary's Meals Strategic Plan 2021-23 is being implemented as we aspire to reach three million children with a daily meal in their place of education by the end of 2023. All Mary's Meals International staff have been updated on the new Strategic Plan and will be kept informed on the progress being made throughout the strategic period. The three strategic aims set out in our Strategic Plan 2021-2023, **"The Next Child"**, continue to guide our growth as an organisation. These aims are outlined below:

1. **To feed more children in a place of education and help those suffering the effects of extreme poverty in the world's poorest communities.**
2. **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.**
3. **To strengthen the organisation and Mary's Meals global network in the furtherance of our vision, mission and values.**

Mary's Meals will continue to work toward these aims throughout 2022.

2. Strategic report

The ongoing impact of Covid-19

Throughout 2021, Covid-19 has continued to sweep across the globe and necessary restrictions have been put in place to mitigate the spread of the virus, including prolonged school closures in countries where Mary's Meals operates. Despite these challenges, Mary's Meals has made a promise to provide one daily meal to the children we support, and we remain resolute in our unwavering commitment to serve all **two million children** who are part of our feeding programme. In doing so, we adapted to a community distribution approach in countries where schools are closed due to rising Covid-19 cases.

Through this approach, Mary's Meals distributes food, which would normally be prepared by volunteers and served to children in school,





to parents and guardians of beneficiaries to cook at home. Following a drop in Covid-19 cases and vaccine update globally, Mary's Meals is delighted to report that in most of our programme countries, children have been able to return to their classrooms as schools have now reopened. Despite the challenging context, the strong relationships we have built with communities where we work have allowed us to reinstate our normal school feeding programme smoothly in thousands of schools.

Mary's Meals understands the importance of school feeding programmes in reversing the potentially disastrous effects of Covid-19 on some of the world's most vulnerable children. The power of school

"School feeding is a game changer...We need these programmes running to stop Covid-19 destroying the futures of millions of the world's most vulnerable children.

- World Food Programme, 2021

feeding in promoting recovery from Covid-19 has become increasingly recognised throughout the international development sphere, and there is already widespread evidence of its role in ensuring that issues that have been exacerbated by the pandemic, including dropping out of school, hunger, malnutrition and poverty, are mitigated.

This is shared by the World Food Programme who state, *"School feeding is a game changer – for children, for communities and for countries. That one meal a day is often the reason hungry children go to school in the first place. It is a powerful incentive to ensure they'll come back after lockdown ends. We need to get these programs running to stop Covid-19 destroying the futures of millions of the world's most vulnerable children."* (WFP, 2021).

With such compelling evidence of the positive impact of school feeding in the context of Covid-19, our work is more important than ever in getting children back into the classroom after prolonged school closures and disrupted learning which has set many children back in their personal and academic development. By providing a daily meal, Mary's Meals is addressing the root causes of classroom hunger, participation in education, giving each child the ability to concentrate and learn and the chance to gain a life-changing education at a critical time, as many of the world's poorest children face a looming learning crisis.

The impact of our work

In 2021, Mary's Meals International published the findings of our five-year impact assessment that shows the impact of a daily meal on the children we serve. In 2014, we undertook an important initiative to evaluate the impact of our school feeding programme more deeply and robustly through a five-year Impact Assessment. From 2014 to 2019, we systematically collected data from schools in two of our largest programme countries, Malawi, and Zambia, and in 2017 added our Liberia programme to supplement our findings and expand our understanding in a very different country context. Just some of the amazing outcomes of this research are outlined below:



The findings from this research confirms that a daily meal in a place of education has a real and significant impact for the children we serve. The findings confirm and provides evidence for key aspects



that our approach to school feeding of providing a meal consistently, every school day, achieves positive outcomes for children's hunger, energy and wellbeing. This approach and outcomes rely on community volunteers in the schools where we operate to commit to the programme and serve meals each day, which is vital for a long-term, sustainable school feeding programme with life-changing outcomes for the most vulnerable and marginalised children.

At Mary's Meals, we are committed to continually learning and improving so that we can be good stewards to the resources entrusted to us, keep our promise to each child, and reach the next child waiting for Mary's Meals. In undertaking this impact assessment, we have informed our work and helped identify key areas for further understanding or action in the future. You can read our impact assessment in full, [here](#).

Reaching more children

As a result of our deep resolve to reach more children, Mary's Meals is thrilled to report that we are now feeding **over two million children** in **20 countries** across our global programmes. This a phenomenal achievement and would not be possible without the support of Mary's Meals Spain, our supporters and the hard work of our volunteers across the globe who play an incredibly important role in our vision to provide every child with a daily meal.

As we share this wonderful news, we are deeply grateful to everyone who believes passionately in our vision and mission that every child receives a daily meal in their place of education. Thanks to this



support, we have been able to grow from feeding in just one school in Malawi in 2002 to feeding **over two million children** in **4,750 places of education** across the globe. Speaking of this incredible milestone, our founder and CEO, Magnus MacFarlane-Barrow said: *"We celebrate an amazing moment in Mary's Meals history. Today, two million children ate Mary's Meals in a place of education. When we set out on this path, we were overwhelmed by people's goodness – and that's been the story ever since. For every one of those children that ate today, many more are still waiting for Mary's Meals to come to their school, so we go on. But this happy day shows us that this vision of ours is possible."*

Throughout 2021, our school feeding programme grew by **441,082 children**, representing a remarkable **24%** growth rate. This includes natural growth and the **425,209 children** reached through expansions into **1,339 places of education**. This is an incredible achievement and is testament to the efficiency of the Mary's Meals School Feeding Model and the hard work of our programme affiliates and programme partners, who have continued to reach thousands of new children safely and effectively in the context of Covid-19 restrictions. Thanks to these expansions, we are now reaching a total of **2,279,941 children** in 20 countries across the globe, including **1,665,016 children** across four programme affiliates and **614,925 children** across 25 programme partners. The table below details the breakdown of the number of children across our programmes:

Number of children in each country		
Country	No. of children	Places of education
Benin	3,458	5
Ecuador	360	1
Ethiopia	24,320	36
Haiti	182,515	562
India	64,123	156





Kenya	136,126	818
Liberia	131,725	613
Lebanon	1,477	4
Madagascar	66,885	406
Malawi	1,072,884	1,044
Myanmar	1,511	18
Niger	223	5
Romania	12	1
South Sudan	75,969	128
Syria	4,159	12
Thailand	444	4
Uganda	12,196	12
Yemen	4,491	4
Zambia	376,407	752
Zimbabwe	120,656	173
TOTAL	2,279,941	4,750



Yemen

Mary's Meals' work will not stop until we have reached the poorest and most vulnerable children who are waiting for Mary's Meals. As part of working toward this mission, we are delighted to report that we are now feeding in our **20th** programme country. Through our new partner, Yemen Aid, **4,400 children** are receiving Mary's Meals for the first time in the Aden region, located in the south of the country. This district is particularly vulnerable as it is home to a large number of internally displaced people and other marginalised populations who all experience extremely high levels of food insecurity.

Yemen Aid support multiple projects across Yemen, including food security, water and hygiene, healthcare, and women's empowerment. Like Mary's Meals, Yemen Aid aims to preserve the dignity of



all those that they serve and strive for access to education for all that will have a long-term, generational impact. Our closely aligned values means that we are ideally suited to work closely together to ensure children receive a daily meal in the most dignified way possible, allowing them to concentrate and learn in class to gain an education in one of the world's most challenging environments. The picture on the left illustrates children with Mary's Meals, a filled pitta wrap and a piece of fruit, for the first time.

Speaking of this new partnership, Yemen Aid CEO, Summer Nassar, stated: ***"As we embark on this new partnership with Mary's Meals, our hope is to give direct support to the children of Yemen, tackling hunger through strategic and sustainable approaches in the education sector. By promising food in schools, we are ensuring a higher attendance rate from students, whilst instilling that feeling of confidence in their future which they may have been lacking."***

This intervention could not come at a more needed time as Yemen's longstanding civil war and instability, which has been compounded by the Covid-19 pandemic, continues to escalate. The current level of hunger in the country is unprecedented and is causing severe hardship for millions of the population. The rate of child malnutrition is one of the highest in the world and the nutrition situation



continues to deteriorate, with **2.3 million children** across the country on the brink of starvation.^{1,2} Our interventions are already making an incredible difference to the **4,400 children** we serve, as seen through Waleed, pictured right, who is in 8th grade in one of the schools who have recently received Mary's Meals for the first time. Speaking of the impact of the feeding programme, he said: ***"The meals encourage more students to attend school. Also, the students understanding in the class has been improved. Before they used to come to school suffering from inactivity and lack of concentration. Now, they are more interactive."***



Although the conflict and context in Yemen is extremely complex and multifaceted, Mary's Meals' simple idea of a daily meal in a place of education can bring hope to the thousands of children who are currently facing unimaginable hardship and devastating hunger. Please follow this [link](#) to learn more about our new school feeding programme in Yemen.

[Malawi](#)

Mary's Meals has been working in Malawi since 2002, it is our longest-running and largest school feeding programme which feeds **over one million children**. Malawi has consistently high levels of food insecurity and the population are increasingly vulnerable to the effects of climate change.³ The majority of families rely on smallholder farming, meaning that the increasing number of droughts and flooding leave little time for recovery and adequate food production.⁴ In Malawi, 41% of children under five have stunted growth.⁵ It is estimated that around half of the populations of Central and Southern regions have insufficient food intake.⁶ The pandemic compounded this situation as lack of work and purchasing power has left thousands of children and their families at higher risk of food insecurity. As a result, much of the areas where Mary's Meals operates experiencing 'crisis' or 'above-crisis' levels of food insecurity, meaning a large proportion of the population are not meeting their daily food needs, which in many cases results in compromising a meal.⁷

Mary's Meals has continued to respond to the great need in Malawi at a time when food security poses a distinct threat to the poorest and most vulnerable children. In doing so, Mary's Meals is pleased to



report that we have continued to expand our reach in Malawi. Over the course of 2021, Mary's Meals was able to reach **over 21,000 children** across **26 schools** through our 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 a vital to strengthening the importance of education and developing communities.

The acute impact of this new partnership is seen through 10-year-old Yahaya, pictured left, who is one of the children who benefitted from our recent expansion in Malawi. Before Mary's Meals, Yahaya could not concentrate in class, distracted by the need to know where he would find food each day. Consequently, he dropped out of school so he could feed himself and his family. Upon receiving Mary's Meals through our trusted partner MCSPA, Yahaya said: ***"Gone are the days of missing class"***

¹ World Food Programme, *Yemen Emergency*, 2021. (<https://www.wfp.org/emergencies/yemen-emergency>)

² UNICEF, *Acute malnutrition threatens half of children under five in Yemen in 2021*: UN, February 2021. (<https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/acute-malnutrition-threatens-half-children-under-five-yemen-2021-un>)

³ World Food Programme, *Malawi*, 2020. (<http://www1.wfp.org/countries/malawi>)

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ World Bank, *Malawi*, 2019. (<https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SH.STA.STNT.ZS>)

⁶ World Food Programme, *Hunger Map*, 2020. (<https://hungermap.wfp.org/>)

⁷ World Food Programme, *World Hunger Map: Live*, November 2021. (<https://hungermap.wfp.org/>)



before of a lack of a nutritious meal. Mary's Meals has had a positive impact on my education. It helps me concentrate and not to sleep in class." Now, Yahaya has a hope that will be much brighter than his past. Speaking of the future, he said: *"My dreams were shattered, but now I can see the light at the end of the tunnel."*

Over the past year, Malawi has reported a high number of Covid-19 cases in line with a trend seen across southern Africa and experienced a third wave of infections earlier this year. Nonetheless, Mary's Meals' commitment to the children enrolled in our school feeding programme in Malawi has not wavered, and we supported children and communities through the provision of take-home rations. These distributions have been vital for making sure that children have something to eat to aid with their education. Following an announcement by the Government of Malawi on 29 September 2021 that in-school feeding could once again resume, Mary's Meals was able to transition back quickly and efficiently to our in-school feeding model once again. This is a testament to the strong partnerships we have with schools and communities across Malawi who we worked closely alongside to ensure the correct training and public health procedures were in place to resume our school feeding programme safely and effectively.

Zambia

Mary's Meals' school feeding programme in Zambia has been crucial as the country continues to face the ongoing challenges of Covid-19 as well as existing issues of inequality, poverty, and malnutrition. Malnutrition rates continue to be among the highest in the world, with the country ranking 143 of 189 in the Human Development Index, with **48%** of the population unable to meet minimum calorie requirements for food intake.⁸ Covid-19 is exacerbating this already difficult situation and a now deteriorating economy is undermining any government effort to deliver social services, alleviate poverty, reduce malnutrition, and achieve zero hunger. As a result, the food security situation in Zambia's Eastern Province between is expected to deteriorate, with the region in **'Stressed'** levels of food insecurity until at least the end of March 2022.⁹

Mary's Meals has not watched this fragile food-insecurity situation unfold without action and has responded to reach more children at a time of great need. Over 2021, we have expanded our Zambia programme significantly to reach an incredible **113,000 children in 260 schools**, representing a remarkable **34%** growth rate in just one year. Thanks to these expansions, we are now reaching a total of **376,000 children** across multiple districts in Zambia's Eastern Province, including Chipata, Kasenengwa, Chipangali, Mambwe, Lumezi, Lundadzi, and in new districts, including Vubwi, Chadiza and Katete.



Samson, pictured left, has been one of the children who has benefited from our 2021 expansions. His school was part of an expansion that took place in June 2021 that reached **over 24,000 children in over 400 schools**. Speaking of the introduction of the school feeding programme at his school, Samson said: *"One of the reasons why I enrolled back in school is that I heard there will be porridge in school. The introduction of Mary's Meals at my school has made my life much easier. The porridge enables me to attend class every day without having to worry about food."*

First-hand accounts from children like Samson highlights that Mary's Meals really is a simple idea that works. Our school feeding programme proves to be a powerful incentive for children to come to

⁸ World Food Programme, Zambia, 2021. (<https://www.wfp.org/countries/zambia>)

⁹ IPC, *IPC Acute Food Insecurity Analysis July 2021 – March 2022*, August 2021.

(https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/IPC_Zambia_Acute_Food_Insecurity_2021July2022Mar_Report.pdf)



school each day, allowing children to progress and have the chance to become educated individuals that can break the cycle of poverty.

Madagascar

Mary's Meals has expanded significantly over 2021 alongside our trusted partner, Feedback Madagascar. For example, in October 2021, we reached over **18,000 children** in **60 primary schools** across the Vatovavy Fitovinany region of the country. Thanks to these expansions, we are reaching a total of **66,500** children through Feedback Madagascar. Mary's Meals is also supporting **360** children supported by our partner Grandir Dignement as part of our special feeding programme which is operating in six detention centres in Madagascar.

The significance of Mary's Meals' expansions and work in Madagascar cannot be emphasised enough as many communities we work alongside find themselves in a dire context fraught with food insecurity. This is outlined by Jamie Spender, founder of Feedback Madagascar, *"In a country like Madagascar, the difficulties are pretty much always extreme. Covid-19 restrictions, the crumbling of the economy, price increases, a series of droughts...There is a compounding of problems."* Alongside our partners, Mary's Meals has ensured that more children are enrolled in school and meeting their immediate hunger needs. By continuing to reach out to the next hungry child waiting for Mary's Meals, we are able to provide children with a chance to go to school and gain a life-changing education thanks to the promise of a daily meal.



The impact of our extensive support is seen first-hand from the children who are served Mary's Meals every school day. We spoke to 8-year-old Joseph, pictured above, who is in Grade 4 at school that was part of our 2021 expansions. Joseph expressed his excitement about the introduction of the school feeding programme at his school. He said: *"The first time I heard that we will start to eat at school, I was not able to imagine how it can be possible to feed all the children every lunch time, every day. It is happening, it is amazing!"*



Joseph let us know the impact of the school feeding programme since it was introduced: *"I really like to eat at school because I can eat with my friends and it is very delicious. It really helps me study since I'm always full after eating and it helps me concentrate during our courses. At home, we are used to eating rice and green leaves, but now we eat different delicious meals every day. I hope that this school feeding programme will continue forever!"*

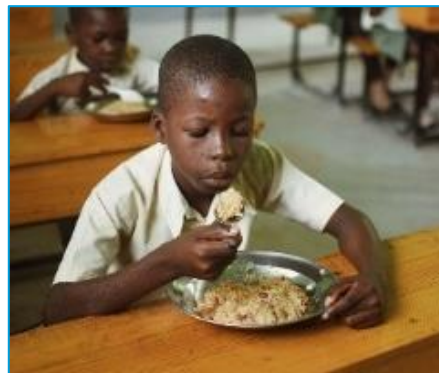
We also spoke with 12-Year-old Lauri, pictured left. Lauri explained that eating Mary's Meals is one of the reasons he goes to school: *"The food from Mary's Meals is rice [and beans]. It helps me because I am very full when I eat it. It makes me want to go to school because I always eat delicious food when I am there."*

Our school feeding programme proves to be a powerful incentive for both Joseph and Lauri to come to school each day, with their families safe in the knowledge that they will receive a nutritious daily meal that is not always guaranteed at home. Like the thousands of children we are supporting in Madagascar, our school feeding programme has contributed to increased access and participation in education, allowing thousands of children to progress and become educated individuals that can break the cycle of poverty.



Haiti

The need in Haiti is great as the country continues to be affected with extreme political and social instability and is heavily prone to climatic shocks such as earthquakes, flooding, and droughts.¹⁰ As a result, Haiti is one of the most food insecure countries in the world, with almost half the population, equating to **4.4 million** people, at risk of hunger and **1.2 million** suffering from severe hunger.¹¹ The country's infrastructure is generally poor, with many households lacking access to basic services such as electricity, water, sanitation, and healthcare.¹² The Covid-19 pandemic has further exacerbated the difficult situation many Haitians face by reducing their purchasing power, and access to food markets. Due to such challenging contextual factors, education is often secondary priority for many children as they are too hungry to attend or try to find means to survive and source food. Consequently, a reported **two children out of ten** do not attend primary school, and the literacy level of the population over 10 years of age is only **61%**.¹³



With the short and long-term impact of Covid-19, the sustained socio-political turbulence and Haiti's vulnerability to the effects of extreme weather events, the need for Mary's Meals has never been greater in the country. In response, we have developed our long-term programme in Haiti in line with the contextual difficulties and opportunities presented through working with partner organisations, who have in-depth knowledge and understanding of this difficult context so we can effectively and efficiently reach the hungry children caught up in this nation-wide instability. In doing so, Mary's Meals completed two expansions in October 2021, and we are now feeding an additional **23,400 children** in **60 schools** with our partner BND, and an additional **10,400 children** in **30 schools** with our other partner in Haiti, Summits Education. As a result of these expansions, we are now reaching over **182,000 children** in **562 schools** across Haiti, providing a crucial lifeline for children on the island.

Following a 7.2 magnitude earthquake that occurred in south of Haiti in August 2021, Mary's Meals worked with Summits Education to ensure vital food rations and other essential items were delivered to those suffering the worst effects of this disaster. Fortunately, the schools where Mary's Meals operates our school feeding program were not at the epicentre of the earthquake and we were able to resume our school feeding programme as normal as the new term began in September 2021. However, to



ensure the poorest and most vulnerable communities were not left behind, Mary's Meals launched our Haiti Crisis Appeal to support those communities who suffered the catastrophic effect of this climate disaster. Thanks to the generosity of supporters around the world, Mary's Meals was able to provide food packs containing rice and beans – along with safe water and tarpaulins – to hundreds of families in the worst affected areas. Speaking of this response, Cassandre Regnier, Director of Programs for Summits Education, stated: ***"I don't think we can say thank you [to Mary's Meals] enough. When the earthquake first happened, we know the best way to support was to provide kits, but of course, without your assistance, we wouldn't have been able to."***

During this unimaginably tumultuous time for the children we support in Haiti, the constant, undeviating support of Mary's Meals provides a lifeline for children who otherwise might not eat anything else that day. This in turn

¹⁰ World Food Program, *Haiti | World Food Programme*. 2022. (<https://www.wfp.org/countries/haiti>)

¹¹ Ibid

¹² Ibid

¹³ Ibid



creates an incentive for children to go to school where they can gain an education which has the potential to better the future for themselves and their families in a country prone to environmental, political, and economic turmoil.

South Sudan

In a country that should be full of hope eight years after gaining independence, South Sudan is instead in the grip of a devastating humanitarian crisis. Ongoing political conflict, years of civil war, compounded by economic downturn and climatic shocks such as drought, South Sudan remains one of the worst hunger crises globally as **60%** of the population do not have secure access to food.¹⁴ As innocent civilians often pay the highest price in any war, such extreme disruption has had a debilitating cost on the children in this young country, with over **70%** of children out of school, put their futures and the future of their country at risk. Without peace and support, a generation of children in South Sudan are being deprived of a fair chance in life.

Based on such an incredibly high need, Mary's Meals, alongside our trusted, long-term partner, the Diocese of Rumbek, has grown from feeding 46,500 children in December 2020 to feeding **70,000 children** in December 2021, representing a remarkable **34%** growth rate in one year. As a result, Mary's Meals and the Diocese of Rumbek is now providing daily meals in **116 schools** across the Lakes and Warrap States located in Central-Northern South Sudan. Additionally, Mary's Meals has also begun feeding in **12 new primary schools** in the northwest region of South Sudan (previously part of Sudan) through a new partner, Mary Help Association (MHA). With our new partner, we are providing a lifeline to another **5,000** extremely vulnerable children every school day. In this unstable, rural environment ravaged by civil war, these children can continue to rebuild their lives with the help of Mary's Meals and MHA. The picture to the right illustrates a child from this expansion receiving their daily school meal for the first time.



In such a dire context, the impact and support of Mary's Meals is acutely felt to the children we serve. This is seen through Angela and Mary, pictured below, two inspiring young women from South Sudan, who started off as classmates and overcame the odds with the help of Mary's Meals. Now, they are building brighter futures for themselves and their communities.

Mary outlined the impact that Mary's Meals had when she attended school. She said: ***"When we started primary school, we had nothing. We had lessons under the trees and pupils were often absent due to hunger. School feeding changed our lives. After Mary's Meals came, the number of pupils increased. We didn't continually think of hunger. Without the food we could not have continued, we would have given up."***



Mary also went on to say how gaining an education helped to change her life: ***"After completing school, I was accepted into basic nursing training. Now that I've graduated, I look after sick people. We're [Mary and Angela] proud of ourselves and our achievements. We can be role models for other children."***

Angela also highlighted how she felt before Mary's Meals made a distinct impact on her life. She said: ***"Most of us come from poor families. Before Mary's Meals, students suffered a lot, especially those who walked long distances. We were always tired and hungry. We'd feel***

¹⁴ Reliefweb, *South Sudan is Facing One of the Worst Food Security and Nutrition Crises Globally*, May 2021. (<https://reliefweb.int/report/south-sudan/south-sudan-facing-one-worst-food-security-and-nutrition-crises-globally>)



dizzy and it was hard for us to concentrate.” Angela told us of how Mary’s Meals changed this, and how it helped her gain an all-important education. She said: *“School meals helped us a lot. We passed our exams and continued with our studies and graduated. Now I’m a nurse caring for patients at a hospital, and I hope to go for further trainings to become a general nurse.”*

The largest group of out-of-school children in South Sudan are girls, with poverty, child marriage and societal views greatly hindering girls’ education. In such challenging circumstances, Mary’s Meals’ support to girls in South Sudan like Angela and Mary even more significant. With more than half of children out of school across the country, the support of Mary’s Meals is creating solid foundations for the future of thousands of children through access and participation in education.

Ethiopia

At the end of 2020, a brutal conflict broke out between federal and government forces in the Tigray region of Ethiopia, where our feeding programme operates. Over the past 15 months, the people of Tigray have lived in a state of besieged hunger as access to the Tigray region is affected by an imposed blockade by authorities with only sporadic access to humanitarian agencies. With no fuel for any humanitarian operations allowed into the region since August 2021, aid operations have had to be reduced or suspended, including critical distribution of food, water, health and nutrition services.¹⁵ As the population exhausts all means to feed themselves, and with little to no aid flowing within the region, more than **4.6 million people**, representing **83%** of households, are facing acute food insecurity.¹⁶ This represents a sharp increase compared to the pre-crisis period in October 2020, when 0.4 million people were suffering from food insecurity in the region.¹⁷ Covid-19 is compounding this, with hospitals decimated and supplies unable to reach the region meaning there is no widespread testing or vaccinations taking place, resulting in serious threat to life from the virus.



Rarely has Mary’s Meals witnessed a need so great or heard of such atrocities. In phone calls with our partner, they have described the harrowing experience of the IDPs who have been affected by the conflict. They said: *“I have never seen or heard the injustice, the evil acts that are being done in the lives of our people...There has never been anything as bad as what we have seen and witnessed. Honestly, the stories I listen to, it is so heart breaking. It is just horrible.”*



Mary’s Meals has not watched the horrors unfolding in Tigray without action and have been resolute in our pledge to provide emergency support to internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Mekelle, who would otherwise be at risk of starvation. During this unimaginably difficult time, Mary’s Meals, alongside our long-term partner, who would normally deliver our school feeding programme in the Tigray region, have been able to provide a daily meal to **30,000 IDPs** who have flooded into Mekelle, the region’s capital city, to escape violence. Additionally, our partner has set up learning, wellbeing, and emotional support programmes for children in the IDP camp. A conversation

¹⁵ OCHA, *Northern Ethiopia – Humanitarian Update Situation Report*, 17 Feb 2022.

(<https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Situation%20Report%20-%20Northern%20Ethiopia%20-%20Humanitarian%20Update%20-%202017%20Feb%202022.pdf>)

¹⁶ WFP, *Emergency Food Security Assessment, Tigray Region, Ethiopia*, Jan 22. (https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000136281/download/?_ga=2.109394565.109675717.1643884449-528533907.1643468674)

¹⁷ Ibid.



between our partner and a beneficiary who received food from Mary's Meals highlights the profound impact our distributions are making to those we are supporting. They said: ***"We thought we were lost, we thought we were alone, but what you are doing, your presence is a reassurance that we have someone, that we have some people that care, who care for us."***

Tragically, there is likely to be more violence, trauma, and pain for some time to come for the people of Tigray. Mary's Meals will continue to work closely with our partner as they assess the ongoing situation and identify how we can continue to bring the most effective help to those suffering. Mary's Meals is extremely thankful to our National Affiliate network for their support in running campaigns during this time to raise awareness and funds to ensure the people of Tigray are not forgotten as global news coverage dwindles and response funding worldwide is at a shortfall.

Growing the global movement

Over the past year, Mary's Meals has continued to grow, and our global movement has expanded thanks to our incredibly creative and hardworking National Affiliates, including Mary's Meals Spain, and volunteers who have launched campaigns and found innovative ways to raise funds for our mission and vision. We are delighted to share updates on fundraising activities which have taken place in 2021. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic and the subsequent restrictions, many of our usual fundraising and awareness events were affected. However, our incredible National Affiliates and volunteers found inspiring ways in which to raise money and welcome more people into our global family, allowing us to grow and work toward our vision that every child should receive a meal every school day in their place of education, which is now more important than ever.



The National Affiliate network has seen some wonderful collaborative work this year. Led by Mary's Meals Germany, Mary's Meals Poland, Switzerland, Spain, and Italy launched the ***'Move for Meals'*** campaign which ran from May to July across Europe, raising funds for children in our Malawi feeding program. The campaign invited supporters to collect sponsorships toward a distance goal, completed by running, cycling, walking or other creative ways. Supporters tracked their distance and logged it on their online account, showing sponsors their progress. There have been some inspiring stories from our supporters across Europe involved in the campaign.

For example, 97-year-old Marietheres Wübken from Germany, who is a retired teacher aimed to walk 100 kilometres in a month and collect enough donations to provide 100 children with Mary's Meals for a whole school year. However, thanks to her amazing work, she surpassed her target and raised an incredible €80,000, enough to feed **over 4,000** children! Overall, it was an incredibly successful campaign thanks to the amazing commitment of our supporters and the great collaboration amongst the affiliates who came together to achieve this amazing feat.

Mary's Meals UK launched their Mother's Day campaign in March 2021, called Mums Make Mary's Meals. This campaign involved the selling of Mother's Day cards for £15.90 each, giving supporters the opportunity to show the women in their life how much they mean to them, while helping to feed a hungry child for an entire year. The card also came with favourite childhood recipes from TV personalities Lorraine Kelly, Ferne McCann and Nadiya Hussain. This is a great initiative which allows people to show their appreciation for their loved ones while also contributing towards our life-changing work.

Mary's Meals Ireland undertook their largest annual fundraiser and raising awareness event, the ***'Step by Step for Mary's Meals'*** (the





Walk to Knock) challenge over eight days from the 7th to 15th August. Each year, supporters from all over Ireland set 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. As Covid-19 restrictions reduced the scale of participants in the walk for the second year in a row, Mary's Meals Ireland created the option of a local walk which could be completed near supporter's homes all throughout Ireland. This achievement was highly successful in both raising awareness and funds for Mary's Meals, with many volunteers walking over 200km! The picture above outlines just some of the amazing participants of the walk.

After such an incredible success last year, the **Big Family Christmas** campaign returned in December 2021. Many of our National Affiliates used this opportunity to spread festive cheer and encourage



supporters to reserve a place at our virtual table this year, and thus feed a child in our school feeding programmes for an entire school year. Events took place to raise awareness of the campaign throughout our National Affiliates. For example, Mary's Meals Slovakia created a new Big Family Christmas-themed video to launch and raise awareness for the 2021 campaign and Mary's Meals Canada celebrated the campaign's launch through the online event, JOY Experience the Wonder 2021 – an evening of music recorded at Five Acres Studios in Abbotsford, British Columbia and showcased performances from a host of Canadian artists.

Even with the numerous challenges which arose during 2021, our National Affiliates and all their supporters found endless effective ways to continue to grow our global movement and support our vision. We are hugely grateful to all our staff, volunteers and supporters for their time, generous donations and prayers to Mary's Meals. Together, we are making an incredible impact on the lives of millions of children around the world during these unprecedentedly challenging times.

Raising awareness of our work

During the past year, our National Affiliates around the world have continued to raise awareness of our cause and support the growth of our global movement. Their hard work ensured Mary's Meals was able to keep its promise to the children in our school feeding programmes and reach out to the next hungry child. Detailed below are some of the highlights from across our National Affiliates in 2021.

There was a hive of activity across our National Affiliate network following the announcement that Mary's Meals was feeding two million children every school day. In August 2021, Mary's Meals Ireland launched **2 Million Meals**, with an aim to raise funds to provide two million children with a nutritious meal for a day. In the Polish city of Gdańsk, Mary's Meals Poland organised a concert and screening of Child 31 to celebrate the announcement, with some guests so moved by the story of Mary's Meals that they signed up to volunteer! Additionally, volunteers in Italy gathered to watch the Two Million Children broadcast. Mary's Meals' digital channels were full of content to celebrate and content from National Affiliates such as Mary's Meals Canada, Spain, Czech Republic and USA was shared across social media outlets.



Mary's Meals Ireland launched a youth programme called '**Little Acts, Big Difference**', which is made up of six different modules. This programme is designed to introduce the life-changing work of Mary's Meals and invites young people to become part of our vibrant global family. A resource document that is supplied to assist with the programme, provides an overview of the work of Mary's Meals, and how through our community-based model, we reach some of the most marginalised children in the world with the provision of a daily school meal. The resource also includes clips from both 'Generation Hope'



and 'Child 31' to help individuals gain a better understanding of how Mary's Meals was established and the work we do across the countries we operate in. The free youth programme pack also contains a teacher/youth leader guide, with six lesson plans, and a complementary resource containing excerpts from 'The Shed that Fed a Million Children'.



On completion of the programme, participants receive a certificate to acknowledge they have now gained an in-depth knowledge of the charity's work and have engaged in activities to further the mission. This is a great tool created by Mary's Meals Ireland and will help to further grow the youth supporter base of Mary's Meals in the country and hopefully inspire more people to join our global movement.

Mary's Meals Italy enlisted actor and singer Romina Power, pictured below, as a new International Ambassador to raise awareness for the work of Mary's Meals. Romina is passionate and attuned about issues of education, poverty, child protection and gender equality, making her an extremely well-suited ambassador to best represent the values of Mary's Meals and to effectively spread our mission and vision of reaching the next hungry child. As part of her role as our International Ambassador, Romina recently appeared on a popular Italian chat show to discuss why this role for Mary's Meals is so important to her. Speaking of her new role, Romina stated: ***"As a citizen of Earth, I feel I have to do as much as I can and reach out to those who aren't as fortunate... [This is why] I have been appointed as International Ambassador of Mary's Meals. I am happy to be their ambassador."*** Thanks to the initial work of Romina, more people across Italy have already heard of the amazing work of Mary's Meals. We hope that this continues to grow, and the vision and mission of Mary's Meals reaches more supporters through Romina's work.



Every year Mary's Meals organises a pilgrimage in October to Medjugorje in Bosnia and Herzegovina, a special place in the story of Mary's Meals. However, due to Covid-19 and related travel restrictions, the past two years have been celebrated virtually with supporters from all around the world joining via the internet. This year however, as travel restrictions eased, some people were able to



attend in person while others joined virtually. The event included activities such as a live introduction and a reflection from Mary's Meals' Founder and CEO, Magnus-MacFarlane Barrow, pictured left, who attended the pilgrimage in person this year. Members of the global Mary's Meals family from Croatia, the Czech Republic and Scotland also attended the pilgrimage in person along with Magnus and took part in walks to Cross Mountain (Križevac) and the Statue of the Virgin Mary on Apparition Hill (Podbrdo). It was a very successful event which highlighted the incredible work Mary's Meals does around the world with the support of its amazing international community.

In September 2021, Mary's Meals USA announced an amazing act of recognition of our work. Thanks to the work and dedication of the Mary's Meals USA team and its supporters, September the 2nd will now be formally known as **Mary's Meals Day** across Jefferson City, Missouri. Proclaimed by the city's Mayor, the inaugural Mary's Meals Day took place in September. The Mary's Meals USA Regional Coordinator and Ambassador organised a musical event to mark the landmark occasion. This is a



fantastic event and will mean that each year, the Jefferson City community will be celebrating and learning about the life-changing work of Mary's Meals.

Despite the ongoing challenges faced by Covid-19, our national affiliates continued to raise awareness of Mary's Meals through virtual events and creating resources easily accessible to our supporters around the globe. As we begin a new year, we hope to continue growing our global movement and welcome more people into our family, raising awareness and support for our vision that every child should receive a daily meal in their place education.

Strengthening the organisation

Organisational transition

At Mary's Meals International, we are committed to being a truly global, remote-first organisation that supports many ways of working – all of which allow us to work together, wherever in the world we are, while focusing on reaching the next child. This new way of working will allow us to make significant steps to becoming a more diverse organisation that supports many ways of working that reflect the post-pandemic context. This has guided the decision to re-open the Glasgow office on a voluntary basis for Mary's Meals International employees following easing of Covid-19 restrictions in the UK. To bolster the new remote-first way of working and to support staff in this organisational transition, we have launched a 'Buddy Scheme' to welcome new staff to our family and connect across the organisation.

In understanding the changes and emotional challenges of working remotely during the pandemic, Mary's Meals International has launched the Well-being Agenda and appointed Well-being Champions. The Well-being Agenda's purpose is to promote and support well-being in all its forms to enable a positive working environment. Mary's Meals International aims to achieve this by raising awareness and normalising conversations around well-being, providing learning opportunities, and empowering employees to take time to assess and evaluate their well-being. As part of this agenda, we have introduced Well-being Champions, a voluntary role taken on by five employees. Their purpose is to promote our well-being tools and to retain focus and momentum around well-being within their own teams, with peers and managers through frequent conversations and information sharing.

National affiliate forum

Five general National Affiliate Forum (NAF) meetings took place in 2021. The National Affiliate Forum has become a very well accepted platform for engaging, sharing, and discussing information and activities between Affiliates themselves and Mary's Meals International. Attendance of NAF meetings is broad and remains sought-after by many staff and key volunteers. Given the excellent interaction and vastly improved relationships that have been established via the NAF, it is now easier to address immediate and specific issues quickly by convening ad-hoc meetings with select NA candidates, while retaining the regular general Forum meetings with the broader attendance.

There are now five active workgroups, with two new short-term workgroups added during 2021, addressing topics chosen by National Affiliates themselves. The results of these workgroups will be broadly shared across the affiliate network and will also help Mary's Meals International determine future levels of support that may be needed by National Affiliates. The output from the longer running workgroups continues to be developed and maintained with outputs are shared more broadly with other affiliates and will eventually be migrated into the newly established National Affiliate Resources Hub.

In keeping with our core values of stewardship and simplicity, the forum and working groups will continue to seek creative ways of developing and sharing resources to grow our global movement throughout 2022.

Developing our people and systems

CRM



Mary's Meals Global Constituent Relationship Management (CRM) tool provides National Affiliates the system and processes needed to cultivate strong relationships with supporters and volunteers. The provision of Salesforce to National Affiliates ensures a consistent and robust approach to data management, using a secure and compliant model to store supporter data in a single source. The Global CRM had a considerable impact on the organisation in 2021 through a range of improvements:

- Additional functionality that enables financial reconciliation with our accounting software.
- New data points to enable tracking of grants and development school feeding.
- A range of user-led improvements to the interface to enhance usability.
- Increased use of reporting and dashboards across affiliates and directorates with over 1,800 reports run in 2021, representing twice as many as 2020.

In 2021, Mary's Meals Switzerland and Mary's Meals Croatia both joined the Global CRM and we are currently working with Mary's Meals Germany to implement their CRM in early 2022. At all stages of the CRM journey, Mary's Meals International provides support, guidance and training to ensure strong user adoption so that affiliates can realise the full benefits of the CRM system.

School Feeding Delivery Model Project

The School Feeding Delivery Model project has now reached a digital phase of implementation, meaning school feeding programme data is being captured digitally and in real time for the first time on smart phones provided to Mary's Meals staff in-country via an app called Resco. Mary's Meals Zambia, Mary's Meals Kenya and Mary's Meals Malawi are now fully live on School Feeding Delivery Model (SFDM) digital with Mary's Meals Liberia currently in roll-out.

Data will now be collected via phone during school visits by school feeding officers and will allow digital verification of enrolment and attendance figures. This will allow Mary's Meals to capture, validate and submit data during field-based activities digitally and in real time. Furthermore, volunteer data and training sessions are also being recorded digitally, giving us a greater understanding of volunteer contribution to the school feeding programme. School feeding officers will also log and verify stock balances at school level, allowing Mary's Meals to ensure there is always correct stock in programme schools. In doing so, the checks made by school feeding officers during school visits can ensure that every child is getting the correct meal - served safely, every school day.

School Feeding
Delivery Model



The school feeding delivery model compliments our 'Next Child Strategy' as it is scalable whilst ensuring efficiency and effectiveness through encouraging best practices across our global programmes, allowing for higher quality data, support and food qualities and processes that enhance school feeding delivery. In deploying our school feeding delivery model in its digital phase, we can ensure:

- We keep our daily promise to children already in our global programmes through more effective monitoring processes.
- Ability to reach the next child quicker and with greater scalability over time through harmonised systems and processes that use best practice throughout all programme affiliate countries.
- More time available for supporting our schools through improved and higher quality data collection.
- Improved reporting capabilities, learning and informed decision making by using data collected to gain a deeper understanding and inform delivery effectiveness.

We continue to review and refresh responsibilities as we learn more from SFDM digital deployments which will evolve further in 2022.

Mary's Meals International has also continued to develop its staff, building the capacity of our organisational leaders and allowing greater cross-organisational learning through the Leadership



Academy, Programmes Academy, Manager training and other trainings that have taken place throughout 2021. For example, the Mary's Meals Liberia team have been hosting Human Resources clinics across the whole team, as outlined in the picture on the left. The first event took place on February 2021 and involved staff from across the Liberia team. The events will cover topics such as policy reviews, strengthening the organisation culture internally, the 7S's model and an overview of 'the Next Child' strategy. The sessions will be facilitated by two HR representatives and will be conducted across the entire Liberia programme. These trainings and informative sessions are vital and help to share knowledge across our programme teams.

3. Report on funding received this year

We continue to be grateful for the financial support of Mary's Meals Spain and confirm that the total amount of funding received during 2021 was **€293,609**. 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

As an amazing year full of incredible milestones, expansions and growth closes, the ongoing contribution from Mary's Meals Spain to our global movement is greatly appreciated. During this extremely challenging time for the poorest and most vulnerable communities worldwide in the face of Covid-19, rising food insecurity and climate change, your steadfast support, encouragement and hard work to raise awareness for our work continues to have a tremendous impact on the children we serve. By working together to provide a daily meal, we are ensuring that children's immediate hunger needs are met, and that they can concentrate and learn in class, giving them the opportunity to gain an all-important education.

We could not do any of our amazing work without Mary's Meals Spain and our network of National Affiliates. As we go into 2022, we look forward to working closely together to continue to make a profound difference to the children supported by Mary's Meals Spain. On behalf of all the children guaranteed a daily meal because of your incredible work, **thank you**.

Appendix A

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

Mary's Meals Spain													
Country Programme	Jan-21	Feb-21	Mar-21	Apr-21	May-21	Jun-21	Jul-21	Aug-21	Sep-21	Oct-21	Nov-21	Dec-21	Total Funds
Ethiopia**	€ 10,000												€ 10,000
Haiti								€ 6,000					€ 6,000
India												€ 360	€ 360
Liberia										€ 18,812.40			€ 18,812
Malawi		€ 30,000	€ 34,691			€ 18,739			€ 7,027		€ 15,701	€ 26,938	€ 133,096
Zambia						€ 6,002					€ 21,043	€ 11,896	€ 38,941
Global Feeding*			€ 10,000	€ 10,000	€ 16,000		€ 7,000					€ 43,400	€ 86,400
TOTAL	€ 10,000	€ 30,000	€ 44,691	€ 10,000	€ 16,000	€ 24,742	€ 7,000	€ 6,000	€ 7,027	€ 18,812	€ 36,744	€ 82,593	€ 293,609

*Mary's Meals International carries out school feeding programmes in 20 countries as shown on page four.

** All funding restricted to Ethiopia for 2021 was directed toward Mary's Meals' 'Crisis in Ethiopia' emergency response.