

International Charity, Mary's Meals reaches major milestone feeding 3 million schoolchildren as global hunger crisis deepens

September 2025 - As children in Canada return to school after the long summer holiday period, school feeding charity Mary's Meals is marking a powerful milestone: now serving vital meals to **more than 3 million children** every school day – an extraordinary increase of around **800,000 children** since the start of 2024.

For children living in areas affected by climate change, acute food insecurity or the aftermath of conflict, the promise of a meal served in a place of education can be the difference between attending school or staying home. There are currently 71 million primary school-age children who are out of school – a figure higher than the total number of children of the same age enrolled in primary education in Canada, UK, Europe, and the United States combined – but research shows that effective school feeding creates a powerful incentive to attend.¹

This milestone follows a major scale-up of Mary's Meals' school feeding programs across nine countries, seeing hundreds of thousands of children added to the program globally over an 18-month period, including in Malawi, Haiti, Zambia, Zimbabwe, South Sudan, and Ethiopia.

In **Ethiopia's** war-torn Tigray region, the charity has expanded its reach by more than 700%, growing from around 30,000 children in early 2024 to more than 245,000 children today. This is giving life-changing nutritional support to children who have endured years of conflict, suffering, and disruption to their education.

In **Malawi** and **Zambia**, two of the charity's longest running school feeding programs have also grown significantly – reaching more than 400,000 additional children and bringing the total to more than 1,315,000 children in Malawi and over 605,000 in Zambia. This is at a time when communities in both countries are enduring the effects of drought, flooding, and other extreme weather events alongside economic challenges. Against a backdrop of political unrest and violence in **Haiti**, Mary's Meals has been able to work with its delivery partners to increase the number of children who receive meals through its much-needed programs to more than 196,000 children.

To mark this historic moment in the fight to end child hunger, Mary's Meals is making a renewed call for global support for its school feeding programs that target children living in high-need and hard-to-reach areas. And as more than a quarter of all children worldwide face severe food poverty in early childhood (27%) amounting to more than 181 million children under five, the need for consistent school feeding programs has never been more acute. Mary's Meals Founder and CEO, Magnus MacFarlane-Barrow, explains:

"This landmark is less a celebration than it is a call to action. We invite every person of good will to join the Mary's Meals movement so that our vision – that every child in this world receives one daily meal in their place of education – might be realized. Whilst it is an

¹ Global education monitoring (GEM) report 2024/25 – UNESCO GEM report (<https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000391406>)

amazing thing that this work has grown to reach 3 million children, the sad reality is that tens of millions of children remain hungry and out of school.

“Today, in a world in which we produce more than enough food for us all, thousands of children will die of hunger-related causes. And yet it costs Mary’s Meals around 16¢ to serve one meal, and less than \$32.00 to feed a child for a whole school year.”

The growth of Mary’s Meals is testament to the number of people who believe in its vision and who share their time and resources to make this vision a reality.

— ENDS —

Testimonies from Malawi

Louis Yahaya, Senior Chief Khanene in Nyambi Village: “We did not think anyone could afford to come this far to a place like this where it is so remote and is in the bush. I thought a project like this can only be implemented in the towns”.

Alesi Simati, mother of seven children attending Namingwere Primary School: “We do not have a home because our house collapsed from heavy rain and, since then, we have not managed to recover from this. And we have hunger in the community because fertilizer is now very expensive. Because we did not use fertilizer, the maize we have in the field may only produce two bags. Hunger is at our doorstep again.”

Luciano Ngiriki, head teacher of Namingwere Primary School: “Because of hunger, many children are sent on errands and to other work pieces so that they contribute to the family. We have so low enrolment at school just because of hunger [and] poverty. Those who come already hungry do not participate in class. Now these children who are staying at home will be coming in large numbers, and they will be able to be active in class. It’s like I’m walking on sunshine!”

B-roll is available for all testimonies (Louis, Alesi and Luciano)

Media Opportunity: Lunch with Magnus (Oct 29) & Extended Interview Slots (Oct 29 & 30)

We’re lining up media opportunities with **Magnus Macfarlane-Barrow** in Toronto this fall and wanted to share an early heads-up so you can pencil them in:

Media Lunch (on-the-record)

Date: Wednesday, October 29, 2025

Location: Burlington Ontario

Format: Film screening (link will be sent to media in advance for viewing – [WATCH THE TRAILER](#)), discussion on expansion and reaching 3 million, followed by a Q&A. One-on-one pre-booked interviews will also be available.

Extended Media Opportunities — In-Person Interviews

Date: Thursday, October 30, 2025

Time: Slots throughout the day

Location: Toronto Ontario

Format: Pre-booked, timed, one-on-one interviews with Magnus.

A formal invitation with full details will follow later in September. In the meantime, if you’re interested (or would like to hold an interview slot), please email Adrienne Harrop adrienne.harrop@marysmeals.org

Photos

Photos and image reference sheet attached to email.

Notes to Editors

- Mary's Meals is a simple idea that works. The charity provides hungry children with one daily meal in a place of education in areas where hunger and poverty often stand in the way of education.
- Mary's Meals works with communities to serve vital school meals to more than 3 million children in 16 countries, including Malawi, Liberia, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Madagascar, Kenya, Haiti, Mozambique, Ethiopia, India, South Sudan, Yemen, Lebanon, Benin, Ecuador, and Syria.
- Our mission is to enable people to offer their money, goods, skills or time, and through this involvement, provide the most effective help in the world's poorest communities.
- Mary's Meals increases school enrolment and improves school attendance.
- Local communities own and run Mary's Meals in the countries where the programmes operate and, wherever possible, our meals are made with locally procured food, thereby supporting the local economy.
- The charity's low-cost approach means that it costs just \$31.70 CAD to feed a child with Mary's Meals every day for a school year. This is only possible because of many dedicated volunteers in more than 40 countries across the globe – from those who dedicate themselves to fundraising and awareness raising to the many thousands of volunteers who rise at dawn to prepare nutritious meals for the children in their own communities.
- Please visit www.marysmeals.ca to find out more.

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