



Mary's Meals / Chris Leslie

Haiti is located on the Western third of the island of Hispaniola in the Caribbean Sea, and is the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere. Approximately 54% of the population of 9 million people live below \$1 per day, and 78% on less than \$2 per day. The country is ranked at 149 out of 182 in the United Nations Human Development Index (HDI), and the average life expectancy is 60.78 years.

Haiti remains a food deficit country. It relies heavily on imported food – 48 percent of national consumed food is imported, 47 percent is produced locally while food assistance fills 5 percent of the national needs. Recent estimates show that more than 2.4 million people in Haiti are food-insecure.

Frequent natural disasters have only worsened Haiti's plight and the effects of these are exacerbated by the country's widespread deforestation and high population density. During the 2008 hurricane season, severe storms devastated more than 70 percent of Haiti's agriculture and most of its roads, bridges and other infrastructure, creating pockets of severe malnutrition and killing 800 people. More recently in January 2010 a massive earthquake hit the capital city Port Au Prince.

In Haiti only a little over half of primary school-age children are enrolled in school, and only 20% of these children and less than 2 per cent of children finish secondary school. 47.1% of the population are illiterate.

Mary's Meals in Haiti

Mary's Meals has been providing daily meals in places of education in Haiti since July 2006. There are three main areas in Haiti that Mary's Meals operates: Cite Soleil, a notorious slum region of the Capital City Port Au Prince; Hinche, in the Central Plateau region; and in Gonaives, a rural region of northern Haiti.

The programme there began by providing a daily meal for around 4,000 children in Cite Soleil and since that time has undergone significant expansions. Mary's Meal is now feeding over 13,000 Haitian children on a daily basis in 26 Primary Schools.



School Feeding - Cite Soleil, Port-au-Prince



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Prior to the recent earthquake Mary's Meals was providing a daily meal in school for over 6,000 children in Cite Soleil, a vast slum area of Port-au-Prince on the edge of the Caribbean Sea.

Despite a reduction in numbers due to many of the children relocating to rural Haiti, the school feeding programme was quickly reinstated in Cite Soleil and at the moment Mary's Meals is feeding around 5,000 children every day. This feeding programme is implemented by our main partner organisation in Haiti, Hands Together.

The people who live in Cite Soleil are crammed into flimsy, over-crowded, makeshift homes with no access to potable water, sanitation or many of the most basic human requirements. The slum is run by armed gangs and the area is extremely volatile. There is widespread hunger and malnutrition especially amongst the children. We are committed to continuing our support.

Students from the Becky DeWine School complex in the Cite Soleil slum rely on school feeding for their primary daily meal. Children in Cite Soleil often forage for food in garbage dumps and take water from open ditch sewage. Destitute mothers make mud-pie pancakes to give their children when there is nothing else to eat.

Mary's Meals works with people on the ground who believe in combating severe malnutrition by combining feeding and education. Feeding efforts are linked to schools, in order to provide a sorely needed educational base, and combat the devastating effects of malnutrition. Each day, hot meals of rice and beans or corn porridge and sauce with meat, vegetables or fish are provided, and our feeding projects are prioritised to reach the most vulnerable.

Mary's Meals is now feeding over 13,000 Haitian school children daily



Benefits of School Feeding

- Improved enrolment rates
- Improved attendance rates
- Improved concentration, performance and attainment

“School feeding facilitates education, and education, particularly for girls, leads to improved food security, health and nutrition, the effects of which all contribute to ending hunger.”

UN World Food Programme

Through school feeding Mary’s Meals provides a ‘social safety net’ to children who suffer from chronic hunger and poverty, aiming to improve their enrolment, attendance and performance in school as well as their nutrition and health.

Mary’s Meals provides meals to every child in each school, which promotes the inclusion of vulnerable groups, such as orphans and children who are HIV positive. It provides valuable support to families by removing some of the household costs of feeding children and the use of locally sourced food also contributes to the local economy and provides an income for smallholder farms.

By removing some of the obstacles to their development, school feeding therefore allows children to fulfill their potential. The UN states that: “Educated children are more likely to be able to feed themselves and their families in adulthood”, and as such school feeding can therefore be seen as an investment in a country’s future, contributing to economic, social and cultural development for the long term.

The average cost of providing a daily meal in school across all projects is just £9.00 per year

Haiti Earthquake - Emergency Relief Programme and 6 Month Progress Report

On January 12th 2010 at 4:53pm local time a devastating earthquake measuring more than 7.0 on the Richter scale, struck Haiti's capital city Port Au Prince. Over 20% of the population of the country, an estimated 2 million people lived in the worst affected area.

Some 220,000 people died, and 1.5 million people were left homeless as a direct result of the earthquake . The scale of the devastation caused by the Haiti earthquake in January 2010 has resulted in massive relief and recovery operations being undertaken by several aid agencies.

Mary's Meals Emergency Relief Programme

Much of Mary's Meals' focus in Haiti since the earthquake in January has been on emergency relief projects. The relief projects have been implemented by Mary's Meals two main partner organisations in Haiti – Hands Together, and Caritas Hinche, and have included:

- Providing a meal a day in school (in temporary classrooms in some cases) for thousands of children.
- Helping to construct temporary classrooms so that education can continue while long-term rebuilding takes place.
- Making regular deliveries of clean water to the people of Cite Soleil.
- Providing parcels of food to vulnerable elderly people in Cite Soleil and the tent cities around Port au Prince.



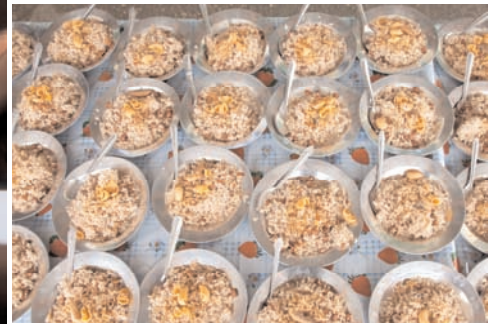
- Funding a mobile clinic based in Cite Soleil.
- Providing simple shelters for those who have no home.
- Provided food, clothing and hygiene kits for families who fled to Hinche from Port au Prince.
- Helped 500 displaced people in Hinche to relocate to their home town.
- Delivery of urgently needed medical supplies to Hinche hospital
- Rebuild damaged school buildings so that they are strong, safe and secure.

Our approach to rebuilding in Cite Soleil relies on the contribution of local people, and the community benefits from the employment opportunities, as well as the end result. *“Much of the work and recovery, we feel, should remain in the hands of the people most affected.”* – Doug Campbell, (Hands Together) explains the rebuilding process

Some 220,000 people died, and 1.5 million people were left homeless as a direct result of the earthquake that struck on the 12th January 2010



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Mary's Meals 6 Month Progress Report

Six months after the earthquake, the founder of Mary's Meals has returned to Haiti to find the most notable progress is being made by ordinary people working on a small scale. Magnus MacFarlane-Barrow was in Port-au-Prince, where Mary's Meals provides daily school meals for thousands of hungry children.

"Life in Port au Prince is very much as it was in January," he says, "it is going on almost normally, except in the midst of ruins and rubble there are clusters of tents everywhere – between buildings, in the central reservations on the roads and underneath petrol station canopies. "It has been raining heavily, so in amongst the tents there is mud and squalor. In some places it is incredibly dangerous, with bits of masonry hanging off and rubble on the pavements. People are still very frightened – even in places where the buildings haven't fallen down, they are choosing not to go in."

While Magnus reported little evidence of rebuilding on a large scale in the capital, in the heart of Cite Soleil, a giant slum known before the earthquake for deprivation and lawlessness, he met teams of local people who were working by hand to rebuild their communities and the schools where Mary's Meals operates. "Our projects in

Cite Soleil are a hive of activity," he says. "At one school there was a team of local people filling cement mixers. The quake had caused protrusions in the playground, so the team had had to hack them away and make a smooth new playground area. There are barefoot kids everywhere, walking around like inspectors, looking at everything that is going on."

The schools in Cite Soleil have reopened, with some classes taking place in makeshift buildings while the main structures are repaired. Groups of Haitian women work together to prepare a daily meal of rice and stew for the children – in some cases their only guaranteed source of nutrition. "The meal that is being provided for these children ensures that they get something to eat every day, and enables and encourages them to come to school," explains Magnus. "That gives them a sense of routine and stability amid the chaos, and we know that education is their best chance of escaping the poverty trap."

"We want to thank our supporters for their generosity to those facing hardship in Haiti," said Abeer Macintyre, Mary's Meals' lead fundraiser. "Their goodwill helped us in the days after the earthquake, and now it is helping us to make a long term contribution to children's future."

"I have an official list of 1,675 elderly who have received food. We arranged for a further 300 elderly to receive food this Friday and the following Thursday. It was all good to see." – Fr Tom Hagan looking to expand the elderly feeding project in Port Au Prince