

## Mary's Meals Urges People to Speak up for Ethiopia

*International school feeding charity shares devastating update from Tigray*



**Bloomfield, N.J. – Tuesday, August 30, 2022** - International school feeding charity [Mary's Meals USA](#) urges people to take notice of the atrocities unfolding in Ethiopia and to become the voice for those living there in terror and deprivation.

A recent letter from the charity's long-standing partner in Tigray outlining unimaginable horrors – including the murder of children and rape as a weapon of war – has led Mary's Meals founder, [Magnus MacFarlane-Barrow](#), to appeal to the world on their behalf.

He said: "The relative peace of recent months was both a breath of fresh air and an answer to prayer and we are shocked and saddened by this recent letter detailing yet more horror and suffering as violence has once again broken out."

Since November 2020, updates from our partner in Tigray have been characterized by gut-wrenching stories of inconceivable brutality and suffering, along with assurances that our colleagues there are trying their best, under horrendous circumstances, to bring relief to the most vulnerable.

"The resumption of fighting is making it almost impossible for our partner to get aid to those in need, but we must not make the mistake of thinking there is nothing we can do. We have a voice, and we must speak up for the people of Ethiopia now."

Conflict in the Tigray region began in November 2020 when the Ethiopian government launched an attack to overthrow the region's main political party, Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), sending the country into disarray. Thousands are believed to be dead and millions more displaced.

Hostilities between the two forces reignited last week following a four-month long ceasefire. Days of fighting were followed by an airstrike in the Tigrayan capital, Mekelle. Two children are among those believed to be dead.

Mary's Meals has been operating in Tigray since 2017 in partnership with a trusted local organization (unnamed here for security reasons) and, before the war, was feeding 24,320 children every school day. When the conflict flared up, schools closed and access to some areas was impossible. Working with its local partner, Mary's Meals was able to switch its program purpose to serve the immediate needs of thousands of displaced families driven out of their rural towns and villages who were seeking sheltering in the capital Mekelle in hastily constructed refugee camps.

Just last week, Mary's Meals received a devastating letter from its partner which outlines the diabolical situation the people of Tigray now find themselves in:

*Since the dawn of 24th August, dark clouds loom over Tigray because war has broken out once again.*

*As you know, there had been countless reports of atrocious violations on human rights after the war that broke out since 3rd November 2020. In silence, months have passed with each day bringing new horrors, forever marking the minds of innocent civilians who got caught up in the tide of such a hate-filled attack.*

*It was not enough that some of the most vulnerable communities had been starving for months on end, it was not enough that the children born and raised with so much love and hope had been murdered with their bodies left to the elements, and it was not enough that families saw the bright vitality of their daughters and wives dim and be replaced with sheer terror laying witness to the horrors they endured, not enough that they had to watch the life they worked so hard to establish when it crumbled, not enough that they had to forgo their dignities and contemplate unthinkable and harrowing acts just to survive, but they also had to watch helpless as one of their own was brutally prosecuted and burnt alive with a crowd cheering on the insanity.*

*Now, war seems to have been ignited once again, undoubtedly rearing to claim the lives of many young souls who could have contributed for the betterment of humanity.*

*I beseech you to pray on our behalf and become our voices as we are about to be silenced once more. In the name of the poor, please advocate for this madness to end, as your support is critically needed right now. This is the juncture from which there will be no return, and in such time, it would show how humanity could prevail over injustice and cruelty.*

*If the worst comes to pass, and communications are completely cut off, kindly know that we will be on this side of the world trying our best, with prayers and efforts to serve our community by exploring all options available.*

All of this endorses the view of Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director General of the World Health Organization, that the situation in Tigray is [“the worst catastrophe on earth”](#). In a virtual press briefing in August, Tedros warned:

“The international community may be sleepwalking into a nuclear war as a result of Russia’s war in Ukraine – it is the mother of all problems. But in terms of humanitarian crisis, I can tell you the humanitarian crisis is greater in Tigray. The only thing we ask is: ‘Can the world come back to its senses and uphold humanity?’”

Magnus MacFarlane-Barrow continued: “I hope we do not look back in years to come with a heavy feeling of shame and regret because we failed to stand up for our brothers and sisters in their time of need. We cannot look away while this continues.

“I cannot ignore the pleas from our colleagues to pray for them, speak up for them, and advocate on their behalf and I am asking that you please join me. If you pray, pray about Ethiopia. And, importantly, make Ethiopia and the situation in Tigray a topic of conversation.

Make sure people know what is going on because it cannot be allowed to continue. And tell anyone with the power to influence exactly what our partner is telling us; we must show how humanity can prevail over injustice and cruelty.”

**— END —**

## About Mary's Meals

[Mary's Meals](#) is a global movement that sets up school feeding projects in some of the world's poorest communities, where poverty and hunger prevent children from gaining an education. Mary's Meals works with in-country volunteers to provide one daily meal in a place of learning to attract chronically poor children into the classroom, where they receive an education that can be their ladder out of poverty. Mary's Meals began by feeding just 200 children in Malawi in 2002.

Today, the organization feeds 2,279,941 hungry children every school day across five continents, in the following countries: Benin, Ecuador, Ethiopia, Haiti, India, Kenya, Lebanon, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Myanmar, Niger, Romania, South Sudan, Syria, Thailand, Uganda, Yemen, Zambia and Zimbabwe. Mary's Meals collaborates with the U.N. World Food Program and is part of the global School Meals Coalition, an emerging initiative of governments and partners to drive actions that can urgently re-establish, improve, and scale up food and education systems. For more information about Mary's Meals visit [marysmealsusa.org](https://marysmealsusa.org) or follow Mary's Meals on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#) or [Instagram](#).

## Interviews & assets

- Interviews with Magnus MacFarlane-Barrow, founder, and CEO of Mary's Meals are available.
- Additional images, videos and information are available upon request.
- Media Contact: Communications Manager Helena Finnegan, (239) 290-7788, [helena.finnegan@marysmeals.org](mailto:helena.finnegan@marysmeals.org).

## Mary's Meals Facts

- 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 feeds more than 2.2+ million children in 20 countries: Malawi, Liberia, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Haiti, Kenya, India, South Sudan, Uganda, Yemen, Ethiopia, Benin, Lebanon, Syria, Myanmar, Thailand, Ecuador, Madagascar, Romania, and Niger.
- The Mary's Meals global movement was born in 2002 when Magnus MacFarlane-Barrow visited Malawi during a famine and met a mother dying from AIDS. When he asked her eldest son, Edward, what his dreams were in life, he replied simply: "To have enough food to eat and to be able to go to school one day." This year, the charity is celebrating 20 years of this work.
- The Covid-19 pandemic disrupted the Mary's Meals school feeding programmes across the world. Mary's Meals had to adapt quickly to ensure hungry children did not go without essential nutrition and started distributing food in communities for the children who rely on Mary's Meals to eat at home.
- The average cost to feed a child with Mary's Meals for a whole school year is [just \\$21](#).
- Magnus MacFarlane-Barrow is the founder of Mary's Meals and author of the bestseller [The Shed That Fed A Million Children](#), which tells the story of how a one-off delivery of aid grew into a global movement, providing nutritious meals to more a million of the world's poorest children every school day. The book was fully updated with a new preface, chapter, and epilogue in September 2021 as the charity reached its milestone of feeding two million children every school day.
- Please visit [marysmealsusa.org](https://marysmealsusa.org) to find out more.