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New Hope for Children in Tigray, Ethiopia After Three Years Without School

Global school-feeding charity restarts program in Tigray.



Children in Tigray receive tea and a high-energy biscuit as school feeding restarts.

Bloomfield, N.J. – August 21, 2023 – There's new hope for children in Tigray as global school-feeding charity, [Mary's Meals](#) has taken the first steps in reinstating its much-needed feeding program in schools in Tigray, Ethiopia, following two years of civil war and three years of disruption to education across the region.

Working with its long-standing local partner, Daughters of Charity Tigray, Mary's Meals has reintroduced feeding for around 10,000 children in 14 schools. In the short term, the menu is dictated by facilities and supplies and children are receiving high-energy biscuits and hot tea. Over the next few months, the program and menu will be expanded as cooking facilities that were destroyed or looted in the fighting are replaced.

The children being served have all missed out on years of learning – some may never even have set foot in a classroom – since schools in the region closed in March 2020 because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Later that year, just as places of education were preparing to re-open, the war began. Two years of relentless fighting left millions of people displaced, traumatized and in need of humanitarian assistance.

Before COVID and conflict closed the schools, Mary's Meals was reaching more than 24,000 children with nutritious, hot daily meals every school day through its program, coordinated by Daughters of Charity with support from community volunteers.

When war broke out and school buildings were being used as shelters for people displaced by the conflict, Mary's Meals and Daughters of Charity continued to work closely under extremely challenging conditions to provide emergency food aid and other essential items to thousands of people seeking refuge in the capital city of Mekelle.

As many thousands of people return to their villages to begin rebuilding their lives, Mary's Meals is supporting its partner to carry out community food distributions, providing essential staples to those families with the greatest need.

"We're so thankful to our colleagues at Daughters of Charity whose hard work in the most difficult circumstances has allowed us to keep reaching people in urgent need in Tigray. During the darkest days, when it wasn't possible to deliver our normal school-feeding program, emergency meals and community food distributions offered people essential sustenance and, above all, hope," said Alex Keay, Director of Program Affiliates and Partners at Mary's Meals International.

"Now, with schools reopening and children turning up to learn after three years without classes, it's important that we work together to reinstate school feeding at the earliest opportunity. It gives us hope, too, being able to take these first steps and keep our promise to the children – that they will eat when they attend school," he added.

Mary's Meals' local partner is currently sourcing the essential supplies needed to reinstate cooking facilities and to restart the school-feeding program in full – serving a hot, nutritious meal to children every school day where they learn. For now, seeing children safely back in class and being able to offer them some daily nourishment while they learn is a welcome change.

"Parents are expressing their gratitude for the feeding program which has brought hope for their children to attend classes and start achieving after years of closed schools," said Deputy Social and Development Coordinator for Daughters of Charity, Gebrisha Gebray.

Mary's Meals' emergency response in Ethiopia was made possible by the dedication of its local partner Daughters of Charity and the generous response to its Crisis in Ethiopia appeal in 2021.

For more information about Mary's Meals and its work, visit marysmealsusa.org.

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About Mary's Meals

Now in its 21st year, [Mary's Meals](https://marysmealsusa.org) is a global movement that sets up school-feeding programs in some of the world's most vulnerable communities, where conflict, poverty and hunger often prevent children from gaining an education. Mary's Meals works with in-country volunteers to provide one daily nutritious meal in a place of learning to attract children into the classroom to receive an education. This simple solution to help end world hunger also enables children to lift themselves from the cycle of hunger and poverty.

Mary's Meals began by feeding 200 children in Malawi in 2002. Today, the organization feeds 2,429,182 hungry children every school day in 5,084 schools across five continents in the following countries: Benin, Ecuador, Ethiopia, Haiti, India, Kenya, Lebanon, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Myanmar, Niger, South Sudan, Syria, Thailand, Yemen, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. Mary's Meals collaborates with the U.N. World Food Program, partners with USAID in Liberia 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.

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