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Are We Losing the Fight Against Hunger?

This World Hunger Day, many ask the question. Mary's Meals offers a simple solution—reaching over 2.6 million children daily with food and access to education.

Bloomfield, N.J. – Tuesday, May 27, 2025 – Observed on May 28, World Hunger Day highlights the paradox that, despite there being a surplus of food in the world, global hunger continues to increase. Acute food insecurity and child malnutrition rose for a sixth consecutive year in 2024 and – despite being five years away from the United Nations goal of Zero Hunger 2030 – continue to affect more than [295 million](#) people across more than 50 countries.

The statistics are grim—and they barely capture the harsh reality faced by those enduring daily hunger and acute food insecurity. And that 2030 goal for Zero Hunger, which offered such a great sense of hope and possibility at its inception, is now unanimously considered to be unattainable. Looking at these facts, it is understandable that many of us may question whether creating a world without hunger is even possible.

However, for more than two decades, the global school feeding charity [Mary's Meals](#) has been collaborating with communities to address child hunger in an innovative way that effectively alleviates children's immediate hunger while equipping communities with a sustainable solution for long-lasting change.

And while hunger still looms large in so many parts of the world, the transformative impact of this simple school feeding program cannot—and should not—be ignored. A program that is managed and operated by local volunteers, many of whom have firsthand experience of hunger and poverty as obstacles to education. A program that promises to provide a meal to every student, in each place of education where it operates, every school day. Currently, Mary's Meals provides meals to more than 2.6 million children every school day in 16 countries, including Haiti, Ethiopia, and South Sudan.

The result is that children not only find relief from hunger, but they are also better able to concentrate in class and more likely to progress with their education:

- Before Mary's Meals began serving in Mozambique (the newest country to be added to the program, last year), 93% of children felt hungry every school day. Once they started receiving Mary's Meals in 2024, 92% of children said they never worry about hunger at school.
- Recent research from Mary's Meals Kenya, Liberia, and Malawi programs shows 100% of teachers stated that the school feeding program had a positive impact on the quality of education last year (2024), including improvements in attendance, participation, focus and lesson retention, pass rate, and a reduction in sickness and absenteeism.

Desire is a 13-year-old boy from Malawi who recently began receiving Mary's Meals at school. He says, "Finding food is hard; I often sleep on an empty stomach. I feel weak and [have] pain in my body when I don't eat. When there was no food at school, I would be shivering and so tired—I would shiver and shake so much I couldn't hold my pen, and it was difficult to concentrate. Sometimes I would have to leave school to go and try to find food."

Many children report being able to concentrate better in class and participate more actively after having a school meal. Research from Mary's Meals Kenya, Liberia, Malawi, and Zambia programs in 2024 showed that while 35% of children felt they could concentrate well before the meal was served, this increased to 98% after they had eaten.

As well as being less hungry and more able to concentrate, children who receive a meal in school are more likely to attend consistently and therefore have a better chance at progressing in their education. A teacher in Mozambique whose students began receiving Mary's Meals in 2024 recently commented, "Learners come to school on time, they no longer miss classes, and the most interesting [impact] is that I did not register even a single child who got sick through the school year. I have also noticed that children can stay more in school even after classes, playing."

Perhaps it's not surprising, then, that in 2023 school meals were added as an official [indicator](#) under Sustainable Development Goal 4: Quality Education, signaling global recognition of school meals as a [key intervention](#) to improve access to education and ensure inclusive and effective [learning environments](#) for all.

For communities delivering long-term [interventions](#) like the Mary's Meals school feeding program, it is vital to address child hunger in a way that promotes access to education and improves children's readiness to learn to ensure that the next generation is equipped to take a leading role in the innovation and development required to help create a world without hunger.

Clare Nolan, head of program development at Mary's Meals, says, "The strength and authenticity of this program stem from the community commitment that sits at its core. The local volunteers we partner with to deliver the school feeding program experience daily challenges as a result of poverty—often driven by conflict, climate change, and economic disruption—yet their tenacity and passion to ensure their children can receive a daily meal at school is a huge part of the driving force behind Mary's Meals.

"That passion is also evident in the support we receive from those who give donations or donate their time to help us realize our vision that every child can receive a daily meal in their place of education. It is sustained community action in all its forms that will help win the fight against hunger."

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About Mary's Meals

Now in its 23rd year, [Mary's Meals](#) 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 and trusted partners to provide one daily nutritious meal in a place of learning to bring 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 more than 2.6 million children every school day in more than 5,000 schools in the following countries: Benin, Ecuador, Ethiopia, Haiti, India, Kenya, Lebanon, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Mozambique, South Sudan, Syria, Yemen, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. Mary's Meals is part of the global School Meals Coalition, an emerging initiative of governments and partners to drive actions that can urgently reestablish, improve, and scale up food and education systems. For more information about Mary's Meals, visit marysmealsusa.org.

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