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On World Food Day, Mary's Meals Underscores a Proven Solution to Child Hunger and Poverty — Now Reaching 3 Million Children Worldwide

Since 2002, the organization has demonstrated how one daily meal in school can help children learn, thrive, and break the cycle of poverty.

Bloomfield, N.J. – Friday, October 11, 2025—World Food Day (Oct. 16) and the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty (Oct. 17) mark the founding of the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization and spotlight global food insecurity and poverty, calling for action and greater awareness of the challenges faced by those living with hunger and poverty.

Since 2002, [Mary's Meals](#) has provided meals to children in educational settings. Today, the organization reaches [3 million children](#) across 16 countries—having expanded this year to serve an additional 462,000 children in eight countries.

Through local partnerships and community-managed programs, Mary's Meals provides daily school meals at a cost of just \$25.20 per child for an entire school year. These meals meet children's immediate nutritional needs and support access to education—a proven pathway out of poverty. As highlighted in the Mary's Meals [2024 Impact Report](#), school meals offer wide-ranging benefits, including improved health, growth, learning outcomes, and community cohesion.

As global hunger and poverty persist, Mary's Meals continues to demonstrate how simple, community-driven solutions like school meals can make a powerful and lasting impact.

Erin Pratley, Chief Programs Officer at Mary's Meals International, said:

"We know that reliable school meals can lay the foundations for families and communities to lift themselves out of poverty and Mary's Meals is committed to expanding its community-led programs in areas of greatest need where poverty and hunger stand in the way of education.

"It is projected that in 2030, five years from now, 512 million people will still be facing hunger, and nearly 60 percent of those will be in Africa. Children are often most vulnerable to the detrimental effects of hunger and poverty and recent figures tracking stunting and wasting across Africa and Asia highlight the need for urgent intervention.

"Children account for around 40% of the population of Sub-Saharan Africa where the majority of our school feeding programs operate.

"Since the beginning of 2025, we have extended our programs across Africa to reach an additional 450,000 children with life-changing daily meals. Our program reaches over 3 million children with a meal every school day, and more than 2.7 million are in Sub-Saharan Africa.

"Collaboration is at the heart of our model, with Mary's Meals working alongside local communities and engaging trusted partners in hard-to-reach places. Our school feeding programs are run by the communities they benefit to offer a scalable and sustainable solution to child hunger. We believe that, in this world of plenty, there is no reason that any child should go hungry or miss out on the chance to learn.

"Together, we can realize our vision that every child receives a daily meal in their place of education and that all those who have more than they need, share with those who lack even the most basic things."

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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 3 million children every school day in over 5,800 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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