

My Weekly Helping Hand

MAKE IT A MILLION!

Bringing Hope

Over the past few years we've worked exclusively with Mary's Meals, feeding hungry children at school and helping them get an education that will enable them to break free of the poverty cycle they find themselves trapped in.

Two of the My Weekly team, journalist Susan Watson and editor Stuart Johnstone, have visited many Mary's Meals projects over the years, in places like Malawi, India, Kenya and Zambia.

They've brought back stories of hardship and loss, of people displaced by war and famine, who have had to overcome enormous obstacles just to get through another day.

But the stories have all had another thread through them – a thirst for learning, a determination to break free of their circumstances and a recognition that the school meal is providing youngsters with a real opportunity, giving them real hope that their future will be better.

The Children Of Kenya Need Your Help

No child asks to be born into a world of hunger and deprivation. Help us bring food and hope to these youngsters

For 12-year-old Moses, the choice is a stark one and ultimately it could be the difference between life and death. He can spend his days wandering the streets, searching for scrap metal, or discarded materials such as paper and plastic, in a bid to provide a meagre living for his family or he can go to school, receive an education and fight starvation by eating the nutritious food supplied by charity Mary's Meals. Moses' situation is by no means unusual. In Kenya, poverty is rife and children often fall through the gaps, where they are expected to grow up and start learning from a very young age. For this year's Helping Hand Appeal, we are once again teaming up with school feeding charity Mary's Meals this time to raise money for impoverished children, like those living in Kenya, who live in conditions of an incredible hardship. Mary's Meals' ethos is simple. Not only does the charity serve food packed with healthy ingredients, but also the incentive to gain an education that will hopefully lift the young people out of the hunger cycle. Working in some of the poorest countries in the world, the charity uses local volunteers to cook nutritious food which is prepared and served in local schools. To receive the food, children must attend classes, so attainment levels have risen dramatically in the places where Mary's Meals works. It is a clever and effective approach – and as it costs the equivalent of £13.90 to feed a child for a year, your generous donations will make a real difference to many young people who may not get any food other than that supplied by Mary's Meals. For Moses, the impact of Mary's Meals has been huge. He lives in one room with his mother and three younger siblings in a one-storey terraced property made of mud, in the slums of Nairobi. It's basic and austere, but even this is better than where he was a year before. At the age of 10, Moses spent a year living on the streets, where his only means was scavenging. Hunger was common and in the darkest days he resorted to sniffing glue to stave off the hunger pangs. "I had to feel high to survive. It also stopped me feeling hungry." "It gave me the illusion my belly was full. It stopped me feeling cold," he said. It was only the intervention of Moses' headteacher, Scholastica Mwachira, who tracked the boy down and persuaded him to go back to school, that stopped the situation from getting even worse. Thanks to her dedication, Moses was able to return to education and receive a



Living conditions are cramped and basic for Moses and his family, but it's better than being on the streets



Moses' mother is going to school where he receives Mary's Meals

welcome meal of maize (porridge) or rice served with beans from Mary's Meals. She said, "He was coming here [to Kapkonduywo Primary School] but he was absent for a whole year. "He works hard. When I tried to find out where he was, I learned he had followed his brother and was selling scraps, so I looked for him. "I sent some of his classmates to find him and speak to him. When I sent for him, thank God he came. We brought him back to class and he has never left school since then. "He's a good student, and we are trying to help him in school. He can be an example to his brothers and sisters, but it's hard for that family because where they live is pathetic. I hope Moses can get a better life."

How You Can Help

During this year's Helping Hand Appeal, you can help provide life-changing meals to some of the world's poorest children. For just £13.90, Mary's Meals can feed a child for a whole school year. You can help by sending a cheque or postal order to My Weekly Helping Hand Appeal, 2 Albert Square, Dundee, DD1 5QJ. Other ways to donate: Freephone 0800 698 1212. Visit www.mysweekly.co.uk or text MMSH17 £5 to 70707. You can donate £1, £2, £3, £4, £5 or £10 up to a maximum of £30 in any month. Donations will be added to your phone bill or deducted from your pay-as-you-go credit. To claim Gift Aid on your personal donations, please follow instructions in the reply text.

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Looking Forward

It's hard to comprehend that readers have donated nearly £1 million since the Appeal began but it's equally mind-blowing to see how much good has been done with that money. We've only had room here to cover a fraction of the projects that we've undertaken – we also refurbished an old folk's home, provided toys and equipment for disabled children, installed heating in a school for deaf children, bought cribs and bedding for a maternity hospital, refurbished the emergency department of a paediatric hospital, bought equipment to treat acute skin complaints, helped children leaving orphanages make the transition to adulthood and independent living and much, much more.

Add to that the tens of thousands of children from India to Somalia, Liberia to the Caribbean, who have received a hot, nutritious meal every single day because of our readers' generosity and you begin to comprehend the scale of what has been achieved.

But while £1 million is an awe-inspiring landmark, it doesn't mean we should rest on our laurels. There are still people in desperate need around the world and My Weekly will continue, with the support of our wonderful readers, to help those in need who cross our path.

It's Working!

The Mary's Meals method of targeting education and hunger simultaneously is making a real difference.

There is currently a five-year project going on in Malawi, Zambia and Liberia (which is being independently evaluated) to assess the effect the charity is having.

Early findings show startling results. Enrolment at "Mary's Meals" schools is up, attendance is improved and the number of children leaving early is down.

Teachers were asked about the impact of Mary's Meals. 98% reported that children paid more attention in class, while the percentage saying "children in my class sometimes complain of feeling hungry" decreased from 87% to 13%.

Mary's Meals is now feeding more than 1.5 million children every day.

Zambia's children need your help

My Weekly's Stuart Johnstone visited Zambia to witness the inspiring work of Mary's Meals

Earlier this year, the charity Mary's Meals celebrated sending one million impoverished children in schools across the world – but this is just the start. Mary's Meals is constantly moving into new territories and for the past 12 months, some of that focus has been on new operations in Zambia in southern Africa. This will be the focus of our Helping Hand Appeal for 2015. In the run up to Christmas we will explore how the charity is already making a huge difference to the lives of thousands of hungry children, and how your generous donations can help them to achieve even more. Located in the Chipata district of the country, Mary's Meals is currently feeding around 40,000 children in Zambia. The aim is to increase this number to 100,000 by 2017, an ambitious programme, but one that is desperately needed to help in the fight against the crippling poverty that grips people who live in the country's enclaves.



Agness with Grace, Heidi and Sylvia

People like 27-year-old Agness Mhanda, a single mother of two, who like many, is struggling to get by. With work scarce, and driven by a desire to make life better for daughters Sylvia (5) and Grace (3), Agness has made the decision to go back to school to gain qualifications. "I want to be something in life, but it's hard," she said. "We don't have much money. I worry about how I can feed my family, but I have to think about my daughters and giving them the best chance." Living in a small, single room house, partitioned by a sheet hung over a piece of rope, Agness does not even have a bed. The three sleep on the floor, sharing a single blanket for shelter. The day begins at 5am when Agness will collect water from a nearby well for washing and cooking food – assuming they have some on that day. "It has made such a big difference," she continued. "I had been thinking about collapsing exhausted into bed when the sun goes down

headteacher at Chitsu Adventist School, which Agness attends. She has noticed big changes in attendance and performance since Mary's Meals began working there. "We have 850 children in the school, and every day was hard because of hunger," she said. "Often the children were too hungry to come to school at all, and when they did attend, they couldn't concentrate. It was very difficult for the teachers to get them to pay attention. Now that they receive the porridge they are able to work, and they always come to school. The teachers are happier, the parents are happier and best of all, the children are happier and ready to work."

Zambia is a new frontier for Mary's Meals and, with your help, more children can benefit from the vital work they are doing in the country.

Matching your donations with UKaid

Between now and December 28 2015, the UK Government will DOUBLE ANY DONATIONS made to Mary's Meals for the Helping Hand Appeal, which will help feed chronically hungry children in Malawi and Zambia with a daily meal in school. Your donations make a huge difference to thousands of hungry school pupils at Chitsu Adventist School

How You Can Help During this year's Helping Hand Appeal it will cost just £12.20 to feed not one, but two children for a whole school year, bringing hope to a hungry world! You can help by sending a cheque or postal order to My Weekly marked Mary's Meals Helping Hand, 80 Kingsway East, Dundee, DD4 8SL. Alternatively, our direct debits set up between September 28 and December 28, 2015 will also qualify for match funding by the UK Government for the duration of the appeal at 2x your donation. £1, £2, £3, £4, £5 or £10 up to a maximum of £30 in any month. Donations will be added to your phone bill or deducted from your pay-as-you-go credit. To claim Gift Aid on your personal donations, please follow instructions in the reply text. To find out more ways to donate to Mary's Meals, visit www.mysweekly.co.uk

The Boy With No Name

Stuart Johnstone meets some of the youngest people in Malawi being helped by Mary's Meals

At first glance the scene is not all that different to any you would expect when you have a large number of young children gathered together. It's a riot of noise and colour as they run around shouting, laughing and playing with their toys. Look closer, however, behind the smiles, and differences begin to emerge. Some are wearing clothes that are not quite the right fit. Others are wearing little more than rags. The boys, which provide so much entertainment, are old and often broken. One boy proudly holds up his sports car for inspection. It's missing two wheels. Another shows off with a pair of large, blue sunglasses which have no legs. Namsimba Under 6

Most of the time they are hungry, sometimes they are not feeling well. We want to open their minds, let them play, learn and develop from this very young age. But it's difficult when they have so many issues to contend with. "Mary's Meals makes a big difference to us. It's emotional for them. Quite often the parents can't afford to feed the children. Mary's Meals is a constant support, and I don't know what we would do without them." It's a slightly different

strategy for Mary's Meals, and one that they hope will pay dividends. Becky Evans has been overseeing the Under 6 programme in Malawi. She says, "Early childhood development is crucial, and if we can target children between the ages of three and six, before they start primary school, we hope we can set them up for the years ahead. "The programme is designed to provide nutrition, life skills and basic pre-school education, which will support the children's development in their porridge. We will advise parents if this is happening. It's a joint effort. It's a slightly different



The little boy with no name

HELPING HAND APPEAL 2014

How You Can Help

It costs Mary's Meals just £12.20 to feed a child in school for a whole year – a brilliant idea, bringing hope to a hungry world. You can help them by sending a cheque or postal order to: My Weekly Helping Hand Appeal, 80 Kingsway East, Dundee DD4 8SL. Donate by phone: call freephone 0800 698 1212, or by text: text MMSH17 £5 to 70707. For example, to donate £5, text MMSH17 £5 to 70707. You can donate £1, £2, £3, £4, £5 and £10, to a maximum of £30 per month. Donations are added to your phone bill or deducted from your pay-as-you-go credit. To claim Gift Aid, follow instructions in the reply text.



The class goes quiet when the porridge is served