

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.

My Weekly's Stuart Johnstone visited Zambia

to witness the inspiring work of Mary's Meals

Mary's Meals celebrated feeding one million impoverished children in schools across the world – but With work scarce, and

this is just the start. moving into new territories and and Grace (3), Agness has for the past 12 months, some made the decision to go back of that focus has been on new to school to gain qualifications. operations in Zambia in

focus of our Helping Hand Appeal for 2015. we will explore how the charity my daughters and giving them 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 many people who live

in the country endure.

HELPING HAND TIMELINE 6.indd

arlier this year, the charity People like 27-year-old Agness Mphande, a single mother of two, who like many, is struggling to get by.

driven by a desire to make life Mary's Meals is constantly better for daughters Syliva (5

"I want to be something in southern Africa. This will be the life, but it's hard," she said. "We don't have much money. I worry about how I can feed my In the run up to Christmas family, but I have to think abou 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 which has started feeding they have some on that day and will involve an intense routine of chores and schoolwork before she collapses exhausted into bed



around 7pm. Grace is not yet school age, but with no-one else to look after her, there is accompany Agness to school. In recent months, things have become slightly easier for Agness with the knowledge that the family will receive a nutritionally-balanced meal, supplied by Mary's Meals, pupils in the school. "It has made such a big difference," she continued. "I had been thinking about stopping school and just trying me to do that." when the sun goes down to find some work so I can feed Barbara Sibongani is

my children, but now I know that by attending school the will get porridge. Most days we don't eat before school starts, and a lot of the time we didn't know if we would eat at all that day. It is a relief to know we will receive the porridge. My children are no longer hungry all day. They feel stronger. Things still aren't easy, but this is one less thing to worry about. School is important. It's better for me to stay and get a better job, and thanks to Mary's Meals, it's possible fo

headteacher at Chistu 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.

ildren Of Kenva

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

or 12-year-old Moses. poorest countries in the the choice is a stark one world, the charity uses local and ultimately it could be the difference between life and death. He can spend his days

wandering the streets, searching for scrap metal, or classes, so attainment discarded materials such as levels have risen paper and plastic, in a bid to dramatically in the places provide a meagre living for where Mary's Meals works. his family; or he can go to school, receive an education approach – and as it costs and fight starvation by eating the equivalent of £13.90 to the nutritious food supplied feed a child for a year, your by charity Mary's Meals.

means unusual. In Kenya, poverty is rife and children often fall through the gaps, where they Meals. are expected to grow up and For Moses, the impact of start earning from a very

young age. For this year's Helping Hand Appeal, we are once again teaming up with school one-storey terraced property feeding charity Mary's Meals made of mud, in the

those living in Kenya, who live in conditions of incredible hardshi

Mary's Meals' ethos is also the incentive to gain an

lift the young people out o the cycle of deprivation.

Working in some of the

18 www.myweekly.co.uk

volunteers to cook nutritious food which is prepared and served in local schools. To receive the food, children must attend

It is a clever and effective generous donations will Moses's situation is by no make a real difference to many young people who ma

not get any food other than that supplied by Mary's Mary's Meals has been huge. He lives in one room with his mother and three younger siblings in a Karasani slums of Eldore even this is better than

At the age of 10, Moses Hunger was common and in the darkest days he resorted o sniffing glue to stave off the hunger pangs

where he was little over a

A truly desperate





tuation, Moses would spend his days searching umpsters for scrap, and if he couldn't buy any food, he nding any kind of shelte where he could sleep. "I had to feel high to survive. It also stopped me feeling hungry

"It gave me the illusion my belly was full. It stopped education and receive a



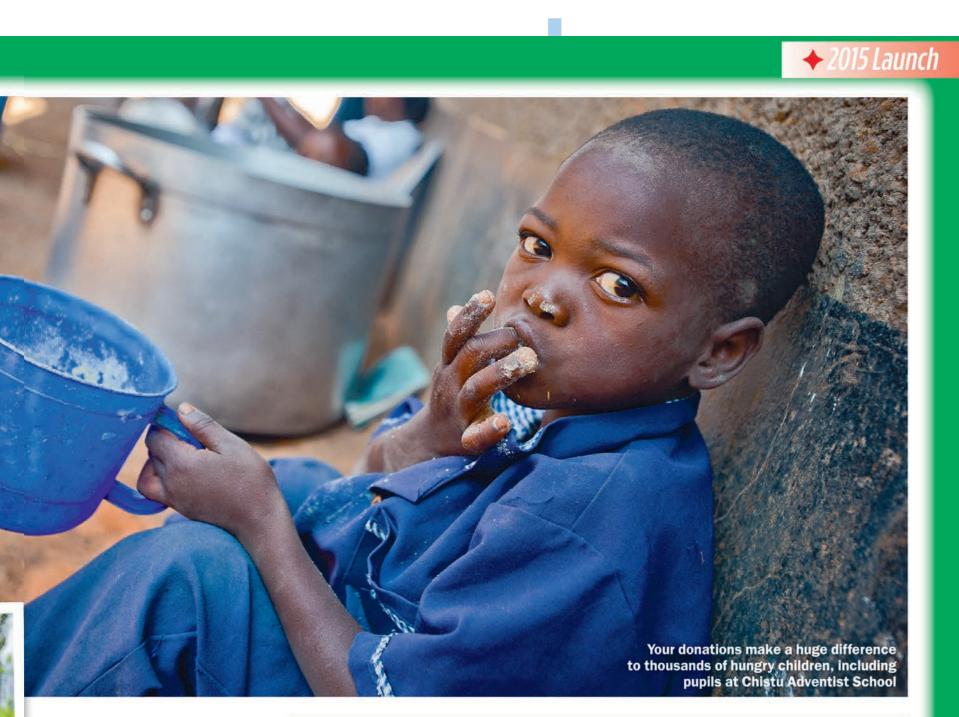
me feeling cold," he said. It was only the intervention of Moses headteacher, Scholastica Mashinga, who tracked t boy down and persuaded him to go back to school that stopped the situation from getting even worse. Thanks to her dedicatio Moses was able to return t

porridge] or rice served with beans from Mary's Meals She said, "He was coming nere [to Kapkenduiywo 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, a we are trying to help him in school. He can be an

example to his brothers and sisters, but it's hard for that amily because where they live is pathetic. I hope Moses can get a better life.'







Matching your 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.

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, any 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 no extra cost to you. You can also text to donate sending FUTR15 and the amount to 70070. For example, to donate £5, text 'FUTR15 £5' to 70070. 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. To find out more ways to donate to Mary's Meals, visit

www.marvsmeals.co.uk

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.

HelpingHand MAKE IT A MILLION!



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 9QJ. Other ways to donate: Freephone 0800 698 1212; Visit www.marysmeals.org.uk; or

text MMHH17 and the amount you would like to donate to 70070. For example, to donate £5, text "MMHH17 £5" to 70070. 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-yougo-credit. To claim Gift Aid on your personal donations, please follow instructions in the reply text.

Continued on page 21

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.

Stuart Johnstone meets some of the youngest people in Malaw being helped by Mary's Meals t 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. car for inspection. It's that are not quite the right fit. shows off with a pair of Others are wearing little more than rags. The toys, which provide so much

entertainment, are old and often broken. One boy

proudly holds up his sports Some are wearing clothes missing two wheels. Another wheels. large, blue sunglasses which name yet," says care-giver have no legs. Namisimba Under-6 say anything and we have to

wearing a Manchester United top – not that he will have any concept of what the team is. He doesn't speak and his expression barely changes. His stomach is distended, a clear sign of malnutrition. He clutches a small, plastic motorbike, and one of the few signs of life he displays is when he absently spins the "We don't know his Ruth Kwango. "He doesn't

an example of this. He's

etting the world to rights

Centre currently has 35 pupils, but this number is expected to grow as the term progresses. Our visit was during the first week of the new term, and things were still settling down. Indeed, all the children.

coax him to get involved. We plates, proudly displaying will try to find out what his empty bowls. story is, but I hope we can get through to him soon." The boy perks up slightly when the call goes out that look after the children. She the porridge is ready. For a moment, the din is from three years old and the silenced as the children tuck come to us with many at this stage they are into their food, sitting not even able to name against the wall on the dusty are so young, Mary's Meals floor, clearly enjoying the provides two meals a day One boy, who can't meal. They rub their tummies here in the centre. be more than three, is happily as they clear their Malnutrition is a big issue.



"Malnutrition is such a big issue in Malawi. We need to fight it early"

Mary Chunga, executive director of the centre, manages 11 care-givers who says, "We work with children problems. Since the children

Most of the time they are hungry, sometimes they are Meals, and one that not feeling well. We want to they hope will pay dividends. open their minds, let them play, learn and develop from overseeing the Under-6 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. The porridge is full of nutrients. "Parents are happy to see primary school, we hope we from an early age. their children improving. 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 Becky Evans has been 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 can set them up for the years ahead. "The programme is

designed to provide nutrition, beneath the standards, they difficult road ahead, but they life skills and basic preschool education, which will make the children more want this to be led by the and comprehensive

communities, which is why we provide training and support to volunteers "Ultimately we want to start helping the children as

HELPING HAND APPEAL 🚸 20

land Appeal, 80 Kingsway East, Dundee DD4 8SL

Donate by phone: call freephone 0800 698 12 or by text: text MMSF14 and the amount to 7007

For example, to donate £5, text MMSF14 5 to

a maximum of £30 per month.

ollow instructions in the reply text.

'0070. You can donate £1. £2. £3. £4. £5 and £10

Donations are added to your phone bill or deduc

from your pay-as-you-go credit. To claim Gift Aid,

It costs Mary's Meals just £12.20 to feed a child in school for a

whole year – a simple idea, bringing hope to a ungry world. You can

help them by sending a heque or postal order

o: My Weekly Help

young as possible Malnutrition is such a big issue in Malawi. It's essential we start fighting it "We monitor the children's height and weight, and if they are falling

will receive an extra nutrition have hope. supplement in their porridge. With your help and We will advise parents if this support, more children in prepared for school. We also is happening. It's a joined-up Malawi can look forward to a

approach that we hope car lead to real change.' Back in the centre, the task of clearing the dishe begins, and already the kitchen is busy as staff prepare the second of the two daily meals. The children gather again in the classroom, where ar

My Name" begins. For these youngsters, there is a long

energetic round of "What's

brighter, hopeful future. My Weekly 27

19/10/2018 12:47:58