*Source: Mary's Meals*

Mary's Meals has today, Friday, 1 April, announced that it is now feeding 2,279,941 children every school day, with funds raised in 2021 helping the charity to expand its work in countries, including Haiti, Madagascar and Yemen.

The charity serves nutritious school meals in 20 of the world's poorest countries, many of which are impacted by conflict and natural disasters. The promise of a nutritious meal attracts hungry children into the classroom where, instead of working or looking for food, they can gain an education and hope for the future.

Despite today's good news, Mary's Meals is pointing to a difficult year ahead - with terrible conflict affecting the world including in countries where it works, such as Ethiopia, Yemen and South Sudan, and the cost-of-living crisis hitting families in the UK and overseas.

Mary's Meals expects food prices to rise in many countries where it serves its meals, making it more expensive to feed hungry children.

Daniel Adams, executive director of Mary's Meals, says: "An incredible 2,279,941 hungry children will eat our life-changing meals today. This is only possible because of the kindness and generosity we witnessed throughout 2021, for which we are very thankful.

"However, we know that a difficult year lies ahead. Many of our dedicated supporters will be affected by the cost-of-living crisis here in the UK, and conflict and natural disasters continue to make our work overseas both challenging and indispensable."

Since the start of 2022, Mary's Meals has helped children affected by cyclones in Malawi and Madagascar, as well as children fleeing war in Ethiopia. The charity has also started serving school meals in Yemen, a country enduring one of the worst humanitarian crises in the world.

Daniel continues: "It is easy to feel hopeless when faced with so much suffering. But every single thing that people do for our mission makes an enormous difference to the children who eat Mary's Meals - and these little acts of love are needed now more than ever before.

"Despite the uncertainty ahead, we remain determined to keep our promise to the 2,279,941 children that we are reaching today, putting our hope in the continued generosity and kindness of all those who believe, like we do, in the importance of attracting children to school through the promise of a daily meal."

Abdo\* is from a village in Tigray, a semi-arid region in Ethiopia. Brutal fighting has taken place in Tigray over the past 18 months, leaving millions of internally displaced people (IDP) in desperate need of food aid.

He says: "We could hear heavy gunfire and bombs dropping. I found my father along with many people fleeing the village in search of safety, but just a few hours later, I was alone, separated from him among the thousands of desperate people fleeing the war."

Abdo heard from a neighbour that the rebels were looking for his father and that he had hidden with other men in the mountains and caves. Since that day Abdo has had no information about the whereabouts of his parents or the rest of his family.

At the age of 11, he is now living alone in a temporary IDP camp in Mekelle, where he eats Mary's Meals.

He continues: "I wish to see peace residing in all places. That is what I want and that is what I think about. Peace is very important for me to go back to my home village and join my family. My hope is for peace."

Since conflict began in Tigray, Mary's Meals has been able to provide 30,000 people with vital food aid and hygiene kits. The charity has set up classrooms in IDP centres and is delivering trauma counselling for children.

It costs just £15.90 to feed a child with Mary's Meals for a full school year.

For more information on the work of Mary's Meals, see: [www.marysmeals.org.uk](http://www.marysmeals.org.uk/)