



mary's
meals

a simple solution
to world hunger

20 YEARS OF
FEEDING
CHILDREN

Our impact story

Mary's Meals 2021 Annual Impact Report

2021 was a challenging but very successful year for Mary's Meals. Covid-19 continued to affect our ability to feed children in their place of education, with school closures or restrictions on in-school feeding continuing from 2020. Despite this, Mary's Meals was able to keep our promise to the children we reach (with in-school feeding where possible and through take-home rations when necessary).

2021 was also a notable year for Mary's Meals as we reached the global milestone of feeding **two million children** daily, whilst demonstrating strong impact across all of our programmes.

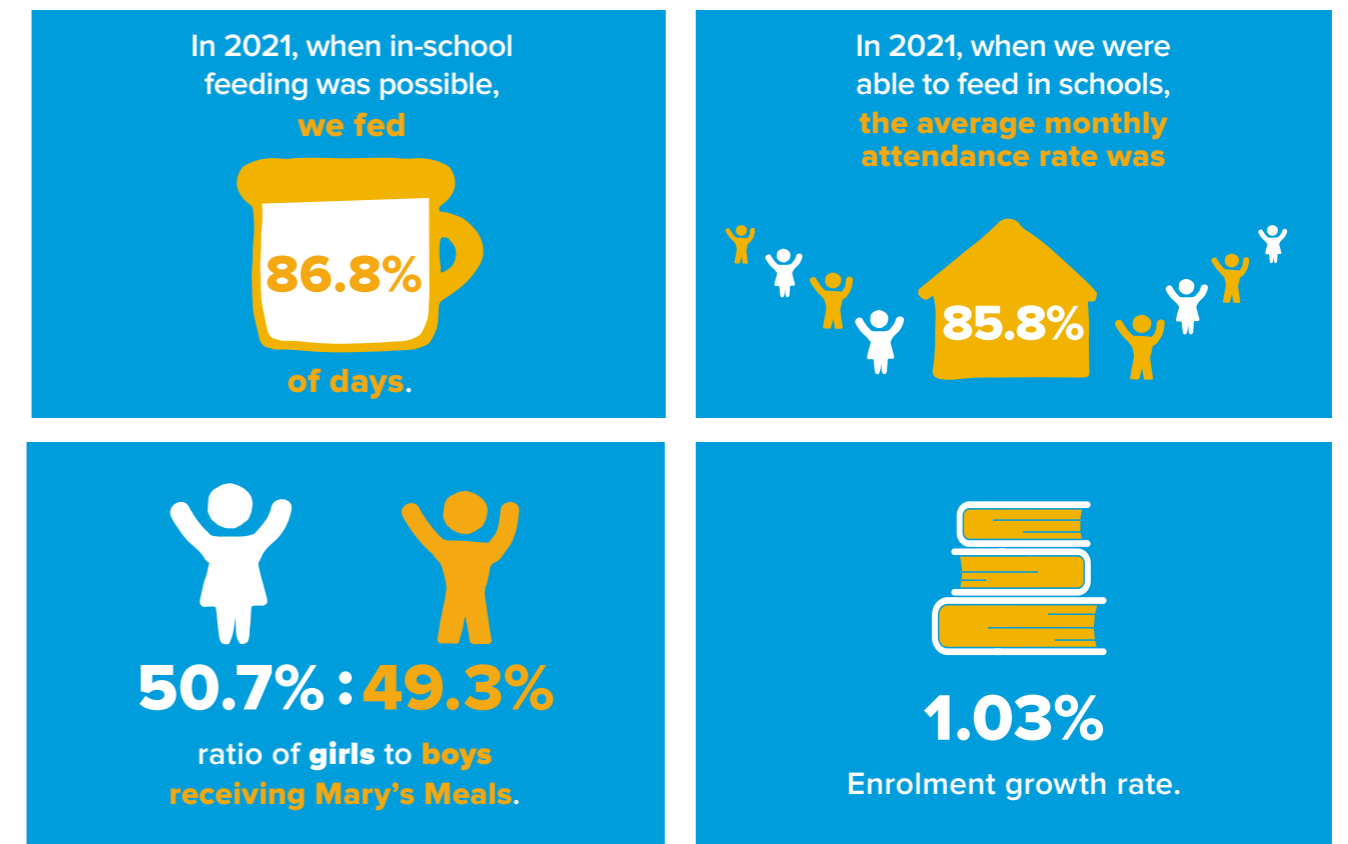
The **2021 Annual Impact Report** provides an overview of data gathered from the ongoing monitoring of our work, as well as a thematic focus on the impact of keeping our promise in Malawi through both take-home rations (for most of the school year) and the return to in-school feeding (for seven weeks).



An Overview of 2021: Key programme metrics

Feeding the correct meal each and every day is paramount to achieving our intended impact. In 2021, we have feeding rate statistics for our four programme affiliates and for the six largest programme partners (all feeding over 40,000 children). Since we provide a meal consistently, we expect that children are motivated to attend school regularly, and for there to be an equal ratio of girls and boys attending.

We also expect that enrolment increases in line with natural growth in schools where we have been feeding for a long time, and that in post-expansion schools we see a larger 'bump' for up to a year. With schools opening and closing throughout 2020 and 2021, understanding meaningful changes in enrolment has been a challenge, with 2019 data being the last complete year of enrolment data. However, we did calculate growth across our four programme affiliates and our six largest programme partners, which includes a combination of natural growth (in the majority of locations) and some post-expansion growth.



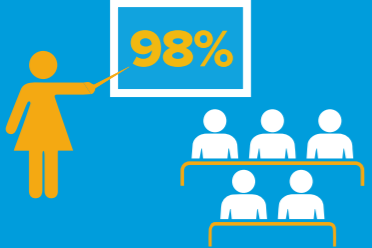
From our five-year impact study, we know that Mary's Meals has strong immediate outcomes when we start feeding in a school. Tracking outcomes when Mary's Meals expands allows us to do ongoing monitoring of our immediate outcomes at the start of the programme.

In 2021, we expanded to reach an additional **425,058 children in 1,240 schools in 12 countries.**
In 2022, we will be standardising our approach to tracking impact across expansions.

In 2021, we gathered some limited data on expansion in **Zambia**, including asking some open-ended questions to help guide our future data collection in this area.

In the month of October alone, Zambia expanded to **83 new schools** to reach **35,627 more children.**

A short survey was conducted with the headteacher in each school and the findings show:



98%

of headteachers reported an **increase in attendance** since the introduction of the SFP at their school.




Nearly 33% of headteachers reported that **teachers are more motivated** after the introduction of Mary's Meals, because of the **lower absenteeism, increased attendance, and increased performance of students.**




Headteachers reported **improvements in participation** and children staying in school longer and/or not missing class.

“As a school, we appreciate Mary’s Meals for bringing us this programme. Before this programme, the school had few pupils but now the enrolment has increased and we want Mary’s Meals to continue feeding our learners.”
Headteacher from Nkhangawa Community School



“We appreciate the programme that you have brought to us and your consistency in monitoring also helps in accountability. Our learners are healthy and happy, and the performance has improved.”
Headteacher from Chikalawa Primary School.

2021 in focus: Keeping our promise in a challenging year

For Mary's Meals, 2021 was a year of adapting to an often-changing environment to ensure we were keeping our promise to the children we reach. Many programmes had schools closed for at least part of the year. In some cases, schools were open, but no in-school feeding was allowed. In our Malawi programme, children received take-home rations until we were finally able to resume in-school feeding in October. We conducted two separate studies in Malawi to track how well we kept our promise throughout the year, and to learn for future emergency responses.

In February 2021, the Mary's Meals Malawi team conducted 588 surveys across 50 take-home ration distribution points in 14 districts across the country to understand the impact of take-home rations for children and their families. The survey was conducted with the householder picking up the rations and questions were based on their use of the previous distribution approximately six weeks prior.

The reality of take-home rations is that we expected that households may share food within their households, and 59% of households reported sharing the food with the entire household.

As such, we asked about how take-home rations affected households rather than just children.



In Malawi

95%

of households told us there was a **reduction in hunger** in their home while they had take-home rations from Mary's Meals.

In Malawi, we saw a

73%

reduction in worry about hunger following the distribution of food.



In Malawi

93%

of households said that **school meals** were an **important** factor in their decision to send their children **back to school** on reopening.



In October 2021, we were able to return to in-school feeding for the first time in nearly 18 months in Malawi. Just after children returned, our team surveyed

169 boys and 192 girls (361 children in total) in 10 schools in 5 districts across Malawi

to compare their experiences with take-home rations compared to in-school feeding.



87%

of children in Malawi reported that the in-school feeding motivated them to **attend school more regularly.**



88%

of children in Malawi stated that now that they are receiving a meal in school, they **rarely or never leave school early due to hunger.**



89%

of children reported an **improvement in their concentration** with the return of in-school feeding in Malawi.



92%

of children reported that they **rarely or never worried about going hungry** with the return of in-school feeding in Malawi.



88%

of children reported feeling **less hungry in school** with the return to in-school feeding compared to when they were receiving take-home rations in Malawi.

Quotes from children about getting a meal in school:

“I am happy because we are eating porridge at school, this gives me strength to concentrate in lessons.”

“The meal is helping me to come to school daily because I know that I will learn and eat here.”



Key learnings to take forward from this work:

Feeding rate is the metric which Mary's Meals has the most control over within our programme. As part of our ongoing monitoring, we identified lower than expected rates in a few programmes and are working to ensure consistent feeding in these programmes. We expect that increasing the feeding rate will also lead to positive changes in attendance and other key outcomes that will be tracked starting in 2022.

- In three of our four Programme Affiliates, our feeding rate was above 90%. Liberia was the outlier at 78%, due mainly to factors where Mary's Meals has less control (e.g. schools closing for unforeseen circumstances, schools delaying reopening after holidays, confusion over the school calendar leading to teachers and children not turning up). To a lesser extent, there were issues that Mary's Meals can directly address, including issues with kitchens and food not being delivered, both of which are things we can improve upon in 2022.
- In Haiti, both Programme Partners surveyed had similar rates, close to 73%. The challenges of feeding in Haiti in 2021 can, to a large extent, explain this, with Covid-19, political unrest and a natural disaster all playing their part. As a result of these challenges, food deliveries became more difficult and were sometimes delayed due to the fuel crisis and the presence of gangs along the delivery routes.

Enrolment is a key indicator of our Programme Affiliate success and although it was difficult to track enrolment because of the irregular school year, we did identify one Programme Affiliate, Liberia, where enrolment has been declining for several years.

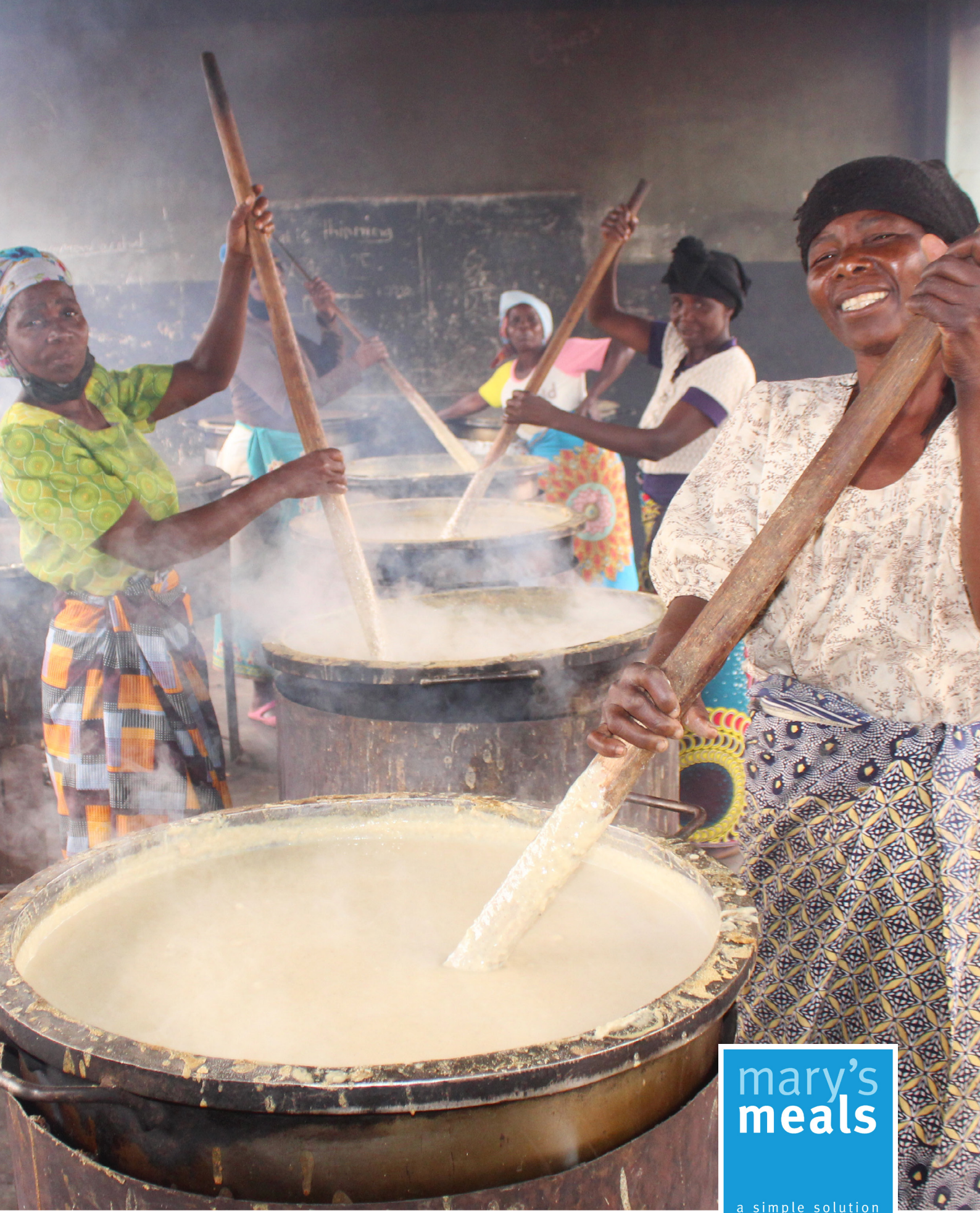
- Initial investigations into the causes of the decline in enrolment in Liberia are currently underway in order to identify next steps to ensure that children are able to enrol in school, and benefit from, a meal in their place of education.

When we are unable to do in-school feeding, take-home rations are effective in keeping our promise and continuing to reach children.

- The evidence from our research shows that take-home rations reduce hunger and worry about hunger in households where children normally receive Mary's Meals.

In-school feeding is the best way to keep our promise to the children we reach. Mary's Meals must work with key stakeholders to ensure we can continue to feed in schools whenever possible, and work to return to in-school feeding as soon as possible after a disruption.

- In-school feeding is the most targeted option to reach school children. In-school feeding is more effective in decreasing worry about hunger, motivating boys and girls to attend school more regularly, and increasing concentration levels while reducing hunger in school when compared to take-home rations.



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