



# Our impact story

Mary's Meals 2022 Annual Impact Report

mary's  
meals

a simple solution  
to world hunger



**Our school feeding programme emerged with key successes in 2022, steadfast in the face of global challenges.**

At Mary's Meals International, we focus on providing a daily meal in a place of education for children experiencing extreme poverty and food insecurity. This approach helps children to access food in unstable and challenging contexts, while equipping them with an education that can improve their own opportunities as well as enabling them to actively improve their community in future.

In 2022, the world grappled with dual food and educational crises.<sup>1</sup> Climate-related disasters and supply chain issues disrupted agriculture, intensified food distribution challenges, and worsened food crisis situations for many.<sup>2</sup> The intensifying global food crisis is hitting hardest in regions with existing high levels of food insecurity, which is the case in all our programme countries. In such contexts, the power of a daily meal served in a place of education can be transformative.



Despite the challenging conditions we faced in 2022 – we remained committed to feeding children within an educational setting, in line with our vision. **We fulfilled our promise by adapting our model and, through programme expansions and natural growth, ended the year reaching more than 2.4 million children in over 5,000 places of education.**



To better understand these successes, we focused on enhancing our impact assessment with strategic research and child-focused indicators. The 2022 Annual Impact Report provides an overview of data gathered from the ongoing monitoring of our work, as well as a particular focus on two important areas: expansions that allowed us to 'reach the next child', and the impact of a daily meal on early childhood development and education.

By streamlining our impact assessment with key child-focused indicators across our Programme Affiliates (Kenya, Liberia, Malawi, and Zambia), conducting early childhood education research with a specific lens on Kenya and Zambia, and researching pre/post-feeding impacts in expansion studies across four programmes, **we were able to provide a comprehensive view of the powerful impact of our programme on the children we reach and discover areas for future learning and development.**



# Our consistent delivery: an overview of 2022 key programme metrics

We know that we have the greatest impact when we can ensure a meal at school every school day. As such, a focus on consistent delivery of school meals is at the core of our work. Food sourcing and supply were challenging globally in 2022. Despite these issues impacting our work, we kept our promise to the communities we work with and maintained reliable delivery of the programme.

In 2022 (across our four Programme Affiliates and seven largest partner programmes),<sup>3</sup>

We successfully served meals over **85%** of school days.



The distribution of daily meals showed a balanced gender split, with **girls receiving 50.2%** and **boys receiving 49.8%** of meals respectively.

From 2021 to 2022, we saw a natural enrolment growth rate



in our existing schools.

The average monthly attendance rate was **86%**



# Child-focused indicators in existing schools

In 2022 we simplified the collection of key child-focused indicators across our four Programme Affiliates using surveys that incorporated child-friendly language and images. This approach was used to track our programme implementation and provide helpful knowledge as we strive for everyday programme excellence, as well as longer term programme innovation and decision-making. We found consistent positive impact in response to key child-specific indicators, including:

**83%** of children reported that they feel 'hungry' or 'very hungry' before the meal. This dropped to **3%** after the meal.

**96%** of children reported that they were able to concentrate 'well' or 'very well' after the meal.



<sup>3</sup> Includes data and results from across the four Programme Affiliates (Malawi, Kenya, Zambia and Liberia) and the seven largest partner programmes (Feedback Madagascar; MCSPA, Malawi; Mavambo, Zimbabwe; Diocese of Rumbek, South Sudan; Summits Education, Haiti; BND, Haiti; BREAD, India; all reaching more than 50,000 children with Mary's Meals)



## Early Childhood Education (ECE) research

In 2022 we completed research from ECE classes in both Kenya and Zambia, interviewing a total of 386 pre-school children, 389 household members, and 23 teachers.

Hunger and food insecurity were both high within households, particularly in Kenya.

When asked why their children do not eat breakfast at home before ECE,



90%

of respondents in Kenya stated that there is **no food to eat at home.**



of the children we spoke to in Kenya said that the school meal was the

**only meal they would eat that day.**

89% of householders in Kenya said their children eat breakfast up to only two school days a week with 45% of total householders in Kenya reporting their children 'never' eat breakfast at home before going to school.

Households in Kenya saw benefits beyond a reduction in hunger.

Following the implementation of school feeding in Kenya,



68%

of householders reported a **change in their child's health** including increased weight, happiness, energy, fewer illnesses, and improved general health.

Before the introduction of Mary's Meals,



22% of households **worried about their children eating enough** to stay healthy 'most days' or 'always', and after children started receiving a daily meal in school, that **reduced to only 4% of households worrying.**

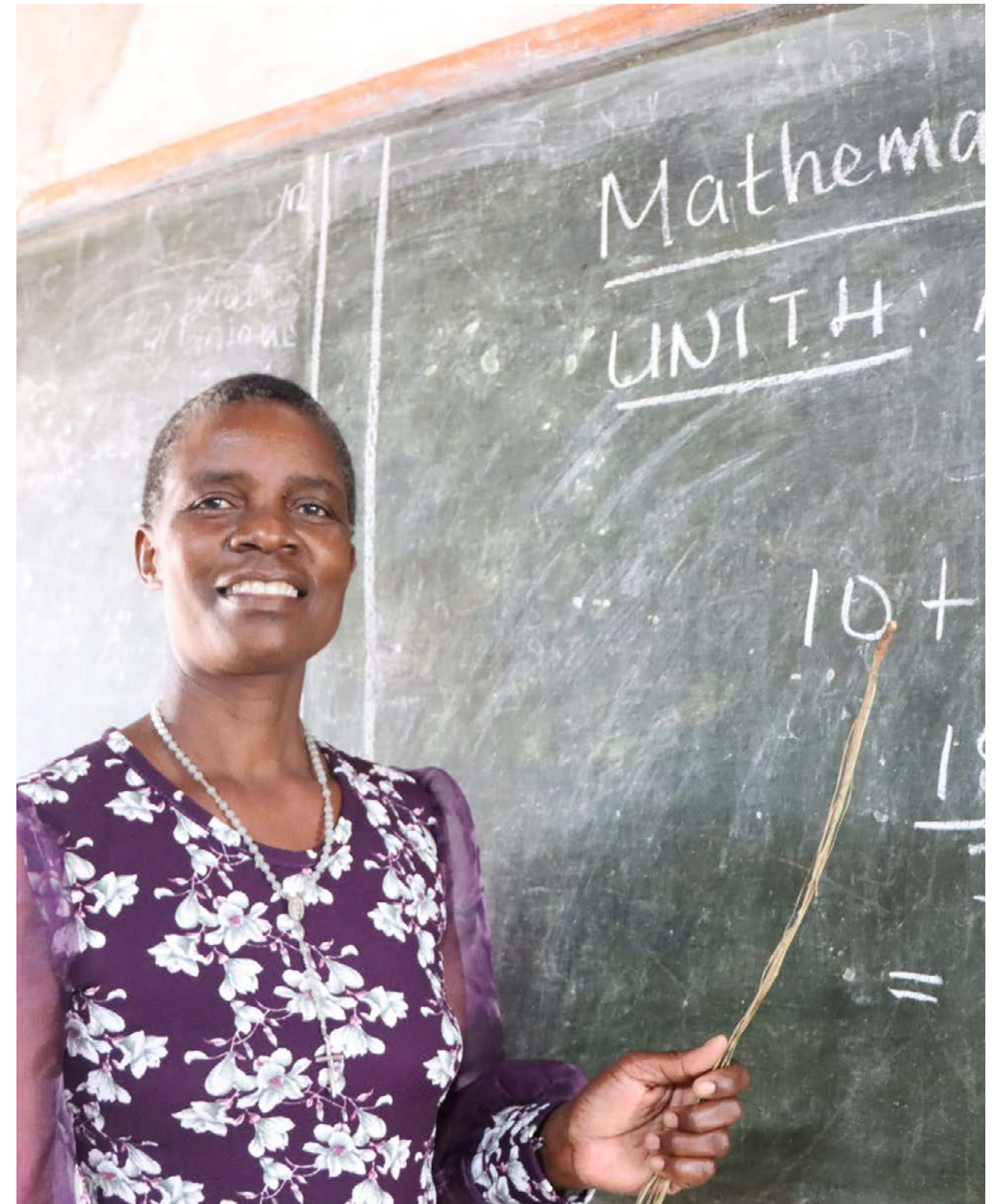
As one parent noted:

**"She looks healthier and strong."**

Caregiver, Kenya

## Our impact on reaching 'the next child'

At Mary's Meals, we know that there is a **powerful and immediate impact for children as a result of our school meal programmes.** During 2022, our Programme Affiliates and Partners implemented **expansions across 10 countries.** While keeping our promise to the children already receiving Mary's Meals, during 2022 we were able to **expand our global reach to serve tens of thousands of additional children every school day.**

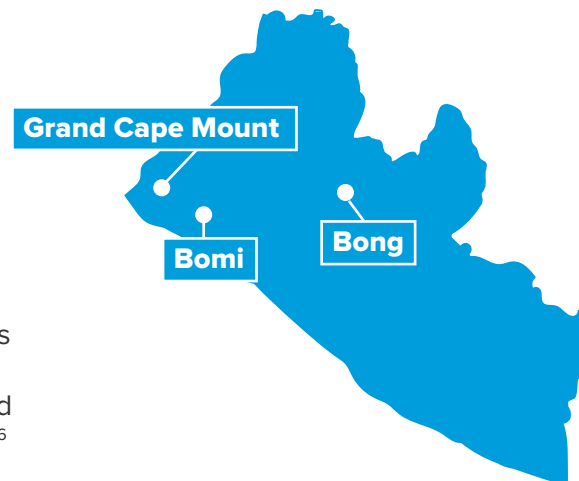




## Spotlight on 2022 expansions

### Liberia

In Liberia, with Mary's Meals Liberia (MML), we expanded to a further 71 new schools during 2022, reaching an additional 12,681 children in Bomi, Bong, and Grand Cape Mount regions. This is great news in a country that ranks 178 out of 191 countries and territories in the Human Development Index,<sup>4</sup> where 8% of the population is classified at 'Crisis'<sup>5</sup> level or above for food insecurity in the International Phase Classification (IPC).<sup>6</sup>

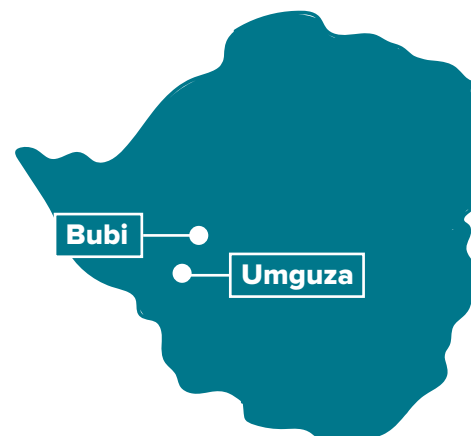


### Kenya

In Kenya, with Mary's Meals Kenya (MMK), we expanded to an additional 66,469 children across 171 schools in Turkana, a county classified at IPC 'Emergency' level of food insecurity with IPC Acute Malnutrition at 'Extremely Critical' and 'Critical' throughout the expansion area.<sup>7</sup> Prolonged drought (four consecutive failed rainy seasons) has also affected the county's crop production, livestock health, and household purchasing power.<sup>8</sup>

### Zimbabwe

In Zimbabwe and in partnership with The Organisation of Rural Associations for Progress (ORAP), we expanded an additional 45 schools and 14,042 children in the Umguza and Bubi districts. In Zimbabwe, 20% of the population is experiencing IPC 'Crisis' or worse levels of food insecurity driven mainly by high international food and crop input prices, and poor rainfall distribution reducing production of maize, the main staple.<sup>9</sup>



## Child-focused impact assessment

When undertaking expansions, we built in time to measure key indicators before feeding began as well as after the programme was implemented, to help us track how impactful and meaningful it is to continue reaching the next child.

In the three programmes highlighted opposite – Mary's Meals Kenya (MMK), Mary's Meals Liberia (MML), and ORAP, Zimbabwe – we conducted pre- and post-feeding surveys with more than 1,000 children to understand our impact.<sup>10</sup>

The child-centred surveys focused on hunger and educational outcomes, including access to education, and readiness to learn – a prerequisite to ensuring the children can receive an education and reach their full potential. Surveys were conducted approximately one month before and three months after feeding began.



8 <sup>4</sup> Liberia – HDI Ranking. <sup>5</sup> Global Report on Food Crises 2023. <sup>6</sup> Global Report on Food Crises 2023. <sup>7</sup> Global Report on Food Crises 2023. <sup>8</sup> Turkana County: Situation Report November 2022. <sup>9</sup> Global Report on Food Crises 2023. <sup>10</sup> Post-feeding surveys are still under way in Madagascar.



## Reducing hunger

Hunger can hinder a child's ability to concentrate, learn, and participate actively in the classroom. At Mary's Meals, the first priority is to ensure that children are not hungry at school. School feeding programmes aim to support a school environment where students are nourished and ready to engage fully in the learning process, fostering better educational outcomes.



Prior to implementing school feeding in Kenya, **74%** of children reported **being hungry at school**. In the post-expansion studies three months after the start of feeding, that dropped to **3%**.

We saw a similar trend in Liberia where we **identified a 54% decrease in children reporting to be 'very hungry' at school**, following the starting of feeding.

We were also able to verify (using our 2022 impact research along with community led focus group data collected in early 2023) that households with children attending schools where feeding is now taking place are in a position to **redistribute their household spending, enabling them to buy more food for the entire family**, and meet other needs.

As one parent noted:

**"Mary's Meals' school feeding programme is helping me and my family to ... cut back on expenses made on daily food. I am now able to spend money saved on household feeding cost to take care of school fees, health and other basic needs of my children and my home."**

**Mother, Liberia**



## Improving access to education

The global disruption to education caused by Covid-19 and exacerbated by inflation, war, and conflict, constitutes the worst education crisis on record.<sup>11</sup> Learning losses have been significant and inequitable; and the magnitude of the situation is yet to be fully understood. In many ways, the crisis has deepened existing inequalities, with those who were already marginalised being the least likely to be able to return to, re-enrol at, or access school.

Mary's Meals meets a child's immediate need for food and enables them to gain an education. School feeding plays a pivotal role in incentivising children to attend school, and in turn, increases enrolment across our programme schools. Our expansion research showed an increase in the number of children enrolling in education post-feeding.



It is noteworthy that, In Liberia, enrolment grew by **3,517 children** across the **71** expansion schools – an **increase of 28%**.

As one parent noted:

**"The school meal has encouraged students who were not in school to push their parents in ensuring that they are registered in school."**

**Caregiver, Liberia**



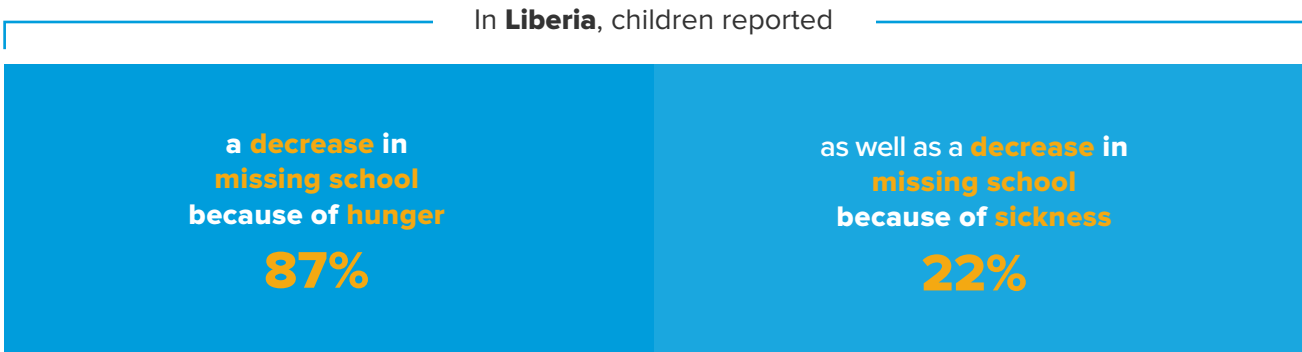
# Ensuring readiness to learn

The transformative power of school feeding programmes lies in the support of an enabling school environment that encourages readiness to learn, and, ultimately, progression through school to support children’s futures. UNICEF highlights that school readiness is the interaction between the child and the range of environmental and cultural experiences that maximise the development and educational outcomes for children (and their consequential readiness to learn).<sup>12</sup>

**Recent context-specific evidence suggests that, if a child arrived at school hungry once a week, they would lose 8.4 weeks of learning time (70% of a term) through their inability to concentrate, over the whole of their primary school life.**<sup>13</sup>

In the context of Mary’s Meals and when reflecting on ‘readiness to learn,’ we analyse and crosscut three key indicators, which encompass ensuring a child is present at school daily (attendance), that they stay in school for the duration of the school day (and don’t leave early) and that they are able to concentrate over the course of the full day. This way, we can ensure that we are **transparently demonstrating how ‘readiness to learn’ translates into improved achievement and a sustainable impact on the lives of children.**

We know that school feeding programmes can be an important motivator to attend school, and our expansions led to improvements in attendance rates across the programmes. We noted that **attendance increased by 4.3% in the 45 expansion schools in Zimbabwe, rising to an overall attendance rate of 91.2%.**



As one parent noted:

**“It makes my children physically fit to study well and play even at home after school hours.”**

Caregiver, Liberia

Not only did children attend more often, but they were also less likely to leave school early because they were hungry.




In addition to improving enrolment and attendance, school feeding programmes improve focus for the child while in their place of education. We know that worry about hunger disrupts concentration and hinders academic performance, and in Zimbabwe, post-feeding data showed 92% of children reporting that they never worry about being hungry while at school, an increase from 21% at baseline.

As one parent noted:

**“It gives my children hope to attend school daily without worrying about hunger in school.”**

Caregiver, Liberia

**Concentration in class**



Across three programmes (MML, MMK and ORAP), most students reported that they can **concentrate ‘well’** or **‘very well’** in class after the school feeding programme began, compared to baseline:

Country	Concentration levels	
	Baseline	Post-feeding programme
<b>Liberia</b>	<b>23%</b>	<b>68%</b>
<b>Kenya</b>	<b>34%</b>	<b>96%</b>
<b>Zimbabwe</b>	<b>64%</b>	<b>94%</b>

Placing children’s voices at the core of understanding our impact ensures that **children’s perspectives are heard**, and their feelings, beliefs, thoughts and attitudes can be **used to inform and direct programmatic decision-making** that affects the **children we are currently serving**, as well as **the next child.**





**Mary's Meals International Organisation**, Craig Lodge, Dalmally, Argyll, Scotland, PA33 1AR

Charity number: SC045223 Company number: SC488380