Mary's Meals – Teacher's notes

Good morning/good evening,

My name is _____ and I am a volunteer for the charity Mary's Meals. It is a privilege for me to share our work with you today.

Mary's Meals serves nutritious school meals to children in 16 countries, across Africa, Asia, the Middle East and Latin America.

This mission was inspired by the words of a child. On a visit to Malawi in 2002, during a period of famine, our founder Magnus MacFarlane-Barrow met 14-year-old Edward and his family. His mother, Emma, was dying of AIDS and was very worried about what the future held for her children. Magnus asked Edward about his own hopes for the future. His simple reply – that he would like to have enough food to eat, and to be able to go to school – had a powerful effect on Magnus, leading to the creation of our first community-led school feeding programmes in two primary schools in Malawi.

From this small seed, our work has grown incredibly over the last 24 years, and we are now working with communities across four continents to serve nutritious school meals to more than 3 million children. This mission is named in honour of Mary, the mother of Jesus, who knew what it was like to face challenges and raise a child in poverty.

Mary's Meals is based on a simple idea that works. By providing a daily meal in a place of education, children experiencing poverty and hunger are brought into the classroom, where they can receive vital nutrition and a basic education, which can provide the foundations for a route out of poverty. In schools where our meals are served, attendance and enrolment increase, hunger is reduced, levels of participation rise, and the children tell us they are happier.

The work of Mary's Meals is only possible thanks to our fantastic supporters who pray for our work, generously donate, and give their time to fundraise and raise awareness. Thank you to everyone present today who has supported Mary's Meals, even in a small way, for being part of our story.

As we look forward to celebrating the birth of Jesus, we are reminded to follow His example in helping those who are suffering. This Christmas, we have a bold vision – to fund 25 million school meals for children in areas of great need, through compassionate collective action. By feeding a child this Christmas, you can help

bring hope and joy to families facing relentless food insecurity. Let me tell you about one of those families.

Brenda attends Thunga Primary School in Malawi, which Mary's Meals has not yet reached. She and her siblings try to work hard in their classes, but the lack of food at home and at school makes this very difficult. She told us: "When I do not eat, I do not feel well. I struggle to see clearly on the board and I get stomach aches." Her brother, Bright, shared with us that they sometimes miss school. He said: "Searching for food can take up all your time, and before you realise it, days can pass without going back to school." He knows that missing out on education will damage his future prospects, but this is the reality when children are forced to choose between attending school and finding something to eat.

Mary's Meals is already serving nutritious school meals to more than 3 million children, helping them to concentrate on their education so they can fulfil their potential. Supporting our Christmas appeal will help us keep our promise to the children receiving Mary's Meals and reach more schools, like the one Brenda and Bright attend, giving more children a chance to build a brighter future.

As we prepare for Christmas, I invite you to join our Christmas appeal and help us spread hope to children and their families around the world. First, we ask for your prayers for our mission. From its inception, the mission of Mary's Meals has been built on a foundation of prayer, and we see the fruits of this in the daily impact of our work and the continued growth of our global community.

You can also support our work by making a donation to our Christmas appeal. The global average cost to provide a child with Mary's Meals for a whole school year is just €22 (EUR) / $25.20 (USD) / £19.15 (GBP). Even a small donation will make a big difference for a child, with each meal costing an average of 11c EUR / 13c USD / 10p GBP. You can help us reach our Christmas appeal target of 25 million meals by giving what you can to Mary's Meals today.

Include details of donation methods, such as donating via the Mary's Meals website, making a bank transfer, or using other available donation methods.

The Mary's Meals mission is powered by many thousands of fantastic volunteers. In our programme countries, local volunteers rise early in the morning to cook and serve meals for the children of their communities. Here and in over 20 countries around the world, we also have volunteers like me who help to raise awareness of our mission and encourage people to get involved.

There are many ways to help as a volunteer, so don't worry if public speaking isn't your idea of fun! If you would be interested in supporting children through volunteering, sharing our mission with others, or helping with fundraising activities, please speak to me after the presentation. There may be opportunities for your school or class to get involved and become part of our story.

Thank you to the headteacher/principal, teachers and all the school staff for welcoming us and giving us the opportunity to share the mission of Mary's Meals today. Thanks, also, to every one of you for listening to me speak about our work, and thank you for any way that you are able to support our mission.

I will leave you with the words of our founder, Magnus MacFarlane-Barrow:

"Mary's Meals is a series of lots of little acts of love. If you put all those acts of sacrifice together, it creates a beautiful thing."