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## Mary's Meals Advocates for Children's Rights as a Pathway to Achieving Social Justice

*Global school feeding charity leader says children should also have the right to hope.*

**Bloomfield, N.J. – February 18, 2025** – Thursday, February 20, is World Day of Social Justice as designated by the United Nations General Assembly. It emphasizes the importance of social justice and the shared responsibility in addressing global issues such as poverty, exclusion, unemployment, gender inequality, and human rights. Social justice forms an essential foundation for peace, equality, and sustainable development worldwide in line with the 17 U.N. Sustainable Development Goals that make up the global 2030 Agenda.

This year's theme, "*Empowering Inclusion: Bridging Gaps for Social Justice*," focuses on fostering equality and fairness by eliminating barriers that prevent people from accessing their rights, opportunities, or resources.

During the Vatican's first World Leaders Summit on Children's Rights earlier this month, [Mary's Meals](#) founder and CEO Magnus MacFarlane-Barrow [addressed](#) world leaders and humanitarians. There, he presented Mary's Meals' simple solution to child hunger and missing education for the 2.5 million children it serves every school day: feed children where they learn.

"Currently, 71 million children are missing school because of poverty and hunger. They are being robbed of their future—their physical growth often stunted, and their lack of education condemning them and their children to a life of poverty. In the last few years, after decades of progress, child hunger is on the rise in too many places across the world—driven by conflict, extreme weather and economic shocks," MacFarlane-Barrow stated.

For 23 years, Mary's Meals has worked alongside communities to deliver school feeding programs. By providing nutritious meals at school, these programs remove barriers to education, promoting inclusion and equality. The programs meet immediate food needs while supporting education that helps break the cycle of poverty and hunger, enabling children to thrive and reach their full potential.

In a world with abundant resources, a prolonged global hunger crisis and ongoing conflicts are increasing humanitarian needs and widening disparities in human rights and social justice. The World Food Programme estimates that [343 million people](#) face acute food insecurity, and UNESCO estimates that [250 million children](#) are out of school.

Vulnerable children and families often bear the impact of poverty and hunger. Noting the challenges children face, MacFarlane-Barrow added that children should be afforded, the "Right to Hope."

"School meal programs do not need to remain reliant on outside aid forever—in fact, by supporting the emergence of an educated young workforce, they play a key part in setting communities free from dependence on aid and creating economies that can eventually support their own provision of school meals," he said.

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## About Mary's Meals

Now in its 23<sup>rd</sup> year, Mary's Meals is a global movement that sets up school-feeding programs in some of the world's most vulnerable communities, where conflict, poverty and hunger often prevent children from gaining an education. Mary's Meals works with in-country volunteers and trusted partners to provide one daily nutritious meal in a place of learning to bring children into the classroom to receive an education. This simple solution to help end world hunger also enables children to lift themselves from the cycle of hunger and poverty.

Mary's Meals began by feeding 200 children in Malawi in 2002. Today, the organization feeds more than 2.4 million children every school day in more than 5,000 schools in the following countries: Benin, Ecuador, Ethiopia, Haiti, India, Kenya, Lebanon, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Mozambique, South Sudan, Syria, Yemen, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. Mary's Meals is part of the global School Meals Coalition, an emerging initiative of governments and partners to drive actions that can urgently reestablish, improve, and scale up food and education systems. For more information about Mary's Meals, visit [marysmealsusa.org](http://marysmealsusa.org).

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