

mary's
meals

V/HITESPACE



**A simple solution to
online donations**

By redesigning the Mary's Meals site we effectively fed a starving child for a whole school year for £1.71.



The Task

There are currently 59 million children who are not attending school because of poverty. Many more are attending school hungry and malnourished meaning they are unable to concentrate and learn. Mary's Meals is a charity that provides meals to children in places of education who are currently living in poverty.

Named after Mary, mother of Jesus, support has historically been from church groups, community groups and schools. However, the charity has witnessed an increased social media following and believes that online donating is an under utilised channel that could help deliver the significant funding required to meet the need's of the world's starving children.

Their vision is 'that every child receives one daily meal in their place of education'. This drove the challenge they set Whitespace to re-design their current website offering in order to grow and maximise this opportunity and help realise this vision.

The following paper sets out our strategic and creative approach, which resulted in the feeding of 45,000 additional children – equivalent to every child living in Aberdeenshire.



Help to ensure that every child receives one daily meal in their place of education

The Background

Mary's Meals is a charity set up around one simple idea that works. It is a global movement that sets up school feeding projects in some of the world's poorest communities, where poverty and hunger prevent children from gaining an education.

They provide one daily meal in a place of learning in order to attract chronically poor children into the classroom, where they receive an education that can, in the future, be their ladder out of poverty.

Mary's Meals started in 2002 when Magnus MacFarlane-Barrow visited Malawi during a famine and met a mother dying from AIDs. When Magnus asked her eldest son Edward what his dreams were in life, he replied simply: "I want to have enough food to eat and to go to school one day". In that first year, Mary's Meals fed 200 children in Malawi. Today they feed 1,101,206 children every school day across five continents, in countries including Malawi, Liberia, Kenya, Haiti, Uganda, South Sudan, Thailand and India.

The average worldwide cost for Mary's Meals to feed a child for a whole school year is just £12.20. Where Mary's Meals is provided, there is a rise in enrolment, attainment and attendance, and Mary's Meals policy is to use locally grown produce to support the local economy and help the wider population.

It is estimated that around 59 million children globally are missing school due to poverty. Instead of sitting in the classroom, they are working in fields, begging on street corners, or scavenging amongst garbage just to survive.



The Situation

Mary's Meals have a simple mission:

'to enable people to offer their money, goods, skills, time, or prayer, and through this involvement, provide the most effective help to those suffering the effects of extreme poverty in the world's poorest communities.'

To fully embrace the enabling aspect of this mission, people need to be able to engage and donate through whichever channel suits them best. With the ever increasing popularity and functionality of digital across every aspect of life, and the need to engage with a slightly younger audience, Mary's Meals identified the need to upgrade their online presence and capability.

The requirement is further strengthened by the need in the third sector for continued efficient and effective approaches than enable the maximum return on funds generated in order to ensure that the greatest amount goes to the cause instead of on administration functions. And lastly the proliferation of grass roots supporters means that new routes to market and channels need to be explored and offered in order to encourage and recruit a new generation of supporters and donors.

From a strategic perspective Mary's Meals set out a three-year growth plan which would see them investing in three main initiatives –

1. The daily feeding of a significantly greater number of children (at least 50%)
2. Strengthening the organisation
3. Growing the global movement

The site development project would help support all three objectives, however growing the global movement is where it has the potential to make the greatest impact. In particular, it was agreed that the site would be instrumental in –

- **Reaching new audiences with more compelling stories through a targeted and redesigned web presence**
- **Optimising interaction and engagement with donors and volunteers**
- **Replicating fundraising success in additional countries**

When the brief was set, the charity was feeding 19,179 children via £233,979.53 of online donations. Given the objective to feed an additional 50% of children over the three-year period, this equates to an average additional amount of **3,196 children** or £38,996 pounds in donations through the online channel. The challenge was set and we started to define our approach.



The Strategy

Digital offers the potential, more than other marketing channels, to meet supporters where they are. We needed to seize these opportunities to deliver the most relevant messages and calls to action to ultimately increase donations and support for Mary's Meals. Our guiding principle was to echo the simplicity of the charity idea itself, and therefore set out to make everything about the website simple. From the navigation to the messaging to the CTAs, we applied it across the board.

Every successful charity site has a strong case for support and inspires visitors to get involved. Rooted in Mary's Meals' brand guidelines and existing assets, we developed a creative concept that informed and inspired site visitors. Using interactive and rich media elements we clearly explained the Mary's Meals story and vision. We balanced this with clean and easy-to-use design assets that drove visitors along clear journeys to complete the key goals for the site. The key was to compel visitors to take action, to illustrate how easily they can bring about the transformation of children's situations and demonstrate how even the smallest of donations can make a significant impact for children and communities.

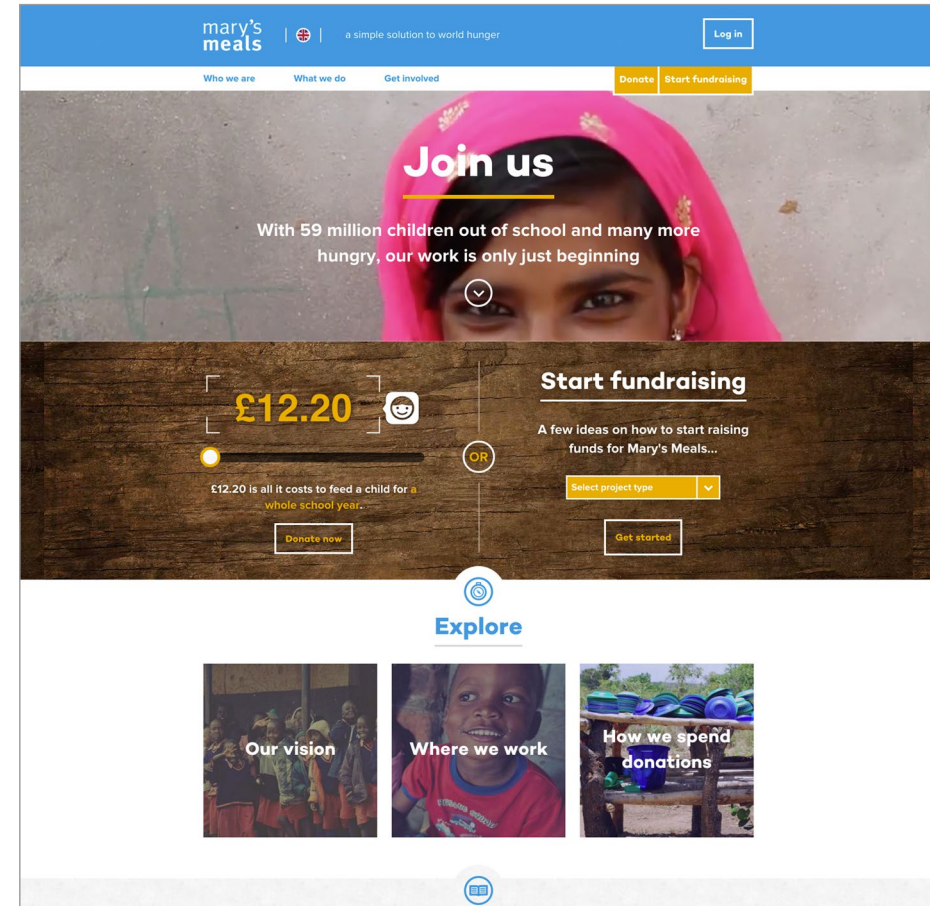
Mary's Meals is first and foremost about helping people, children in fact. This was a key insight for us and one, which we believed, needed to sit at the heart of the creative concept. We wanted the visuals to tell stories and put in context the children that needed help. Their website was static and copy heavy, with recessive visual content. Our solution was to make this the hero and encourage people to make an emotional connection between the potential donor and the children Mary's Meals feeds.

**By keeping the website simple, informing and inspiring,
we would help create an emotional connection.**

Before:



After:



We wanted this feeling of connection between potential donors and children to feel as tangible as possible by adding a human element to the user interface itself. The homepage slider was developed to give users a functional control with real, emotional feedback – by equating their financial donation directly to the number of children they'll feed. Should the slider be dragged to either extreme, the messaging changes itself to anticipate different user behaviour. Low donations remind users that they can donate their time or unwanted goods too, and high donations propose getting in touch about more formal philanthropy.

We also reinterpreted Mary's Meals' brand guidelines to feature rejuvenated colour, web-based typography and photographic treatments, alongside developing a playful new illustration style that meant that the children at the core of Mary's Meals' were never far from thought – even in areas without video or photography.

The design itself was a fully modular layout of horizontal strips, which may be reordered, hidden or replaced individually to allow each affiliate to play to the strengths of their local markets. This meant that the design truly embraced the global requirement in that it could be tailored for individual regions but still remaining under a consistent style and most importantly not requiring expensive versions for individual markets.

Mary's Meals originally asked for a means for users to name a specific school in their donation. However on seeing how successful JustGiving campaigns were, we proposed building a fully custom Fundraising Platform for Mary's Meals that would allow users to pick and sponsor schools (or just fundraise in general), without needing to give a service like JustGiving a cut of their donations.

We took that opportunity to address the niggles we've all had with online fundraising, by building a system with a user experience that rivalled any other fundraising service available online at the time. The Fundraising Platform necessitated its own donor and project database for which we built a custom dashboard interface from scratch, allowing Mary's Meals to view and import rich data on their donors and fundraisers into any third-party CRM system affiliates may use.

From a technical perspective the Fundraising Platform is incredibly flexible and can be adapted to any market by configuring languages, dialects, currencies and payment platforms to suit the needs of affiliates. It even includes an automated email service to alert or encourage users at key junctures in their fundraising journey.

As a result we have gone on to build 12 sites, using 12 languages, for key affiliate and supporter groups to raise funds and awareness of Mary's Meals around the world.

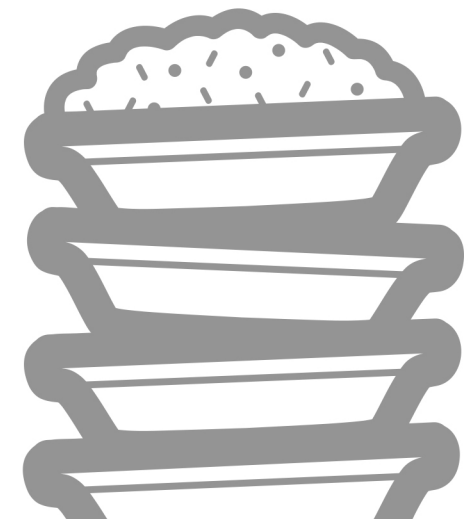
So in summary, we simplified the main navigation from eight options to three, we made it easier to make a donation by making the function clearer and more prominent, we made it easier for potential donors to emotionally connect with recipients by up-weighting the visual references and incorporating video and implemented a simple design style that communicated messages succinctly and allowed for regional markets to tailor content.

1. Keep it simple

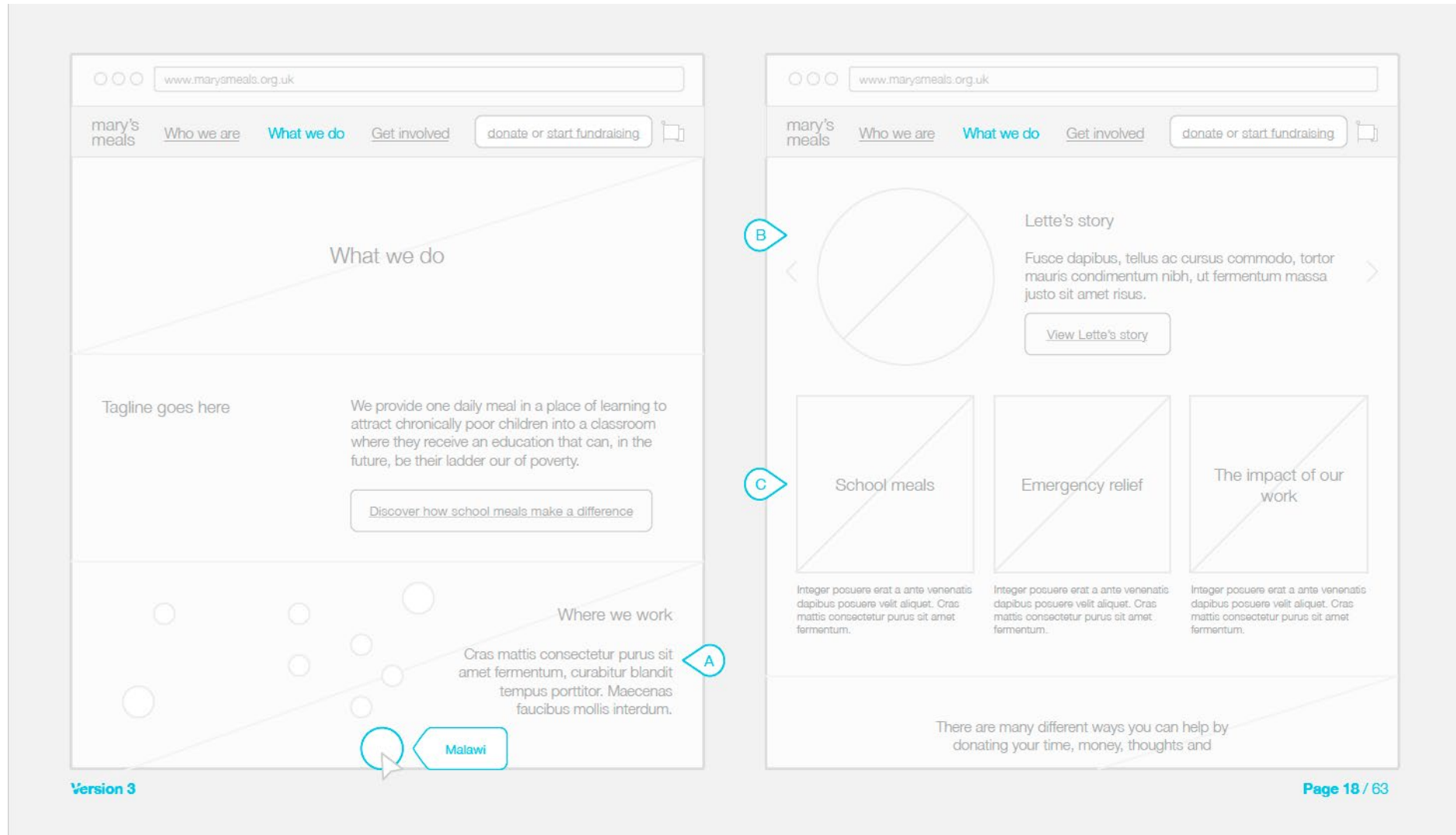
2. Make it easy

3. Create a connection

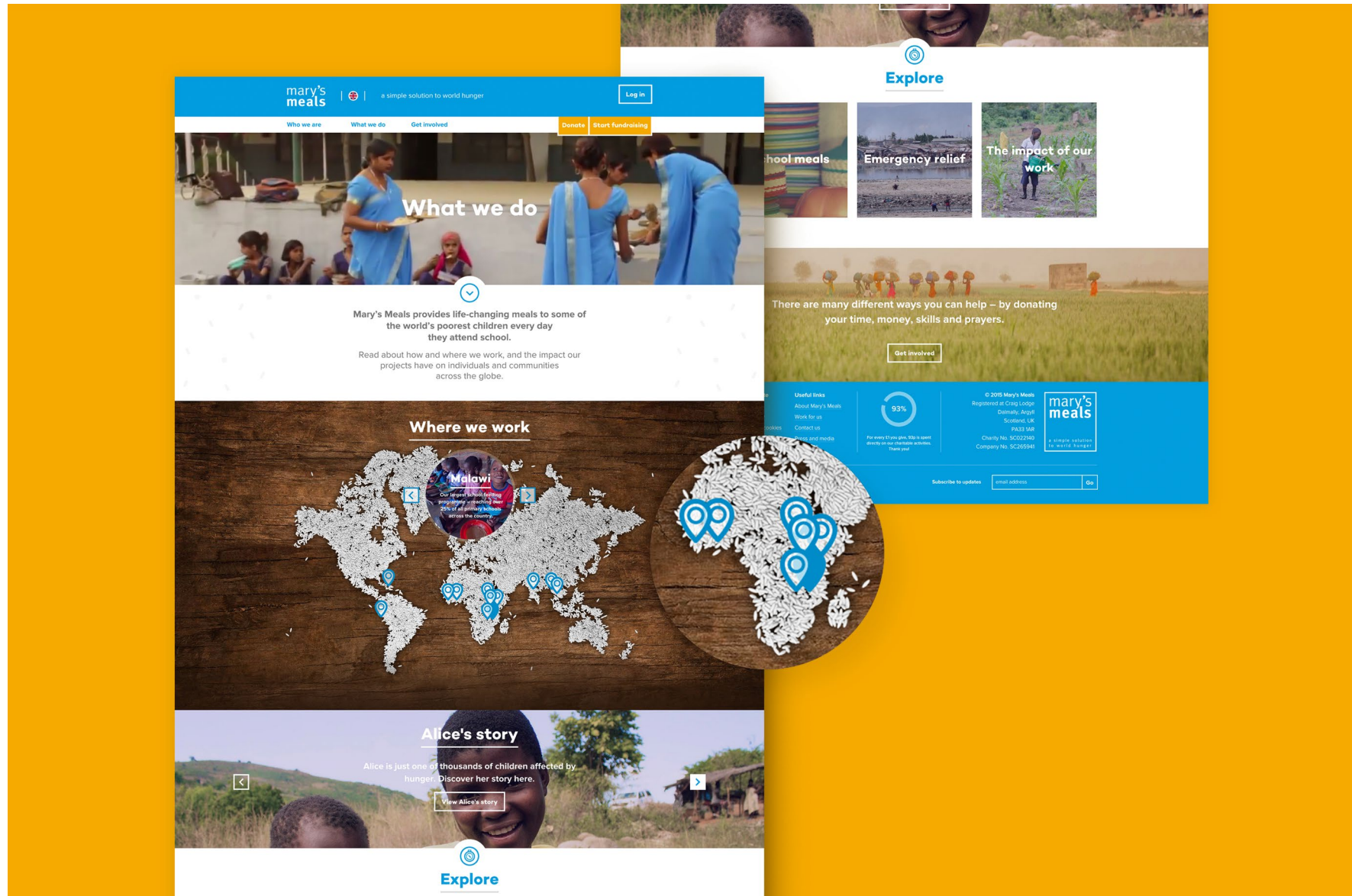
4. Communicate clearly



The Creative - Wireframe



The Creative - Website





What to pack



Eraser, ruler, sharpener, pencil case



- Notepad ●
- Pens, pencils, crayons ●
- Eraser, ruler, sharpener, pencil case ●
- Towel ●
- Shorts or skirt, t-shirt or dress ●
- Flip-flops or sandals ●
- Soap, toothbrush, toothpaste ●
- Small ball ●
- Spoon ●

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The Results

On top of this, the online donation results were phenomenal. The amount donated through the online channel increased YOY by a massive +245%.

We were keen to ensure that this was in isolation and down to the re-design of the site, so we have attempted to compare like for like, year on year and have checked with the client, who confirmed, that there was no significant difference between marketing spend in 2014 compared with 2015.

As a further measure, we looked at off-line donations levels since any brand led initiatives are likely to have an effect with off-line donations as well as online. In 2014 the total donated off-line was £5,291,175, which increased in 2015 to £8,809,456, effectively a 66.5% increase.

In comparison, online donations across the same period increased from £233,979.53 in 2014 to £807,706.59 in 2015. This is a massive +245% increase. We also doubled the contribution level that online plays in the overall levels of donations. In 2014 online contributed 4.2% of donations whereas by 2015 it was 8.4%, a significant fact giving the increased popularity of digital as a method of donating.

A fantastic result but put into a human context it is an extra 47,027 children fed for a whole year whilst attending school. The investment was £80,426, which gives us an **ROI, figure 1:7.1** meaning in effect we spent **£1.71** to generate the required £12.20 to feed a child for the whole year.

To express this another way, our target was an additional £38,995 based on the 50% increase in children fed over the three year period. Online donations grew £573,727.06 in one year equivalent to 1,471% increase!



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