



Director of Programme Development

Department: Programmes
Reporting line: Chief Programmes Officer
Contract type: Permanent

Working at Mary's Meals International:

Our mission, vision, and values are at the very heart of everything we do here at Mary's Meals and working for Mary's Meals International is so much more than a career opportunity, we offer the opportunity to support our global movement in a dynamic, flexible and inclusive environment with a real focus on personal and professional development.

We believe in the innate goodness and dignity of every person, respect the importance of family life, and are committed to being responsible stewards of the resources entrusted to us. In line with these values, Mary's Meals is fully committed to safeguarding and to creating an inclusive and welcoming environment. As an equal opportunity employer, we are committed to ensuring that all individuals are treated fairly and on merit, without discrimination of any kind.

Role purpose:

The Director of Programme Development is responsible for leading the strategic development, design and continuous improvement of Mary's Meals programmes globally, ensuring programmes are informed by evidence, aligned with organisational priorities and positioned to maximise impact for the children and communities we serve.

The role provides leadership to Programme Development teams and works closely with Programme Management, Programme Operations and implementing programmes to drive programme quality, learning, innovation and strategic growth. The postholder oversees programme development frameworks, policy, research, impact measurement, organisational learning and programme design, ensuring that lessons, evidence and emerging opportunities are translated into effective practice across the global movement.

Acting as a key strategic leader within Programmes, the postholder plays a central role in shaping organisational strategy through programme development insight, influencing future direction and supporting the achievement of Mary's Meals' global growth ambitions and strategy.

Key responsibilities & activities:

Strategic Leadership

- Lead the development and evolution of Mary's Meals' Programme Development strategy, ensuring alignment with organisational strategy, priorities and growth ambitions.
- Provide strategic leadership on programme design, quality, learning and development across the global movement.
- Lead transformational initiatives that strengthen programme effectiveness, sustainability, impact and reach.
- Contribute as a senior member of the Programmes leadership team, helping shape organisational direction and strategic priorities.
- Use evidence, learning and programme insights to influence organisational decision-making and future strategy.

Programme Strategy & Policy

- Oversee the development and implementation of programme development frameworks, strategies and policies across Programme Countries and Affiliates.

- Lead the development and implementation of country-level strategic plans, including government engagement plans, ensuring alignment with organisational priorities and the Who We Reach strategy.
- Ensure programme policies, standards and approaches are informed by evidence, best practice and organisational learning.
- Work collaboratively with Programme Management, Programme Operations and implementing programmes to ensure strategy and policy are effectively translated into practice.
- Lead or contribute to strategic organisational projects and initiatives relating to programme development and future programme growth.

Research, Learning & Evidence

- Lead the organisation's programmatic learning agenda, embedding a culture of evidence-based improvement, reflection and continuous learning.
- Champion the integration of research findings, impact evidence and lessons learned into programme policy, strategy and practice.
- Oversee programme-related research activities and ensure findings are effectively disseminated and applied across the organisation.
- Ensure learning and knowledge-sharing mechanisms support collaboration across Programme Countries, Affiliates and organisational functions.
- Promote the use of evidence and data to inform programme design, decision-making and strategic planning.

Programme Excellence, Innovation & Impact

- Oversee the development and continuous evolution of Mary's Meals' Theory of Change and associated programme quality frameworks.
- Identify, lead and support programme innovation opportunities, ensuring pilots and new approaches are effectively tested, evaluated and embedded where appropriate.
- Ensure programme development approaches reflect emerging best practice and support long-term programme quality and sustainability.
- Lead initiatives that strengthen programme effectiveness, scalability and learning across the movement.

Cross-Functional Leadership & Collaboration

- Act as a key strategic interface between Programmes and other organisational functions, ensuring alignment on programme development priorities.
- Work closely with Growth teams to support funding opportunities, donor engagement and strategic programme development initiatives.
- Collaborate with Programme Management and Programme Operations teams to ensure programme strategies, policies and development priorities are effectively implemented.
- Partner with safeguarding, finance, people and culture, communications and other organisational functions to ensure programme development work is integrated and aligned.
- Represent Programme Development within cross-organisational working groups, steering groups and strategic initiatives.

Government & External Relationships

- Build and maintain effective relationships with government stakeholders, research institutions, development partners and other external organisations.
- Support Programme Countries and Affiliates in developing strategic external partnerships that strengthen programme effectiveness and growth.
- Build and maintain effective relationships with government stakeholders, partners and external organisations in collaboration with Country Directors and programme leadership.
- Represent Mary's Meals externally in relevant forums, conferences, networks and stakeholder engagements.
- Promote Mary's Meals' programme development approach and contribute to thought leadership within the international development and school feeding sectors.

Additional information:

All MMI employees are expected to undertake the following general duties:

- Work within the framework of the Mary's Meals mission, vision and values.
- Work towards achieving department strategy, operational plans and objectives.
- Ensure familiarity with and adhere to all MMI policies and procedures whilst contributing to an inclusive and welcoming environment.
- Undertake and apply learning from appropriate training and development programmes.
- You may be required to travel to countries where Mary's Meals operates
- Understand and uphold the standards outlined in MMI's [Safeguarding Policy](#), acting with due care and attention to safeguard anyone that comes into contact with our work.
- Demonstrate behaviours that promote a safe culture and raise any safeguarding concerns immediately.
- Uphold the principles of Simplicity, Service and Stewardship ([3S](#)), alongside the standards outlined in our [Personal Conduct Policy](#), ensuring you act in a way that reflects our values and supports our mission.

Leading & Managing:

- As a leader at Mary's Meals, you are expected to consistently demonstrate the behaviours and standards set out in our [Way We Lead framework](#), modelling these in your day-to-day actions, decision-making and interactions.
- Provide strategic support, leadership and direction to a high performing team.
- Oversee the delivery, monitoring and reporting of progress made against team and department strategies and plans.
- Lead, develop, coach and inspire a high-performing team, promoting a culture of engagement and empowerment including identifying and implementing opportunities for delegation and development.
- Seek all opportunities for personal growth and development to support the aims of our organisational strategy.
- Role-model Mary's Meals values and leadership behaviours.
- Ensure MAP's and Development Conversations are in place for all direct reports.
- Ensure integration and collaboration between the different strands of the directorate.

Essential skills & experience required for this role:

- Strong commitment to Mary's Meals vision, mission and values.
- Significant strategic leadership experience within international development or a related sector.
- Proven experience leading programme development, design, quality improvement, learning or research functions in complex international contexts.
- Experience shaping organisational strategy through evidence, research and programme insight.
- Experience leading and developing high-performing, multicultural teams.
- Strong experience developing programme strategies, frameworks, policies and organisational approaches.
- Experience overseeing research, learning, monitoring, evaluation and impact measurement activities.
- Strong stakeholder management skills, with experience working across multiple functions and diverse international contexts.
- Excellent communication, influencing and relationship-building skills.
- Understanding of safeguarding, governance and compliance within international development programmes.

Desirable skills & experience required for this role:

- Experience working with governments and senior external stakeholders.
- Experience leading programme innovation, pilot initiatives and programme transformation projects.
- Strong understanding of evidence generation, research methodologies and learning systems.
- Familiarity with school feeding, education, nutrition or community-led development approaches.
- Experience contributing to organisational growth strategies and programme expansion.
- Strong understanding of safeguarding in international contexts, particularly child safeguarding.

Qualifications:

- Degree qualification in Social Sciences, International Development, Education, Public Policy or a related field, and preferably a relevant postgraduate qualification.

Changes to your role:

As our organisation evolves and grows, your job description may need to be reviewed and if appropriate, changed. These changes may be initiated by you or your manager but always in consultation with you and your job description may also be reviewed as part of your MAP process.