

Save the Children UK

Alumni Association - Centenary Newsletter



Most of you will know the story of how Eglantyne Jebb and her sister Dorothy Buxton launched the Save the Children Fund at the Royal Albert Hall on May 19th, 1919. There has been a welcome amount of recent historical research¹ into the achievements of both women, and in our own way we wish to honour them with this Newsletter.

This Centenary Newsletter has been assembled by alumni to tell some personal stories of their involvement through the years. All alumni registered with the association were asked to write something, and this is an unedited and idiosyncratic collection of a selection of their memories in their own words. Their own words – whether you agree or disagree – and all the more valuable for that. Some of the material is moving, some thought-provoking, some funny. There are also a couple of light-hearted competitions.

We hope you enjoy the stories that your fellow alumni have chosen to tell for this Newsletter. However, they are just a tiny sample of the accounts all of you could give of your experiences with Save the Children. We would like to make it possible for you to share these stories so that they are available to future generations; we made a great start with this at the Centenary Conference and we are currently in discussion with the organisation about ways in which we could build on this. There is already excellent work ongoing with the Save the Children archive at the University of Birmingham (see Mike Aaronson's post on the site). If any of you think this is a good idea and would like to contribute your stories and artefacts, please let us know. We shall keep you posted from our end.

We hope the sisters would have approved.

Born this Way – Lady Baba. Mark Bowden's memories of the 1970s and 80s

My first memory of Save the Children was in 1974 when I was recruited to be the field administrator for the advanced medical team that was being sent to respond to the famine in Ethiopia. My recruitment involved a visit to the Headquarters which was located in Queen Anne's Gate.

The Overseas Department was on a large room across most of the top floor and as I remember it, rather resembled a war time strategic planning or ops room, a large room with a

central table that was wreathed in clouds of cigarette smoke. The military style of décor was confirmed by a round of introductions to: Colonel Tony Hawkins (Overseas Director), Major Jerry Fonseca (Deputy Overseas Director) Eileen Watson ex WRAC and then in charge of personnel and someone who introduced himself as Corporal Cumber, who was later to become Director General of SCF, having just retired as Governor of the Cayman Islands.

¹ [Clare Mulley's biography](#) of Eglantyne has been reprinted to coincide with the centenary, a new [biography of Dorothy](#) by Peta Dunstan has just come out, and next year sees the publication of [Emily Baughan's history](#) of the first fifty years of Save the Children

My interview was somewhat cursory and seemed to revolve around a telephone conversation with my boss at the Ministry of Overseas Development to ascertain whether I was basically a 'good chap' that could be trusted not to run away with the £125,000 that would be entrusted to me to set up operations in Ethiopia. I passed the test, no doubt assisted by the fact that I had been recommended by John Seaman who was to lead the Advance Medical Team and held in high esteem by the Overseas Department.

These impressions would seem to confirm the views propounded by the historians at the centenary workshop. To paraphrase: a paternalistic, neo colonial, establishment organisation run by the military on military lines. It may have taken some time for the 'wind of change' to hit Save the Children Fund, but I believe that Save's response was very much an example of the wholesale change that would sweep across Save in late 1970's and 1980's. Much of the international relief operation in the 1974 Ethiopia famine was amateurish and involved doctors and nurses dropping into Ethiopia on a great adventure pursued by rat-pack journalists from the British tabloids.



A different sort of Rat in a different Ethiopian famine

I remember rescuing Max Hastings, now a very distinguished journalistic figure, from his overturned car on the Addis-Dessie road. As he uncoiled himself from the car, he shook my hand, saying 'Max Hastings, Evening Standard' and continued his journey with me to cover the famine from SCF's operation in Korem.

Save's response to the famine was very different from other organisations. The Advance Medical Team was far more analytical and undertook some ground-breaking work on the nature and causes of famine which were later to be taken up by Amartya Sen. The 1974 work in Ethiopia was the beginning of a new approach to relief and in particular to famine response which would be developed further in the 1980's and not only deeply influenced global thinking on food security but also led to the establishment of international standards of response as were developed in the Sphere project.

When I returned to SCF in 1979, Tony Hawkins had been replaced by Hugh Mackay, another Colonel, but I believe that Hugh was one of the few people that could really continue the change that SCF needed. Throughout the 1970's, Save the Children Field Directors were primarily recruited from the military, generally rumoured to be through the noticeboard of the Army and Navy Club. Part of the reason for this form of recruitment was that the candidates were already on military pensions and therefore willing to accept the low salaries that SCF offered at the time and were informally referred to as 'retreads' by what could be loosely termed a 'personnel department'.

I was recruited as Field Director for Bangladesh (although having been initially offered something in the Seychelles) and was part of Hugh's process of changing and professionalising SCF's operations. Hugh understood the weaknesses of the military approach and a number of the more eccentric Field Directors were moved out. Hugh did a great deal more in terms of modernising SCF apart from its field operations. He recognised the need for policy and technical support which he introduced into the Overseas Department.

Much of the nature, direction and the character of SCF up until the late 1980s came from its Committee structure and its very distinctive membership. The composition and

the influence of SCF's various committees will have confirmed the historian's critical views of the organisation. However, they sought to provide a level of accountability and representation of SCF's UK membership that has been lost and appears lacking in more recent versions of Save's Board. They also provided me with some of the more fascinating times in SCF.

Apart from the Council, there were four other subsidiary committees: Finance, Branches, UK and Overseas Relief and Welfare. It was the Overseas, Relief and Welfare committee (later renamed the Overseas Committee) with which we in the Overseas Department engaged. The membership of the Overseas committee consisted almost entirely of women, many of whom were titled, or the spouses of senior establishment figures and were able to travel independently to visit programmes. Along with a regular monthly meeting in which specific country programmes were scrutinised and budgets approved, the Overseas committee also wanted to oversee the recruitment of all field staff.

Many staff will remember that all employment interviews would have to take place with an overseas committee member present. This rule was only slightly relaxed during the Horn of Africa crisis when we recruited 200 plus staff within a few months. We usually only had two or three regular committee members to draw on in the interview process of whom Lady Alexandra Metcalfe was the most prominent.



Lady Alexandra Metcalfe, known to most of us within the Fund as 'Lady A' and to her intimate circle as Baba Metcalfe was the youngest daughter of Lord Curzon, the Viceroy of India. In the 1930s she was a great socialite and according to her biography was associated with Mosley and Lord Halifax amongst others. She married Edward 'Fruity' Metcalfe who became equerry to Edward VIII. She and her husband were the witnesses to Edward's marriage to Wallis Simpson. She was introduced to SCF in the 1950s by her great friend Edwina Mountbatten at the time President of the Council. She was a longstanding chair of the Overseas Committee but by the time, I joined SCF, she had stood down as chair but remained extremely active. An obituary written by one of her friends described her thus: *'Baba Metcalfe's intimidating imperiousness mellowed in old age. She loved gossip and her unquenchable interest in people made her the best of companions. There was almost no place she had not seen or person of interest or importance she had not known. When I lunched with her last week in London, with the temperature near the nineties, Baba was as cool, beautiful and immaculately dressed as ever. The term grande dame might have been invented for her.'*



Lady A with the Dalai Lama

I provide this brief background to paint a picture of what it was like to spend time with Lady A. I spent most time with her on various staff interviews all of which were memorable,

but one stands out in particular. Barbara Mildenhall, Lady A and I were interviewing for nutritionists to go to Darfur. The first candidate was swiftly rejected by Lady A on the grounds that his experience of working to turn grass into edible human protein was probably not the right background to address food security issues in Darfur. The second candidate was working at Kew. Lady A seemed to sense that she had an issue with this candidate and questioned her intently. The first questions concerned the candidate's ability to cope with the heat in Darfur. Lady A continuously referred to the fact that unlike Kew there would be no respite from the heat by 'stepping out of the greenhouse'. After much relentless questioning, the candidate replied. 'I will be alright because the Lord, my redeemer will be with me.' To which Lady A, representing her establishment values, responded by asking the candidate whether she was a member of the Church of England and suggesting that the Lord was rather too busy to deal with individual cases. There were times when we questioned the value of having committee members involved in interviews



While Lady A was most interested in Tibet and the SCF programme in Ladakh, Peter Poore and

Did we make a difference? Some thoughts from Peter Poore delivered at the Centenary Conference

I worked for Save the Children for 17 years and left in 2000. My knowledge of the organisation today is limited.

Memory is unreliable and selective, especially of complex and emotional events in the past. For aid agencies there are the additional complexities of a funding, and media frenzy, where everyone wants to be a part of the

I also travelled with her on a trip to Zanzibar. One evening we walked along the beach. Lady A now in her late 70's had clearly been an outstanding beauty and was wearing an elegant, diaphanous cover over her bathing costume and looking extremely elegant. Peter was explaining to us as to how to respond in case we trod on a sea urchin. Apparently, according to Peter, uric acid is the best response. Lady A demonstrated a rather earthy sense of humour by saying to Peter that she was not best equipped to deal with the situation and if she did step on a sea urchin 'could you do the honours for me?'

While members of the Overseas Committee such as Lady A represented establishment values, attitudes and sometimes prejudice, they also contributed a great deal in terms of access, in maintaining the independence of the organisation and at times protesting volubly and effectively against perceived injustice.

Lady A would without hesitation call Mrs Gandhi when she was Prime Minister of India, who would meekly concede to Lady A's requests. Similarly, Lord Carrington as Foreign Secretary would regularly be lobbied by Lady A over policy issues of concern to SCF and take her concerns seriously. No history of Save the Children would be complete without an examination of the evolution of its governance structures and the individuals who were a part of its governance. The nature and character of the organisation has been shaped as much by its governance structures or lack of them as by its staff.

solution, whilst avoiding the risks of being part of the problem through poor coordination, poor understanding of the context, inadequate resources and skills.



Doctors at Large – Drs Poore and Seaman at the recent Centenary Conference. (Sitting just behind them are centenary newsletter contributors Mark Bowden and Angela Penrose)

The importance of an archive is clear from our recollections. However, archive material is also selective, both in their authorship and in their selection. At the same time, anyone who has undertaken formal evaluations, for any agency, will know that any criticism, however constructive is usually rejected or at least left out! In any event, 'learning from history' hasn't a particularly good record!

In the often chaotic environment of an emergency there is a need for a dispassionate approach based on a set of basic principles and practice, thought through and adhered to, according to competencies, availability of funds and specific knowledge.

My memory is of an organisation which had clear competencies, a strong management system at home and abroad, able to make quick decisions, with an independent funding source with clear policies and practice.

I'm on this Centenary Conference panel, because my role with SCF was to address the longer-term emergency of vaccine preventable infectious disease, which incidentally was killing more children than than all the natural and man-made disasters put together. This project offered much insight into what worked and what didn't in health care delivery. I visited all of SC's programmes many times during my time, including all of the emergencies during the last two decades of the 1900s. This afforded me the rare privilege of being able to

² Here is the full Alma Ata report from Unicef https://www.unicef.org/about/history/files/Alma_Atta_conference_1978_report.pdf

meet Ministers in capital cities, families in the remotest villages, as well as representatives of the UN agencies involved and other NGOs. We were able to share this experience widely and had the ear of those working towards Universal Primary Health Care (PHC.)

Three events should be recalled which are relevant to SCF's approach.

- (i) Small pox was eradicated in 1976 and the world was looking for another disease to eradicate.
- ii) The Alma Ata Declaration on Primary Health Care (PHC) in 1978 acknowledged that 'health' meant far more than just 'health care'². It included safe water, sanitation, 'health care', including immunisation, education, and food security. As such it was as much a political Declaration as a way to address inequity worldwide. It stated clearly that PHC would fail unless it took place within a process of socio-economic development. It did (fail) where there was insufficient socio-economic development. (The impact of major disasters is always worse in those areas of the world where socio-economic development is weak.)



PHC/WHO
The International Conference on Primary Health Care at the Lenin Convention Center in Alma-Ata in September 1978.

- (iii) The Stop Polio initiative from SCF in 1979 was developed to immunise children against all 6 diseases, included in the WHO Expanded Programme on Immunisation, EPI. SCF's approach used Polio as the way to understand the complexities of establishing systems to allow for the delivery of vaccines in any context.

SCF enjoyed the trust of governments in many countries through their past work in disaster planning and prediction. This allowed us to reach the parts of health systems that others could not! A detailed and sensitive knowledge of all of the links in the chain of delivery built a strong comprehension of what would work and what wouldn't and why.



A Save the Children nurse vaccinates a child against polio

Access to government officials, UN agencies and others, as well as opportunities to speak and teach in influential fora ensured that we had a useful advocacy role. In my case, this

Problems with large mammals - Wendy Fenton

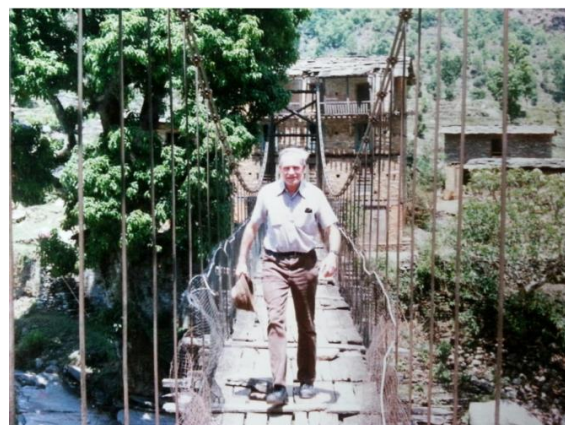
I was the Save the Children UK Deputy Field Director in Darfur during 1985-86. We were running a major emergency food aid distribution programme in Darfur which included setting up and servicing Um Bala refugee camp (Chadians) in the west. Radio and telex were our main means of communication with Khartoum with occasional telephone calls when lines were working. One afternoon, our radio operator, Youssif el Tayeb El Nour, (who is now the Executive Director of the Darfur Relief and Rehabilitation Agency) came to me with the following radiomessage: 'Huge monkey arriving on next plane.' Youssif and I looked at each other. 'Is this from Chris Eldridge (the Country Director in Khartoum)?' I said. Chris was notorious for sending what he considered to be humorous radio messages. Youssif wasn't sure as the radio transmission had been crackly and unclear. I sighed heavily and said, 'Well, let's go to the airport and see what turns up.' We drove to the Nyala airport and waited 20

culminated in my representing the British government at the G7 meeting in Okinawa in 2001 talking about our experience of the delivery of effective health care, and particularly the problems that remained to be solved.

Did we make a difference? I'm sure we did in much of our emergency work as well as our work in training health care workers especially. Were there any unforeseen consequences? I'm sure there were. The problem of attribution of action and effect was acknowledged by SCF at the time and we need to be honest in accepting this.

The role of an NGO should, in my view, be to offer something new in the understanding of the reality of lives led by those in poor environments. For example, careful surveillance and listening to those affected can predict some emergencies, allowing for preparation to prevent or at least mitigate impact and strengthen resilience.

minutes for the plane to arrive. The plane landed and passengers began disembarking and goods were unloaded. We asked the pilot whether he had any 'unusual' cargo on the plane. He started to respond when I heard my name being called. I turned around to see our 'huge monkey' at the top of the steps. It was Hugh Mackay, the Save the Children Fund's Overseas Director.



A huge monkey visiting Save the Children projects in Nepal, April 1988

What was their name?

18 faces from 1991. How many can you recall?



If you can get more than ten, please send your answer to Leonie@SCUKAlumni.org. We will publish the names of everyone and the name of the person who got most in the next newsletter

Short-tempered Short. A memory from Angela Penrose ...

Selecting one memory to write about has proved very difficult, as Save The Children provided such a wealth, mainly of wonderful people explaining their work to me in many different countries, as we travelled over potholed roads in rocking vehicles, or sat in an open boat for hours on the Mekong, to visit inspiring programmes.



(Angela with Cambodian national staff in the 1990s)

This particular recollection illustrates the dangers confronting Policy Directors nearer to home. In October 1997 the Oslo International Conference on Child Labour was convened by the ILO and UNICEF to look at the role of development and international cooperation in eliminating child labour.

The Save The Children Alliance had organised a meeting for children on the side and were doing their best to ensure children's views were fully represented. On the first day I was

invited to a lunch hosted by the UK Ambassador to Norway; I was chatting to him and a few other guests when Clare Short, Secretary of State for Development, entered the room. She approached the Ambassador who was putting out his hand to greet her, but on seeing my name badge she began thumping me on the chest, saying 'Don't you ever do that again!'

What had I done? It appeared that the Save the Children UK Press Office had succeeded in placing a pre-recorded statement I had made on child labour in the BBC morning news bulletins covering the conference. According to the current estimates, there were over 250 million children between the ages of 5 and 14 in work around the world at that time, many of them at risk from hazardous and intolerable forms of labour.

Save the Children obviously shared the growing concern but they had become aware that precipitate attempts to stop child labour could have unforeseen consequences. There had been moves in the United States to ban the import from Bangladesh of any products involving child labour. That had led to many children, mainly girls, from extremely poor families being thrown on to the street and becoming beggars, and sometimes becoming involved in child prostitution. Certainly not going to school.

The case of children stitching footballs in Sialkot, in Pakistan, which were then used in League and international matches had become a particularly controversial issue in the UK.



Save The Children believed that proposals to ban children from stitching footballs were based on a limited understanding of their lives. Rapidly phasing out children's involvement in football stitching before alternatives and adequate educational opportunities were in place could result in children becoming involved in more hazardous forms of work.

Working with programmes and partners Save the Children had developed a position on children and work, based on the UNCRC, which stated that, whereas the eradication of hazardous and exploitative forms of work was a priority for action, it was also essential to consult children and that all action affecting children must be in their best interests. In the garment industry in Bangladesh and the football stitching in Sialkot the voices of child workers and their families had been drowned out by the international noise.

Rwanda to the Taliban - memories from the poultry farmer Shon Campbell

1994 - coming into Bukavu soon after the Rwandan genocide from Kigali and I was met by my English colleagues at the notoriously difficult border checkpoint with the heavily armed Zairean guards demanding that every item be opened, rifled through and requested that it be left for them.

I'd been dreading this legendary set of difficulties but one English colleague sat with

The ILO and the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) took an unequivocal line; no nuances. At the lunch I was seated on Clare Short's left and the representative of the ICFTU on her right. She invited me to explain our position whilst the ICFTU representative continued to argue that all child labour must be banned immediately.

'I'm going to bang your heads together,' said Clare Short, and she did. Putting an arm round my neck and an arm round his she brought our heads together across her bosom somewhat to the bemusement of the Ambassador and his guests around the table.

To her credit Clare Short, despite her suspicion of child participation, completely understood that boycotts or over-night exclusion of children from industries could drive the children into worse exploitation and DFID went on to fund a Save The Children social protection programme in Sialkot so that by the end of following year when children were stopped from working in the football stitching industry, they were not forced into more hazardous and exploitative work and their families were developing alternative sources of income.

The model developed in Sialkot was then adapted and applied in other provinces, focusing on removing and protecting children from more intolerable forms of work which were less susceptible to pressure from international consumers. Debate on this issue continues; looking back I still think our position had a lot to recommend it.

the guards and proceeded to chat. The other pulled me aside and explained that the strategy was to basically bore them to the point where they lost interest. Our colleague however went one better and bored them to the point where they begged him to leave and take us with him as he was evidently preventing them from business with others!



before the Taliban arrive in Northern Afghanistan

1997 - trying to set up our first satellite phone, looking much like a small laptop, in northern Afghanistan as our only means of outside communication. Despite following all instructions to the letter and regardless of the number dialled, I continued to connect through to the same man who I assumed was sequestered away, high above the earth, in a satellite somewhere, with a very strong American accent. On the seventh or eighth call, it became clear that whoever had carefully packed the satphone had neglected to set up the phone card. With Taliban coming closer, I explained that I was calling his satellite from northern Afghanistan and begged the satellite chappie to make just one call to Save the Children Fund in London to alert them to set up the phone. He requested that I repeat the name of the organisation and then, with evident confusion, asked me to confirm one last time that he should call *Save the Chicken Farm* in London...

To his huge credit - he made the call, we were connected and able to communicate as the conflict closed in. All appeared to be going swimmingly until I set it up in the garden (needing as clear a link with the satellite as possible), and burned a large hole in the grass with a relatively short call. After that, my phone usage could be tracked by the burnt squares around the garden. I explained to the staff that, walking in front of this was surely going to affect their future children and they all gave it a very wide berth.



Relics of earlier conflicts

These were the early days of the Taliban and I was at the time the only female head of mission in northern Afghanistan. I requested an audience with the Taliban to discuss options for bringing our female staff back to the office in such a way that they would be fully separated from the male staff members. To my surprise this was granted and I arrived at a meeting with my bemused translator to find 10 or so Taliban 'government ministers' around the table. In good Pashtun tradition, they sat with their eyes downcast, not being allowed to look at any woman from outside their family, but the temptation was too great and it frequently caught one or another peeping.

Finally it was agreed that the Minister of Religious Affairs would visit the office and decide whether it was an appropriate place for Save the Children's female staff. I dressed in my layers of black and veil with all skin covered other than my face and welcomed them into the compound, insisting that the Kalashnikovs remain outside. One Talib was left outside with a stack of weapons, looking rather sullen at the realisation that he would miss the novelty of following this strange foreign creature into Save the Children's office.

That sorted, we began with the gates .. one for the men and one for the women. Their initial concern was that the male guard would see the women, but the Taliban finally decided that may be Ok given his very advanced age and his eyes being so severely crossed that he possibly saw little of anything. We ventured on

for green tea, small talk and sweets with the heavily turbaned Minister doing his best to hide what was clearly fascination at first discussion with any woman from outside his family. Formalities over, we moved on to the closed door and airlock of sorts we had set up to separate the sections for men and women. Here I repositioned my veil and announced that only I could pass through this the door through to the women's section, ensuring compliance with all the Taliban requirements. To the huge amusement of the contingent of male Save the Children staff waiting in every word, the Taliban Minister, evidently confused, sputtered incredulously .. 'But you, you're almost a man! You can't go into the women's section'. Battle lost....

Despite the very difficult circumstances, our courageous Save the Children team in Mazar-i-Sharif went on to find ways to reach and improve the lives of women and children. A number of our female staff, no longer able to

work or leave their houses, sought refuge in Pakistan where they could work in our health education project with the refugee population. Back in Mazar-i-Sharif, we set up projects training Taliban and others on children's needs and obligations (child rights), on health in particularly disadvantaged areas of the city, and provided support in emergencies. Our Afghan staff remained hugely committed, courageous and dedicated - truly admirable.

When I left in 2001, the Taliban Minister of Health with whose agreement we had started health activities (these in themselves developed in a series of surreal discussions in his hospital room during the dressing of his recently amputated leg after taking a short furlough from his job as Minister of Health to join the fighting in the west), showed me the rose he had planted in my and Save the Children's honour in the hospital ground, and promised a quick visa whenever I wanted to visit.

Centenary Caption Competition



Mike at the London Alumni reunion in January 2019

Professor Sir Michael Aaronson, Director General of Save the Children UK from 1995 to 2005, demonstrating the wisdom of Don Lockwood's aphorism in *Singin' in the Rain* 'Dignity, Always Dignity'.

What we want to know from you though is what you think the young lady behind Mike wants to say about him or to him. Please send your one-liner to Leonie@SCUKAlumni.org. We will publish the best responses in our next newsletter – the prize for the winner is the knowledge that they've made the alumni laugh!

A national perspective from Hussein Mursal

As someone who was lucky enough to have had a career spanning more than two decades with such great organisation as Save the Children, I thought I will share with you some of my reflections which for me defined the job satisfaction I received during my time there.

Normally, anniversaries are a good moment to take stock, to analyse and reflect on the values and politics that led to the founding of the movement and its evolution over time in response to both internal and external factors. So, I am sure that much has been written

about the history of Save the Children and the humanitarian sector by more qualified academic and research institutions. As such, my contribution will reflect on just one aspect, which is the emergence of the influence of national staff in shaping the direction of Save the Children and its evolution from a country centric organisation³ to a global one (Save the Children International) with a voice that brought the debate on the plight of children consistently into the international agenda and forums.

Most of Save the Children offices were located in the regions of the Northern Hemisphere⁴ and it was not until the turn of the century and the emergence of Save the Children International where there are now strong Save the Children bases in the Southern Hemisphere such as India, South Africa, Brazil and others.

Skill Sharing –Evolution of the Role of National Staff

So, how much the increase of influence from national staff played a role into the globalisation of the Movement?

In the eighties, the role of national staff⁵ was limited to being a good source of information and to facilitate access to the communities and sometimes to the local authorities. The rest, such as decisions on programming, resource distribution and service coverage were left for the internationally recruited staff. This was at a time where many organisations took the ‘Charity’ approach, where the narrative was more on ‘we do what we can and where we can’ to help those unfortunate.

In the nineties, especially in the wake of the adoption of the Convention of Rights of Children (CRC), that was based on the draft text Eglantyne Jebb submitted to League of Nations and with record number of countries

signing and rectifying the Convention, an internal debate has started within Save the Children UK (SCUK) in how to shift the focus from what was then known as ‘good programming’ to a genuine ‘Child Rights Programming’⁶ and talk more about obligations as duty bearers to make the global adoption of Rights of Children a reality.



As a member of national staff in Hiiraan, Somalia 1985

Due to the Universality and divisibility of rights, selecting to address one or two sets of rights only, came with moral dilemma as addressing the rights of children holistically needed building constituencies to forge multisectoral partnership, mobilise civil societies and support the ‘duty bearers’ to deliver for children. The first step to this approach was to have a full picture of the situation of the rights of the children in every context, identify gaps and jointly with other partners, along with the ‘duty bearers’ and create an environment where every child will be able exercise his/her rights. Therefore, knowledge of the local context on where we are working became crucial and it was acknowledged that the more national staff are involved in this exercise, the better quality the data will be.

I believe that this was one of the triggers that brought the national staff on board as they would have better knowledge of the local context. As such, SCUK, along with other Scandinavian SC offices started a robust

³Country centric such as SC UK, US, Norway etc

⁴ Northern Hemisphere in this paper include nationals from Australia, Canada, Europe, New Zealand and US

⁵ Sometimes known as local staff, but for the purpose of this piece, I will use the national staff

⁶ Literature on Child Rights Programming is available in the website www.savethechildren.org.uk

programme of training and capacity building to enhance the knowledge and the skills of Child Rights Programming to all staff.

How Senior can National Staff be in the hierarchy?



As Country director, Nigeria 2010 – dressed in white

By mid-nineties, more national staff were joining the senior management teams to contribute to the programme; and sometimes to the policy development of the organisational strategies.

However; we have to note that Save the Children was a late bloomer when it came to attracting national staff from the Southern Hemisphere to a very senior position, especially for the most coveted post of Country Director (CD) in international programmes until the turn of the century.

I was honored to have served in the post for nearly a decade in four high profile countries

Mike Aaronson explains how he tried to find his inner piece...

It's really hard to single out a special memory from my time at Save the Children, as there were so many of them! However, this was definitely one of the most memorable moments. The photo is from 19 July 2000 and shows the SC UK team with the UN Secretary General, Kofi Annan in his office on the 38th floor of UN Headquarters in New York.

We are showing him one of the pieces of a giant jigsaw assembled by children in the UK from portrait photos of some 25,000 of our supporters who had signed our 'Portrait

and it was really the best time span of my career. This post allowed one to be actively part of the policy development of the organisation. For example, I had the opportunity to be part of the process in the different phases of the transformation of the organisation from the old country specific Save the Children to the current SC international (from consolidation, to unified presence, to a one-Save the Children and finally to the current SC International).

Since then, the number of CDs from the Southern Hemisphere regions increased albeit continuing the male dominance and it seems that we are still struggling to attract more female candidates to the position.

The Future is bright

I know that there are initiatives already in place to improve on this record and I hope that current leaders in the organisation will continue their effort and set targets for attracting more female candidates to the Country Director position.

In conclusion, I believe that with the establishment of Save the Children International, there is the forum, the opportunity, the will and the resources to make this organisation globally more diverse and inclusive.



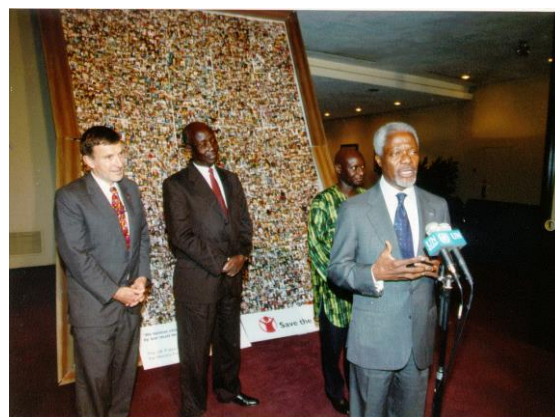
Pledge' as part of our 'Forgotten Children' campaign to raise awareness of the world's 20 million children displaced from their homes,

mainly by armed conflict. We decided to take this to New York to coincide with the Economic and Social Council Humanitarian Segment, which was discussing the situation of internally displaced persons, including children, and also a Security Council debate, scheduled for 26 July, on children and armed conflict. Our aim was to raise awareness of the plight of children displaced by conflict, especially those stuck within their own country and therefore not qualifying for refugee status.

We had taken the giant portrait (so tall that we could only show it on an easel in exceptionally high rooms – in London we had had to use the Royal Opera House at Covent Garden!) broken down into jigsaw pieces – plus the easel -by air as a gift in kind from Virgin Atlantic and our plan was to erect it outside the UN Security Council chamber – the so-called ‘stake-out area’, where Ambassadors, Foreign Ministers, et al give their briefings to the media.

Amazingly, and with the support of Olara Otunnu, the Secretary General’s Special Representative for Children in Armed Conflict, we managed to pull this off. Even more amazingly, as Olara and I were holding a press conference in the media suite it came to a halt when the SG entered the room unannounced; we then went with him to see the installation and the picture below shows him addressing the media in front of the full montage, with

Olara (green shirt), Francis Deng, the Special Representative of the SG for Internally Displaced Persons, and yours truly in attendance.



What a coup! OK, it was stunt, but as stunts go it was pretty amazing. It was also a great example of different teams from across the organisation working together to achieve a shared goal: media, policy, campaigns, and the guy with the tie... A special memory, indeed!



Father of the bride - David Alexander

I will always be grateful to Save the Children for giving me some of the best experiences of my life. These have included:

- Unforgettable summer holiday camps on the beach with disabled children in Morocco
- Working with some extremely courageous colleagues in the ‘Luwero triangle’ in Uganda
- Leading a fantastic team responding to the Ethiopia famine emergency of 1984-5
- Benefitting from a scholarship to study for an MBA at the Cranfield School of Management
- Working with great colleagues in the DRC and all over East Africa
- Leading the amazing Merlin team through their tricky integration into SC
- Serving on SC’s migrant rescue ship ‘Vos Hestia’ in the Mediterranean

While I was in Ethiopia I gained a bride and gave another away! I met my future wife, Kirsty Russell, there and I was honoured to play the role of ‘father of the bride’ to one of our wonderful nurses,

Olwyn Gillespie, at her wedding to Chris Mason of Oxfam. What better way to cement the relationship between these two great NGOs?

Flying close to the sun - Toby Porter

In professional terms, the best decision I ever made was to apply for the Emergencies Director role at Save the Children in 2004. There began almost a decade with the charity, in that role from 2004 to 2007, then on secondment to the then newly formed Save the Children India from 2008 to 2011, before a final two and a half years back in London heading up the institutional partnerships and funding team. I then left Save the Children in late 2013 to become CEO of HelpAge International. My ten years with Save the Children were very special times, still the highlight of my career to date, working with very special people all over the world, for leaders and Trustees and a vision of one Save the Children that I have always passionately believed in. Not without problems or flaws, but our best attempt to give a modest helping hand to children and families coping with catastrophe, poverty, exclusion and neglect.

The Emergencies team I joined in mid-2004 had five or six people in it, as a charity we seemed to have lost our way when it came to responding quickly and adequately to emergencies, as illustrated by the sluggish and introverted response to the Darfur crisis when it first erupted in 2003. After our eventual withdrawal from Darfur by the end of 2004 under tragic circumstances, I think Save the Children went on to do some amazing things in emergencies. The most significant in humanitarian terms in my time was surely the ambitious therapeutic feeding programme we started in Niger in 2005 with no prior country presence, and the response to the earthquake that struck Pakistan-administered Kashmir a few months later the same year. I have always been confident that many, many lives were saved directly by these two operations, so they would be my proudest moments, as for all of you, this ambition tends to be what made me first pursue a career with an aid agency in the first place.

Both of these operations followed by five and ten months the start of the Tsunami response, which was quite unique institutionally but, I would argue, modest at best, operationally, and more importantly, in outcome. I have never had any doubt that the billions of dollars donated around the world to global and local humanitarian agencies after the Tsunami, as well as to the United Nations, would have had infinitely more impact had the funds just been divided up equally and paid into the bank accounts of the survivors, with almost all of the humanitarian agencies asked to stay away. I think Save the Children struggled, in imagination, implementation and also when it came to dealing with the unprecedented demands for accountability.



Banda Aceh – January 2005

Looking back on my time with Save the Children, I suppose I could be seen as something of an 'entrepreneur' - not just in humanitarian terms, but thereafter in India, where Save the Children became a 'stronger member' after 2 years, long before the 10 year timeframe envisaged in its founding strategic plan. When I returned to Save the Children UK three years later, I took over leadership of a team that ran what is to this day arguably the most successful institutional partnership and funding operation ever established in an UK-based INGO, with the DfiD partnership growing from some £40m a year when I arrived to

some £110m a year when I left less than 3 years later. As a team based in the UK we did some things very well and, in hindsight, I am sure I never had the fortune to work with a more brilliant and driven group of individuals, in head office and in SCI offices around the world.

But there was a lot of good fortune as well, primarily (and very seldom acknowledged) the major changes to programme implementation and donor account management rules that accompanied the creation of Save the Children International (SCI) as a single programme implementation entity a year or so before I took this role. In effect, the deal struck between members when they created SCI gave SC UK an exclusive licence to sell to UK donors and DfID in particular a technical 'at scale' programming capability in fragile and low-income states that SCI had largely inherited from SC US, and that had not existed in SC UK for some years outside of a diminished and diminishing handful of countries. This was particularly the case with health, nutrition and early childhood development and education.

What we called 'the DfID account' is, barely five years later, sadly now back to almost zero due to controversies of which all will be aware and the decision of DfID to suspend all new funding for Oxfam and Save the Children while their respective statutory enquiries are ongoing (and which, I have always been convinced, is very poor policy indeed on the UK Government side -

see <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/pour-encourager-les-autres-toby-porter/>)

Inevitably, the surprising and disappointing events of the past few years have made me question my legacy. I am sure I am not alone in this among the 'alumni'. Were those of us privileged to hold influential positions within the UK Save the Children all living, unaware, and thereby contributing to our 'Icarus' moment as a charity? Were we too confident of our offer, did we make too much of a virtue of growth? Did we unwittingly sacrifice some of our independence and sense of perspective

to capture the funds on offer during a sweet-spot period when the SCI deal created a very attractive programming offer during a pretty unprecedented boom in institutional funding? Time will tell.

The current generation of leaders at SC UK, SCI and other members certainly have their hands full - some general, most notably a very fast-changing political economy surrounding international aid in general and INGOs in particular, and a decline in trust of charities like Save the Children. It's hard not to predict a double whammy of organisations like Save the Children being less welcome in many countries where they have traditionally worked, and also less well supported in many countries where they have traditionally raised most funds.

Some specific challenges too. Growth, I think, would neither be a sensible or plausible primary aim for the Save the Children in the 2020's, as it was during most or all of my time. Within the movement, viewed from afar, it seems we are a few years into the start of a new 'super cycle' where the funds and influence SC UK has within the wider movement may well fall after a dozen years of growth, with SC US likely continuing as an ever-more dominant presence. I also believe the movement currently employs far too many people in London, after a few years of a de facto headcount 'arms race' between SC UK and SCI head offices.



India cricket captain Virat Kohli supporting Save the Children India movement.

I have never been convinced this was necessary, wise or sustainable (see point on political economy above), and I think a

significant re-balancing and re-siting of much of this capability would be one obvious opportunity amidst the challenges of the well-publicised fall in income for the UK member during the DFID funding suspension. The real prize would be another few dozen stronger members emerging over the next decade like Save the Children India.



I was very glad to attend the recent

Regina Keith reflects on what Save the Children means to her

When I joined Save the Children, in December 2000, 12 million under five-year-old children were dying every year from preventable causes. One child every three seconds. When I left it had reduced to 9 million, and today only 5.1 million children are dying from diseases like pneumonia and diarrhoea. Releasing evidenced based reports like *“80 million lives”*, *“Paying with their lives”* and *“New Products into Old Systems”* really made a difference. Our work made a difference not only directly through life saving programme interventions but through policy changes and ensuring that the principles of equity, and voice through an intersectoral approach were more than just rhetorical promises.

Our five-year longitudinal study (*The Cost of Coping with Illness in East and Central Africa series*) into the barriers to timely health care utilisation, identified that the direct and indirect costs of health care were preventing over a third of mothers seeking health care at all, while pushing a further third into poverty. This evidence inspired many more organisations to advocate for universal

Humanitarian Conference (above). I was sorry to see so little SCI representation or attendance at the event. Academic reflection and gatherings have traditionally been both intended and even justified by how the lessons of yesteryear should inform the practice of today and tomorrow, so an almost total absence of SCI presence at the event inevitably raised questions about the work still needing to be done to build a single movement. It was a joy to see so many former colleagues and old friends, including some of the people I had most revered and looked up to in my time with the charity, and I congratulate and thank people who have worked and are working so hard not just on the centenary, but on the broader alumni programme.

coverage to health services (that were free at the point of access). Our article in the British Medical Journal estimating that 330,000 under five children’s deaths could be avoided for £1.50 inspired the UK government to promise to support up to 12 countries to move away from impoverishing user fees. Countries like Liberia halved their child mortality rates once they made essential health services free at the point of access. I remember visiting a community centre in rural Liberia to explore the impact of the Minister of Health’s (Dr. Gwenengale)’s approach to strengthening health systems after the civil war ended. Save the Children had supported the strengthening of health financing systems as well as rural service strengthening. I was going to meet with the President and the Minister after my field trip and I asked the community what messages they wanted me to relay. A young girl put her hand up and asked me to thank the President for making health services free: *“I woke up this morning with a fever, and I was able to go to the health centre, as it was free, I have malaria. I was given treatment and I even managed to go to school. I am very happy”*.

Save the Children UK was happy to work with other organisations to increase our impact and this was refreshing in the often-competitive world of development. Our work with others in Sierra Leone helped to create the enabling environment for the implementation of free health care for children under five, again reducing child mortality rates by half in 2012.

Save the Children also valued the essential role of mothers in improving children's lives. One Ethiopian child said it best: *"If my mother dies what will happen to me?"* part of our research into health care access in Ethiopia. As a midwife the essential connection between the health of mother and her infant was very clear. Research we carried out in Afghanistan illustrated that if a mother died her infant was much more likely to also die.

So, when I am asked what Save the Children means to me it is the privilege to help create enabling environments for change to occur. To connect the voices from the field with the supporters in the UK and policy makers in Geneva and all over the world. The eight years I spent working with amazing field colleagues to ensure the voices of women and children reached the policy makers enhanced my life and enabled me to bring real life stories of change and heroism back to our UK supporters.

I was an active member in my Sutton Save the Children group run by Mary Kasey and her husband Ray. They would organise quizzes, raffles, carol singing every year. Mary passed away this year, but her legacy goes on, the group has raised millions, allowing Save the Children staff to undertake the essential work and research to help ensure policy changes can be informed by voices of those often ignored. Despite being very ill she continued to raise money for Save the Children, while continuously knitting blankets and hats for infants. Although I left Save the Children, I continued to share the group's handiwork with children from Liberia, Sierra Leone, Mongolia, Laos and many other countries.



Here is a picture of an Ethiopian clinic where mothers with malnourished children were benefiting from that 20-year commitment. Not many ever really leave the Save the Children family, you move onto to share the experience you have gained with others. I continue to value my collaboration with Save the Children and many of my Master's students go on to work for Save the Children.

If I have a wish for Save the Children as the organisation celebrates 100 years, it is for the organisation to stand back and say a huge thank you to the hundreds of supporters and field staff who are the unsung heroes. Their stories may never be told but their inspiring work enabled everyone I worked with in Save the Children to be a little of the change they wished to see in the world. I will be in Ethiopia on May 19th raising a celebration glass before boarding my flight home to UK. Congratulations to all those who ever raised money for Save the Children or worked for the organisation, today be proud, I will always value my time spent working with you all.

Funny memory:

In 2001, on a visit to Liberia, there was sporadic shooting, the team saw me fall, thinking I had been hit, but it was only my knee dislocating. A moment of light relief in a dangerous time. It was always humbling meeting the numerous staff who spent their lives, often in danger, to try and improve the lives of their communities.

A few words from Carolyn Miller. From Mozambique to global 1987-2001

High points

Too many to do justice to: Seeing local staff and partners growing and taking control. A common drive to make a difference – and achieving it. And all those social activities. Also keeping in contact with so many colleagues over the years.

The low point

That global conference (remember it?) held in Wimbledon in an old teacher training college, which was due for demolition. Overseas colleagues arrived just after hearing their budgets had been cut – only to be also faced with old fashioned plug sockets, pickled onion pasta for supper and moldy hair filled showers. Sorry to all - it was cheap though! Now I inspect venues myself.

Thanks

To everyone for all the experience I have since used in other international development work – and especially to Mike A for giving me the opportunities.

And finally ... a light-hearted look at SC's relationship with Arsenal across the years



In 2011, The Arsenal Foundation announced Save the Children as its global charity partner and since then has raised more than £2million for Save the Children's vital work.

Today, SC and Arsenal are using the power of football to improve the lives of vulnerable children around the world.

It wasn't always like that though ... Pete Smith led the Finance Overseas Group in the 1990s, but was once asked by Fundraising to collect a cheque from the Arsenal ...

It was one of those autumn days in the early 1990s that seems so English. Cold but not freezing, damp but not wet. I listened attentively to a heated debate on the train as to whether the rain would better be described as 'drizzle' or 'mizzle' ...

I was on my way to the Arsenal football ground in North London to pick up a cheque for Save the Children, a club donation doubtless to offset their recent run of bad press. Nothing to do with results on the pitch; just the usual cocktail of managerial impropriety, player infidelity and fan misbehaviour. I couldn't care less why they were giving; cash was cash. There would probably be a toothy publicity picture of their manager, George Graham, handing me the cheque as we shook hands and I would, I hoped, disappear long before the tedium of their evening game against Wimbledon.

This was years before the novel concept of playing attractive football to entertain crowds caught on in that part of the world; an Arsenal game against Wimbledon back in the day had to be sanctioned by Air Traffic Control so that low flying passenger jets could avoid the higher miskicks. I caught the Tube up to their Highbury Stadium enjoying the locals comforting weather discourse and arrived at about 4pm on a Wednesday afternoon.

It was well over three hours until kick off but there was already a buzz in the air. Kids were hanging around the main gate hunting for players' autographs; I walked past trying to look important. What does an owner of a football club look like? Or an agent? Maybe one of the players' dads? None of them asked me to sign anything. Little shits.

Explaining who I was at reception, I was immediately whisked into corporate hospitality

and given a glass containing a familiar cold, bubbly liquid. One sip was all that was needed. Krug. And not the cheapest one at that. At least a hundred quid a bottle, off-sale. Obviously, George was running late and I was being placated.

I am never quite sure if it was after the fourth or fifth top-up that I lost count. All these years on, some of the less important details are blurred. I am not sure as to whether this is because of the excellence of the champagne or the passing of time. The key events are however indelibly etched. Indelibly.

A few other guests begin to arrive in corporate hospitality. We make small talk where I seem to remember that as the bubbles slip down, I am particularly witty, erudite and engaging. At least I think so. But all the while that one wine waiter remains focused on my glass. The other guests are hardly going dry, but clearly none of them are being placated in quite the same way. I glance at my watch; it's worryingly near 6pm. I have visions of Mr Graham bustling his way to the changing room being reminded by his secretary he had one last important job to do before his pre-match talk ... but no sign of him. The clock is ticking.



Possibly the hugest monkey to visit a Save the Children project

The wine waiter duly refills and I start for the first time in my life to get a warm feeling about this venerable institution, the Arsenal. I was born south of the river in Brixton in the 1950s, well before it was mockneyfied by the arriviste sons and daughters of Britain's white middle class in their Holy Grail search for street cred. So by accident of birth I had – indeed have – a profound genetic distrust of anything hailing from the north side of town.

But as I anecdote away to a coterie of fascinated club sponsors and their friends, it begins to dawn on me that the wine waiter has been given a briefing. 'Poor bloke's working for a charity, probably never gets a decent drink in his life. Take special care of him, John. Rather he got our good stuff than those corporate hangers-on.' And they are going to give me a cheque for £25k. What a nice bunch of people they are. I've clearly misjudged them all these years. They have, however, profoundly underestimated the amount of fine vintage champagne I have managed to put away.

7pm. The last chance gone. He's bound to be in the changing rooms now. That means they want to do it after the match. They could have said, otherwise I wouldn't have wasted these last three hours ... drinking Krug. Maybe not such a waste. Oh well, I'll watch the match and pick up the cheque afterwards. I've had worse evenings.

7:15pm. The players are out on the pitch, warming up, fifteen minutes until kick off. The flight-paths for Heathrow and Stansted have been altered. Time for just one more before the match starts. My waiter comes towards me, I raise my glass in anticipation but to my surprise he takes it from me. 'This way, sir.'

The waiter puts a hand on my shoulder and leads me through a side door and down some steps. We go through one door, then another, his pace quickening. We come to a fire exit. He pushes the heavy metal door and beckons me through. I am on the touch line. It's now night time and the sky is as dark as a London sky ever gets, but the stadium is ablaze with the glow of artificial lights. There's a crowd of 30,000 people. Noises and smells. And a besuited and smiling George Graham is fifty yards away on the halfway line, with one of those giant cardboard cut-out cheques. All I have to do is to walk across the pitch, shake his hand and collect it.

I gaze up to the jumbo TV screen and see the camera focus in on me. Thirty thousand heads turn in my direction. I realise at once what had been going on; no one with any sense would walk out across a pitch in front of a lively football crowd for a publicity shot of a fake cheque presentation. Not unless you were well

and truly placated first, that is. And I am. So without fear or trepidation, I step on to the Highbury turf.

And without any organisation, any preparation, any coordination, thirty thousand people look at me on the giant TV screen and start to chant with one voice: 'YOU FAT BASTARD! YOU FAT BASTARD!'



* * *

I smile as I stroll across the ground, bowing and waving to the most vocal elements of the crowd with what I hope is a particularly irritating grin affixed my face. The chant repeats in a continuous loop. I make a mental note to advise my fundraising colleagues to end their relationship with Arsenal. Luckily, one of the consequences of the Krug was that I forgot to send that email, and it appears that was one of my more effective hangovers.

We simply can't end this special newsletter with just a funny story. The work deserves more than that. Far more. Some of the many prominent figures from our present and past were asked to sum up what Save the Children meant to them in a few words:

Sarah Uppard:

'This is where I learnt about child protection through the opportunity to work with and learn from some incredible colleagues and mentors. What makes me most proud of Save the Children's work is the dedicated and committed national staff; two responses stand out - Rwanda in 1994 and the Rogingya response in Bangladesh in 2017/18.'

Ben Foot:

'I gave 40 years of my life to Save the Children and the children I have reached out to have more than repaid me for that.'

