



Save the Children UK Alumni Association February 2026 Newsletter

Hi everyone and welcome back to the Save the Children Alumni Association newsletter. It's been a while — thank you for your patience.

A great deal has happened in the world since the last (pre-Covid) issue, and this newsletter isn't going to attempt to cover all that. Instead, we've included some general pieces to start, before turning to a much more serious topic that many of you will already be feeling in your work — and others may be seeing from the outside.

Recent News



Starting with a quick note of an impromptu social in the Farringdon pub, *The Fence*, near HQ, about a month or so back. There were over 60 attendees, mainly alumni, though a few current staff sneaked in!

As Leonie reminds us, when you talk about Save the Children, you always end up talking about the people. Apologies if your ears were burning that evening

On the left are a few faces you might recognise who came along ... Mike Aaronson, Doreen Doland, John Vaughan and of course Angela Ingman.

And on the right Rachael Cummings (just back from a long stint in Gaza for SCI but formerly SCUK), Fiona McSheehy, Leonie Lonton, Dominic Courage and Linda Steinbock (at the front).



We will arrange another event in due course, but are conscious of the London bias. Perhaps an on-line meeting where you bring your own refreshments? Let us know your views — ideally on the Bulletin Boards.

An Intriguing Anniversary

We've written an article on our website that marks a fascinating Save the Children milestone: 2026 is the 100th anniversary of the start of our work in the UK, wrapped deeply within the events of the 1926 General Strike. And if you were ever a milk-monitor or heard stories from your parents or grand-parents about drinking milk at school, look out for a possible origin story. You don't need to be logged in to read this — just click [here](#).

The return of Eglantyne and a Call to Action!

We've significantly upgraded our website recently, and that work continues. Have a mooch. One feature we expect to be of particular interest is our new **AI Research Assistant *Eglantyne***.

Eglantyne will help you by pulling together *reliable* source-verified information from our archive and trusted sources. She'll ignore the various rants on social media and dubious news outlets that pollute so much of the internet and other AI tooling. Even more importantly, she'll link in new content that all of **YOU** write. We've talked before about our role in preserving institutional memory — but how?



Well, now you can ask ***Eglantyne*** to retrieve them whenever asked. Please read our [Call to Action](#) (log-in please) and follow alumna Anne Watts lead in writing down stories and lessons you learned along the way so that ***Eglantyne*** can use them to answer questions! Field experiences, anecdotes, retrospectives, biographies, book reviews — every contribution welcome.

Now and the Future

Which brings us to the much more serious item in this issue. Many alumni are still closely engaged in the sector and will be feeling the current pressures first-hand. Others have retired or moved into different fields. Wherever you stand, it's clear the humanitarian world is under intense strain and changing fast.



Major donor funding cuts since early 2025 have hit NGOs and UN agencies hard. The impact is already being felt by people who need support, and by the people trying to provide it: downsizing, suspended programmes, and reduced essential services, all against a backdrop of escalating global crises.

The cuts as ever fall heaviest on the most vulnerable — particularly children and women — and they expose how dependent the system has become on a small number of major donors. A few organisations, notably MSF, are coping through alternative funding, but overall the outlook for humanitarian effectiveness remains precarious. In many respects, the post-war status quo has gone.

On the public side of website you'll find a comprehensive article [here](#) setting out in blunt factual terms the scale of the reductions and what's already happening as a result. Mere numbers though don't convey the trauma. Deep cuts in work and staff are now a reality, with all the appalling consequences that brings.



However you look at it, we're at an inflection point for the humanitarian and international NGO sector — and we'd really like to hear your views. We've opened a small set of discussion threads on the Bulletin Board (a members-only discussion, so these links will only work if you're signed in). Please join in:

- **Reflection 1 – Impact of Change.** What shifts are you seeing (or expecting) in how aid will be funded and delivered and the impact on work? [Click here to post.](#)
- **Reflection 2 – Institutional Knowledge.** The 'Call to Action' above to write your experiences for *Eglantyne* is a practical way for us all to get started — but that can't be only answer. What else should we be doing to preserve and share knowledge, and how would we make it accessible? [Click here to post.](#)
- **Reflection 3 – Role of our Alumni Association.** Does the Alumni Association still make sense in its current form in this new environment? 'People memories' have always mattered to us, but it doesn't feel right if we're left as a social group. Should we be reaching out to other alumni groups, other staff groups, or more broadly? [Click here to post.](#)

Please add your thoughts via these links so others can see them and build on them. Alternatively, if technology isn't your friend, you can reply to this email — just let us know whether it's for admin only (e.g. feedback on the site) or whether you'd like your comments shared with the wider group.

That enough for now. Please participate in discussions on the Bulletin Boards when you have a few moments. You cannot possibly have read this far and not have some opinions on all this!

Warm regards,

The Save the Children Alumni Association

Mike Aaronson | Leonie Lonton | Gareth Owen | Pete Smith

PS. Apologies if you've replied to join and heard nothing back. A lot going on at the moment. We will catch up the backlog soon.