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| Institution: University of Sheffield | | |
| Unit of Assessment: D-28 History | | |
| Title of case study: Humanitarianism, politics and children's rights | | |
| Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2016–2020 | | |
| Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit: | | |
| Name(s): Emily Baughan | Role(s) (e.g. job title): Lecturer in 19/20th Century History | Period(s) employed by submitting HEI: 2016–present |
| Period when the claimed impact occurred: 2016 onwards | | |
| Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N | | |
| <p>1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)</p> <p>Baughan's research, on the evolution of modern humanitarianism, has had a critical effect on Save the Children as an organisation, on its staff, and on a public and practitioner audience. It has enabled Save the Children to rethink its political identity, individual staff to reflect on the ethical and political challenges associated with humanitarian interventions, and introduced a wider audience to the question of the relationship between humanitarianism, children's rights, and politics. This has been particularly pertinent to the organisation's centenary in 2019. It also speaks to the wider international child welfare movement in confronting challenges posed by new forms of armed conflict impacting young people, and the drive to decolonise international aid.</p> | | |
| <p>2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)</p> <p>This case study is based on Baughan's research into the history of international humanitarian organisations in the 20th century, conducted between 2016 and 2020, and in particular the history of child welfare organisations. Baughan's research is amongst the first critical histories of humanitarian aid, and is pathbreaking in situating the history of a major NGO within the histories of imperialism and state-building, where previously such histories have been produced internally and promoted uncritical, celebratory narratives. The related outputs include academic journal articles and a major monograph (R1), to be published in 2021, the findings of which have already been widely disseminated through presentations and advance access to the full text. The research has revealed three major insights that have shaped Baughan's work with the humanitarian sector.</p> <p>The first concerns the political nature of humanitarian aid (R1). Today, it is often taken for granted that humanitarian aid should be separate from politics. This research has revealed that, in the early 20th century, humanitarian organisations often conceived of themselves as explicitly political actors. In the case of Save the Children (SC), which is the focus of the monograph, its socialist founder Dorothy Buxton imagined humanitarian action as a way to inspire international political change. The book also examines the processes through which aid has been depoliticised, as aid organisations have sought to gain a broader popular appeal by focusing on uncontroversial aspects of their work. In particular, it shows how care for children was often described as though it were inherently apolitical, even though this was not always the case.</p> | | |

The second insight from Baughan's research concerns the relationship between humanitarian organisations and governments (R2). From the early 20th century, aid organisations have often been co-opted by government ministries to channel state funded aid to crises, and in doing so fulfil official diplomatic agendas. These collaborations benefit aid organisations, insofar that they extend their access to suffering populations, and to distribute state funded relief. Such collaborations have been enabled by aid organisations' insistence that they themselves are impartial and nonpolitical, and therefore able to collaborate with governments from across the political spectrum. Yet these collaborations have led aid organisations into highly political situations. In the aftermath of the Second World War, for example, Baughan shows how aid organisations collaborated with colonial governments in rehabilitation programs designed to block anti-colonial resistance. Collaborating with governments has often come at the expense of retaining operational and indeed ethical independence.

Thirdly, Baughan's work has shown how the relationship between children and their communities has been constructed historically (R3). After the First World War, children's welfare was seen primarily in physical terms. It was often deemed more efficient to remove children from their families and communities and care for them en masse in orphanage facilities. In the aftermath of the Second World War, with the rise of 'attachment theory', children's emotional wellbeing became as important as their physical health. Humanitarian organisations increasingly focused on preserving family bonds. In her forthcoming monograph (R1) and journal articles in *Past and Present* and *Journal of British Studies* (R2; R3), Baughan has examined how changing social scientific ideas about the nature of childhood have impacted humanitarian practice, in particular during wartime.

Baughan's research reflects the genuinely mutual nature of impact between higher education and external partners, in that she worked closely with the SC archives in organising its collections and with NGOs in facilitating training that was sensitive to historical events and to the historicity of humanitarian efforts involving children.

3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

- R1.** Baughan, E. (2021). *Saving the Children: Humanitarianism, Internationalism and the British Empire, 1915-1970*. University of California Press (accepted September 2020). Available by request.
- R2.** Baughan, E. (2020). Rehabilitating an Empire: Humanitarian Collusion with the Colonial State during the Kenyan Emergency, ca. 1954–1960. *Journal of British Studies*, 59(1), 57–79. <https://doi.org/10.1017/jbr.2019.243>
- R3.** Baughan, E. (2018). International Adoption and Anglo-American Internationalism, c.1918–1925. *Past & Present*, 239(1), 181–217. <https://doi.org/10.1093/pastj/gtx059>

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

Baughan first worked with Save the Children (SC) as part of her PhD research. She continued this association with them with an academic in-residence position from 2016, at a point when the organisation was taking a critical view of its position and culture, and consider its place in 21st century humanitarianism. Baughan's research into the history and origins of Save the Children became, in the words of SC's Humanitarian Director "*central, in an intellectual way, to our ability to argue for change*" [S1].

Embedding critical reflection in organisational culture

Baughan developed an online training course revealing the origins of aid in empire and state-building, using her work on the history of humanitarian aid. This course is a core part of the mandatory training programme for all staff (1,000 people, across 20 countries) in the Humanitarian Operations Programme. Baughan's research is used to inform staff of the history of their work and enable reflection on the complex ethical challenges associated with humanitarian interventions. The course is now available globally, and has been translated into French, the other operating language of SC. Staff consistently award it five stars in feedback, and they feel that the course has "*strengthened their knowledge of humanitarian operations*" and highlighted "*controversial issues*" [S2].

Baughan has also consulted on the development of a team-taught course on the critical reflection on humanitarian affairs. Course convener Juliano Fiori noted Emily's work on this course "*will help to improve understanding about the purpose and ambition of Save the Children and support staff in doing their jobs*" [S3]. It is the first of its kind in the world and aims to enhance the competency of aid workers, fundraisers, and policy writers by enabling them to critically address the ethical and political challenges encountered 'in the field'. 28 aid workers in 15 nations participated in a pilot in 2018 and students found it "*excellent*" and that it "*made me more engaged in my work*" [S2]. Following a successful pilot, the course is due to be rolled out on an annual basis in 2021.

Changing political identity and perceptions of humanitarianism

Baughan's work has provided the intellectual base from which to weave the social and political history of SC into its organisational culture and reassert its origins as a political organisation. It has given the organisation "*live intellectual ammunition to help us re-weaponise our political agenda for sectoral change*" [S3]. The ambition to re-politicise SC, supported by Baughan's research, has manifested itself in two ways:

1. The Centenary Archives Project

Baughan was historical adviser to a project to collate archival information and digitise new content for use in Centenary marketing, advocacy and training programmes. Its aim was to reflect a revised foundation story, based on Baughan's research, of an organisation firmly rooted in the major political challenges of its day. Baughan advised the project team on the selection of suitable material to achieve these aims. Digitised material, which portrays this revised historical narrative is now available to staff and is used in strategy and planning documents, as well as marketing [S3]. Archive staff were also interested in Baughan's work on Dorothy Buxton as key to putting together a full picture of the organisation's history. The archivist reported that "*I had heard about Emily's research and was especially interested to get her perspective on Dorothy Buxton because very little was known about her internally at Save the Children in comparison to Eglantyne Jebb*" [S4]. This material has been used to reshape the visual culture of SC's head offices: in 2019, a major conferencing room was redesigned and renamed 'The Buxton Room', with images and text recalling Dorothy Buxton and her radical vision of humanitarian aid. This material was shared with a public audience through a central London photo exhibition in 2019, now displayed in the head offices of SC UK. It has enabled the acknowledgement amongst staff and the wider public that "*some items might have been left out of the archives in order to save face*" [S5].

2. The Centenary Conference

Baughan co-organised and was keynote speaker at a major international event for the Centenary of SC. The theme, on the connection between humanitarianism, children's rights and politics, and the structure of the conference was drawn directly from Baughan's research (R1). and the conference hosted participants from across the world. 240 attended in person and 130 via video link. They represented organisations such as Oxfam, the Department for International Development and the Liberian Department of Health and were from 18 countries. Delegates included Nigerian girls rights activist Maryam Ahmed and New York Times journalist Rafia Zakaria. Baughan's work ensured that, unlike in previous SC events, critical reflection and historical awareness was embedded into the event [S2]. Sir Mike Aaronson, former Director of Save the Children, who worked with Baughan to develop and plan the conference, commented that 'It is fair to say that the Centenary Conference, together with Dr Baughan's sustained engagement with the organisation, has transformed the way it understands and appreciates its history' [S6]. Participant feedback was positive, including that the experience would *"help me provide more informed and practical advice to teams"* and praise for the idea of *"actually using thoroughly well researched work about an organisational history to shape the organisational future"* [S7].

Bringing historical research to bear on policy making

Work with SC led to Baughan's appointment as a consultant for the major United Nations report on the protection of children in conflict, led by Gordon Brown (January 2018). By showing how in the past child protection legislation had been altered as the methods of conflict shifted, Baughan helped to build the case that in the present legal protections for children should be updated as methods of conflict change. Baughan's research and observations were adopted in the final report [S8], which suggested the extension of zones of humanitarian immunity to include schools and school transportation, and to encompass children's carers. A press release from Gordon Brown's office cited Baughan's research directly, stating that *"Historically, the protection of children has been viewed not only as an area most likely to secure international co-operation – but as a site for transforming international relations"* [S9]. The report is now under review at the UN, and may form the basis for a revision of international humanitarian law. It is also the basis for an ongoing major campaign led by SC, calling on governments and international lawmakers to urgently revise child protection legislation and fund humanitarian support for child victims of conflict. The report has also led to the inauguration of an International Day to Protect Education from Attack, reigniting a campaign to provide safe spaces for education in conflict zones which Baughan identified the first iteration of in 1937.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

- S1.** Testimonial statement and filmed interview, Humanitarian Director, Save the Children.
- S2.** Course feedback for 'Critical Reflection' online course and 'History of Humanitarianism' course.
- S3.** Testimonial from Head of Studies (Humanitarian Affairs), Save the Children.
- S4.** Centenary Archive Project staff feedback.
- S5.** Feedback from centenary photo exhibition.

- S6.** Testimonial from former CEO, Save the Children.
- S7.** Feedback from centenary conference event.
- S8.** *Protecting Children in Armed Conflict*, UN Final Report (Chapter IV is based on Baughan's work).
- S9.** Press Release from Gordon Brown's office
(<https://gordonandsarahbrown.com/2018/04/make-the-law-clearer-to-help-children-in-armed-conflict/>).